



Brief for School Superintendents Considering a Job Move

NAVIGATING BOARD RELATIONSHIPS AND CAREER CROSSROADS

As a school superintendent, one of your most important leadership responsibilities is fostering a productive, respectful, and unified relationship with your board of education. When that relationship is strong, it creates the conditions for focused governance, long-term planning, and districtwide progress. When it breaks down, however, it can lead to dysfunction, distraction, and disruption. **Superintendents must act intentionally to nurture board unity and alignment, particularly during periods of division or discord.**

If board relationships begin to fracture, your first response should be to guide the board back to a shared commitment: the district's mission, vision, and strategic goals. Reunifying around what matters most which should be a focus on students, learning, and community. This can help reduce politics and personal agendas by board members.

Additionally, consider bringing in your state's school board association to provide professional development on board-superintendent roles and responsibilities. This often helps clarify governance versus management and allows for recalibration without placing blame.

In more complex situations, engaging an external consultant may offer a neutral space for honest dialogue and help re-establish healthy boundaries. You can also consider reaching out to a trusted colleague in another district who may have suggestions or strategies to help improve relations.

STEPS TO REPAIR BOARD RELATIONSHIP FRACTURES

GUIDE THE BOARD BACK TO A SHARED COMMITMENT

BRING IN YOUR STATE'S SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION

REACH OUT TO TRUSTED COLLEAGUE IN ANOTHER DISTRICT FOR ADVICE

ENGAGE AN EXTERNAL CONSULTANT

Still, even the best efforts can fall short if trust is broken or if some board members harbor personal agendas that undermine the work of the district leader.

“If you find yourself in a place where the relationship is persistently contentious, where decisions are regularly questioned or where you are being micromanaged or publicly disrespected, it may be time to reassess your future in the district.”



Trust, once lost, is hard to regain, especially when mutual respect is lacking or when board members are unwilling to operate within appropriate roles. Some superintendents find themselves spending more time managing board dynamics than actually leading the district. If that becomes your reality, you must consider whether it's sustainable or wise to remain in the role or consider another job opportunity.

When contemplating a transition, avoid surprises. Communicate professionally and discretely with your board president if you begin exploring other opportunities. Do your best to keep the relationship intact and prevent your current position from becoming a spectacle - especially in the media or on social platforms. A public separation agreement or combative board meeting can do lasting damage to your reputation, career prospects and school community.

Lastly, evaluate your readiness to move from both a personal and professional lens. Consider your family's needs, preferred geography, required salary and benefits and the type of board and community with whom you best work. Reflect on your leadership style, your strengths, and where those align best. In the end, leadership is about service. Find a district where your skills, vision, and values align with a board that supports your growth and empowers you to make a lasting impact. Whether you stay or move on, the decision should be grounded in where you can do your best work.

TIME TO REASSESS YOUR FUTURE?

Spending more time managing board dynamics than actually leading the district?

Being regularly surprised or not supported during board meetings?

Family urging you to make a move or your health is suffering?