



Leadership for Student Learning

The School Board's Role in Creating School Districts Where All Students Succeed

Study Guide



Leadership for Student Learning: Study Guide

Introduction

This study guide is designed for use with *Leadership for Student Learning: The School Board’s Role in Creating School Districts Where All Students Succeed*, published by the Iowa Association of School Boards. That book was written to give your board the tools they need to create the best possible school district. This study guide can help your board use the book to stimulate the meaningful conversations which are an integral part of developing those tools.

The ideal use for this study guide is to allow a whole board and superintendent team, working together at the board table, to consider the concepts expressed in each chapter of the book and apply them to their own work as a board/superintendent team focused on the best interests of the district. Individual board members, district leadership teams and school improvement committees may also find it useful.

Goals

This study guide is provided to:

- present a framework for board discussion around meaningful leadership issues.
- promote quality conversation and learning at the board table: These conversations and learning can ultimately result in policy, plans and decisions which make a positive difference for all children in the school district and help your school district become a true learning organization.
- give individual guidance to board members and others who read this book regarding their leadership decisions.
- offer options for discussion. Facilitators will have a variety of prompts to choose from to stimulate discussion and may select those they feel most workable for their board.

Using this Study Guide for Learning Team Discussion

1. **Determine who will be part of your study team.** The primary audience for this study guide is a board-superintendent team. In some districts the team may include other administrators who are going to be an integral part of the leadership work. Some districts may choose to have “side by side” learning going on with a school improvement committee or an administrative team. Some boards may choose to “grow” future candidates for the board by specifically inviting an audience of citizens to read the chapters and listen to the discussion. Please remember that any discussions that involve a majority of board members will be subject to the rules of the open meetings law.
2. Distribute copies of the Leadership for Learning book and this study guide to all study team members. Note that no one will be expected to read the book all at once. **Review the initial goals** (see suggestions on page 2) which your board will have in doing this work. Acknowledge that the board has important work to do at every meeting, but this “learning work” can stimulate quality conversation which will help guide and focus board decision making. This study can make a difference for your board!
3. **Develop a timetable** for your board discussions. Use the samples provided on pages 45-47 or create a timetable that fits your board’s needs. Options include scheduling a few longer sessions or using just one module per board meeting. Whatever schedule you create to fit your board’s needs, ensure that you get the commitment of the entire board to devote the time to do the readings and reflections and attend the discussion sessions.
4. **Select a facilitator.** Every board study team member will need to commit to reading the Leadership for Student Learning chapters and jotting down their initial thoughts in the workbook prior to the meeting. You will also need to assign a facilitator to keep the discussions on track and ensure that everyone participates. The board president could serve as a facilitator for these discussions, although some board presidents may not be comfortable or have the time for this role. Other options would be for another member of the board to take on the role of facilitator, to rotate the responsibility among board members or seek outside facilitation. The key is finding a facilitation means that ensures all study team members have the opportunity to take part equally in the discussion. The facilitator will also need to determine which of the discussion questions to use.

The questions in each module marked with this symbol  always need to be considered. See page 4 for more information.

5. **Select a scribe to take public notes during your discussions:** Find a way to take public notes (on flip chart paper, on the computer, on a whiteboard at the front of the room...anywhere where the group can see highlights of its discussion reflected). Make sure someone has accepted the responsibility of recording these public notes and distributing them to the whole board within a week after each meeting. The board secretary may seem to be the obvious choice to take notes. However, it may contribute to team unity to have a rotating member of the study team taking the public notes. This may have the disadvantage of limiting

the scribe's participation in the discussion. The key is finding a way to take public notes that the whole board has confidence in and that are periodically checked to ensure they reflect the thinking of the entire study team. As the study progresses the group will begin to use these notes to devise an "implications for our work" list. These will help transform the conversation into action.

6. **Conduct the introductory module immediately as you hand out the book.** Use the introductory section to model how the board discussion will work. Use the discussion guide selectively. You may find some questions lead the board into a review of the material more effectively than others. Talk about how long the reading takes and whether the timetable you have devised seems realistic. This is a short session and should only take about 30 minutes, including reading time. It simply introduces the board to using the book and the study guide and helps establish expectations up front. Take time as you conclude to review your learning goals and to stress the importance of participation by all members of your study team. As with all sessions, the scribe should compile the public notes and distribute them to each team member soon after the session.

An Important Caution

As you study this information and discuss individual modules as a board team, resist the temptation to rush to action, identify a to-do list for the board or administrators, make motions or major shifts in your district's course without deeper thought.

During the final module—after you've had a chance to read, reflect, discuss and consider all of the information—you'll have the opportunity as a board/superintendent team to clarify major areas of focus you may wish to pursue together, based on your study. Those areas of focus may simply reinforce a course you've already begun; they may identify areas of further learning or discussion; or they may open up new arenas for your leadership work as a board/superintendent team.

Your work and study are intended to help you take informed and committed action: Determine the next steps at the end of the process to make sure your action is thoughtful and has the broad commitment of your board/superintendent team so that you lead powerfully in ways that make a difference for your students.

Using this Study Guide for Individual Learning

1. As you read *Leadership for Student Learning* jot down your answers to the questions in the modules. Pause in your study and come back to your answers in a day or two. See how your initial responses reflect your best thinking.
2. Ask for time on an agenda and use your notes from a particularly relevant chapter to introduce this work to your whole board. Try asking them to help you think about one of the questions that might stimulate some interesting discussion.

Making the Most of Your Study



This symbol in each module indicates the most important discussion questions. We encourage everyone to consider and make notes on their reflection sheets for all questions. During your board/team discussion, spend the most time on the areas marked by the symbol. Use the other study questions to supplement, reinforce, or dig deeper on issues important to your board. If time allows, you may certainly discuss all of the questions.

The symbol also indicates areas to be included in your learning report, if you choose to seek Better Boardsmanship credits for this work. (See below for more details.)

Taking Your Learning to the Next Level with Support from IASB

Board Team Study: Take your board team's study to the next level with advice from IASB by concluding your study with consultation from IASB board leadership experts.

Send IASB a written learning report on your discussions and the implications for action determined by your board. This learning report should be simple to compile based on the notes taken by your scribe during the study sessions. (To request a Microsoft Word document to fill in your notes electronically, e-mail BoardDev@ia-sb.org.)



See the  symbol throughout the modules for the notes to include in your report.

You may choose to receive a written response or a remote consultation (via conference call or teleconference) during a board meeting with an IASB staff member, offering suggestions regarding the feasibility and possibilities of the implications and assistance in identifying the next steps for your board. Note: Boards choosing the remote consultation should schedule the time with IASB in advance as part of creating your study team timetable.

Cost: \$150

Boards selecting this option may earn 20 Better Boardsmanship credits for board members who took part in the study sessions.

Individual Study: If your whole board is not involved in a study, you may send a written report on the implications you have determined from your study of Leadership for Student Learning. Completing the written report will help you reflect on your learning so it makes a greater difference in your board work. Individuals submitting a written report earn 10 Better Boardsmanship credits.

See pages **47-48** for application forms. With questions or to schedule a consultation, contact: the IASB Board Development Team, BoardDev@ia-sb.org.

Introductory Module

Pages 5-8

This module can be completed without advance reading assignment. Simply allow study team members time to read pages 5-8 of Leadership for Student Learning during your study team session.

Why are you taking time to do this study?

Why are you interested in board work? If you are a board member, why did you choose to run for the board? (Delve deeper than “Because my neighbor asked me to.” Why were you willing to commit the time and effort that school board work involves?) How does your reason relate to the reasons expressed on page 5? How do you feel the reason you came on the board is currently expressed in your work at the board table?

This book is about what can be done to improve student learning (p. 5). As you begin this study, what are two key things you would like to see being done in your district to improve student achievement because of work at your board table?

1.

2.

Key Words

In the original Lighthouse study the paired districts had similar demographics, yet they were “significantly different in knowledge, beliefs and actions.” (p. 6)

As you begin this study, what are some beliefs about student learning you have heard expressed or have expressed, at your board table?

1.

2.

“The Lighthouse Research studies frame five main leadership roles of the board in improving student learning and key actions of the board within these roles.” (p. 7)

Your board takes important, meaningful actions at every board meeting. As you begin this study, what is an action that your board has taken that you believe has actually resulted in improving student learning?

Module 1

Chapter 1: Committing to High Expectations for All (p. 9-21)

Case Study: 'Yes!' Raised Expectations, Persistence Pay Off (p. 105-107)

No Excuses

The Lighthouse research (p. 16-17) shows that boards in low-achieving districts made excuses about why some students, or groups of students, were not succeeding. In the high-achieving districts, the boards had a no-excuses attitude. What are three excuses that are sometimes made in your district for students not achieving to higher levels? And how do the lessons from the great gains districts and the case study districts help refute those excuses?

1. Excuse

Rationale for No Excuses

2. Excuse

Rationale for No Excuses

3. Excuse

Rationale for No Excuses

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What do you feel are the two most critical attributes of the great gains districts described on p. 10-11? What must be happening for these districts to commit to high expectations?

- 1.

- 2.

Responsibilities

Chapter 1 discusses what board leaders can do in order to commit to high expectations for all. Think about this chapter and the first case study and consider the respective responsibilities for boards, superintendents and others. Be as specific as possible. (Yes, they worked to overcome apathy and the status quo but how did they do that? What actions did they take?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were very important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board's role was related to other roles. (A quick beginning of this work is illustrated below — see how many other roles and connections you can fill in.)

Boards	Superintendents	Others
Board members developed a clearer understanding of current levels of student achievement in the district (p. 17)	Superintendent provides information regarding how students are doing. (p. 105)	Staff and community develop a clearer picture of needs, better prepared to support change. (p. 17 & p. 106) Principals become strong communicators of district needs to staff.

Key Words

“District leaders took a stance against the common thinking that some groups of children cannot or do not learn well.” (p. 10)

What are two important actions that a board could do to “take a stance?”

1.

2.

“Administrators and teachers shared the conviction that all students could be successful provided they had adequate support and high-quality instruction.” (p. 11)

What might a board do to help build shared conviction that all students can be successful? (Think about what it would take for conviction that is shared by the board, the administration, the staff and all who contribute to the school system.)

“When the board starts discussing the need for improved results, it can be intimidating to the people who work in the district.” (p. 19)

What could a board do that would help staff see this work of the board as an essential challenge rather than intimidation? How can a board make the case that high expectations matter?

“While board members maintained their pride in a good school district, they came to agreement: If more is possible for our students, why wouldn’t we want it?” (p. 105)

This case study describes a district in which many students were already doing very well. What are some beliefs you hear expressed in these board members’ voices that helped them overcome the complacency of a “most of our kids are doing okay” attitude? How can a board approach the need for improvement while still maintaining their pride in the system?

Making a Change

What do you see as the key ingredients for successful change in the case study: 'Yes!' Raised Expectations, Persistence Pay Off?

What do you see as the key turning points?

Module 1: Overall Conclusions and Implications



Based on your learning in this module, in what ways have your actions as a board-superintendent team been consistent with a **commitment to high expectations**? What are your strengths? In what areas might you want to improve? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well and areas that could be stronger.

Module 2

Chapter 2: Aiming for the Core: Improving Instruction for Each Student (p. 22-30)

Case Study: Rude Awakening Sparks Commitment to Improve (p. 108-110)

Focusing on Instruction



The Lighthouse research indicates that boards in high-achieving districts knew what was going on in the district in relation to curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff development. (p. 27) The case study describes specific steps taken by the Wall Lake View Auburn school board in just this kind of learning. (p. 108-110) As you read this chapter and the case study, what do you feel are essential actions for a board that wants to focus on the core of improved instruction?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What do you feel are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p. 23-24? What must be happening for districts to focus on the core?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 2 discusses the board’s responsibility to aim for the core and focus on improving instruction for each student. Think about this chapter and the second case study and consider the respective responsibilities of the board, the superintendent and others. Be as specific as possible. (“Yes, the board-superintendent team and district leaders...ensure the primary focus and accountability is on instructional improvement” (p. 29), but how did they do that exactly? What did they do?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were very important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board’s role was related to other roles.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

Key Words

“...leaders came to the same conclusion: To improve student achievement they needed to emphasize a key factor within their control—improving instruction.” (p. 23)

How did this chapter illustrate that improved instruction is a factor over which the board has some control?

“Our research work, based upon millions of student achievement records, clearly indicates that difference in teacher effectiveness is the single largest factor affecting academic growth of populations of students.” –William Sanders (p. 24)

What might your board do to convey their belief in the power of instruction? How did the boards described in this chapter and in the case study overcome the tendency to emphasize other factors affecting student achievement at the expense of a focus on improved instruction?

“A ‘rude awakening’ served as the catalyst that sparked the school board, staff and superintendent...to make tremendous strides in student achievement, but it was shared leadership and a common mission that continue to make marked differences in student achievement in the district.” (p. 108)

This case study describes a letter from the state as the catalyst for the district’s “rude awakening.” What kind of circumstances exist in your district that would help “awaken” the district to the need to make strides in student achievement? How clear is your common mission? How clear is it to your board superintendent team? To your community?

“If we truly believed every child could learn...we would be relentless...” – Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik (p. 26)

How do Slavin, Madden, Dolan and Wasik describe the five actions a “relentless” district would take? How could your district be more “relentless?”

Making a Change

What do you see as the key ingredients for successful change in the case study: “Rude Awakening Sparks Shared Commitment to Improve”?

Once the letter was received, what happened to keep the district from simply making excuses?

Module 2: Overall Conclusions and Implications



Based on your learning in this module, in what ways have your actions as a board-superintendent team been consistent with a focus on improved instruction? What are your strengths? In what areas might you want to improve? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well and areas that could be stronger.

Module 3

Chapter 3: Setting Clear and Focused Goals (p. 31-41)

Case Study: The Galvanizing Impact of a Single Goal (p. 111-114)

Goals and Initiatives



The Lighthouse research indicates that boards in high-achieving districts not only knew what the goals were, they established the goals and could describe initiatives in place to meet them. (p. 36) The Wake County case study describes the pervasive districtwide impact of a single focused goal. (p. 111-114) As you read this chapter and the case study, what do you feel are essential actions for a board that wants to use goals as a powerful lever to get the district moving toward high achievement for all?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What do you feel are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p. 32-33? What must be happening for districts to use focused goals to improve student achievement?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 3 discusses what board leaders can do in order to ensure meaningful goals exist and that they actually mean something to staff and for students. Think about this chapter and the Wake County case study and consider the respective responsibilities of the boards, superintendents and others. (Yes, the use of goals seems to have a “statistically significant correlation with above-average student achievement” (p. 33) but every district has goals. What made these goals really have a significant impact?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were very important? What were superintendents doing? What were actions others were taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board’s role was related to other roles. Keep in mind this important rule of thumb: Boards describe what they want to see happen, administration and other staff decide how to make it happen.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

Key Words

“By concentrating their efforts on clear, measurable, yet reachable goals, they are able to **build momentum** for success in other areas.” (p. 31)

How do the Lighthouse II districts (p. 37) and the Wake County case study (p. 111-114) provide illustrations of using focused goals to build momentum within the system?

“Moving...to measurable student learning goals...is delicate work that requires clear **systematic effort** and, in the early going, **strong district-level interest and commitment.**” (p. 34)

Schmoker’s insistence that this work be at the district level, rather than building by building, is an important message for school boards. How does this book describe the role of the board in keeping that strong district-level commitment? What must be done at the board level?

“Select [the] area to get the lion’s share of attention, even as you **balance** the need to continue to attend to other areas.” (p. 38) “While other areas are attended to, this focus area will receive the lion’s share of districtwide attention and resources, in order to increase the implementation” of new instructional strategies. (p. 40)

Maintaining this balance is hard work. What can the board do to ensure that the district does not lose sight of its accountability and achievement in other areas, while still maintaining a strong emphasis on and total commitment to the focus goal?

“...you’ll have to continue ‘sell it,’ to **build commitment** and ownership in the goal area.” (p. 39)

How do you see the districts described in Chapter 3 and in the Wake County case study building commitment for their goals? What are boards doing to ensure staff members know the importance of these goals to the board and to the children of the school district?

Making a Change

What do you see as the key ingredients for successful change in the case study: “Setting Clear and Focused Goals?”

What enabled the Wake County Board of Education to move beyond having 8 or 11 goals to creating a single goal? What helped them stick to it?

Module 3: Overall Conclusions and Implications



Based on your learning in this module, in what ways have your actions as a board-superintendent team been consistent with **setting clear, focused goals** that truly drive improvement? What are your strengths? In what areas might you want to improve? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well and areas that could be stronger.

Module 4

Chapter 4: Making Professional Development Relevant and Useful (p. 42-53)

Case Study: Charting a New Course (p. 115-117)

The Power of Professional Development



The Lighthouse research indicates that boards in high achieving districts could describe the link between teacher training and board or district goals. (p. 48) Making that connection between strong focused goals aimed at a clear vision of improvement and staff development is echoed in the Muscatine case study. (p.115-117) As you read this chapter and the case study, what do you feel are essential actions for a board that believes in the power and the possibilities of teacher learning?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What do you feel are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p. 43-44? What must be happening for districts to “build strong collaborative work cultures” (p. 42) that give teachers the skills to improve student learning?

1.

2.

3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 4 discusses what board leaders can do in order to create a work culture in which learning is not confined to students. Think about this chapter and the Muscatine case study and consider the respective responsibilities of the boards, superintendents and others. (Teachers learning and applying new skills can make all the difference for a child’s learning. But “professional development systems that change achievement are still relatively rare.” (p. 46) What can boards do to ensure such systems are the rule rather than the exception in their school district?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board’s role related to other roles. Keep in mind this important rule of thumb: Boards describe what they want to see happen, administration and other staff decide how to make it happen.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

Key Words

“I am enjoying learning and growing with my students. The scientific research-based strategies that we are learning in professional development are evident every day in my classroom.” – Darlys, an Iowa elementary school teacher (p. 47)

Darlys had taught for over 20 years when she made this statement. What kind of support can the board/superintendent team offer to teachers to help ensure all of them have the opportunity to develop this kind of response to good staff development?

“Use board **policy** to **send the message** that the priority for district-sponsored professional development is to align with academic improvement goals.” (p. 50)

Based on your reading, what are some key things a board policy on staff development should include?

“Legislative **advocacy** must be a ‘**habit**’ of your board’s leadership work—a key part of the board’s role in building the public will for academic achievement.” (p.53)

Why is advocacy, with the legislature and with your community, terribly important for the success of professional development in your school district? What are some key ways you as a board can develop this advocacy muscle and use it effectively in the best interests of teacher learning?

“Peer coaching brings a **95 percent application** of a new teaching skill.” (p. 45)

How is peer coaching defined? What will it take from boards to ensure this practice is standard procedure for staff development in their district?

Making a Change

“...[the board] set a vision of high expectations...[and] the board-superintendent team established a culture...that supports [the vision].” (p. 117)

What enabled the Muscatine board-superintendent team to move beyond the words of their vision and put those words into action? What were three or four key steps they took?

Module 4: Overall Conclusions and Implications



Based on your learning in this module, in what ways have your actions as a board-superintendent team been consistent with **ensuring that professional development is meaningful and relevant**? What are your strengths? In what areas might you want to improve if you want your district’s staff development program to result in meaningful, effective implementation of new instructional strategies? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well as a board and areas that could be stronger.

Module 5

Chapter 5: Effective Use of Data for Accountability and Improvement (p. 54-65)

Case Study: Tackling Achievement Gaps: A Team Effort (p. 118-121)

Data as a Strong Board Tool



The Lighthouse research (p. 60-61) indicates that boards in high-achieving districts referred to student needs, as expressed by data, as a driver for decision making. The Sioux City case study illustrates a board that is focused on improvement data, but also recognizes data as an impetus for further work. (“Celebrating progress while being honest about further need,” p. 120.) As you read this chapter and the case study, what do you feel are essential actions for a board that wants to use data to make better decisions? What helps boards anticipate data as a tool for their work, rather than dreading and trying to conceal data?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p. 55-57? What must be happening for districts to use data as a tool for accountability and improvement?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 5 discusses what board leaders can do to create a culture in which data is seen as a crucial tool for decision making. Think about this chapter and the Sioux City case study and consider the respective responsibilities of the board, superintendent and others. (Every district has a lot of data to choose from. Boards could spend all their time studying data. What can boards do to ensure they are an example of data study enriching decision making? How can they ensure data is “energizing” (p. 59) for them as well as for staff?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board’s role was related to other roles. Keep in mind this important rule of thumb: Boards describe what they want to see happen, administration and other staff decide how to make it happen.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

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Key Words

“...the meetings became more of a **conversation** in which the board and staff looked at **many sources of data** to understand what was happening in the district.” (p. 60)

What would your board need to do to turn examinations of data (which can be rather intimidating) into rich learning conversations? What might be a couple of important actions to take?

“When I look at the data that says 1 in 4 of our students isn’t learning to read at grade level, I picture my daughter’s 4th grade class and ask myself ‘which of her friends is that?’...the **mental picture** keeps me grounded...” –An Iowa school board member (p. 63)

As you read Chapter 5 and the Sioux City case study, what are some ways you thought of that “put a face” on the data? How can your board make sure that the needs of children are pointed out by the data, rather than getting lost in it?

“The momentum behind building high quality data systems...has never been stronger. Although collecting better data is essential, knowing how to **analyze and apply** this information is just as important...” – Elizabeth Laird (p.57)

How can the board contribute to supporting staff in having the time and the energy to analyze and apply data? What kind of behaviors should board members be modeling at the board table to encourage in-depth analysis in the school system?

“School boards must always carefully balance that **pressure** with the **support** to get the work done.” (p. 65)

What are some specific behaviors that can allow boards to increase both pressure and support? What specific kinds of support does this chapter suggest? If a data picture is not what the board wants to see, what kind of supports does the board need to offer along with the pressure to improve?

Making a Change

The board at Sioux City had some pretty clear data available around the gaps in student achievement and now they have data around the gains. (p. 118)

The board and superintendent are very clear about the need for respect, and the need for communication.

How did they maintain both of those qualities in the face of challenging data?

Module 5: Overall Conclusions and Implications



Based on your learning in this module, in what ways have your actions as a board-superintendent team been consistent with using data for accountability and improvement? What are your strengths? In what areas might you want to improve? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well and areas that could be stronger.

Module 6

Chapter 6: Developing Leadership and Collaboration around Shared Purpose (p. 66-77)

Review—Case Study: ‘Yes!’ Raised Expectations, Persistence Pay Off (p. 105-107)

Review—Case Study: Charting a New Course (p. 115-117)

Shared Leadership for School Improvement



The Lighthouse research (p. 72-73) indicates that boards in high-achieving districts consistently describe structures that support connections and communications within the district. This ability to involve all sectors of staff in the school improvement process around a goal or a shared purpose is echoed in the two case studies referenced above. As you read Chapter 6 and reviewed the case studies, what did you feel were essential actions for a board that wants to build an inclusive team focused on improving student achievement?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p. 67-68? What must be happening for districts to develop widespread leadership and collaboration?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 6 discusses what people in leadership can do to ensure a powerful guiding coalition emerges which ultimately unites the entire district around school improvement efforts. Think about this chapter and the two case studies you reviewed and consider the respective roles of the board, superintendent and others. (This is an important area for board-superintendent teams to consider. You can't do it alone. And yet you have to determine individual responsibilities for involving others. Whose job is it, or is it everyone's job, to provide a model of collaboration and a commitment to shared purpose which draws others into the effort? And if it is a job for both the board and the superintendent, what specific "tasks" will they perform? This is outlined in both the chapter and the case studies.) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were very important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board's role was related to other roles. Keep in mind this important rule of thumb: Boards describe what they want to see happen, administration and other staff decide how to make it happen.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

Key Words

“...school improvement **can’t depend on the vision or drive of one person** or even a small group of people. That drive—and the knowledge-base to get results—must be owned by large majorities of educators.” (p. 71)

How do the two case studies referenced at the introduction to this module illustrate that “shared drive?” What was happening in these districts that ensures the drive was indeed shared by more than just the board and the superintendent? How did the board and the superintendent serve as catalysts for that drive?

In the Lighthouse II districts “the district leadership team served as an instrumental group for the board to carry out its role of monitoring and supporting improvement efforts, acting as a conduit between the board/superintendent team and the staff.” (p. 73)

How does your board-superintendent team relate to the district leadership team? How do you hear from them as a whole board? What are some ways this relationship could be strengthened? What do the studies of great gains school districts help you think about as you consider ways to strengthen relationships throughout the system? What supports could the board give to those relationships?

“I think the key is that we constantly communicate to the staff that **we care as much** about what they are doing **as they do.**” – Bruce Roetman (p. 107)

How can your board nurture this kind of communication between the board and the staff?

“Most people won’t go on the long march unless they see **compelling evidence** within six to 18 months that the journey is producing expected results.” – John Kotter (p. 77)

School improvement is a very long march. Celebrating the wins of staff and students becomes very important. This is a way for boards to show they appreciate what staff are doing. What compelling evidence can your board highlight?

Making a Change

You were asked to review two case studies for this chapter. What do leaders from Sioux Center and Muscatine describe as happening that allows them to build real commitment to a shared purpose? In these case studies what are some pivotal turning points that built that shared commitment?

Module 6: Overall Conclusions and Implications



What are some implications for your board if you want to create broad-based leadership and a culture of collaboration around a shared purpose of improving student achievement? What are your board's strengths in this area? In what areas might you want to improve? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well and areas that could be stronger.

Module 7

Chapter 7: Connecting with the Community (p. 78-86)

Case Study: Focusing Parents and the Community on Achievement (p. 121-122)

Engaging an Entire Community



The Lighthouse research (p. 82-83) indicates that boards in high-achieving districts were able to identify ways they had connected with and listened to their community. In the Romulus school district case study, community involvement was a complex process that received a great deal of support and attention. This ability to ensure that community values and energies are a part of the school improvement process is a difficult but essential responsibility. As you read Chapter 7 and reviewed the case study, what did you feel were essential actions for a board that wants to make a firm, meaningful connection with the community?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p. 79-80? What must be happening for districts to engage community support and employ community energy?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 7 discusses what people in leadership can do to ensure a connection with the community that builds support for school improvement efforts. Think about this chapter and the Romulus case study and consider the respective responsibilities of the board, superintendent and others. (This is a critical area for board consideration, since the board members are elected representatives of the community. What specific actions can a board take to empower and engage community members? All Iowa schools are “Community Schools.” How can boards make that term resonate with a real feeling of responsibility for all community members to help ensure all students have the best possible opportunity to learn?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were very important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board’s role was related to other roles.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

Key Words

“District leadership and school leadership **persistently** sought ways to increase participation of their communities.” (p. 79)

Community involvement efforts can be discouraging. The low-achieving districts in the Lighthouse research felt there was not much they could do to involve their community. (p. 82) How can the board help ensure that staff is persistent in their involvement of the public? How can the board be persistent in its pursuit of public involvement in board work, in the meetings of the board, and in school board elections?

In the Lighthouse II districts, **two themes** emerged about the boards’ work with their communities. (p. 83)

What were the two themes which emerged? How are these themes echoed in the Romulus case study?

“Be the **champions** for the change effort in your community.” (p. 85)

What are the blockers to change in your community? How might your board begin to work around those roadblocks? What are some suggestions made in this chapter?

Research shows that “when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.” (p. 80)

How well does your community understand this concept? How could the board make the importance of their role more apparent to them?

Making a Change

What focused the Romulus school district on intense community involvement efforts?

What specific initiatives helped this district produce spectacular achievement gains?

Module 7: Overall Conclusions and Implications



What would need to happen for your board to ensure that your district could be a “best practice case study” of **engaging parents and the community** in the next edition of this book? What are your board’s strengths in this area? In what areas might you want to improve? Be sure to talk about both the things you do well and areas that could be stronger.

Module 8

Chapter 8: Staying the Course of Improvement (p. 87-97)

Case Study: Improvement is a Marathon, Not a Sprint (p. 123-125)

Putting the Continuous into School Improvement



The Lighthouse research (p. 92-93) indicates that boards in high-achieving districts understood the importance of sticking with school improvement. In the case study, Cedar Rapids has seen the benefit of a “Plan, Do, Study, Act” cycle that is ongoing. As you read Chapter 8 and reviewed the case study, what did you feel were essential actions for a board that wants to make sure that the district does not give up on school improvement, but rather keeps providing needed resources to efforts that support improvement?

Lessons from Great Gains Districts



What are two or three critical attributes of the great gains school districts described on p.88-89? What must be happening for districts to commit to a long-term focus on school improvement?”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Responsibilities

Chapter 8 discusses what people in leadership can do to ensure continual, ongoing, never give-up school improvement efforts. Think about this chapter and the Cedar Rapids case study and consider the respective responsibilities of the board, superintendents and others. (Board members can receive pressure from a variety of sources to give up on improvement efforts. Requests for resources to be channeled to other areas, a desire for a “quick fix,” frustrated responses from those who are being asked to change...all these are negative forces which are brought to bear on school board members. This makes their clarity about the need for change even more essential. What are some actions board-superintendent teams can take to solidify their willingness to “hang in there” in response to these forces?) Some actions will be the same; some will be unique to each position. Make a quick outline. In your reading, what board actions did you think were very important? What were superintendents doing? What actions were others taking? What was the connection of the board to all these actions? Try drawing some connecting lines to show how the board’s role was related to other roles.

Boards	Superintendents	Others

Key Words

“The school board plays an important role through its steady commitment to improvement and focus on results.” (p. 87)

How does your board show its commitment to improvement? What are some ways you can keep that commitment steady not letting it waver in the face of community or staff “push-back?”

“Staying the course involved anticipating future changes in leadership and personnel and ensuring that those joining the district [understand and share] the commitment to improvement in the focus area.” (p. 93)

What did the Lighthouse II districts do to ensure their new board members were informed about what was happening in the main focus areas? What can your board do to ensure that once goals and focus is established, that new board members can share in this commitment?

“...you must have the will to prioritize the resources needed for staff to be successful.” (p. 94)

This chapter contains good advice on how to sustain the will for improvement. How can your board sustain the will for ongoing support for school improvement? Can you point to ways in which your board has prioritized resources, or could prioritize resources, which would build the skill as well as the will for school improvement efforts?

“Reaching success means making the drive to accomplish results a filter for everything you do...” (p. 97)

How can your board “filter” its time and energies at the board table to ensure your actions are aligned with your primary school improvement goals?

Making a Change

The Cedar Rapids school district worked hard at turning “random acts of improvement” (p. 124) into solid long-term full system alignment around accountability for school improvement. What were the key ingredients of this alignment?

Module 8: Overall Conclusions and Implications



As this chapter points out, for a system to go from good to great, there is no one single action that happens at one isolated point in time.

“There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Rather, the process resembled relentlessly pushing a giant heavy flywheel in one direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough and beyond.” –Jim Collins (p. 91)

What specific steps can your board take to put their shoulders to the flywheel and not hesitate or stop when the going gets difficult?

Module 9

Conclusion: The Board-Superintendent Team Learning Together (p. 98-103)

The Power of Boards and Superintendents Learning Together



This chapter points out the importance of the board-superintendent team leading and learning together. How do you see your board-superintendent team being strengthened by its shared learning? Hopefully this work with the Leadership for Student Learning book has been a shared learning experience that has united your leadership team. What did you notice happening as you worked together?

Concluding With a Learning Plan



This final chapter points up the importance of using effective policy making and information to focus and unite the work of your board-superintendent team. You have been studying the information in Leadership for Student Learning. With every chapter you have taken time to consider what overall conclusions and implications the chapter held for you. Take a quick look at the answers to those eight questions. What raised the most interest in your board? What did you see, as a board, was the biggest “gap” from where you are now to where you would like to be? Then talk about two or three big areas of work that seem to suggest themselves as most important to your board. Be sure to let IASB know what these areas are, so that we can help you take your next steps.

An example might look something like this:

Focus Area of Learning and Work: We must get clear, as a board and as a system, on high expectations for all children.

Steps we will take to strengthen our board’s knowledge and leadership:

- Study the data around where we are right now in reading and math. We will look to see if students are typically making a year’s growth in a year’s time.
- Ask staff to help us understand what “proficient” really represents when we look at ITBS data.
- Look hard at a variety of data and try to narrow our focus.

Focus Area of Learning and Work: _____

Steps we will take to strengthen our board’s knowledge and leadership:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Focus Area of Learning and Work: _____

Steps we will take to strengthen our board's knowledge and leadership:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Focus Area of Learning and Work: _____

Steps we will take to strengthen our board's knowledge and leadership:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Planning Your Study of Leadership for Student Learning

Possible time schedules. Consider your board and their individual needs.

Option 1:

One way to use the book with a whole board is to schedule three two-hour workshops for the board to discuss the questions in the study guide. Each workshop would cover several modules. This has the advantage of keeping the discussion going, allowing time for in-depth discussion of topics of interest and creating some immediate focus. It has the disadvantage of requiring solid blocks of board member and administrative time. Another disadvantage is that the board will be considering three to four chapters at a time. For some this may seem to be a lot to remember and a lot of reading prior to a single meeting.

Option 2:

Another way to use the book with a whole board is to schedule a 30- to 45-minute discussion before several board meetings. This has the advantage of not requiring additional, separate meetings. It has the disadvantage of splitting up the discussion, possibly resulting in disjointed conversation. Therefore, this process will require careful note taking to keep track of what has been learned in previous sessions. It will be important to begin each of these sessions with a quick review of what was learned at the last meeting(s).

Sample Timetable #1

Introductory Session—30 minutes

3 Work Sessions—2 hours each

Consultation Session (optional)—30 minutes

Study Session

Introductory Session

Study Guide: Introductory Module

Reading Assignment: No advance reading is necessary. The team can read p. 5-8 during the session.

Estimated Discussion Time: 30 minutes

Work Session #1 Modules 1, 2, 3

Reading Assignment: Chapters 1-3, p. 9-41

Case Studies on p. 105-114

Estimated Discussion Time: 2 hours

Work Session #2 Modules 4, 5, 6

Reading Assignment: Chapters 4-6, pages 42-77

Case Studies on p. 115-120, plus review p. 105-107

Estimated Discussion Time: 2 hours

Work Session #3 Modules 7, 8, 9

Reading Assignment: Chapters 7-8

and Conclusion, p. 78-103

Case Studies on p. 121-125

Estimated Discussion Time: 2 hours

IASB Consultation/Follow-Up

(optional)

Send written report of your discussion notes on the questions to IASB. Schedule a remote consultation with IASB staff; or, if you've requested written feedback from IASB, schedule a time for your board team to discuss the response.

Schedule for Our Board

(write your schedule dates here)

Sample Timetable #2

Introductory Session—30 minutes

7 Work Sessions—30-45 minutes

1 Work Session—60-90 minutes

Consultation Session (optional)—30 minutes

Study Session

Introductory Session

Study Guide: Introductory Module

Reading Assignment: No advance reading is necessary. The team can read p. 5-8 during the session.

Estimated Discussion Time: 30 minutes

Work Session #1 Module 1

Reading Assignment: Chapter 1, p. 9-21;
Case Study on p. 105-107

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #2 Module 2

Reading Assignment: Chapter 2, p. 22-30;
Case Study on p. 108-110

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #3 Module 3

Reading Assignment: Chapter 3, p. 31-41;
Case Study on p. 111-114

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #4 Module 4

Reading Assignment: Chapter 4, p. 42-53;
Case Study on p. 115-117

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #5 Module 5

Reading Assignment: Chapter 5, p. 54-65;
Case Study on p. 118-120

Schedule for Our Board

(write your schedule dates here)

Sample Timetable #2, continued

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #6 Module 6

Reading Assignment: Chapter 6, p. 66-78

Review case studies on p. 105-107 and 115-117

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #7 Module 7

Reading Assignment: Chapter 7, p. 78-86;

Case Study on p. 121-122

Estimated Discussion Time: 30-45 minutes

Work Session #8

Modules 8 & Conclusion

Reading Assignment: Chapter 8 and

Conclusion, p. 87-103


Case Study on p. 123-125

Estimated Discussion Time: 60-90 minutes

IASB Consultation/Follow-Up

(optional)

Send written report of your discussion notes on

the  questions to IASB. Schedule a remote consultation with IASB staff; or, if you've requested written feedback from IASB, schedule a time for your board team to discuss the response.

Leadership for Student Learning

Board Team Application for Better Boardsmanship Credit

Organization Name: _____

List names of board-superintendent team members who took part in the study team discussions:

Briefly describe the timeframe or approach you took for the study (work sessions, integrating into regular meetings, span of dates, etc.)

Select option for feedback from IASB:

_____ Remote consultation (please call IASB to schedule.)

_____ Written feedback

Payment method (there is a \$150 consultation fee)

PO # _____ OR Check enclosed _____

Submitted by: _____

Attached this form to your written learning report for questions marked with and send to:
BoardDev@ia-sb.org.

Leadership for Student Learning

Individual Application for Better Boardmanship Credit

Name: _____

Organization Name: _____

Briefly describe the timeframe or approach you took for your study (on my own, worked with a partner, span of dates, etc.)

Select option for feedback from IASB:


_____ Remote consultation (please call IASB to schedule).

_____ Written feedback

Payment method (there is a \$150 consultation fee)

PO # _____ OR Check enclosed _____

Submitted by: _____

Attached this form to your written learning report for questions marked with  and send to:
BoardDev@ia-sb.org.