

# Hancock Central School District

**The Wildcat Pledge:** We nurture and empower each learner's unlimited capacity to become a responsible citizen with a promising future.

**Our Vision:** Striving for excellence as an innovative, advanced and reflective school community.

## Core Beliefs:

- Our mindset: We do whatever it takes to ensure continuous growth because we believe each of us can learn.
- Collaboration: We work better together, always.
- Innovation: We embrace creativity and advancing technology.
- Integrity: We trust, respect, support and care for one another.
- Learning environment: Our approach is engaging, learner-centered and adaptable to individual needs.
- Student centered: We put students first.

## Goals/Accountability System Talking Points

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Observe the 6 Ps of strategic planning – Proper Prior Planning Promotes Positive Performance.
- “Give Power to Get Power” – Shared planning, accountability and transparency promote positive board relations, trust and empowerment. As this process has grown and developed, the Board has willingly transitioned from unproductive postures related to micromanagement and passive indifference to the highly productive roles of being engaged and focused on managing strategic initiatives related to improving student achievement, policy development, community relations and visionary planning.
  - Keep It Simple – Status reports and updates are streamlined and written/presented using very simple, non-technical and understandable formats.
  - Alignment/Continuity – The board presentation program complements the goals/accountability program.
  - “Everybody In” – All management and supervisory staff is involved in the process. Everyone has a stake in the game and plays an important role in supporting the school district primary mission (student learning). A third-party facilitator/trainer works with the administrative group (especially support-staff managers) during the retreat to ensure objectives and strategies are aligned and relevant. Personal and professional relationships between board members and all supervisory level employees have flourished.
  - “Over Prepare, Over Inform” – Planned presentations and schedules are constantly used to keep the BOE updated and informed, thus significantly limiting the urge to micromanage.
  - Celebrate and Recognize Success – An end-of-year celebratory board dinner meeting is scheduled offsite in June of each year.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Upon my arrival in the summer of 2002, it became clear very quickly that the board of education lacked an aligned, comprehensive and systematic approach to strategic planning and goal-setting. Test scores lagged relative to our comparative set and school facilities were decaying and outdated. Board meetings lacked vision and focus, and the district struggled to advance key initiatives related to improving student achievement.

My entry planning process revealed structural gaps across all management domains and true lack of focus with regard to strategic planning. The principals and non-instructional middle managers rarely, if ever, addressed the Board unless pressed to do so as a result of a crisis situation. In short, the District operated at a functional level, but little attention was paid to promoting transparency, and crafting a strategic vision tied to fostering a culture of continuous improvement for the present and the future.

Initially, I encountered resistance from the Board (satisfied with its role as it stood at the time) and from the middle managers (complacent, self-interested and accustomed to managing for the day) as the goals/accountability process was implemented. However, this resistance was overcome through targeted professional development and the district was successful in raising student achievement and garnering widespread community support. Moreover, Board trust and support for the executive team has never been stronger.

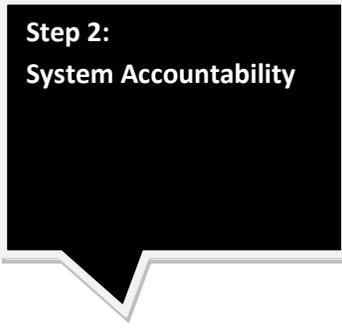
## PROCESS FLOW



**Step 1:  
Summer Retreat for  
Board/Administrators**

### Key Coaching Points

1. Third Party Facilitation is used to “flatten” the organizational structure and eliminate managerial bias.
2. Offsite venue is used to promote team bonding and privacy. BOE members are invited to attend but have declined in recent years as they have developed a high level of comfort and trust of the Superintendent and management team. Individual managerial objectives and strategies (each middle manager and the Superintendent draft these measures) aligned to the BOE goals are formulated prior to submitting the completed system for review and approval.
3. Goals, strategies and objectives are approved by BOE at the September meeting, and the completed system is distributed to local media and published in the District newsletter (in recent years, the BOE goals have not changed).
4. Goals posters are visibly posted in each office (district, elementary, middle/high and CSE).
5. A separate, complementary process is used by the principal while setting instructional objectives & strategies with teachers.



**Step 2:  
System Accountability**

### Key Coaching Points

1. Middle managers and the Superintendent report on goals no less than two times per year at planned BOE meetings.
2. In addition, the Superintendent and each middle manager are responsible for submitting quarterly reports (aligned to school marking periods in November, February, April and June) to keep the BOE updated on all facets of our instructional and non-instructional programs.
3. A planned BOE presentation program complements the goals/accountability system.



**Step 3:  
Celebrate Success**

### Key Coaching Points

1. The second BOE meeting in June is held at a local restaurant where middle managers report out on annual goals and present final status report.
2. Reflection time is used to discuss and initiate the planning process for the next school year.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over a 10-year period, the Board of Education has transformed from being largely passive into being actively engaged in crafting proactive and strategic positions for the future. Rather than micromanaging, the Board is now enthusiastically and constructively managing the broader vision of supporting a highly efficient and effective educational program for rural-school students. Trust and confidence in the executive management team is at an all-time high.