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Director of Education

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MODULE 5 Part A:
Performance Review: Director of Education

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PART A IS DESIGNED TO:

• assist the board of trustees and the director of education in developing a policy for the performance review of the director of education;
• ensure that the policy provides for conducting the performance review using a collaborative and agreed upon process.

“Leadership is lifting a person’s vision to high sights, the raising of a person’s performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.”

PETER F. DRUCKER

INTRODUCTION

As Chief Education Officer and Chief Executive Officer of the board, the director of education provides leadership for growth in student achievement and well-being as well as leadership in the growth and success of the organization. The director has leadership responsibilities for implementing the elected board’s multi-year strategic plan and for developing and maintaining an effective organization with programs and services that operationalize the board’s policies. While student achievement results will vary from school board to school board, the director’s Performance Review process will focus on the effective strategies and leadership practices the director has employed to implement the board’s multi-year strategic plan.

169.1 (1) Every board shall,
(h) monitor and evaluate the performance of the board’s director of education or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education, in meeting,
(i) his or her duties under this Act or any policy, guidelines or regulation made under the multi-year plan ... required in Section 169.1 (1) (f), and
(ii) any other duties assigned by the board.

(‘Education Act, Ontario)

When the review process for the performance of the director is well structured and effectively conducted, the outcomes are clear. The process will:
• benefit the students and school system,
• ensure accountability,
• enhance the relationship between the director and the elected board,
• recognize the contribution of the director,
• assist the district school board in providing quality educational service, and
• model the importance of continuous improvement throughout the district school board.
The Performance Review Process is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

• Ensure accountability for the effective leadership and management of the school system;
• Provide the director with concrete feedback from the elected board on his/her performance to be used as a basis for his/her personal development in the role.

The main intent of the process is to provide helpful, objective feedback to the director in order to optimize future performance.

The Director’s Performance Review process parallels the Board Self-Assessment Process. (See Part B of this Module)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE DIRECTOR’S PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS

Each board of trustees is expected to develop a policy outlining a process for the performance review of the director. The policy should be approved by the elected board before implementing any performance review process. The following principles offer a sound basis for the development of a board policy:

• It benefits students based on the shared responsibility of the director and the elected board for improving student achievement;
• It strengthens the organization, making it more cohesive, viable, accountable and proactive in serving the needs of students and the broader school board community;
• It is based on the director’s job description and clearly aligned with the annual goals of the board’s multi-year strategic plan. (Module 3 – Roles and Responsibilities encourages elected boards to develop a policy for the director’s job description and provides a template job description);
• It is conducted on an annual basis, involving all members of the board;
• It is founded on quantitative and qualitative evidence (data) agreed upon in advance by the board of trustees and the director and collected for the purpose of informing the performance review process;

• It is a mutual learning opportunity to affirm successful practices and to improve areas of identified need;
• It is results-oriented and reflects a continuous improvement focus for both the director and the school board;
• It is characterized throughout by a process that is well understood and communicated to stakeholders while respecting the confidentiality of individual inputs and findings within the professional process of the conduct of the review; and
• It provides a structured opportunity for the director to receive feedback and it identifies concerns in a timely and supportive way to facilitate resolution.

EFFECTIVE POLICY ELEMENTS

The board of trustees is encouraged to consider the following elements of an effective performance review process when developing or reviewing a policy:

• Clear rationale and objectives for the process, including context;
• Legal requirements and confidential reference to the director’s contract with the elected board;
• Clear process steps and timeline, with agreement of the full board of trustees and in collaboration with the director, at the beginning of the Review year;

Effective elements of a process might address:

- what will be assessed (using the job description of the director of education) and what criteria will be used such as annual goals;
- what specific evidence (data) will be collected;
- who will be involved and how it will be collected; and
- a description of the end of year process that will include approval of a written report by the board of trustees.

Using a skilled facilitator to assist with the process may be beneficial to both boards and directors.
• Written report that is objective, based on the agreed evidence gathered, and includes areas for focus/improvement in the year ahead;
• An effective process for discussing and dealing with any disagreement between the board of trustees and the director on the process or the written report.

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Within the context of the requirements set out in legislation, Ministry of Education policy and guidelines, and the director’s local job description, the core leadership practices which form the basis of the director’s performance review are:

1. Setting Goals
This capacity refers to working with others to help ensure that goals are strategic, specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) and lead to improved teaching and learning.

2. Aligning Resources with Priorities
This capacity focuses on ensuring that financial, capital, human resources, curriculum and teaching resources, professional learning resources and program allocations are tied to priorities, with student achievement and well-being as the central, unambiguous focus.

3. Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures
This capacity is about enabling schools, school communities and districts to work together and to learn from each other with a central focus on improved teaching quality and student achievement and well-being.

4. Using Data
This capacity is about leading and engaging school teams in gathering and analyzing provincial, district, school and classroom data to identify trends, strengths and weaknesses that will inform specific actions for improvement focused on teaching and learning.

5. Engaging in Courageous Conversations
This capacity relates to challenging current practices and fostering innovation through conversation, to listen and to act on feedback, and to provide feedback that will lead to improvements in student achievement and well-being.

These core leadership capacities are outlined in the Ontario Leadership Framework (revised 2013) A School and System Leader’s Guide to Putting Ontario’s Leadership Framework into Action and are aligned with the work of the Ministry of Education and school boards. (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/SOLeadershipFramework.pdf)

In each of these categories, The Ontario Leadership Framework expands on practices which demonstrate skills, knowledge and attitudes essential to effective system leadership. Performance review of the director is tied to these leadership practices.

In each of Ontario’s four publicly funded school systems, the director’s job description and expectations with regard to leadership practices will also be influenced by the unique mandate, missions and values that characterize those systems. In a Catholic school board, for instance, there will be a focus on Catholic faith, community and culture. A French-language school board will have an expanded focus on community capacity-building related to sustainability of French language and culture.

RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES OF BOARDS

The performance of the director is affected by individual competencies and efforts, and also by the conditions and demographics of the district. The director performance review process should be designed to allow for the flexibility to recognize these individual circumstances and needs.

One of the most significant aspects of the director performance review process is the open communication, collaboration and discussion that leads to “an agreed upon process.” This collaborative approach allows both the director and the board of trustees to be clear about all aspects of the process before the director performance review process begins. There should be no surprises for either the director or the elected board.

The director performance review process culminates with a report from the chair that is written on behalf of the entire board of trustees and approved by the board. The report recognizes the director’s accomplishments and identifies future areas for emphasis and development.
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Board Self-Assessment: Governance Performance

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PART B IS DESIGNED TO:

• Assist the Board of Trustees to build capacity in self-assessment in terms of school board governance functions, principles and practices

“Board development is an aspect of capacity building that focuses on enhancing the ability of board members to function as a group. A useful approach to building this capacity is through board self-evaluation, which can serve a number of purposes, including developing a shared understanding of effective governance, enhancing the board’s strategic capacity, improving decision-making processes and identifying governance information needs. Board evaluations generally focus on core areas of the board’s mandate. They can be conducted by the board itself or through engagement of qualified consultants. Ideally, either approach will result in a governance improvement plan which is executed by the board.”

SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE: A FOCUS ON ACHIEVEMENT, P. 31

INTRODUCTION

Governance is the work of the board of trustees and involves the purposeful exercise of collective leadership. Good governance doesn’t just happen. It requires the elected board to take responsibility for the effectiveness of its governance practices. Effective Boards of Trustees will have a governance review policy which includes processes that can contribute to the continuous improvement of board governance.

The Education Act requires the elected board to develop a multi-year plan strategic plan, and develop and maintain policies and organizational structures which:

1. Promote student achievement and well-being;
2. Ensure effective stewardship of the board’s resources;
3. Deliver appropriate education programs and services to its pupils; and encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals.

An important aspect of the responsibility of the board of trustees is to annually review the board’s multi-year strategic plan. This requirement also provides an opportunity for the elected board to look at its governance policies and actions and how successful it is in focusing on what matters most to student achievement and good governance.
ONGOING SELF-ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE

Self-assessment is a valuable process that results in a range of benefits. In addition to improving communication among board members and building an understanding of the effectiveness of the directions taken by the elected board, the key outcome is greater certainty around what works for the benefit of students.

The process that boards of trustees undertake to review their performance will vary from board to board. Collection of the information to inform the review can occur in a number of ways including:

- surveys of board and committee members;
- focus groups with community members and other stakeholders;
- interviews with board members and the director of education;
- use of an outside facilitator/consultant.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE BOARD GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROCESS

Elected boards should consider the development of a policy which is parallel to the policy for the performance review of the director of education. The following principles form the basis for the development of a board policy:

- It benefits students based on the shared responsibility of the director and the elected board for improving student achievement and well-being.
- It is conducted on an annual basis and it assesses board effectiveness in carrying out the core governance functions. Assessment relates to board responsibility for having a plan in place, following the plan and annually updating it.
- It relies on a process and evidence agreed upon by the board of trustees in advance and collected for the purpose of informing the Board Governance Review Process. It is essential that it be determined and agreed by the elected board in advance:
  - what information will be collected;
  - how it will be collected and by whom;
  - who will have access to the information;
  - how it will be analyzed and compiled;
  - when and how it will be discussed and whether a facilitator will be asked to assist in the discussions;
  - how reporting and feedback will occur;
  - how the assessment results will be acted upon; and
  - how recommendations related to agreed-to changes will be monitored.
- It is a mutual learning opportunity to affirm successful governance practices and to improve areas of identified need.
- It is results-oriented and focuses on continuous improvement for the board as the governing body.
- It is characterized throughout by transparency and open communication, balanced by
professional confidentiality and respect for all parties.

• It leads to the development and implementation of a specific plan for the improvement of governance practices.

**LEADING GOVERNANCE PRACTICES**

The basis for the elected board’s self-assessment includes its job description (see *Module 3 – Roles and Responsibilities*) and reflects the following leading governance practices:

• Setting the Vision
• Establishing Goals
• Developing Policy
• Allocating Resources
• Assuring Accountability

Self-assessment includes examining how well the board works together and how effective the group dynamics are. Day to day examples of this include:

• do board members come to meetings on time and well-prepared?
• do they contribute constructively to the meetings?
• do they follow board policy including conflict of interest policies?
• is conflict handled well?
• are political dynamics and constituency-based interests handled constructively and appropriately?

**RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

Expert Facilitator/Consultant assistance in developing and implementing policies in these areas are available from the Centre for Governance Excellence at OESC-CSEO: www.oesc-cseo.org

The Centre for Governance Excellence also maintains a portfolio of self-assessment tools that can be considered by boards.

An expert Facilitator will work with a board to complete a comprehensive governance review (Audit) of all or selected board governance functions.


OESC-CSEO has developed a Pre-Assessment Survey on Governance, (www.oesc-cseo.org) specifically designed for elected school boards.

Please visit the resources hub for enriched information.

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**Your feedback is requested.** We value your input as a school board trustee. Visit modules.ontarioschooltrustees.org/en/feedback to share your comments and suggestions regarding Module 5.
Education that Connects
Global Achievement with Local Accountability

The Ontario Education Services Corporation partners are:

Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario (ACÉPO)

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Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA)

Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA)

Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)