

FactSheet

November 2017

Board Self-Evaluation: Results and Recommendations from an Analysis of CSBA's Board Survey Tool

by Michael S. Hill and Mary Briggs

Introduction

School boards support improved student outcomes by creating and sustaining the conditions that support effective and equitable teaching and learning.¹ Governance teams bring together community members with a broad range of backgrounds, educational experience, and goals. Board training can improve the likelihood that boards will be able to coordinate their efforts on behalf of students.

Board self-evaluation is one powerful way to support effective governance. Since 2011, CSBA's Governance Consulting Services Department has offered boards a tool and access to consultants to help them evaluate their local practices. The tool includes a survey designed to be completed by each member of a participating board. Once the survey responses are collected, CSBA generates a report that serves as the foundation for a facilitated conversation on how to build on strengths and address areas for improvement.

Overview: The CSBA Board Survey Tool

The CSBA Board Survey Tool aligns with the Association's Professional Governance Standards, research, and good governance practice, and is divided into two areas: (1) Conditions of Effective Governance and (2) Board Responsibilities. Questions are divided into subcategories within each section. Participants rank their district or county board performance on a four-point scale: Almost Always (4), Often (3), Less Often (2), Rarely (1), or Not Sure (not weighted).

CSBA's Governance Consulting Services Department provides two options for conducting the self-evaluation. Following completion of the electronic survey, participating districts either review the results on their own, using written guidance provided by CSBA, or with in-person facilitation by a CSBA consultant.

In this fact sheet, you'll find:

- » A description of CSBA's Board Self-Evaluation Tool
- » Key findings from prior participants in the Board Self-Evaluation process
- » Planned modifications to the survey

Recent Analysis of the Survey Tool

CSBA Member Services recently evaluated the survey tool to ensure it provides meaningful, accurate information to participating boards. Michael S. Hill, a consultant from the University of California, Davis, analyzed the existing data to ensure that the survey reliably measures what it is intended to measure. The analysis revealed opportunities for improvements and offered insight into board member perspectives about governance within their districts or county offices of education.

Our sample included 478 surveys completed by 351 board members. Because some districts conduct regular self-evaluation, approximately one-fifth of the districts completed the survey more than once. When districts took the survey more than once, only the results from the first administration were included in the analysis to avoid skewing the data.

Excerpted Findings

Data from boards that have taken the survey in the past offer insights into what participants perceive to be their governance team's strengths and areas for growth. The results

could inform future professional learning opportunities that CSBA offers our members. Importantly, each district voluntarily opted to participate in the self-evaluation, so the findings might not be broadly representative of all CSBA members. Despite that caveat, the perceptions of 70 different boards point to common themes that can inform the professional development that CSBA offers and can prompt rich dialogue within local governance teams.

In general, average responses suggest members have confidence in board operations and support for the district priorities and superintendent. Yet they also noted room for improvement in the areas of community leadership and regular review of board performance and actions.

Board Strengths

- » Board members generally reported their superintendents were met with respect (78%) and their board demonstrated support for the superintendent in carrying out board directives (75%).
- » On most boards, participants reported that the role of the board president was clear (80%).
- » Most participants reported their board meeting agendas reflected district priorities (77%).
- » Respondents rated their board's fiscal planning responsibilities highly (75% for budget adoptions aligned with district goals and 79% for monitoring).
- » Items related to board support of district goals were also rated highly:
 - › 78% of participants reported their boards as a whole were focused on achievement for all students *always* or *often*.
 - › 76% also reported their boards *always* or *often* demonstrated commitment to district priorities and goals.

Areas for Growth

- » Half of the participants reported that individual members attempt to influence superintendents *often* or *always*.
- » Nearly half of participants reported that the effective orientation of new members and the review of governance procedures are conducted *less often* or *rarely*.

- » Board members reported that they do not frequently engage in self-evaluation; nearly 60% of board members indicated board self-evaluation is done *less often* or *rarely*.
- » Board members indicated that their governance teams could strengthen their community leadership:
 - › 51% reported their boards *always* or *often* advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local state and federal level.
 - › 55% reported they *always* or *often* inform the community about district priorities, progress, needs, and opportunities for involvement.

Upcoming Changes to the Survey

While the statistical analysis indicated that the existing Board Self-Evaluation Tool is a valid and meaningful survey, the consultant's report recommended several small modifications that CSBA could make to improve the survey, primarily through reorganization and shortening of the sections. These adjustments will maintain the overall validity of the tool while reducing the time it will take for participants to complete the survey.

Conclusion

Self-evaluation allows boards to pause and reflect on how well they are meeting their responsibilities, as well as potential changes to positively impact governance on behalf of students. CSBA's analysis of existing board self-evaluation results shows how these boards learned about their strengths as well as areas for improvement. Districts that are interested in conducting a board self-evaluation can reach out to CSBA's [Governance Consulting Services](#).

Endnotes

- 1 Briggs, M., Buenrostro, M., & Maxwell-Jolly, J. (2017). *The school board role in creating the conditions for student achievement: A review of the research*. Sacramento, CA: California School Boards Association.

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