



## Getting started:

### Step-by-step guide to a high-quality superintendent evaluation system

No matter what type of rubric, standards, or tool a board and superintendent agree to use, every high-quality educator evaluation system involves a well thought out step-by-step *process*. The steps outlined below are based on a set of evaluation [assumptions and a framework](#) co-developed by the Michigan Association of School Administrators and the Michigan ASCD, and supported by the Michigan Association of School Boards. We encourage board/superintendent teams to review this framework as a guide to developing their own district-wide evaluation system. (The Assumptions and Framework document is available at [www.gomasa.org/performance-evaluation-resource-center](http://www.gomasa.org/performance-evaluation-resource-center) or by calling 517-327-9268.)

When it comes time to evaluate the superintendent, outlined here are some steps that **superintendents and boards of educations can take collaboratively** as they begin to implement superintendent evaluation system designed to:

- Follow 2011 laws on administrator evaluation
- Serve as a useful tool in setting clear expectations
- Encourage continuous growth toward district goals and improved leadership

Included below:

[Superintendent Evaluation Process in Seven Steps](#)

[Abbreviated System for New Superintendents and/or Boards](#)

[A few words of caution](#)

[Additional resources and consultation available](#)

### Superintendent Evaluation Process in Seven Steps

#### Step One: Schedule your evaluation cycle

Agree to a cycle of periodic review points (activities, conversations, etc), culminating in an annual performance evaluation report. Choose from quarterly, mid-year, and annual reviews as appropriate and feasible in your district. Ideally, this planning occurs at the beginning of an annual cycle. If you are evaluating a new superintendent or starting the process late, the board will need to conduct an [abbreviated version](#) of this plan to start.\*



### **Step Two: Set Goals**

Ideally, the board will have a set of 3-5 year district goals articulated. Within that set of goals, together identify superintendent *priorities* for a 1- 2-year cycle.

### **Step Three: Choose a rubric**

Work together to choose a research-based rubric that is grounded in the critical work of the superintendency. (**Key question:** Ask vendors, providers, or authors of any rubric you consider what research base informed their work.) High-quality rubrics and discussion formats can help school boards define what successful performance of duties looks like and facilitate discussion with the board to set realistic, obtainable goals. (Sample rubrics are available at <http://www.gomasa.org/services/superintendent-evaluation-toolkit>). Caution: Even when a rubric is well informed by research or established State or national standards, not all items in any rubric will be equally important for the work of a superintendent in your district at any given time (see next step).

### **Step Four: Set “smart goals”**

Meet together to select performance areas (these will serve as “power standards” for your superintendent’s work) within the rubric that most directly connect to your current district priorities, and hence should provide focus for the current work of the superintendent. Agree to give priority weight to these performance areas or “power standards” for a specified time period (2-3 years suggested). Work out an overall rating system that reflects priorities and any weighting you establish between those priorities.

### **Step Five: Agree on appropriate evidence**

Agree together on the type of evidence or metrics that can credibly measure effectiveness in the key performance areas identified in your “smart goals.” Evidence could include financial/budget indicators, student growth scores, attendance data, community/staff perception data, program implementation reports, or other metrics related to the goals agreed upon by the superintendent and board.

### **Step Six: Stay focused**

Avoid letting “issues of the day” distract you from the “smart goals.” Focus *primarily* on the agreed-upon body of evidence and targeted performance standards at each evaluation point in the cycle. Be sure to revise priorities no fewer than 12 months prior to assessing your superintendent’s performance in a new or revised priority area.

### **Step Seven: Agree on an effectiveness label**

At the end of your annual cycle, schedule ample time for the board/superintendent team to review and discuss all available evidence, including a self-assessment by the superintendent. Based on established performance priorities and all sources of evidence, establish a final effectiveness rating (using the State effectiveness rating categories) by the board as a whole (not individual board members) for the superintendent in the current evaluation cycle.



[\\* See Appendix A for abbreviated version of this seven-step plan](#)

## **A few words of caution**

**Keep it simple!** The superintendent's evaluation should flow seamlessly from the priorities of the district and the work the board has charged the superintendent to do. Districts that are just now establishing a way to examine elements specified in recently adopted laws (e.g. stakeholder feedback, student growth measures, etc.) will benefit by adopting them carefully, with an eye to future growth.

**Gathering evidence.** Gathering evidence can be a challenge for boards of education, because they have limited ability to directly observe the performance of the superintendent in most areas of any rubric. The solution is to ask the superintendent to bring his or her own evidence, supported by corroborating metrics where available.

**Beware of individually scored (by each board member) evaluation systems.** . These can skew an evaluation when one or more members of the board fall radically outside the consensus position of the board.

The Open Meetings Act, Section 8(a) allows the board to go into a closed session for the purposes of conducting the superintendent's evaluation, if he or she makes that request. Many school boards use the evaluation tool only as a work sheet (without scoring indicators) to stimulate their own individual thoughts about the superintendent's performance in a certain area, and then discard their personal work sheet once the board has reached consensus on an effectiveness rating and summary statement. NOTE: any score sheets or numerical tally sheets completed by individual board members to be compiled by the board president are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and must be given upon request to the media or public.

## **Additional resources and consultation available**

MASA and MI ASCD are partnering to provide ongoing support, resources, consultation and professional development on educator performance evaluation systems. Please let us know how we can help you these guidelines or answer other evaluation questions. Our School ADvance Evaluation System for administrators includes research-informed, standards-based rubrics for principals, central office administrators and superintendents. Learn more at [www.gomasa.org](http://www.gomasa.org) or by calling 517-327-5910.



## Appendix A

### Abbreviated Plan for new superintendents or boards

If for any reason, the board and superintendent have not had an opportunity to plan for all aspects of the annual evaluation process as described above, the following abbreviated steps will help you get started.

#### **Step One: Set smart goals**

Ask the superintendent to identify the key areas or “power standards” from your existing performance rubric or evaluation instrument that he or she feels are most critical to the current work of the district, and why. (If the board has not previously used any rubric or evaluation instrument, see step 3 above for a link to sample instruments.) Work with the board to confirm the performance priorities for the current evaluation cycle based on the superintendent’s recommendations and board discussion of district priorities.

#### **Step Two: Conduct a self-assessment**

Ask the superintendent to do a self-assessment against the priority performance areas established with the Board in Step One.

#### **Step Three: Agree to an abbreviated rubric**

Based on your conversation in Step Two, the board can discuss which part of the rubric should be used in this evaluation cycle. HINTS:

- On which areas of the rubric or evaluation instrument is the evidence clear and consensus on effectiveness easy to achieve? (Remember to use only the areas that the board and superintendent establish as priorities for the current evaluation cycle.)
- Which established priority performance areas for the current evaluation cycle require additional evidence? Focus your energy on gathering that evidence and discussing these areas to reach consensus.

#### **Step Four: Agree on an effectiveness label**

Discuss as a board all available evidence for the priority performance areas established for this evaluation cycle. Establish a final effectiveness rating for the current evaluation cycle (using the State effectiveness rating categories) by the board as a whole.

