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Roles and Responsibilities in Vermont School Systems

[Act 46 of 2015](#) provides Vermont school districts a unique opportunity to rethink district governance to ensure that systems are organized to support goals of quality and equity in student learning, and that district resources are used in the most effective way to support those goals. As part of forming a new district with a preferred structure and at other times when evaluating effectiveness, leadership should begin by reviewing roles and responsibilities of different members at different levels of the system. Examples drawn from best practice include:

School Boards

Purpose: Governance

The school board:

- Engages the community to establish the mission and vision for the district
- Uses the mission to guide decision-making
- Sets performance goals for the district
- Establishes local policies aligned across the supervisory union/supervisory district consistent with the minimum standards established by the [State Board of Education](#)
- Employs and supervises the superintendent (sole direct-employee of the Board)
- Holds the superintendent accountable for developing a strategy and education work plan to achieve district or SU goals
- Negotiates contracts with employees

School boards are accountable to voters, and are subject to the laws, rules, and regulations of the State.

Sample Indicators of Success:

The school board:

- Approves and monitors implementation of the district education plan and relevant performance indicators
- Approves proposed budget and submit to voters
- Monitors operations against the budget
- Reviews and updates policies on a routine basis to reflect changing statutory and regulatory context, and evolving system's priorities
- Determines capital project priorities
- Reviews and provides feedback to Superintendent on an annual basis
- Maintains a strong focus on outcomes and indicators of performance, as evidenced in meeting agendas and minutes
- Approves school continuous improvement plans, and reviews regular performance reports as provided by Superintendent
- Meetings are typically well organized and efficiently run

Frequency of meetings should be based on the work the board needs to accomplish. Boards should set annual goals for themselves and all meetings should have an agenda built around those goals.

Superintendents

Purpose: Operations

The Superintendent is the CEO of the system and is responsible for:

- Operational oversight of the school district
- Maintaining focus on the school board's mission, and developing an education work plan to achieve the mission
- Ensuring quality of education and equity of opportunities within the system
- Managing services, programs and resources, for the quality of learning and for the implementation of the school board's annual district education plan and budget
- Making day-to-day decisions consistent with the policies set by the school board, and within statute and state regulations
- Employing all non-licensed staff, and recommending one licensed candidate to the board for review and approval for other openings
- Creating a robust comprehensive local assessment system, implemented system-wide, that assesses student progress toward proficiency-based graduation and captures evidence of learning with respect to all seven education goals outlined in the Education Quality Standards and standards adopted by the State Board of Education
- Preparing reports, such as the district strategic plan, district budget, and district fiscal and student learning performance reports that enable the school board to evaluate implementation of its mission and progress towards its goals

The Superintendent is accountable to the school board and to the State for operating within statute and regulations.

Sample Indicators of Success:

- Decisions are made on behalf of and in service of school board policies and mission
- Superintendent engages in intentional leadership development within the system
- Superintendent supports conversations about students and outcomes through SU-level staff and building leaders
- Meeting minutes reflect appropriate roles
- Faculty and staff can articulate mission/vision and focus on students, as well as what they are doing to advance learning and systems consistency across and within building(s)
- Both students and educators engaged in continuous learning
- Leadership teams have clear expectations and accountability

The District has a clear focus on professionalism and shared leadership.

Principal

Purpose: Instructional Leadership

A principal is responsible for:

- Serving as instructional leaders
- Maintaining a strong, safe, and supportive school climate that is conducive to learning
- Leading day-to-day operations within the school
- Maintaining fidelity to the supervisory union action plan, and making decisions with consideration for system priorities and initiatives
- Providing supervision and evaluation of staff, for the purpose of improving teaching and learning
- Using data to inform decision-making based upon what is best for students (as opposed to adults)
- Articulating progress and the well-being of school and students to the school community
- Developing building specific policies and practices that support the educational mission of the school and district

Principals are accountable to the superintendent.

Sample Indicators of Success:

- Consistency within the school with respect to instruction, use of data, and expectations
- Intentional development of teacher leadership/leveraging of teaching expertise to improve instruction
- Provision of timely, high quality feedback and support to all educators
- Climate indicators suggest strong positive school climate, and where data suggests needs, principal directs improvement efforts related to those needs
- Evidence of support for professional learning and collaboration, including use of meeting time for focus on improving teaching
- Principals invested in staying in their schools to engage in continuous improvement over time (low levels of turnover)

The school feels orderly and welcoming.

Teachers

Purpose: Instructional Development and Delivery

Teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining a strong, safe and supportive classroom climate that is conducive to learning
- Knowing expectations for student learning, and developing and implementing high-quality opportunities to learn that engage learners and move all students systematically towards ambitious goals
- Maintaining fidelity to supervisory union action plan, and make decisions with consideration for system goals

- Using data to inform teaching and to make teaching responsive to individual needs (personalization), based upon what is best for students (as opposed to adults)

Teachers are accountable to the superintendent.

Sample Indicators of Success:

- Student survey data indicates students feel teachers are invested in their safety and learning
- Students indicate they feel challenged
- Student outcomes suggest continuous improvement and progress towards goals
- Teachers play a leadership role within schools and across schools, sharing expertise and providing mentoring in service of systems goals
- Teachers engage in ongoing professional collaboration around improving teaching and learning, both within schools and across schools in the system, and within grade levels and across grade levels

Teachers are invested in staying in the school and working to make it strong.

Local Councils or Advisory Committees

A building-based council or team operates in an advisory capacity to the principal. It:

- Provides advice to the principal regarding school policies
- Suggests, develops, and supports strategies for partnerships within the community
- Provides advice on ways to improve or maintain a positive climate within the school
- Serves as liaisons between the community and the school

Sample Indicators of Success:

- Parents and community members have structured opportunities to provide feedback to the principal on a range of issues, including school climate and improvement initiatives
- Local councils meet on a regular, scheduled basis with building leaders, as evident in minutes
- There are strong partnerships between the school and the surrounding community
- Community members attend school events

Note: This document is provided for guidance only and does not have the force of law. See the underlying statutes and/or Acts for more detail.