

# THE SUPER

# Six



## Six questions school board members should be asking their superintendents

Research shows that highly effective boards have a culture of trust and respect in the boardroom, and lead as a united team, along with the superintendent. For many boards, however, challenges ranging from ineffective communication to poor policy management prevent them from achieving this level of trust. The solution, according to Dr. Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), is to ask the right questions. Here, he shares the top questions school board members should ask their superintendents to help build the collaboration and trust needed to reach their strategic goals.

### 1 Strategic Planning

**How do we create a community and district-wide culture of continuous improvement, plan strategically, and align our operating plans to achieve strategic outcomes?**

Creating a culture of continuous improvement begins with a strategic plan made up of bold goals, such as reaching a 95 percent graduation rate, or ensuring that 80 percent of students are college and career ready. An effective plan empowers school and teacher leaders to take ownership of issues and implement proven solutions.

**Recommendation:** Work with your superintendent to develop a strategic plan with bold goals around a framework of proven practices to level the playing field and help more students become college and career ready.

### 2 Student Achievement

**How are we monitoring leading critical indicators to support all of our students achieving at grade level or above, and how are we communicating that information?**

Improving student achievement means looking beyond test scores at the experiences different groups of students are having in school. Expectations and practices are typically different in honors courses than in other classrooms, but boards should realize that every student has the potential to achieve at honor levels if given the chance to do so.

**Recommendation:** Work with your superintendent to conduct an audit of expectations, assignments and assessments in the classroom to ensure they're aligned to grade-level standards for all students.

# 3

## Accountability

**How do we hold personnel accountable for developing and implementing school improvement plans at each school?**

Accountability for student outcomes shouldn't be limited to the classroom teacher. Every employee—from the kindergarten teacher to the senior teacher in high school to the middle school principal, has a role in supporting students and affecting outcomes. Policies that facilitate unity—such as giving teachers more time to plan together, and empowering staff at all levels to take bold and proven actions—lay the foundation for accountability across the entire school system.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that your strategic plan and policies encourage teamwork and empower people to think creatively and collaboratively so that everyone feels accountable for improving the achievement levels of all students.

# 4

## Equity

**What policy recommendations, practices and data indicators are we using to ensure we are meeting every child where they are?**

Rather than focusing on remediation and accommodation, the pursuit of equity should be centered around accelerating student learning. This means providing additional time and assistance to students who are struggling, and looking for new ways to ensure all students are given grade-level experiences to move them forward.

**Recommendation:** Challenge district leaders to examine policies, practices and data indicators to help them better understand why some students aren't engaged in grade-level learning, and adjust your strategies accordingly.

# 5

## Building Community Support

**How are we engaging, soliciting, and responding to our key stakeholders, parents, and business leaders to enhance student learning?**

Effective boards develop their strategic plans and policies with input from the entire community, aiming to make parents partners in their children's education. One important way for school leaders to engage parents and the community is to show elementary and middle school students of all levels and backgrounds the variety of career choices available to them, arranging for visits to hospitals, manufacturing plants, banks and other community sites.

**Recommendation:** Create focus groups to gather feedback from parents, and develop policies to ensure that all students know about the career opportunities available to them.

# 6

## Fiscal Responsibility

**How do we ensure that we are being fiscally responsible with our financial resources, and how do we communicate that to our board and community stakeholders?**

In addition to approving budgets, boards that are fiscally responsible understand how resources, including discretionary dollars, are linked to strategic goals. They also demand and provide a high level of transparency by regularly reviewing expenditures and income, asking questions, and providing financial updates to the community.

**Recommendation:** Ask school leaders to provide the board with a monthly financial report for review and discussion, and publish an annual report so taxpayers can see how their investment in the school system have supported students in the community.

### Contact us today for a free demonstration.

If you want to build a culture of trust in the boardroom, you need the right foundation. Learn how Simbli's board management software can help board members and superintendents get the right things done by keeping their strategic plan, policies, evaluations, meetings and communications aligned.

 **877-404-7707**

 **[www.eboardsolutions.com](http://www.eboardsolutions.com)**