

# Board & Administrator

FOR SUPERINTENDENTS ONLY

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## Board planning prevents leadership void

Superintendent Terry Dougherty of the Hancock (N.Y.) Central School District said that when he arrived at the district, the organization was well-managed at the board and superintendent level. But what the district lacked, in his view, was a comprehensive planning process.

Dougherty said his assessment of the district in his first 100 days reinforced themes brought out during the interview process: The district needed strategic direction in key areas like facilities, financial leadership, and instructional leadership.

He developed a simple and transparent planning process that gets worked annually. "We've mapped a vision to move the district forward with a process where all parties know what to expect, including board members, superintendent, middle managers, faculty and staff, and community," Dougherty said.

Clarifying expectations helps the board-superintendent relationship. "Planning is a proactive way to prevent micromanagement,"

Dougherty said. "The board-superintendent relationship in Hancock is based on trust and mutual respect. The board has grown to trust the management team, which in turn prevents a leadership void."

Here are the important elements of the planning process Dougherty uses with his board:

- **Observe the 6 P's of strategic planning.**

The 6 P's represent "Proper Prior Planning Promotes Positive Performance."

- **Give power to get power.** Shared planning, accountability, and transparency promote positive board relations and trust, Dougherty said. "As the process has grown and developed, the board has willingly transitioned away from unproductive postures like micromanagement to the productive roles of being engaged and focused on initiatives related to student achievement, policy development, and community relations," he said.

- **Keep it simple.** Status reports and updates are presented using very simple formats. Middle managers report progress relative to their annual goals two times per year using a goals template, Dougherty said. The quarterly status reports complement this process by offering board members additional insights into the functional performance of each management area, he said.

The district also relies on goals posters to communicate its strategic focus to all stakeholders, Dougherty said. It displays 21-inch-by-15-inch posters in office areas, he said. "The

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intent is for all internal and external customers to view the posters and to ask questions," Dougherty said.

- **Have staff participation at all levels.**

All management and supervisory personnel are involved in the planning process, Dougherty said. During an annual retreat, a third-party facilitator works with the administrative staff to ensure objectives and strategies are aligned and relevant, he said.

"Personal and professional relationships between board members and supervisory level employees have flourished, and the professional growth of middle managers has been noteworthy," Dougherty said.

"There's a perception that middle managers are incapable of thinking strategically, with the thought being that managing day-to-day is all that is expected of them," Dougherty said.

The process has empowered his middle managers to be viewed as strong and capable leaders, he said.

- **Over-prepare, over-inform.**

Dougherty said a planned schedule of presentations keeps the board updated and informed year-round. "That significantly limits the urge to micromanage," he said.

The board hears status review checks on goals twice a year from middle managers and the superintendent, Dougherty said. "The intent is to promote transparency and to keep the board over-informed," he said.

Dougherty also uses a board presentation program to complement the goals/accountability system. See page 5 for excerpts from this program that communicates key organizational data to the board in a systematic matter.

- **Celebrate and recognize success.**

Each year concludes in June with a celebratory board dinner meeting off site where the year's accomplishments are presented and discussed.

Feedback on the district's commitment to planning is positive, Dougherty said.

"We almost always deliver far more than we promise," he said. "We have built strong community relations. Being goals-oriented reinforces the perception in the community that we are accountable to the public and our stakeholders appreciate that.

"Board members, especially the veterans, feel very comfortable and confident knowing there is a plan of action and a vision for the district's future," Dougherty said. ■

## **Rookies, veteran superintendents can benefit from planning**

Superintendent Terry Dougherty of the Hancock (N.Y.) Central School District said both new-to-a-district superintendents and established veterans can use planning to their advantage.

**1. As a new superintendent.** "When a new superintendent enters a district, he can use the entry process as an opportunity to set goals with the board," Dougherty said. "It's easier to accomplish this during the first 100 days."

**2. For a sitting superintendent.** Planning gives a veteran superintendent a chance to enhance and restore credibility, Dougherty said. "Using a third-party facilitator provides objectivity and provides the chance to reset and recalibrate by using the planning process." ■

## Board presentation program communicates key results

Below find the board presentation program Superintendent Terry Dougherty uses to keep the board informed about key events like progress on annual goals. This communication program leads to a better-informed board.

### 2011-2012 Hancock Central School District Board of Education Presentation Program

#### July 2011: Reorganization Meeting and Mid Summer Status Review

July 11 — Reorganization Meeting and Mid Summer Status Review

#### August 2011: Review of Faculty and Student Handbooks/Codes of Conduct/Safety Plans

August 22 — Review of Faculty and Student Handbooks/Codes of Conduct/Safety Plans

#### September 2011: Teacher Tenure Reviews/Strategic/Long Range Planning Review

September 12 — Teacher Tenure Reviews (teachers completing probationary period)  
September 26 — Strategic/Long Range Planning Review

#### October 2011: Senior Trip Presentation/Introduction of Recently Tenured Teachers/New Teachers and Staff/Audit Presentation

October 11 — Senior Trip Presentation  
October 24 — Introduction of Recently Tenured Teachers/New Teachers and Staff/Audit Presentation

#### November 2011: Senior Class Recognition Program/Senior Play Cast/Fall Athletics Report/2011 Fall Scholar Athletes

November 14 — Senior Class Recognition Program I/Senior Play Cast  
November 28 — Fall Athletics Report/2011 Fall Scholar Athletes

#### December 2011: National Honor Society Inductee Recognition

December 19 — National Honor Society Member Recognition

#### January 2012: High School Program Recognition/Middle School Program Recognition

January 9 — High School Program Recognition  
January 23 — Middle School Program Recognition

#### February 2012: Middle Managers Goals Accountability Program/ Senior Class Recognition Program II/Budget Presentations/Budget Analysis

February 13 — Middle Managers Goals Accountability Program/ Senior Class Recognition Program II  
February 27 — Budget Presentations/Budget Analysis

#### March 2012: Winter Athletics Report/2011-2012 Winter Scholar Athletes/All School Play Cast/Budget Review/Analysis

March 12 — Winter Athletics Report/2011-2012 Winter Scholar Athletes /All School Play Cast  
March 26 — Budget Review/Analysis

#### April 2012: Budget Adoption/Elementary School Program Recognition/Senior Class Recognition III

April 9 — Budget Adoption  
April 23 — Elementary School Program Recognition

#### May 2012: Annual District Meeting/School Budget Vote/Budget Vote Analysis/Senior Class Recognition III

May 7 — Annual District Meeting  
May 15 — School Budget Vote  
May 29 — Budget Vote Analysis/Senior Class Recognition Program III

#### June 2012: Spring Athletics Report/2012 Spring Scholar Athlete Introductions/ Final Middle Managers Goals Accountability Reports/ Year End Student Performance Reports

June 11 — Spring Athletics Report/2012 Spring Scholar Athlete Introductions/Final Middle Managers Goals Accountability Reports/Senior Recognition Program IV  
June 25 — Year End Student Performance Reports

*Source: Superintendent Terry Dougherty, Hancock (N.Y.) Central School District. ■*