



NEW ENGLAND  
SECONDARY SCHOOL  
CONSORTIUM

# GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

2ND EDITION

*An Internationally Benchmarked  
Self-Assessment Tool  
for Secondary Learning*



### STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

**1 INITIATING**

The school board develops policies to support progress toward district goals, with a focus on alignment with statutory requirements. These policies may be straight from national or state school board associations with little adaptation to the specific district's context or meaningful buy-in from the board or community. The school board sets goals that will keep the district in compliance with state and federal requirements. The board develops a balanced budget that allows schools to meet their state and federal requirements. School board members consider the perspectives of some community members. Board members meet with members of the community when approached with questions or issues. The board has an established process in place to hire and review the performance of superintendents.

**3 DEVELOPING**

The school board develops policies to support progress toward district goals, with a focus on accountability; some or all of these policies are publically available but may not be in an easily accessible digital location. The school board sets goals that reflect state and federal requirements and community priorities. The board budget supports many of the district goals. School board members represent the interests of the community. School board members stay abreast of local issues and meet with individuals and groups in the community to discuss issues that affect the district. The school board and superintendent both work to support teaching and learning in the district but there may be areas of misalignment or overlap in their efforts. The board's process for selecting a new superintendent is established, and certain aspects of it include stakeholders. There is a process in place to inform the annual review of the superintendent's performance against some of the district's priorities.

**5 PERFORMING**

The board acts as a cohesive whole on behalf of the entire community, distilling local policies from a community vision, data on student needs, and state and federal requirements. The board focuses its work on policy, allowing the superintendent to attend to the district's operations. In concert with the district, the board develops high-leverage policies that improve academic outcomes, promote equity for all students, and give schools autonomy to meet goals. Board members make decisions based on the best interests of students and serve as advocates for district reforms. Board members set aside time to learn about best practices in education, state and federal policies, and data-informed policymaking and accountability. They regularly audit school policies to ensure continued alignment with district priorities. The board develops a strategic plan, which, together with local policies, establishes budget priorities. The process for hiring a new superintendent is governed by a written policy. The process is shepherded by the board and includes community stakeholders. Candidates are evaluated against the district's mission and vision. The board crafts a plan to support the superintendent's professional growth and updates that plan annually. There is a process in place for the annual review of the superintendent's performance against the district's priorities, and it results in actionable feedback against professional standards.

### STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



**STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES**

**SAMPLE STRATEGIES**

- Collaborate with community stakeholders to create a strategic plan that includes a vision and mission statement for the district and a multi-year plan to guide the administration of schools and services for students.
- Establish an orientation for all new board members focused on learning about district policies, best practices in education, current state and federal policies, data-informed policymaking, and the district's norms for communication and collaboration.
- Host and participate in annual board retreats to create yearly objectives for meeting the district's mission and vision and reflect on the previous year's objectives.
- Adopt proficiency standards for students at every level of the district based on the superintendent's recommendations.
- Set graduation requirements to ensure every student graduates an informed and skillful citizen of the community, as described in the vision statement.
- Prioritize programs and services in the budget to meet student needs, referencing the district strategic plan and policies.
- Organize the district calendar to give school faculty and staff the time to implement reforms and create professional communities focused on learning.
- Use community networks to garner support from local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to augment school resources, forge connections to community services, and provide out-of-school learning opportunities.

**OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION**

**STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE**

**SAMPLE EVIDENCE**

- All current policies are accessible to the community on the district website.
- Families and community members are aware of the issues facing the district and its strategic plan; they are not surprised by new initiatives and see clear ties to the collaboratively created mission, vision, and core beliefs.
- There is a process in place to determine community priorities and goals; it has resulted in a vision for a rigorous, equitable, personalized education system and targets for achieving that vision.

**OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION**

### STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING	3 DEVELOPING	5 PERFORMING
<p>The superintendent has an administrative team focused on budgeting, scheduling, and compliance with state and federal regulations. District leaders have few opportunities to learn about the instructional practices in place in schools or do not act as instructional leaders. Professional development is limited and only occasionally informed by data and needs of the faculty and staff. There is no process in place that ensures the alignment of professional development with the school and district's vision, mission, or current initiatives. Each school in the district acts in isolation – with little to no district support or guidance. The district collects data to document compliance with state and federal regulations. The superintendent meets regularly with the school board to discuss the budget and compliance with state and federal requirements, but there are few opportunities to engage in reflections on the district's strengths and challenges.</p>	<p>The superintendent has begun to align financial and human resources that will support the improvement of teaching and learning across the district. District leaders with responsibilities for teaching and learning are aware of the importance of professional development but have not fully aligned professional development programs with district policies and priorities. District leaders are involved in many day-to-day operations in schools rather than building capacity among district staff or supporting decision-making in alignment with the district and school's vision. The district collects data to document implementation of district goals and compliance with state and federal regulations. The superintendent meets regularly with the school board and community groups to keep them informed about progress toward realizing the district vision and goals, but does not advocate for policies and programs that promote proven practices.</p>	<p>The superintendent champions effective instruction and rigorous academic experiences for all students and establishes a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement among building leaders and teachers. The superintendent ensures that a commitment to equitable systems extends from the district's central office to its schools and classrooms. The superintendent engages in the creation and implementation of district policies and empowers district and building leaders with supported autonomy. District leaders engage faculty and staff in the design, implementation, and monitoring of district-wide vision and standards. The administrative team has a process to vet school plans for coherence with the district's strategic plans. The superintendent builds administrative team members' individual and collective capacity, and prioritizes district- and school-level professional development that aligns with district policies and goals. District leaders publicly support building leaders and teachers. They provide principals with guidance to build capacity for exemplary leadership and establish a process to review principal performance and support their professional growth. The district collects data to evaluate progress and guide continuous improvement efforts. District leaders foster a collaborative relationship with the school board and share their professional expertise with board members to help them understand student needs and best practices. The superintendent and the administrative team engage community stakeholders in conversations about how the schools can best support all students.</p>

### STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



**STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES**

**SAMPLE STRATEGIES**

- Recruit, hire, and support experienced educators to lead curriculum and instructional departments.
- Hire and support principals who can implement the district's vision at every school.
- Foster networks of school leaders and teachers to collaborate across schools to encourage continuity, alignment, and growth.
- Collect school and community climate and satisfaction data, share the data with all stakeholders in the community, and create and implement a plan for celebrating achievements and addressing challenges.
- Develop a system for district-wide data collection that includes providing tools for schools to organize and analyze a variety of data, training in the use of those tools, and a process for reporting data to the community.
- Organize learning opportunities for board members to share current data about student needs and best instructional practices.
- Adopt a protocol to guide meetings and communication, including but not limited to: norms for communication, procedures around agenda-setting, identifying next steps, and disseminating minutes and notes. The board, district leaders, and school leaders use these frameworks and processes in their professional interactions.
- Engage local businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies to augment school resources, connect students to community services, and provide out-of-school learning opportunities for students and faculty.

**OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION**

**STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE**

**SAMPLE EVIDENCE**

- The district has a rigorous and transparent selection process for hiring to ensure that the qualifications, skills, and personalities of candidates align with the district's vision, mission, and values.
- District leaders regularly visit schools and classrooms, meet with teachers and leaders, and attend school and community functions.
- Trends in student data are published on the district's website and include targets for progress.
- The district regularly provides data to the board and the community to document implementation of district goals and policies.
- Board members, families, and community members are aware of the issues facing the district and are actively engaged in addressing them.

**OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION**