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NEW HAMPSHIRE
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION
Incorporated 1946

May 2004

*“Only together can
we really make a
difference.”*

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focus

on New Hampshire School Boards

Volume I, Number

Table Talk: Board Self-Evaluation

The challenge of school governance

The School Board is ultimately accountable to the community who elected its members and therefore, board members are constantly challenged to make decisions in the best interest of that community.

But School Boards also have responsibility, as an agent of the state, to uphold the laws and rules of the State of New Hampshire and the laws of our nation, which can sometimes conflict with the demands of the community.

Intertwined with these external demands are the key internal functions of the board’s interaction with the Superintendent, and the board’s role in making decisions that provide the best education for the community’s children.

To meet all of these challenges, boards need to establish an effective process for conducting business. They have important decisions to make, and they need to be efficient in how they come to those decisions.

A board should have an understanding of why teamwork is desirable, how it can be nurtured and developed, and how the power of multiple viewpoints can lead to optimum solutions for your schools and community.

With some practical training designed just for school board members, boards can master the art of compromise and decision-making based on consensus. Board members will benefit from learning more about each other and what each person brings to the table, as together, you chart a course for student achievement.

Meet the challenge!

School Boards are only as effective as the commitment of their members to be effective. Each board has full control over set-

variety of ways, but the key lies in constant reflection and evaluation to see what is working, what is not working, and to make changes when necessary.

Too often the time needed for the self-evaluation exercise is completely ignored in favor of taking the time to address more immediate and pressing needs.

It is important for board members to understand that with reflection and self-evaluation come ways to avoid crises and bottlenecks, and create better ways to handle those immediate and pressing needs.

The end of the school year is an ideal time to reflect on where the board has been over the past year, and where they want

to head in the next. Pinpointing areas where you would like to improve the work of your board with your Superintendent, your community, and each other can be invaluable in helping you target the next steps for your team. Boards need to establish a cycle for goal-setting, and goals evaluation. A good process will strengthen the board and superintendent relationship and contribute to overall improvement of the school district.

The *NHSBA School Board Tune-Up* is an assessment process for boards and administrative teams who want to improve their functioning, teamwork, and relationships with the community and administration. The focus of the process is on the board and administrative team’s assessment of their own performance, with a correlation to what is viewed as most important.

Tune-up Process

The *NHSBA School Board Tune-Up* utilizes two assessment documents:

Board Relations Assessment is a six-

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BENEFITS OF BOARD SELF-EVALUATION

- Facilitates communication and goal development
- Establishes priorities
- Helps identify individual strengths and weaknesses
- Provides early warning signs
- Encourages teamwork and improved decision-making
- Holds the board accountable
- Provides a clear signal to the community that the board is monitoring performance

A school board that develops an effective evaluation system for the district will be ultimately be rewarded with improved student achievement.

Tune-Up Process

(Continued from page 1)

This assessment tool is unique in that it asks each member individually to rank not just performance, but also the importance of each item. The results of this assessment tool are presented back to the board graphically, so that it is easy to see those items which board members feel are important and performed well or not so well.

Board Operations Exam is a 12-question knowledge-based multiple choice exam. The questions are designed to promote discussion, dissension (yes, we said dissension!), and ultimately team-building during the workshop. The results are a stronger team-based approach for your board.

Once you sign up for the Board Tune-Up, these assessment

forms directly to NHSBA. All materials are kept confidential, and no individual responses are identified. NHSBA tabulates the results, writes a summary, and prepares a comprehensive graphical report. A two-hour workshop is then scheduled where the results are presented, and a discussion is facilitated by NHSBA staff. Suggestions for improvement are ultimately identified, and the board can use them to generate next step action items.

The *NHSBA School Board Tune-Up* is based on workshops and materials of the Oregon, Washington, and Pennsylvania State School Boards Associations.

For information about School Board Training opportunities through your New Hampshire School Boards Association, contact Ted Comstock, Executive Director, or Betsy Miller-Jones, Member Services Coordinator at 228-2061, or toll-free