Best Practices in 360 Degree Evaluations for Superintendents and the Inclusion of Community Input

In this report, Hanover Research examines best practices in “360 degree” evaluations for superintendents, including methods to integrate community feedback into the process. The report uses real-world examples to supplement a broader literature review and to provide insight into how other public school districts are using the 360 degree model in their evaluation systems.
Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of best practices in 360 degree evaluations for school district superintendents, with particular focus on ways to improve the value of the feedback gathered, alignment with superintendent competencies, and methods to involve the community. The report uses real-world examples to supplement a broader literature review and to provide insight into how other public school districts are using the 360 degree model in their evaluation systems.

The report is structured as follows:

❖ **Section I: Best Practices in 360 Degree Evaluations:** The first section of the report offers an introduction to best practices in the implementation of a 360 degree evaluation model. This section further reviews the common data sources used in 360 degree evaluations of district superintendents and covers methods for data collection.

❖ **Section II: Best Practices in Community Inclusion:** The second section of the report narrows its focus to the inclusion of community members in the evaluation process. This section opens with an overview of best practices in the design and implementation of parent surveys, as the literature on the subject shows that parents remain one of the largest community stakeholder groups in the feedback and review process. The focus then turns to various methods for the collection of public input and considers an alternative model (outside the evaluation process) for community inclusion.

❖ **Section III: Examples of 360 Degree Superintendent Evaluations:** The third and final section of the report provides two detailed case studies of 360 degree evaluation models in use at two public school districts—one that uses a series of small focus groups to gather input and another that uses a common, online survey instrument.

**Key Findings**

The research conducted for this report yielded the following key findings:

❖ In the launch of a 360 degree evaluation, one scholar recommends the use of a collaborative design team, a “top-first” approach to feedback, administration of a pilot test, and avoidance of early publicity.

❖ One source suggests three to seven rater groups as the standard for 360 degree evaluations in school districts. For example, one superintendent noted that his evaluation process collected input from members of the board,
teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents, but also considered the insights produced from a self-evaluation.

- In the private sector, input on 360 degree evaluations is sometimes limited to a very small number of respondents in each group targeted for feedback. Within the education sector, this does not necessarily need to be the case.

- Larger groups of parents or school staff may be invited to participate in a feedback survey. One scholar suggests that, in a random sample, a 25 percent response rate yields a confidence level of about 4 percent.

- While 360 degree evaluation surveys administered to a large group of employees, parents, or other community members is an approach that appears to be common and even recommended in the literature, there are districts that favor a more targeted data collection effort, either through focus groups or surveys administered to a carefully selected evaluation team.

- Some districts have invited the public to participate in online evaluation surveys focused on the superintendent’s progress, while others have used focus groups to convene a small number of community members to provide input.

- Some school districts use performance standards set by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to evaluate their superintendents. Others have designed surveys unique to the district’s established strategic goals and the superintendent job description.
Section I: Best Practices in 360 Degree Evaluations

Use of the 360 degree approach to evaluations captures input from multiple stakeholder groups. The model uses this “collective wisdom” to inform evaluators how the superintendent is perceived by teachers, principals, other staff members, parents, and local community members, among other groups. The approach carries the potential to solve some of the common problems associated with single source evaluations, including “lack of fairness, accuracy, credibility and usefulness to the evaluatee.”1 If implemented correctly, the 360 degree approach can help school districts build a balanced and reliable evaluation system. This section of the report provides an introduction to best practices in the implementation of a 360 degree evaluation model and a review of the common data sources used in such evaluations of district superintendents.

Best Practices in the Implementation of 360 Degree Evaluations

The successful delivery of a 360 degree evaluation depends on careful planning and implementation. The push for greater accountability, especially among school board members and state legislators, may lead to haste in the evaluation process in order to supply data for review. A hasty approach, however, often results in disorganized, mass survey efforts, hesitance and fear among participants, and low response rates. Drawing on several decades of research and work with superintendents across a diverse set of school districts, the School Improvement Model (SIM) Center at Iowa State University recommends that school districts take a careful and thorough approach to the process in order to “provide validity and reliability to the data collected.”2 In an article published in School Administrator in October 2000, Dr. Richard P. Manatt, then director of the SIM Center, offered the following essential guidelines for implementation of a 360 degree evaluation process:3

- **Bring together individuals from all stakeholder groups** in order to form a “collaborative design team.”
- **Start with feedback to the top**—the school board, the superintendent, the superintendent’s cabinet, principals, etc.
- **Perform a pilot test of the procedure** in order to “debug” the process before it is implemented more broadly.
- **Avoid early publicity** that may instigate fear among teachers as they anticipate feedback or alarm parents about retribution for voiced criticisms.

---

3 Ibid.
Manatt also offers the following tips for 360 degree evaluation design, implementation, and follow-up:

- **“Seek an array of respondents.”** The 360 degree evaluation process relies on feedback from multiple parties. Accordingly, districts should seek to gather as many insights as possible that can inform a review of the administrator or educator to be evaluated.

- **“Create a sampling procedure that fits the need.”** In the private sector, input on 360 degree evaluations is sometimes limited to a very small number of respondents in each group targeted for feedback. Within the education sector, this does not need to be the case. Several pilot tests that SIM conducted in partnership with school districts revealed that the vast majority of teachers wanted the chance to provide feedback to the principal.

- **“Put the process in place over three years.”** It is suggested that 360 degree evaluations should be phased in over a period of three years, with administrator evaluations conducted initially and teacher evaluations added in the second year. Parent input should not be included in the process until the third year.

- **“Publicize good examples.”** This will signal to parents and teachers that the surveys and results were taken seriously. A positive review of the superintendent, for example, might be shared in the community newspaper, while principals might share aggregate feedback at faculty meetings.

- **“Apply sampling theory for parent surveys.”** It is noted that “a random sample that generates a 25 percent response yields a confidence level of plus or minus 4 percent.” One tactic to help improve the response rate from parents is to inform them that their children have already participated.

- **“Use an outside authority for validity.”** External groups such as the SIM Center may provide “validity checks, reliability measures, and item discrimination.”

- **“Use the feedback for improvement.”** It may be appropriate to partner with an external consultant to coach administrators, whether in a group or one-on-one setting. Consultants may be used to process the 360 degree feedback and to help administrators recognize their strengths and weaknesses and to set realistic and appropriate growth goals.

---

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
Case Study: Riverhead Central School District and Bedford School District

Approach: A “Top-First” Implementation Model

The superintendents of two school districts—Riverhead Central School District (New York) and Bedford School District (New Hampshire)—used a “top-first” approach in the implementation of a 360 degree evaluation process. The approach first gathered feedback on the superintendent, school board, and principals. In both districts, a random sample of parents and guardians was created from an enrollment file. A direct-mail survey was then administered, though, in both cases, a second mailing was required. When the returns from both mailings were combined, the districts achieved a 25 percent response rate. These responses were supplemented by feedback gathered through questionnaires distributed at school meetings. In each case, the evaluation process was managed by a stakeholders’ committee, while the SIM center processed the data.13

Methods for Successful Data Collection

A review of the 360 degree evaluation processes in place at a variety of school districts suggests that online survey instruments, evaluation forms, and focus groups may be used to gather input on a superintendent’s performance from multiple stakeholder groups. Design of the survey instrument—or interview questions, in the case of focus groups—is a critical component of the 360 degree evaluation process, as one of the more important considerations is how easily the information collected from the various stakeholder groups can be used to create a performance improvement plan. Poorly designed survey instruments, especially “competency models” that demonstrate a narrow focus on technical or task-oriented skills, fail to provide administrators with the type of feedback they need to truly improve their leadership of a given school or district.14 Indeed, the purpose behind a comprehensive, 360 degree evaluation of the superintendent is twofold: (1) to provide “oversight and public assurance that ... policies are being effectively implemented,” and (2) to supply the superintendent with input and feedback that will allow for professional growth and performance improvement.15

Some school districts use performance standards set by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to evaluate their superintendents.16,17 When Danvers Public Schools decided to adopt the 360 degree evaluation approach in 1997, for

---

13 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. ii.
example, the superintendent relied on the AASA standards to “identify and define the competencies related to the job,” which were then formatted into a feedback survey. As a more recent example, McCall-Donnelly Joint School District #421 used these standards as the basis for its 2012 community input survey, which will be profiled in Section II of this report. These standards, however, sometimes remain too broad, and school districts must adapt accordingly.

**While 360 degree evaluation surveys administered to a large group of employees, parents, or other community members is an approach that appears to be common and even recommended in the literature, there are districts that favor a more targeted data collection effort, either through focus groups or surveys administered to a carefully selected evaluation team.** For example, when Danvers Public Schools first launched its 360 degree evaluation effort, it allowed the superintendent to select members of the evaluation team. While an administrator may be apt to choose among his or her friends, “research shows that friendship does not bias evaluations.” Furthermore, safeguards such as Olympic scoring and anonymity in the survey process may be used to minimize the impact of biases. A self-selected team of evaluators may include a range of stakeholders in line with the 360 degree approach, including teachers, principals, curriculum specialists, and parents. Similarly, a focus group may be used to bring together a relatively small group of stakeholders to discuss and offer opinions on the superintendent's performance in a group conversation that is led and monitored by a moderator. This approach will be described in more detail within the context of Broward County Public Schools’ evaluation process, profiled in Section III of this report.

**Data Sources for 360 Degree Evaluations**

The literature suggests that educators and administrators have found the multisource data collection aspect of 360 degree evaluations to be an integral component of individual teachers' professional growth and whole school progress. According to one study of teachers’ perceptions of traditional and 360 degree evaluations in a suburban New York school district, only 29.6 percent of participants believed traditional evaluations to contribute to student achievement outcomes, compared to 66.7 percent of participants who believed the 360 degree feedback model to be more focused on student achievement. The participating teachers further appreciated the multisource evaluation’s ability to help them identify professional development needs. This has also been the case for 360 degree evaluations of superintendents.

---

19 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
In a 1997 article in School Administrator, Manatt writes that superintendents who have used the 360 degree approach for their own evaluations have found the data collection process to provide “valid and reliable means” for judgment of their performance.\(^{22}\)

**One source suggests three to seven rater groups as the standard for 360 degree evaluations in school districts.** For example, one superintendent noted that his evaluation process collected input from members of the board, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents, but also considered the insights produced from a self-evaluation.\(^{23}\) Manatt suggests the following potential data sources for teacher evaluations: peers, principals, parents, students, and self. He suggests that, if aggregated, these same sources can provide feedback for superintendents and school boards.\(^{24}\) A review of the evaluation practices of school districts suggests that community feedback can also be a critical part of the evaluation process. Each of the stakeholder groups suggested in the literature are examined in further detail below. A dedicated section of the report (Section II) focuses on parent and community inclusion.

In the **peer feedback** process, a colleague conducts a review of another colleague based on the same standards used by supervisors. For example, a teacher undergoing peer review would select a colleague that would be able to fairly evaluate him or her based on the same criteria that students and principals would use in the evaluation. Notably, peers do not necessarily always rate their colleagues on rules such as promptness or punctuality, but rather focus on their practices in the classroom.\(^{25}\) One of the benefits of including peer feedback in an evaluation is its ability to support the “lateral integration of skill sets” within a particular work setting. Peer feedback further ensures a sense of accountability to the work team as a whole and promotes growth “technically and socially.”\(^{26}\) While particularly useful within the context of teacher evaluations, peer feedback may be less prominent in superintendent evaluations, but may appear in the form of input from fellow administrators or the school board.

**Self-evaluation** is typically used to gather quantifiable results based on self-reflection. For example, a teacher or administrator undergoing self-evaluation might respond to various prompts on the methods or activities that they apply in their roles. Past research has suggested that educators’ self-perceptions more closely align with students’ ratings than with those of principals or other supervisors.\(^{27}\)

---


\(^{25}\) Ibid.


self-assessment prior to the evaluation process may also help superintendents communicate to evaluators their personal goals and their view of the progress made toward community or staff-related objectives over the previous year.28

With federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT) pushing for a shift toward standards-based education reform, some school districts have opted to use student achievement data as another input in 360 degree evaluations.29 Manatt suggests that student achievement gains may be measured by criterion-referenced tests in a pre-test/post-test format and the results calculated in a percentage-of-mastery report. He notes, however, that such a data set may require “several years of curriculum renewal, alignment, and assessment to develop.”30 Aside from student achievement data, school districts may also solicit direct feedback from students through surveys.31

In the case of teacher evaluations, principal feedback plays an important role. A principal rates a teacher’s performance according to “observations, interviews, work samples, and examination of progress toward goals set by the teacher” over the course of a year or semester.32 In the case of superintendent evaluations, feedback may also be solicited from school principals.33 Feedback from classroom teachers and school staff of all classifications may be featured prominently in the evaluation process for superintendents, as the district’s employees will likely be one of the most eager groups to offer their opinions.34

29 Ibid.
31 As will be seen in Section III of this report, Hermiston School District collected input from students in its 360 degree evaluation survey. The survey results overview is available at the following link: http://www.hermiston.k12.or.us/sites/hermiston.k12.or.us/files/press_media_news/SuptSurvey08.pdf
32 Ibid.
34 As will be seen in Section III of this report, Hermiston School District’s survey collected input primarily from school employees. As another example, Broward County Public Schools organized focus groups for principals, as well as instructional and non-instructional staff. A description of the focus groups is available at the following link: http://eagenda3.broward.k12.fl.us/eAgenda/1599/43592/Files/evaluation.pdf
Section II: Best Practices in Community Inclusion

In addition to the sources of feedback described in the previous section, community feedback in 360 degree evaluations can play a pivotal role in school board calculations. The way in which community feedback is gathered is usually tailored to the specific demands of a given school district, though some common practices are noted in the literature. For the purposes of this report, “community” is defined as all stakeholders outside of a school’s body of administrators and educators. This section of the report first provides an overview of best practices in the design and implementation of parent surveys, as the literature on the subject shows that parents remain one of the largest community stakeholder groups in the feedback and review process. The focus then turns to various methods for the collection of community input and provides case studies that detail the efforts of two public school districts to solicit public input in their superintendent evaluation processes.

Best Practices in the Design and Administration of Parent Surveys

Insight into best practices for the administration of parent surveys comes from the Alaska Department of Education. The Department’s evaluation handbook for educators delineates the following practices. Though written with teacher evaluations in mind, the principles discussed below may be more broadly applied to superintendent evaluations.35

- Parent surveys should use a global item that solicits information on overall satisfaction as the “central datum for evaluation decisions.”36 The Alaska Department of Education provides the following item as an example: “Were you satisfied with your daughter’s or son’s overall classroom experience as provided by this teacher?”

- For context, parent surveys should incorporate questions that will help gauge how involved parents have been with the school. For example, has the parent communicated with teachers to learn about classroom content and goals?

- School districts should establish a minimum return rate and publicize that expectation in order to encourage the participation of parents. The Alaska Department of Education suggests 60 percent as an appropriate goal for the return rate in order to ensure reliability, though this is notably higher than the 25 percent minimum cited by Manatt in his discussion of parent surveys.

36 Ibid.
As districts seek to interpret the survey results, the characteristics of parents should be taken into consideration. It may be insightful to consider differences among parent populations, such as parents of children at certain age or grade level divisions.

Help teachers (or administrators) interpret the information gathered from parent surveys. Educators and administrators may be unrealistic in their expectations for the survey results. Oftentimes, it takes years of experience to know that less than perfect ratings on surveys are the norm and not cause for alarm or disappointment.

Finally, it is important to “vary the frequency of parent surveys.” The Alaska Department of Education points to one source’s suggestion for annual parent surveys for newer teachers, but surveys at only two or three year intervals for more experienced educators who have demonstrated a consistent pattern of responses from parents.

Methods for the Collection of Public Input on Superintendent Performance

Methods for the collection of community input fall into the two primary categories previously discussed in this report—survey administration and focus groups. The following pages discuss the efforts of two public school districts to collect public input through survey instruments. Section III of this report will provide insight into how focus groups can be used to better understand how community members perceive a superintendent’s performance and progress. Section III profiles Broward County Public Schools, which conducts focus groups with three constituent groups that fall outside of the district’s employee base and provide community input. These groups include general Community Representatives, Business Sector Leaders, and Parents.

Case Study: McCall-Donnelly Joint School District #421

Approach: An Online, Standards-Based Public Input Survey

McCall-Donnelly Joint School District #421, located in Idaho, solicits input from the general public through the use of an online survey instrument. The short, online survey—designed to be completed in just five to ten minutes—is made available to the public on the district’s website. The invitation to participate notes that the survey data will be used by the Board of Trustees as they finalize the superintendent’s annual evaluation, with the ultimate goal being to use the data to

---

37 Ibid.
38 A description of the focus groups is available at the following link: http://eagenda3.broward.k12.fl.us/eAgenda/1599/43592/Files/evaluation.pdf
improve performance. The nine-item survey made available to the public is based on the performance standards established by the American Association of School Administrators and National School Boards Association:

- Leadership and District Culture
- Policy and Governance
- Communications and Community Relations
- Organizational Management
- Curriculum Planning Development
- Instructional Leadership
- Human Resources Management
- Values and Ethics of Leadership
- Employee Relations

The survey describes each standard in detail, enumerating the performance indicators associated with each. Following the description of each standard, the survey asks participants to rate the superintendent’s performance as one of the following: Unacceptable, Needs Improvement, Good, Excellent, Outstanding. The survey also gives a “N/A” option for each question, as well as an opportunity for participants to add free-response commentary (see Figure 2.1 on the following page for a sample question). The survey provides an opportunity for participants to submit a name, but does not require that they do so. The results of the public survey are factored into the superintendent’s evaluation along with the results of three other surveys designed for employees, the leadership team, and the board.

---

41 Ibid.
Figure 2.1: Sample Question, Public Survey of Superintendent Performance, McCall-Donnelly School District

Standard 1: Leadership and District Culture

This standard stresses the superintendent's performance in leadership through empowering others, visioning, helping shape school culture and climate, and understanding multicultural and ethnic differences.

Performance Indicators:
(Do not rate individual indicators. These are listed only to help you think about the standard.)

1.1 Facilitates a community process to develop and implement a shared vision that focuses on improving student achievement.
1.2 Promotes academic rigor that focuses on learning and excellence for schools.
1.3 Creates and supports a community of learners that empowers others to reach high levels of performance to achieve the school’s vision.
1.4 Models learning for staff and students.
1.5 Promotes understanding and celebrating school/community cultures.
1.6 Promotes and expects a school based climate of tolerance, acceptance and civility.
1.7 Develops, implements, promotes and monitors continuous improvement processes.

The superintendent’s performance for Standard 1 is:
- Unacceptable
- Needs Improvement
- Good
- Excellent
- Outstanding
- N/A

Comments:

Source: McCall-Donnelly Joint School District #421

Case Study: Juneau School District
Approach: A Downloadable Evaluation Form for Community Input

Juneau School District in Alaska solicits input from the local community through an evaluation form that is published online. Rather than use an online survey tool, Juneau School District provides a downloadable (.pdf) evaluation form that community members can complete and return via mail or email to the Human Resources Office. Similar to the McCall-Donnelly survey, the Juneau School District survey provides an opportunity for participants to submit a name with their survey, though it is not required. Unlike the McCall-Donnelly survey, however, whether an individual submits his or her name has an effect on how the feedback is

---

processed and used. **Anonymous comments are discussed with the superintendent, but are not considered in the official evaluation.** All signed forms are factored into the Board of Education’s evaluation of the superintendent.\(^{44}\)

The Superintendent Evaluation Public Comment Form is open to any community member who wishes to provide written feedback for the superintendent. The brief form asks participants to rate the superintendent’s performance in **eleven broad areas** (detailed in Figure 2.2). The form also provides room for participants to comment on the superintendent’s overall strengths and weaknesses and to make specific suggestions for improvement.\(^{45}\) **Community input gathered through the public form is combined with staff feedback** and reviewed by the Board of Education in its formal review of the superintendent’s performance.\(^{46}\)

**Figure 2.2: Superintendent Evaluation Public Comment Form, Juneau School District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select from: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides overall vision for the District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an instructional leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops a strong, progressive, caring administrative team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays strong administrative and organizational skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates well to internal members of the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates well with external members of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an advocate for high educational standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates and supports the goals of the District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains and encourages inspiration, integrity, and honesty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides direction for the allocation of resources as a means for achieving the District’s mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates initiative for providing direction that supports the District Mission Statement and Beliefs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{45}\) Ibid.

Community Inclusion Outside of the Evaluation Process

Community inclusion may occur outside of the official superintendent evaluation process, as well. Danvers Public Schools, for example, used external data collection in its strategic planning process, identifying “key stakeholders in the greater school community and town whose thoughts, suggestions, and feedback should be solicited about current programs and the effectiveness of the school system.”47 The district used telephone interviews and focus groups to gather input from these individuals. The community members invited to participate in the strategic planning focus groups included members of the local town government, representatives of community partnerships, local clergy members, parents of Danvers Public Schools students, current students, and recent graduates, among others.48

The focus groups and interviews used three key questions to gather community input:

- What are your expectations of the Danvers Public Schools?
- In partnership with the schools, who has a role in contributing to the success of the whole child?
- What are your recommendations for ensuring every Danvers child has the opportunity for success in the 21st century?49

Such a model for engaging community members in the strategic planning process would allow a district to gain insight into the concerns and expectations of members of the local community, without necessarily collecting feedback on the superintendent’s individual role in the district’s progress. However, by considering community input in the formulation of the district’s strategic plan, the district would help ensure community approval of the overarching goals against which the superintendent’s progress would be evaluated.

48 Ibid., p. 5, 19.
49 Bulleted questions reproduced verbatim from: Ibid., p. 19.
Section III: Examples of 360 Degree Superintendent Evaluations

This final section of the report provides detailed profiles of two public school districts that use very different approaches to gather information for 360 degree evaluations. Broward County Public Schools uses multiple focus groups to gather information from a range of stakeholder groups, while Hermiston School District uses a single online survey instrument to solicit input from a wide range of individuals both inside and outside of the school district community.

Broward County Public Schools

Approach: Individual 360 Degree Focus Groups

Broward County Public Schools, located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is classified as a large suburban school district. The district serves more than 255,000 students in 325 schools. Broward County amended its superintendent evaluation process for the 2009-10 school year. The district hired Dr. Bill Mathis, a management psychologist at Mathis Consulting Group, to help develop the new instrument, as well as to begin Board Training to improve the working relationship of the board and the superintendent.

The first step in Broward County’s superintendent evaluation process is to convene eight initial focus groups to gather information that documents the superintendent’s performance. The eight focus groups represent the following constituent groups:

- Business Sector Leaders
- Community Representatives
- Labor/Union
- Executive Leadership Team
- Principals
- Teachers (Instructional Staff)
- Non-Instructional Staff
- Parents

All participants are selected by school board members for their unique knowledge of the superintendent’s character and job performance. Each group participates in a discussion with an outside facilitator. The facilitator asks each focus

---

50 National Center for Education Statistics. Common Core of Data. http://nces.ed.gov/ced/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&InstName=broward&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=1200180


52 Ibid., p. 1.
group to comment on several aspects of the superintendent’s performance. Common questions addressed by all focus groups for the 2009-10 review included the following:

- Evaluate the success of the superintendent over the past year (the 2009-10 school year in this case).
- What can the superintendent do to show more leadership for the school district?
- What do you recommend for the board’s support of the superintendent and successes in the coming year?

Furthermore, participants in most focus groups—the exceptions being the Business Sector Leaders and Parents focus groups—were asked to describe workforce morale, productivity, and the superintendent’s leadership over the school year. The Community, Labor Union, Non-Instructional Staff, and Principal focus groups were also asked to describe how the superintendent made efforts to consider their input in the decision-making process and what could be improved in that area. The Community, Labor Union, and Non-Instructional Staff groups were also asked to describe what they would like to see from the superintendent in the coming year.

The following questions were tailored specifically for the remaining focus groups:53

- **Business Focus Group:**
  - Describe the communications and business partnership outreach the superintendent has exhibited during the last year.
  - How can the superintendent improve his relationship with the business community to be more effective next year?

- **Executive Leadership Team:**
  - How is the Executive Leadership Team/superintendent relationship working as you see it?
  - What can the Executive Leadership Team do to improve the District next year?

- **Parent Focus Group:**
  - Do you receive feedback and good communication when you approach your school’s administration?
  - How has the superintendent’s relationship been working with parents this past year?
  - What does the superintendent need to do to make parents a more integral part of the school system next year?

---

53 Ibid., pp. 46-89. Reproduced with slight variation from the original text.
Principal Focus Group:
- How is the Executive Leadership Team/superintendent relationship working as you see it?

Teacher Focus Group:
- How well did the superintendent support teachers with their challenges this past year?
- What specific efforts can the superintendent make for teachers next year?

Once the group meetings have concluded, the external facilitator prepares a written document that includes a summary of comments, as well as a listing of all comments voiced in each group meeting. Board members are given the opportunity to review comments from the groups during their evaluation of the superintendent. Board members participate in a similar facilitated discussion before the evaluation is completed.\(^\text{54}\)

Other Documents Used in the Evaluation

In addition to the focus group summaries and comments, board members at Broward County Public Schools receive a packet comprised of several documents to aid in their evaluation of the superintendent. The superintendent is asked to answer the same set of questions as board members, which is used as a self-assessment of performance. A document with the superintendent’s responses is presented to the board members for consideration during their evaluation.\(^\text{55}\) Another document enumerates the superintendent's performance goals for the previous year. The superintendent is responsible for creating a list of school board, superintendent, and staff accomplishments related to each of these performance goals. To provide context for the evaluation, the superintendent’s employment agreement is also presented to the board members for consideration. This legal document includes all past amendments to the agreement.

The Broward County Public Schools Strategic Plan further provides important information on district-wide goals and objectives in the following areas:

- Student Achievement
- Wellness and Safety
- Parents, Business, and Community Partnerships
- Employee Excellence
- Environmental Stewardship
- Innovation

---

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 105.
Combined, the focus group summaries and the documents described here provide a comprehensive picture of the district’s and superintendent’s strategic goals and his self-perceived fulfillment of those goals, as well as the opinions of numerous stakeholder groups as to how well he has worked toward those goals and supported and strengthened the area’s public schools. With the help of the facilitator, the board creates a final written document that summarizes the superintendent’s evaluation.

**Hermiston School District**

*Approach: Combined 360 Degree Survey Instrument*

Hermiston School District in Oregon is a small district that serves a student population just shy of 5,000 students in ten schools. Hermiston’s evaluation policy calls for the annual evaluation of the superintendent to be based on demonstrated fulfillment of the administrative job description, alignment with any applicable standards of performance, and evident progress made toward the achievement of yearly goals set by the superintendent and/or the school board. For the 2008 superintendent evaluation, the district administered a single 360 degree survey that gathered input from multiple stakeholder groups, including school administrators and staff, students, parents, volunteers, and other community members. Figure 3.1 on the following page depicts the breakdown of the respondent population.

**Figure 3.1: Number of Survey Respondents by Constituent Group, Hermiston School District**

![Figure 3.1: Number of Survey Respondents by Constituent Group, Hermiston School District](image)

Source: Hermiston School District

---

56 National Center for Education Statistics. Common Core of Data. [http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&InstName=hermiston&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=4106300](http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&InstName=hermiston&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=4106300)


Licensed staff members represented the largest single group of participants, with 174 of the 306 completed respondents. Overall, the survey yielded responses primarily from internal stakeholders; administrators and staff members of all classifications (licensed, classified, and exempt) made up 86.3 percent of the survey population. Combined, external stakeholders that might be considered under a broad “community” group (community members, parents/guardians, and volunteers) made up 9.8 percent of the survey population, while students represented just 4.0 percent of participants.\(^{59}\)

Rather than design targeted surveys for each constituent group, Hermiston used a single survey instrument, which asked participants to identify themselves as a member of one of the previously discussed groups. The survey also asked participants to identify the location with which they were most closely associated, whether the district as a whole or one of eight individual schools, and to answer the following questions related to the superintendent’s vision, accessibility, direction, strengths, weaknesses, and goals (Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2: 360 Degree Survey Questions, Hermiston School District\(^{60}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree or Disagree</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Select from: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged and inspired by the District’s vision to become the premier school district in Oregon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This year, the superintendent visited our schools and departments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent is accessible to students, staff, parents, and community members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent fosters community support and partnerships to benefit the students of the Hermiston School District.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in the direction the superintendent is leading Hermiston School District in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Strength</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Select all that apply.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on your experience and observations, which of the following would you identify as the superintendent’s strongest skill?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Community Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Instructional Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Organizational Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Visionary Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Interpersonal Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ None of the above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Not enough information to answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{59}\) Ibid.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
## Areas for Improvement

Select all that apply.

Which of the following is an area requiring continued growth/improvement for the superintendent?

- Community Leadership
- Instructional Leadership
- Organizational Management
- Visionary Leadership
- Interpersonal Relations
- None of the above
- Not enough information to answer
- Other

## Goal-Based Questions

Select from: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent has high expectations for student learning and achievement.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent provides focus for the improvement of instruction.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent’s learning visits at my school were valuable.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hermiston School District

As illustrated in Figure 3.2, the school district devised a single set of questions that were broad enough that multiple stakeholder groups could weigh in on the superintendent’s performance. The approach allows for cross-comparisons of individual stakeholder groups’ opinions on the success of the superintendent during the year in question.

At Hermiston School District, responsibility for the administration of the 360 degree evaluation survey fell to the Human Resources department. The survey was administered via Zoomerang’s online survey software and respondents were able to complete the survey anonymously. From the information available online, however, it is unclear how the survey sample was created or how invitations to complete the survey were delivered to potential participants. Furthermore, the district does not publish information that explains how the 360 degree evaluation survey is integrated into the school board’s official review of the superintendent’s performance. One important practice that the district does demonstrate is communication with the community regarding survey results. Hermiston published on its website a brief review of positive feedback gleaned through the survey, including data on three questions which resulted in more than 89 percent positive answers (defined as responses of “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree”). Importantly, the brief article also linked to the full survey results. This type of communication should help participants see that their input was reviewed and valued in the evaluation process and may help encourage greater participation in the future as teachers, administrators, parents and community members recognize the importance of their feedback.

---

61 “Results of 360 Degree Evaluation Survey for Superintendent Fred Maiocco.” Hermiston School District. [http://www.hermiston.k12.or.us/SuperintendentSurvey08](http://www.hermiston.k12.or.us/SuperintendentSurvey08)
**Project Evaluation Form**

Hanover Research is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds member expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.


**Caveat**

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties which extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of Hanover Research or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every member. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, Hanover Research is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Members requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.