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Source of Report: LD 643, Resolve 2021, Chapter 73 Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Establish a Working Group To Determine Best Practices and Accountability Standards for School Boards To Manage the Performance of Superintendents

Topic: Best Practices and Accountability Standards for School Boards To Manage the Performance of Superintendents

Context

LD 643 directs the Department of Education (DOE) to establish a working group to study and disseminate a program to improve the training of school boards in their role of hiring, evaluating, and overseeing superintendents. Section 1 of the directive is specific to the development of a best practice module for diverse and inclusive executive hiring practices and a standardized performance evaluation system that solicits feedback from multiple sources and from a variety of points of view, akin to a 360-degree performance evaluation system. This section further directs the Commissioner to invite members from statewide educational organizations to participate in the working group. Section 2 directs the Commissioner to report on the findings and recommendations of the workgroup to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

Prior to the passage of LD 643, the Maine School Management Association (MSMA) began collaborative work between the Maine School Boards Association (MSBA) and the Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA) to develop model superintendent evaluation tools and review a revised school board policy on the evaluation of the superintendent, Policy CBI. The DOE began collaborating with MSMA in response to LD 643 in order to honor and capitalize on the related work already in progress.

Actions

The Department of Education was directed to establish a working group that would be responsible for reviewing best practices and developing models and tools with the goal of establishing an evaluative method for superintendents. The working group for the review of best practices and accountability standards for the evaluation of superintendents was facilitated by Courtney Belolan, the Director of Policy & Government Affairs for the DOE, and comprised of the following people:

(1) Member from a statewide organization representing school board members	Steven Bailey, Executive Director of the Maine School Boards Association
(1) Member from an organization with expertise in measurement and evaluation in service of strategic school systems	Eileen King, Executive Director of the Maine School Superintendents Association
(1) Member from an organization with cross-sectoral specialization in organizational governance, goal setting based on specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound	Jessica Nixon, Chief of Operations for the Department of Education

(SMART) criteria and 360-degree performance evaluation systems	
(1) Member with expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring and evaluation	Margaret Brownlee, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the Department of Education
(3) Members who are active school board members or community volunteers	Jane Osborne, Vice President, Region IV of the Maine School Boards Association serving Deer Isle and Stonington Lucy Richard, Chair of the Maine School Administrative District 01/RSU 79 School Board serving the towns of Castle Hill, Chapman, Mapleton, Presque Isle and Westfield Peggy Splaine, MSBA President and Chair of the Boothbay School Board Becky Fles, Chair of the Maine School Administrative District 11/RSU 11 School Board serving Gardiner, Pittston, and Randolph
Additional MSMA/MSBA/MSSA contributors (not attending LD 643 workgroup meetings)	James Boothby, Superintendent RSU 25 serving Bucksport, Orland, Prospect, & Verona Island Andrew Dolloff, Superintendent of Yarmouth School Department Patricia Hopkins, Superintendent of Maine School Administrative District 11/RSU 11 serving Gardiner, Pittston, and Randolph Eric Waddell, Superintendent of Kittery School Department

The timeline of DOE and MSMA collaboration was as follows:

- 12/ 2020 MSMA begins work on policy revision and model superintendent evaluation guide
- 6/2021 LD 643 is adopted
- 8/2021 DOE meets with MSMA
- 8/31/22 DOE meets with final MSMA work session
- 9/20/22 LD 643 Workgroup meeting
- 10/18/22 LD 643 Workgroup meeting

The tasks before the working group were as follows:

1. Review existing school board policies and procedures;
2. Develop a best practices module for diverse and inclusive executive hiring practices; and
3. Create a standardized performance evaluation system that incorporates best practices and board member training tools.

On 9/20/22 the LD 643 reviewed the sample school board policy CBI: Supervision and Evaluation of the Superintendent (attached). MSMA revised this sample policy based on examples from other state school board superintendent evaluation guides; it was based on a prior version. Title 20-A Chapter 101 Subchapter 1 does not specify superintendent supervision and evaluation as a required school board policy, however many school administrative units (SAUs) do adopt such a policy, and they are recommended to do so by MSMA.

At the 9/20/22 LD 643 meeting, the workgroup discussed current and best practices for school board training in inclusive executive hiring practices. Currently, in Maine, there are several options for a school board electing to engage in such training. The MSMA offers several trainings related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, superintendent hiring processes and practices, and evaluation. In addition to MSMA's own training offerings, they facilitate connecting districts with a consultant from Carney Sandoe for individualized support in these areas. Drummond Woodsum also offers training sessions available to school board members. Other training providers, such as the MidAtlantic Equity Consortium, have supported Maine SAUs and school boards as well.

The majority of the 9/20/22 work group meeting was spent reviewing the Superintendent Evaluation Process guide produced by MSMA. The guide was informed by a variety of evaluation tools including those from the National School Board Association, the American Association of School Administrators, several state School Board Associations, an online evaluation tool for K-12 leaders, and a variety of local Maine school boards. The overarching goals of the MSMA Superintendent Evaluation guide are to:

1. Support a high functioning executive
2. Achieve positive student outcomes
3. Build a strong board-superintendent relationship

Recommendations

First, the workgroup recognizes the timely and thorough work of the Maine School Management Association. The sample superintendent evaluation policy and evaluation guide are readily accessible resources for the SAUs of Maine. In addition to outlining the rationale of a well-rounded relationship-centered evaluation process, the MSMA guide emphasizes the use of measurable goals and data in service of a meaningful and reflective evaluation. Akin to a 360-degree performance evaluation, the MSMA guide includes the following elements:

1. Measurable goals based in professional standards
2. A focus on job specific skills
3. A focus on leadership and effectiveness
4. Feedback from a range of stakeholders

The MSMA guide lays out a clear framework for superintendent evaluation and remains flexible enough to accommodate the variety of SAU and school board configurations here in Maine. This methodology allows for the unique needs of each school district to determine the nature and scope of their superintendent performance evaluation. For instance, while some school boards may want to utilize a

targeted feedback survey that would focus on specific populations of school personnel, other school boards may want to employ a digital tool accessed more broadly by district constituents. Another example may be a large preK-12 district with multiple buildings for the elementary, middle, and high school levels in which a comprehensive evaluation process including a broader range of school community members is realistic to implement every 3 years, versus a small K-8 district with one school comprised of multi-age classrooms that can engage in a yearly comprehensive process.

The Department of Education does not provide support for the professional learning and training of school board members. As a local control state, any expectations for school board members beyond what is articulated in Title 20-A Chapter 101 Subchapter 1 and Chapter 103 Subchapter 3 are developed at the SAU level. The MSMA has been the entity in the State of Maine to develop and offer training and technical assistance to school boards. The trainings and resources available through MSMA range from the Maine Freedom of Access Act to Culturally Competency, Boardmanship, and Roles and Responsibilities of School Board Members, among others. The Working Group determined that the trainings and resources available through MSMA adhere to the directive in LD 643 to provide best practices in diverse and inclusive executive hiring practices. Future materials or offerings may be developed in collaboration with Department of Education content area experts.

Should the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee take further action related to superintendent evaluation, the workgroup has two recommendations.

1. Ensure superintendent perspectives are included in all potential discussions regarding expectations of performance and evaluation.
2. Any guidelines, rules, expectations, or evaluation frameworks developed must be flexible and allow local School Administrative Units to adapt systems and tools appropriate to their context and needs.

Contact:

Courtney Belolan
Director of Policy and Government Affairs
Courtney.belolan@maine.gov
207-215-7396