



Information Briefing

IOWA SCHOOL BOARDS FOUNDATION

April 2007

Vol. 1 • No.8

Framework for Describing the Roles of the Board for Improving Student Learning: Emerging understandings from the Lighthouse Research

Key Areas of Board Performance:	Knowledge, Skills, and Beliefs Necessary for Performances:
<p>Creating awareness of the need to improve – Building commitment to the needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating clarity about the need • Increasing the sense of urgency • Focusing on improving achievement in a content area of need • Improving teaching as the key means to get there • Expecting more • Believing it's possible to achieve 	<p>KNOW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand what's at stake if nothing changes (in relation to student learning) • Understand that improving teaching is the most important factor for improving student learning • Understand the importance of improving teaching in the content area of greatest student learning need • Understand what is possible to expect (schools that have beat the odds) • Clear understanding of the urgent status of student learning in their district, based on analysis of data • Clarity about learning gaps among sub-groups of students that currently exist • Understand that boards make a difference (board leadership is critical for improving learning for all students) <p>DO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confront current beliefs about what is possible to expect in terms of student learning (their own beliefs and the beliefs of others) • Communicate the urgency for improving student learning • Consistently communicate high expectations; • Use data and research to identify highest priority area for change and define focus and targets for improvement; • Consistently communicate the focus for improvement and model the adherence to the focus through board actions and conversations <p>BELIEVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current level of student achievement is not what can be expected – we can expect much more • How well students learn in school depends primarily upon what the adults in the school do • Improving the quality of teaching is the most important strategy for improving student learning • Virtually all children can meet grade level expectations • We have become complacent about the achievement of our students

Key Areas of Board Performance:	Knowledge, Skills, and Beliefs Necessary for Performances:
<p>Applying pressure for accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive use of data • Setting high expectations for improvement • Defining acceptable evidence of success • Monitoring progress 	<p><u>KNOW:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the important role of pressure and support (accountability and reciprocal responsibility) • Understand key data analysis concepts • Understand the importance of monitoring both implementation and impact • Understand the school culture necessary for improving student learning (7 conditions necessary for productive change and continuous improvement) and key indicators of that culture • Understand the current status of achievement in the district and what needs to change • Understand what would be reasonable targets for improvement given the current achievement status <p><u>DO:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set improvement goals and targets that appropriately “stretch” the district improvement efforts • Identify the indicators the board will accept as progress toward the goal and/or targets • Regularly monitor progress toward the specific annual targets • Ensure conditions necessary for continuous improvement are present in the culture of the school and regularly monitor evidence of progress toward the learning culture for adults and students • Expect and support corrective action when progress is not evident (culture, implementation, & impact) • Regularly discusses implications of data reports and reference data in decision making and problem solving • Support decisions with good data and information (internal and external – cost and impact) • Ensure the districtwide comprehensive assessment system can provide answers to identified key questions about student learning <p><u>BELIEVE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent monitoring of student learning is critical to improving teaching and learning • Formative and summative (as well as up-close and distant) assessments of student learning are critical for monitoring progress
<p>Demonstrating Commitment :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating board learning time • Learning together as a board team • Modeling a willingness to learn and innovate • Engaging in extensive conversations among board members to understand different points of view among the board members and clarify what’s important to the board as a whole • Staying the course • Taking actions and/or making 	<p><u>KNOW:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the board for improving achievement • The public/governing role of the board in relation to democratic principles • Key principles of good governance <p><u>DO:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus board meetings on the student learning improvement area • Talk to each other – when presentations are made to the board, balance the time asking questions of the presenter with meaningful dialogue among the board members to clarify shared understandings, implications, etc. • Commit extra board time for work sessions to focus on improvement and board learning; • Demonstrate commitment to the learning priorities through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Negotiations

Key Areas of Board Performance:	Knowledge, Skills, and Beliefs Necessary for Performances:
<p>decisions that demonstrate commitment to the focus area (resource allocation, time provision, calendar, negotiations, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Calendar development ○ Budget setting ○ Policy development and approval ○ Superintendent selection ○ Superintendent evaluation ○ Etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluate the performance of the board based on the collective effort to monitor, support, and ensure the district improvement goals are met <p><u>BELIEVE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In order for student learning to improve, schools must be organized and structured differently ● Schools cannot continue to do what they have always done and expect to get different results ● Doing more of what we are currently doing will not result in significantly improved learning
<p>Providing ongoing support for quality professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting clear expectations (for the outcomes & process of professional development) ● Creating time ● Providing financial support ● Celebrating success 	<p><u>KNOW:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Characteristics of professional development (what it takes to change practice at the classroom level in ways that will have a positive impact on student learning) ● The board’s role in relation to selecting initiatives and providing the professional development system to support them ● The criteria to consider when approving and supporting initiatives to improve achievement ● The implications of fully implementing potential initiatives to improve achievement (includes general understanding of what it will take for full implementation) <p><u>DO:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze the current professional development system in relation to what it takes to change practices ● Consider initiatives to improve achievement from a framework of key criteria ● Analyze the cost effectiveness of current and potential initiatives to improve achievement ● Set clear/measurable expectations for the outcomes of professional development (improvement in student learning improves as the primary outcome) ● Allocate resources to ensure a district infrastructure exists to support quality professional development ● Allocate resources to ensure the success of approved initiatives to improve achievement ● Monitor progress/success of professional development in relation to established outcomes. <p><u>BELIEVE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In order to change outcomes for students, we must improve the knowledge and skills of the educators ● School districts must focus major attention on improving professional practices in the classroom through high quality professional development ● Collaboration among adults is necessary for substantially improving student learning ● Student achievement barriers, such as poverty and lack of family

Key Areas of Board Performance:	Knowledge, Skills, and Beliefs Necessary for Performances:
<p>Supporting and connecting with districtwide leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing strong district-level leadership from the board/superintendent team • Empowering shared district-level leadership through the creation and support of a district-level leadership team (central office administrators, principals, and teachers responsible for leading districtwide efforts to improve achievement) • Demonstrating a willingness and readiness to lead and let others lead 	<p style="text-align: center;">support, can be overcome by quality teaching</p> <p>KNOW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership role of the board • The importance of distributed leadership • The difference between leadership and management • The instructional leadership role of school administrators • The characteristics of leadership needed to lead for improved achievement – leadership needed for standards based improvement • The importance of a narrow focus for improvement <p>DO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clarity, systemwide, about the most important focus for improving student learning • Communicate consistently about the focus for improvement, the specific expectations/targets, and what the district is doing to improve achievement • Protect the work from fragmentation and distraction • Stay the course • Create a framework for receiving and responding to reports from staff regarding student learning and improvement initiatives during board meetings and work sessions to ensure productive and appropriate dialogue • Monitor progress regularly and ensure corrective action is taken and supported <p>BELIEVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is either everywhere or it is nowhere • Leadership for improving teaching and learning is critical to school district success
<p>Deliberative Policy Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing meaningful policies through deliberative processes in key areas related to the improvement of teaching and learning • Focusing policies on the desired outcomes/results (what the board wants accomplished) and the rationale (why it is so important to realize the outcomes) NOT how the outcomes will be met (not what the district will do to achieve the desired results) 	<p>KNOW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The difference between discussion and deliberation • The importance of whole board deliberation throughout the policy development process (for policies directly impacting teaching and learning or the seven conditions) • The role of policy for guiding and sustaining district improvement work <p>DO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study background information related to the policy area • Identify greatest hopes • Prioritize expectations • Determine measures of progress/success for each expectation • Identify support needs for each expectation • Finalize priority expectations based on what can be monitored and supported • Regularly monitor policy implementation <p>BELIEVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local school governance is critical for ensuring the success of all students • Local school boards can positively impact teaching and learning • The actions and beliefs of board members are critical for district success
<p>Connecting with the community and building the public will to improve achievement:</p>	<p>KNOW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the importance of the school and community connections • Understand there are different levels of community connection

Key Areas of Board Performance:	Knowledge, Skills, and Beliefs Necessary for Performances:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing meaningful relationships and mutual partnerships with parents, community members, and groups or businesses within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informed ○ Input ○ Involved ○ Engaged • Understand the board’s role for ensuring the community helps decide and communicate what needs to change, why it needs to change, what can be expected, what it will take to get there <p><u>DO:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value the important role of the community in helping the district meet its improvement goals • Value the role of the school within the larger community (among other child serving organizations) and understand the specific contribution of each organization • Consistently communicate the case for change and the vision for the future • Consistently communicate what the district is trying to improve, specific expectations, what the district is doing to reach the expectations, and how the community can help <p><u>BELIEVE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school exists to serve the community • The community must be a partner with the school district in order for the school to improve learning for all students