

Best Practices With Their Associated Indicators
Best Practices (1, 2, 3 . . .) and Indicators (a, b, c . . .)
Adopted June 2002

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Best Practices and Indicators

Board and Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities

1. The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have policies to ensure that they have effective working relationships.

- a. The district has developed written policies that clearly delineate the responsibilities of the board and the superintendent.
- b. New board members receive orientation training when they first come on the board. Part of this training covers the roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent and Sunshine Law requirements.
- c. The board has qualified as a master board and board members receive ongoing training.
- d. The board and superintendent have policies for how board members are to access district staff or direct staff to respond to constituent inquiries, and board members adhere to these procedures.
- e. The board and superintendent advise each other when they become aware that an agenda item is likely to be controversial or that a controversial topic may arise at a board meeting and develop a plan to manage the issue.¹
- f. The board evaluates its performance and, if the superintendent is appointed, evaluates the superintendent's performance.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.

- a. The district prepares a master calendar showing the dates of major events, and board actions needed to meet legal requirements and uses it to ensure that these matters are placed on the board agenda in a timely matter.
- b. School board meetings are scheduled at a time and place convenient to the public.
- c. The school board pulls items from its consent agenda for discussion and public comment when requested to do so by members of the public.
- d. The board receives agenda materials in sufficient time to review them thoroughly prior to board meetings.
- e. The board's agendas allocate sufficient time for the board to discuss, develop, or evaluate district policies, goals, programs, and strategies for improving student achievement. The board addresses these issues.
- f. For each major agenda item, district staff provide board members with a clearly written summary that describes how the item supports the district's goals and objectives, and other specific information that may include any of the following items deemed necessary by the board:
 - the reason for recommended action on the item;
 - how the action will be accomplished;
 - what the desired results are;
 - what alternatives have been considered;
 - what resources will be needed;
 - who will be affected and whether they have been advised of and given opportunity for input on the proposed action;
 - how the proposed action will affect students and parents;

¹ This should be conducted in compliance with Florida Sunshine Laws. For example, an agenda item could be pulled from the regular board meeting and scheduled for a separate workshop that would be open to the public.

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- what policy or law may apply to the item;
- whether the item complies with, duplicates, modifies, or affects existing policies or procedures;
- whether a new policy is needed to implement the proposed action;
- what the time frame is for implementing and completing the proposed action; and
- who will evaluate the proposed action and how it will be evaluated.

g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.

a. The board has adopted written policies for the district that are updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in law and that ensure relevancy.

b. The district's policies do not cover procedural matters.

c. The superintendent has developed procedures dealing with district-wide administrative matters, and these procedures are up to date and reflect changes in law and board actions.

d. The district's policies and procedures are readily accessible to all district staff, and staff uses them to guide their activities.

e. The board's attorney reviews all proposed policies and procedures revisions to ensure that they comply with state requirements and are relevant and complete.

f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The district routinely obtains legal services to advise it about policy and reduce the risk of lawsuits. It also takes steps to ensure that its legal costs are reasonable.

a. The school board has an attorney (either in-house or on contract) with the primary responsibility of advising the school board, reviewing policy, and reducing the risk of lawsuits.

b. The district can demonstrate that the school board's agenda and meeting materials are provided to its legal counsel in a timely manner.

c. The district has procedures for the board or individual board members to confer with the board attorney.

d. The district has procedures for the superintendent or his designee to confer with the board attorney, and these procedures consider cost of providing attorney services and potential conflict-of-interest situations.

e. The district has procedures for other staff to access the attorney. These procedures consider the cost of providing these attorney services and potential conflict-of-interest situations.

f. The district retains outside counsel (counsel other than the board attorney) when appropriate. Appropriateness includes when particular areas of expertise are needed, cost, and potential conflicts of interest.

g. The district regularly reviews its legal costs (cost of the contract attorney or salary and benefits for in-house attorneys) to determine whether it would be more cost-effective to obtain in-house or contracted legal services for routine legal work.

h. The contract fees or salary the district pays its board attorney is comparable to those of similar districts.

i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

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Organization, Staffing and Resource Allocation

5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.

- a. The district has organizational charts that clearly and accurately depict its organizational structure.
- b. The district has clearly defined the responsibilities of each organizational unit and communicated these responsibilities to staff and the public.
- c. The district's organizational structure eliminates unnecessary overlapping functions and excessive administrative layers.
- d. The district's top administrators (directors and above) have reasonable spans of control.
- e. The district regularly (at least once every four years) reviews its business practices and organizational structure and presents the results in a written report to the board.
- f. The district makes changes to its organizational structure to streamline operations and improve operating efficiency.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.

- a. The district comprehensively reviews its administrative staffing levels to improve operating efficiency and presents the results in a written report to the board.²
- b. In conducting its review, the district obtains broad stakeholder input.
- c. As part of its review, at a minimum, the district assesses the reasonableness of its administrative staffing levels to those of comparable districts using appropriate measures that may include classroom teachers per administrator, instructional personnel per administrator, total staff per administrator, and total administrators per 1,000 students.
- d. The district implements changes to its administrative staffing levels when necessary to improve its operating efficiency.
- e. Administrative staffing is reasonable given the number of students served and services provided by the district.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.

- a. District school board members receive training and understand school district budgeting and finance.
- b. The proposed budget is presented to the board in an easy-to-read, understandable, and concise format that board members and the community can understand.
- c. The district provides the board with information about revenue and expenditures by major function over the past two to three fiscal years for use in evaluating budget proposals.
- d. The district has a procedure for informing, in a concise and easily understood format, the board about the short- and long-term fiscal implications of proposed budgets or budget amendments.

² The frequency of such a comprehensive review will vary based on several factors such as the size of the district, staff turnover, program organization and funding changes, etc. As a general rule of thumb larger districts should conduct a comprehensive staffing review every four to five years and smaller districts less frequently.

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- e. Changes or concerns in financial condition are reported to the board in a timely manner, and the board takes necessary corrective actions.
- f. The school board has established limits for how much various district staff can spend without approval and it reviews and approves all purchases that exceed these amounts.
- g. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve management structures, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district has clearly assigned school principals the authority they need to effectively manage their schools while adhering to district-wide policies and procedures.

- a. The district can demonstrate that it has clearly communicated the authority it has assigned to school administrators; these administrators either know what is expected of them or where to find out.
- b. The district has given school administrators staffing and budget flexibility.
- c. The district has given school administrators sufficient authority over school operations to enable them to achieve school, district, and state education goals.
- d. The district has sufficient controls to ensure that school administrators adhere to district-wide policies and procedures.
- e. The district regularly assesses the authority it has assigned to school-based administrators and looks for ways to enhance school-based decision making.
- f. The district holds school administrators accountable for their performance in achieving school, district, and state educational goals.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Planning and Budgeting

9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.

- a. The school district maintains and publishes a clearly written, multi-year strategic plan to provide vision and direction for the district's effort. The plan addresses state and district education goals, including student performance goals.
- b. In developing the strategic plan the board
 - identifies and formally adopts a limited number of district priorities to guide the district's strategies and major financial and program decisions;
 - instructs district staff on how these priorities should be considered in making program and budget decisions.
- c. The strategic plan clearly delineates
 - the district's goals, and objectives and strategies for achieving them;
 - the priorities the board assigns to its goals, objectives, and strategies;
 - the strategies the district intends to employ to reach desired objectives;
 - the performance measures and standards the district will use to judge its progress toward meeting its goals; and
 - the entities responsible for implementing the strategies in the plan and the time frames for implementation.

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- d. The board annually assesses the progress the district has made toward achieving its objectives.
- e. The board annually reviews and, if necessary, amends its priorities and strategic plan to reflect changes in community standards, student needs, or board direction.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.

- a. The district strives to provide an accurate enrollment forecast and does not regularly overestimate or underestimate its enrollment.
- b. The district bases its enrollment projections on statistical enrollment techniques, such as a cohort survival methodology, that can detect turning points due to changing demographics.
- c. When making enrollment forecasts, the district considers additional factors such as planned enrollment changes in private schools, influences due to changes in employment opportunities, city/county comprehensive plans, and planned new development in the district.
- d. The district documents the methodologies and processes for key areas of its forecasting process.
- e. The district has a process for minimizing the adverse effect of projection errors.
- f. The district implements processes to ensure the accuracy of school FTE counts.
- g. Enrollment projections for individual schools consider the existing school populations, mobility, and housing starts within the areas served by each school. School-based administrators review the reasonableness of these projections.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its annual priorities in the strategic plan and its goals and objectives; and district resources are focused towards achieving those goals and objectives.

- a. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its priority goals and objectives, including those for student performance.
- b. The district can demonstrate that it assesses performance and adjusts its financial plans and budgets to improve its ability to meet its priority goals and objectives.
- c. District staff is aware of and direct their effort toward the achievement of the priority goals and objectives.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.

- a. If additional revenue is needed, the district considers pursuing various local options to increase revenues (e.g., half-cent sales tax, bonds underwritten by voted millage, property taxes).
- b. The district has taken actions to obtain private, state, and federal grants and other alternative funding.
- c. The district has taken advantage of opportunities to improve management structures, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Community Involvement

13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision making and activities.

- a. Schools use every practical means of communication to provide timely information to parents/guardians such as: newsletters, flyers, websites, direct school-parent contact, etc.

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- b. The schools annually distribute information about school policies and programs in a clear and understandable format.
- c. District schools conduct annual parent/teacher conferences.
- d. The district has active Parent Teacher Associations/ Parent Faculty Organizations and other effective methods to involve and encourage parent leadership and participation.
- e. The district can demonstrate that parents on School Advisory Councils (SACs) are actively involved in making decisions regarding school improvement.
- f. The district can demonstrate that SAC members receive training on their responsibilities and in district finance and budgeting policy.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision making and activities.

- a. District schools have developed forums for regular communication with local business entities.
- b. District schools involve businesses in helping to fund educational programs, including applying for grants.
- c. Each school (or in smaller districts, district staff) has an individual who is responsible for coordinating and monitoring programs and projects with its business partners.
- d. Students, parents, teachers and administrators regularly participate in community service projects, including offering school resources when practical.
- e. District schools have active mentoring programs.
- f. The district actively engages the education committees of business and social organizations.
- g. The district can demonstrate that business partners on School Advisory Councils (SACs) are actively involved in making decisions regarding school improvement.
- h. The district maintains or coordinates with a foundation whose members reflect a wide variety of business interests.
- i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?