



## **WORKING WITH YOUR BOARD Guidance Document**

### **Common Mistakes**

Following is a list of Common Mistakes made by new superintendents. The source is *Becoming a Superintendent*, Carolyn Hughes Chapman.

#### UNSHARED VISION

- Vision developed prior to district or experiences, that had little basis for fact in new district
- There is a need for “purposing” or forgoing a shared covenant
- People who pose impediments like “status quo” must be shown the light

#### TOO MUCH TOO SOON

- Trying to address all the perceived problems right away
- Need to learn the local culture and discover problems of change

#### PROMISES, PROMISES

- Making hasty commitments early on and not being able to come through later
- Lack of adequate information or research; this mistake causes real credibility problems

#### OFFENDING SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- Lack of information
- Partial board notified, etc.
- Political board ties to staff
- Creating unrealistic expectations
- Failing to pick up on the nuances of a board vote with a consistent pattern

### NOT DOING HOMEWORK BEFORE BOARD MEETING

- Failure to bring along reluctant or uninformed board members or an issue
- Need to talk to them about day to day issues
- Surprises or introduction of new ideas at board meetings

### POWER POLITICS

- Need to learn where the various pockets of power are within the school district
- Special interest groups with a single interest, i.e., music, athletics
- Board members have special constituencies of their own
- Need to know politics and be aware of them to engage total community

### FICKLE LOYALTIES

- Do not attach to a “certain group”
- Understanding and not criticizing the past
- Must develop loyalties from all groups

### FAILURE TO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS

- Do not allow things to progress as they were if board expects a new direction
- Must provide a level of leadership that demonstrates competence to identify problems and move toward other solutions

### BLUNT TALK

- Do not misread the past
- Most people in an organization often “like it like it is”, appraisal can be too “harsh” and “offend”

### ALONE AT THE TOP

- Superintendents’ position is isolated work
- Need to learn focus on one issue at a time
- Practice time management
- Allocate time and identify issues that can be delegated
- “Spinning the plates” can be a result of poor time management

### HAZARDOUS HOUSE CLEANING

- Personnel issues must be handled without bias and evenhanded to avoid “mistrust”

### OVERLOOKING THE OBVIOUS

- Do homework/research on issues to gain support

### HIGH COST OF SAVING MONEY

- Projects are too time consuming when you do them yourself instead of getting outside help