THE SUPERINTENDENT/BOARD RELATIONSHIP
PURPOSE

Provide you, the participant, with some tools and insights to effectively partner, and survive, working with your school board.
Putting it all together........

Research

Contemplation
Rumination,
Sustenance Required...
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

What do you believe is essential?
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

• Take Time to Understand District Expectations for Superintendent/Board Relations
  • What was/was not working
  • Communication Structures
  • Governance
  • What do you do about conflicting messages?

• Remember That Less May Actually Be More
  • Is the topic fundamentally important?
  • Is the issue one they are likely to hear about?
  • Is it something they need to hear about?

• Provide the same information to all Board members
Wisdom from your colleagues:

“Relationships are developed when you realize each board member has a communication style—speak their language. (Face to face, emails, phone calls, text messaging)”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

- Speak Only Positively With and About Your Board Members
  - Assume positive intent
  - Maintain a professional communication style
  - Avoid oversharing
  - Don’t assume your comments to board members will stay confidential
  - If you can’t say something nice…..

More Wisdom:

“Relationships matter: it’s important to work closely with your Board regardless of the personalities.”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

- Learn to “Bite Your Lip”
  - Maintain grace under pressure
  - Follow up privately
- Plan to Manage Conflicts among Board Members
  - Rely on operating norms/values
  - Focus on issues, not personalities
  - Avoid taking sides

More Wisdom:

“Every board member is serving because he/she wants to make the district a better place. It’s our job to help make that happen for them.”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

• Focus on the Details
  • Be Prepared, especially for board meetings
  • Build a sense of competence and trust
• Do Not Be Afraid to Admit When You Do Not Know Something
• Seek Out Advice
  • Other Superintendents
  • WASA

“Honesty, sharing, and humor along with the ability to say, "I don't know, let me back to you;" and then get back in a timely manner!”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

- Avoid surprises. Keep the Board informed as situations develop
  - Kindergarten students like surprises…
  - Allow enough time process issues and initiatives

“Find a way to keep the board regularly updated on matters that will swirl in the learning community. The more they know the better they will be able to lead and guide. The board will be more vested if they are seeing something important to them moving forward.”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

• Look for Opportunities to Educate Your Board
  • New Programs/Initiatives
  • Best Practice
  • Data Analysis
  • Work Sessions

• Collaborate with Your Board President on the Board Meeting Agenda

  “Get to know each board member personally and find out what is important to them.”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

• Consider a Board Retreat
  • Opportunity to jump-start your working relationship
  • Develop norms, protocols, agreements, governance

“I believe it critical that superintendents communicate with board members using language comfortable to the board - non jargon, and in the language of the goals for the district.”
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

• Maintain Your Sense of Humor!
  • Our work can often be the theater of the absurd…

“F*#! Them if they can’t take a joke.”
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In Summary

Themes:
- Relationships
- Communication
- Expectations
- Trust
- Be Strategic
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOARD

Questions?