

The Lowellville Board of Education met in special session on Saturday, December 5, 2020 Via Zoom; President Michael Palumbo presiding. Mr. Palumbo called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL: Brian Wharry - Present Stephanie Yon - Present
 Jerry Dubos - Present Michael Palumbo – Present
 Joseph Sturm - Present

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

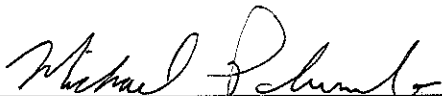
1. Introduction of Ohio School Boards Association facilitators (Board Development Training).

Dr. Thomas introduced Steve Horton from Ohio School Boards Association. Mr. Horton went through a PowerPoint presentation regarding duties and responsibilities of Board Members. Additional notes and the PowerPoint are attached.

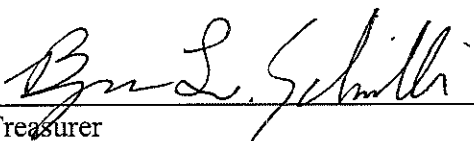
(20-12-7771)

2. Adjournment:
Gerald Dubos moved to adjourn at 12:32 p.m. Seconded by Joseph Sturm.

ROLL CALL: Wharry - Yon - Dubos - Palumbo - Sturm - All Aye.
Mr. Palumbo declared motion carried. 5-0



President



Treasurer



December 5, 2020
Steve Horton, OSBA Senior Board and Management
Services Consultant

LOWELLVILLE LOCAL SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION RETREAT

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OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

1



This is a golden opportunity!!


TEAM
DISCUSSION IS
MOST
IMPORTANT

HONOR THE
OPINIONS AND
INPUT OF EACH
TEAM MEMBER


SEEK TO LEAVE
TODAY AS A
BETTER TEAM

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2




What's on the agenda?




Effective Board member practices
– What do high functioning boards do?




Communication –
How can you communicate as a team and top down with staff?



Chain of command – How do you stay in your lane?




Sunshine Laws –
How do we work together within the law?



Evaluations – How do we set the team up for success?

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3




Let's start the conversation . . .

What are the most critical issues the district is facing now?

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The board's legal responsibilities

- Employ and evaluate a superintendent
- Employ and evaluate a treasurer
- Approve the annual budget and appropriations
- Provide needed, safe and appropriate facilities
- Ensure appropriate use of public money
- Adopt policies for the governance of the district









"The price of greatness is responsibility."
~ Winston Churchill

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5

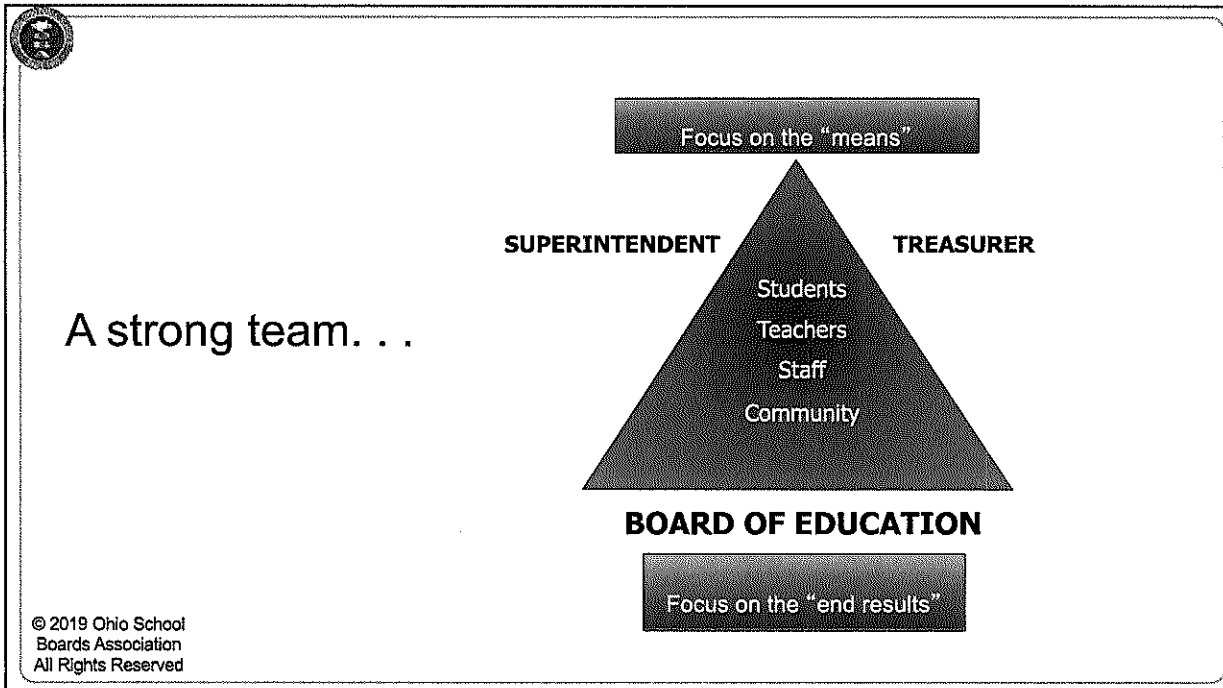


8 Characteristics of an Effective School Board

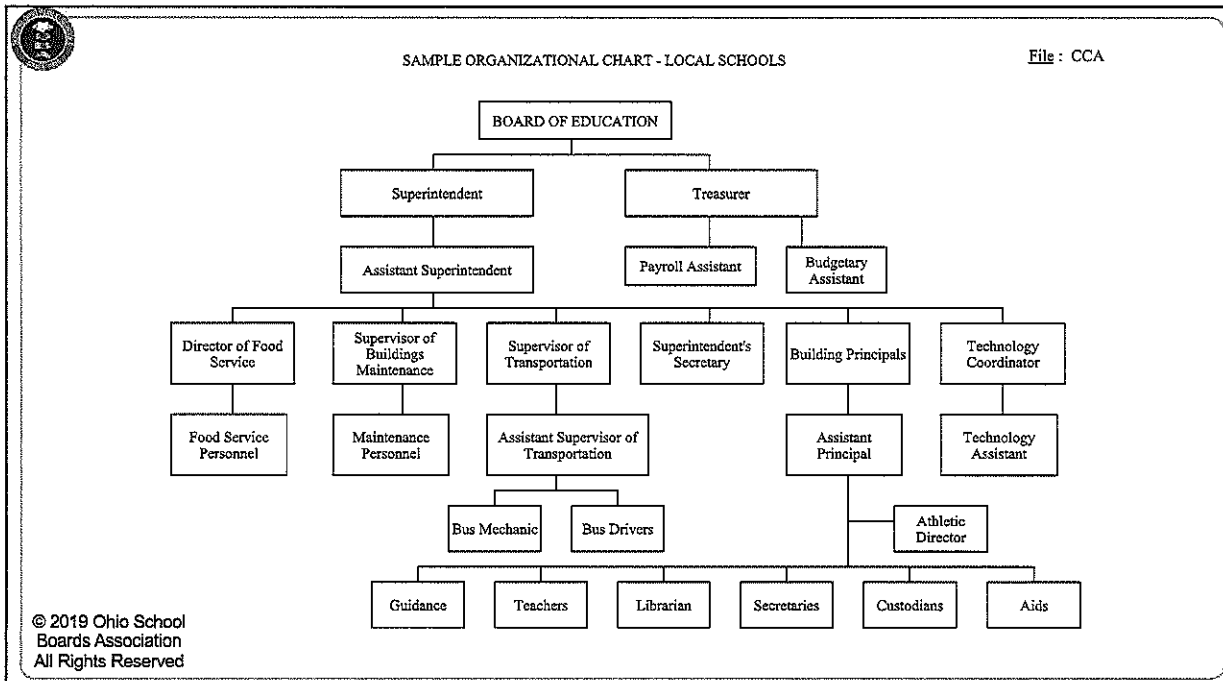
 Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement	 Hold strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students	 Remain accountability driven	 Maintain a collaborative relationship with staff and community
 Work to be data savvy	 Work with their administrators to align and sustain resources	 Lead as a united team with their superintendent and treasurer	 Take part in team development and training with the superintendent and treasurer

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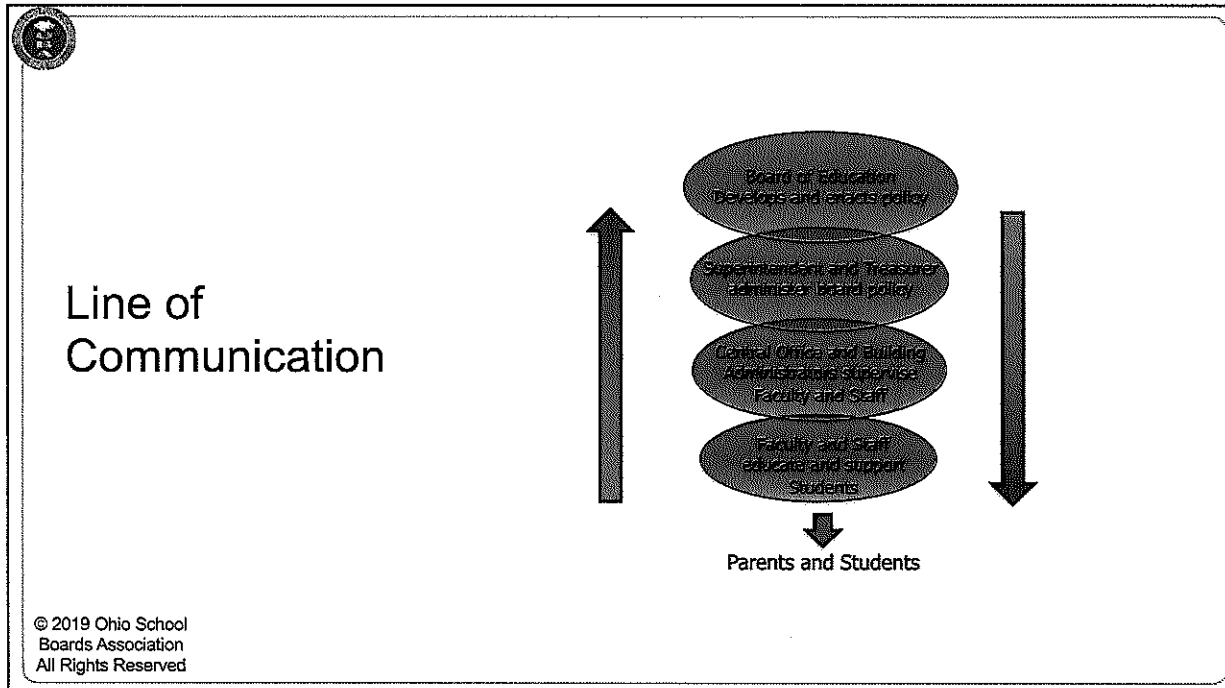
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7



8



9

A great analogy. . .


TRUST
is like a paper
once it's crumpled
it can't be
PERFECT
again

You can flatten the paper and try and make it as straight as you want, but it will never be perfect again.

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The slide features a large, light-colored background image of crumpled paper. On the left, the text 'A great analogy. . .' is written in a simple font. On the right, the word 'TRUST' is written in large, bold, black capital letters. Below it, the text 'is like a paper once it's crumpled it can't be PERFECT again' is written in a mix of bold and regular fonts, with 'again' in a cursive script. At the bottom of the crumpled paper image, a small line of text reads: 'You can flatten the paper and try and make it as straight as you want, but it will never be perfect again.' A small circular logo is in the top-left corner.

10

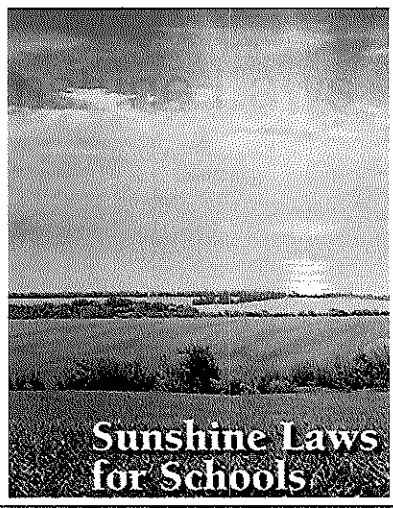


Public Meetings and Sunshine Laws

What constitutes a board meeting?


- Any prearranged discussion
- Of public business of the public body
- By a majority of its members.

*(For OMA purposes)



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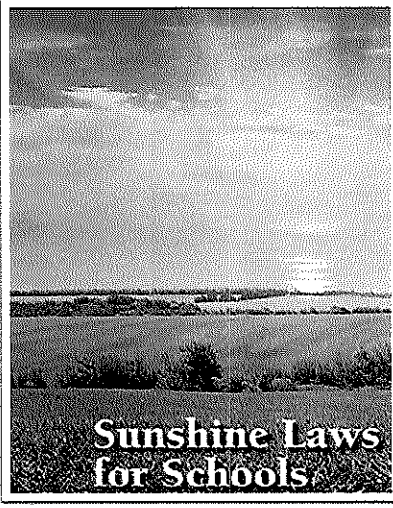
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Public Meetings and Sunshine Laws

OMA requirements

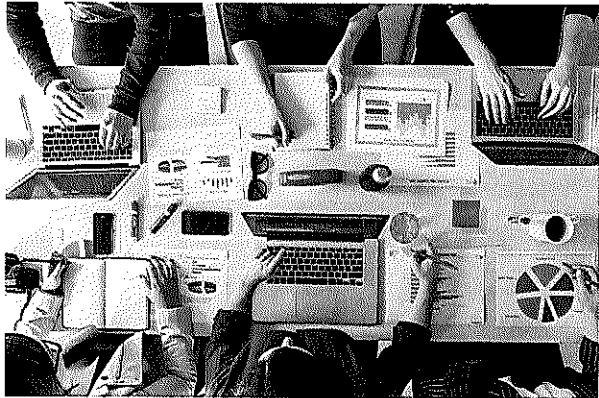
- 1) Advance notice of meeting
- 2) Full and accurate minutes
- 3) Meetings open to the public



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12

Is it a meeting?




Board policy committee meeting

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13

Is it a meeting?

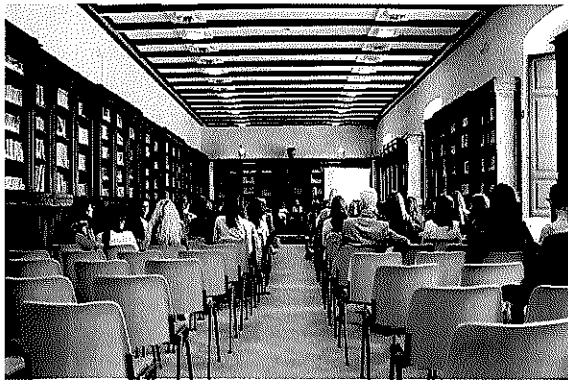


Board retreat or work session

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14

Is it a meeting?

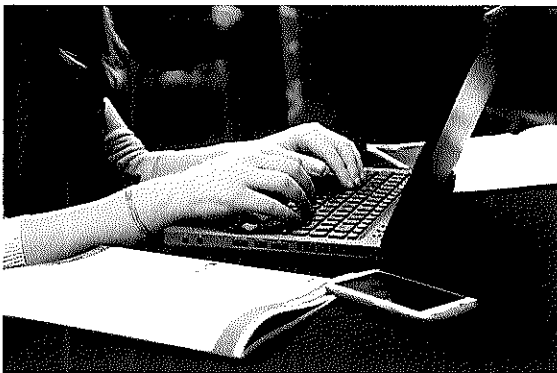


Levy committee meeting

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Is it a meeting?




Email/texts between board members

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16




Executive session



- What is it?
- Who attends?
- What topics are appropriate for executive session?

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Legal Reasons for Executive Session

- To consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official
- Purchase or sale of property
- Conferences with attorney to discuss pending or imminent court action
- Collective bargaining matters
- Matters confidential by law
- Security and emergency response matters

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18




Nothing crinkles paper like a breach of confidentiality!

TRUST
is like a paper
once it's crumpled
it can't be
PERFECT
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You can flatten the paper and try and make it as straight as you want, but it will never be perfect again.


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19



What about Evaluations?

1. It is about more than compliance
2. The best evaluations promote growth
3. A good evaluation forces the development goals and objectives
4. It is a great learning opportunity for the team – what works and what doesn't work
5. It sets the district up for continuous improvement



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20



Standards are benchmarks for how the work is done

- Superintendent, Treasurer and Board of Education each have their own benchmark standards
- Can you align the strategies to the benchmark standards? Each strategy aligned to a goal...and one or more standards!

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21




The Superintendent Standards

1. Vision, Focus and Continuous Improvement
2. Communication and Collaboration
3. Policies and Governance
4. Instruction
5. Resources
6. Leadership and Special Projects

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The Treasurer Standards

1. Leadership
2. Financial Management
3. Facilities, Property and Capital Asset Management
4. Communication and Collaboration
5. Professionalism

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23



The Board of Education Standards

1. Responsible school district governance
2. Communication of and commitment to high expectations
3. Creation of district-wide conditions for student and staff success
4. District accountability in all areas
5. Engagement of all community members

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24

Lowellville Local Schools Board of Education Team Work Session, December 5, 2020

Facilitators Notes

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you and lead an important discussion regarding your future as a leadership team. With new board members, change is inevitable. The strength of your situation is that you have an opportunity to determine how you move forward. Building a strong foundation of culture and team expectations will help you in working through the change. Here are the notes and thoughts I collected during our evening together.

I asked you at the beginning to consider your challenges as a board and district. I asked you to consider the things that represent the big rocks preventing you from doing your best work. Here are your responses.

- Need to sustain enrollment
- Financial – be careful not to overspend
- Small district is vulnerable to legislation
- Board work is different with social media – it is more difficult to be cohesive and stay together
- Transparency – Sunshine Laws make it more difficult to know what to share and what not to share
- Get through the pandemic – right now there is no consistency
- Board needs a playbook and needs to get on the same page

These challenges shape the work of the board and district as you move forward. Your job as a leadership team is to seek solutions to the many needs of your children and families. Keep your eye on these as you strive to improve and work to maintain a strong leadership team.

Keep the principals of the eight characteristics of an effective board at the center of your work together. I am including the research report that is the basis for these eight characteristics. The bulk of our discussion was about the first two characteristics; Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement; Hold strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students.

Your current strategic plan offers a strong direction and that is the focus of the decision making for the administration. Always examine a decision as whether it supports and aligns to the current plan. It is important that the board and administration spend time on those things that advance the work of the plan. A concern was raised during this discussion that the board is not necessarily connected to the work that is happening. Dr. Thomas made the commitment to be more diligent and more frequent in reporting to the board about ongoing progress.

I hope you will consider the decision-making framework as you are faced with big decisions that need a strong solution.

1. State the issue – what is it that needs your attention and make sure that is clearly stated and defined for your stakeholders. If you don't pay attention to this first step, you may be setting yourself and the district up for a rough ride.

2. What are the “non-negotiables” for each board member. Spend time putting each person’s thoughts and needs on the table. Remember, belonging and mattering are crucial to maintaining a high level of trust for the team.
3. Ask the triggering question, how can we do this with the criteria set forth by the team?
4. Brainstorm solutions. Work to develop a plan that is not a competition for who has the best idea.
5. Be willing to give to get. It is likely that you will not have all of your needs and ideas fully satisfied, but through a collaborative process, it gives you the opportunity to arrive at a decision that all members can support.

Discussion about the chain of command is always a good idea for the leadership team. This is especially difficult in a small community where people know each other. Ensuring that community members and staff communicate through the correct channels is important in every district including Lowellville. Board members are key to making sure communication happens between the appropriate people when issues are shared. The best response from board members is to make sure that stakeholders understand that individual board members do not have authority to act on their own and avoid sharing personal opinion that can be construed as the opinion of the entire board. This is essential to building trust and consistency throughout the organization.

A request that came from the discussion about the chain of command was to revisit the organizational chart and make sure that the entire board is on the same page.

An important topic for our morning together was the Sunshine Laws and board work and communication. Ohio is one of the stricter states regarding board communication both within and outside of the meetings. Meetings are defined as any prearranged discussion of public business of the public body by a majority of its members. Board members have to learn how to communicate within the bounds of the law.

The law does allow for individuals to communicate but be careful that the conversation does not become more a discussion about decisions the board must make as a whole. Electronic media has attracted considerable attention from our legal system. Even though communication is by text or email, the nature of the communication can be considered a violation if it becomes an extended discussion that should happen in a public session.

There are two things to consider when communicating electronically. One, it is always legal to push information one way. Whether that is from the superintendent, treasurer or individual board members. Questions from individuals are fine, but it is best to avoid reply all. Second, consider the nature of the communication. If it seems to be straying from general information and into a back-and-forth conversation, then someone should stop and defer to the upcoming meeting time. It is always best to err on the side of caution.

Standing board committees are part of the communication process for many boards. Remember that the rule of requiring a public notice and minutes for each of the meetings applies to board committees. There is no rule about how often the committees meet. Ideally, the committees are a forum for addressing needs in a given area and for better informing the entire board of the work that is being done in each committee area. How board members are assigned to these committees is at the discretion of the board. These committees are different

from those formed by the superintendent, which are at the superintendent's discretion and do not require a notice or public minutes. Those may or may not involve board members, depending the purpose of the committee.

Executive session was also an important topic that took some time. The rule is that the board invites others into executive session. In all but a very few instances, the superintendent and treasurer are included in these sessions. You have traditionally also included your principal and athletic director in executive sessions and that is fine as long as the board agrees. Remember that the law is very specific about the reasons a board can be in executive session and that the board can only discuss the item(s) voted on prior to entering the session. There are to be no minutes or exchange of written notes between any member for the session. Once something is written and shared among the members, it is deemed a public record.

The most important point about executive sessions is confidentiality. Remember that breach of confidentiality is a concern and burden for the entire leadership team. Often leaked executive session information can have serious legal ramifications.

The last important point of discussion was about superintendent and treasurer evaluation best practices. The best and most effective evaluations involve the entire team and center around goals and objectives, and benchmark standards that have been developed for superintendents, treasurers and boards as well. You already have goals in your strategic plan, so priorities developed as part of the evaluation should align with those.

The most important points about an effective evaluation process are:

1. The process promotes continuous growth and improvement.
2. It forces the team to come together to examine the work of the district and develop specific objectives for the superintendent and treasurer (priorities for the next school year).
3. The objectives that are developed are aligned with one or more of your strategic goals as well as the established standards.
4. It allows the team to come together and examine evidence of growth or areas of need.
5. Timeline should be – meet in the summer to review and develop objectives for the next school year – meet in the winter to do a midyear review – and meet at the end of the year for a final summative review.
6. Make it a process that can be replicated year on year.

I am including templates that were developed to help boards work through this process.

I am very enthusiastic about the future of this leadership team. You are diverse in your backgrounds and ideologies and that is a good thing. Work to continue to communicate well and work together toward a better future for Lowellville Local Schools. I hope we can do more together in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Horton, OSBA Senior Board and Management Services Consultant