

**Seattle Public Schools  
Board of Directors  
Board Self-Evaluation  
November 2016**



**Introduction**

Under Board Policy No. 1820, Evaluation of the Board, the Board evaluates its own performance each school year. The policy reads, in its entirety:

At the conclusion of each school year, the Board shall evaluate its own performance in terms of generally accepted principles of successful Board operations and in relation to its annual goals and objectives. The Board's self-evaluation shall address performance in the key functions of school Boards - vision, structure, accountability and advocacy. The results of the self-evaluation shall be used in setting goals for the subsequent year.

At the May 18, 2016 legislative meeting, the Board unanimously approved for itself a self-evaluation instrument, a self-evaluation rubric, and three specific SMART goals aligned with the 2015-16 Board governance priorities; the instrument established the Board's self-imposed expectations for 2016. All of these documents [are available in the Board Office files](#). At that time, Directors noted that a shortened evaluation cycle would give new Board members the opportunity to work through the goal process in a shorter timeline.

The adopted rubric supports ongoing growth of the Board's work. By outlining increasingly more developed levels of organization, processes, and accountability measures, this rubric guides the Board to improve its decision-making capabilities and resulting positive outcomes for District students.

As described on page 2 of the rubric, four Standards have been identified: Oversight and Governance; Fiscal and Fiduciary Responsibility; Board-Superintendent Relationship; and Board Relations & Public Engagement. Specific Indicators accompany each Standard to describe the specific knowledge, skills, and performance involved. One specific indicator was chosen as an area of focus for each of the three Board SMART Goals and implementation steps were identified for each goal.

**Board Performance Evaluation**

The assessment ratings of the Board self-evaluation are based on a four-step system, using the following descriptive evaluation terms: "Distinguished," "Proficient," "Basic," and "Unsatisfactory." Similar to a school grading scale, within each level there are also "plus" and "minus" distinctions (e.g. Basic+ or Proficient-). To be Basic+, the Board would need to meet all of the elements in the Basic category and *less than* the majority of elements in the Proficient category. To be "Proficient-" the Board would need to meet all the criteria of Basic and the majority of items in Proficient.

Each of the three SMART goals selected for evaluation was discussed at a Board work session held on November 22, 2016. One director was absent for this session and one other director had to leave before the discussion of the final goal. Prior to the work session, Board members were also surveyed about their individual perceptions of the performance on the specific SMART goals, and this feedback from the survey was provided at the work session.

In November 2015, the previous Board determined assessment ratings for its goals. After the November 2015 elections, four new Directors joined the Board. The current Board, while comprised of a majority of

new members, chose to keep the previous Board's ratings as baseline ratings for each of the three goals that were readopted this year. These baseline ratings are noted below.

SMART GOAL #1 / Indicator II-A-2 (Budget Monitoring)

This SMART goal involved implementing a budget monitoring system as part of the Board's fiscal and fiduciary responsibilities. The baseline ranking from November 2015 was Proficient.

In a survey and at the November 22, 2016 work session, Directors noted that the District budget is a very complex system and a learning curve exists for gaining a full understanding of its intricacies. The Board has held numerous work sessions on this topic over the past year. However, Directors expressed concerns about the current level of accountability for staff given a lack of oversight in at least one higher profile instance where a labor settlement agreement that involved significant financial implications was authorized without being submitted to the Board for approval.

Directors have expressed feeling positive momentum about more recent work in this area with the ongoing series of transparent discussions taking place regarding the potential large budget shortfall for the 2017-18 fiscal year, but acknowledge there is more work to do for the Board to achieve proficiency under the rubric. Directors agreed to the ranking of Basic for this goal.

SMART GOAL #2 / Indicator IV-A-2 (Public Engagement)

This SMART goal involved continued Board work to increase engagement with underrepresented groups in the Seattle Public Schools community. The baseline ranking from November 2015 was Basic+.

This topic sparked robust discussion at the November 22, 2016 work session. Directors emphasized the effort that is made at the individual level by Directors to get out into the community, but called out the limitations that come with being placed in a part-time, volunteer role. Directors cited the creation of a community engagement task force and Board participation in that group as some positive progress that has been made.

Directors also noted the emphasis in the goal language around hard-to-reach communities and the desire to grow the circle of those who can speak into Board issues. While some efforts were cited at the individual Director level, the general consensus was that the Board as a whole still has work to do on this front.

The Board discussed the desire to move from a reactive to a proactive engagement stance. Directors stressed that the primary function of the Board is to ensure academic excellence and equity in schools and that, when this is going well, there is reduced need for reactive engagement. At the same time, Directors acknowledged that ongoing proactive engagement that reaches all communities within the District will continue to be necessary. Directors agreed to the ranking of Basic+ for this goal.

SMART GOAL #3 / Indicator IV-C-1 (Continuous Improvement)

This SMART goal involved increasing Directors' cultural responsiveness. The baseline ranking from November 2015 was Proficient-.

At the November 22, 2016 work session, the Board had mixed responses about the progress made on this goal. Directors noted the number of Board discussions that have taken place around the District's work on eliminating opportunity gaps and pointed to the good work that is being done on this front across the

District. Directors highlighted the questions that the Board has asked throughout the year on this subject and expressed concerns about the lack of resources and data the Board has been provided to advance this work. Directors felt a lack of certainty around the success of many current District gap-closing strategies because data to support evidence of progress has not been provided. At the same time, Directors expressed concern about the lack of specific Board actions taken in this area.

All Directors felt that there was much more work that could be done to progress in this goal. Directors expressed a strong desire to continue in this work and the possibility of additional Board training in this area was raised.

After significant discussion, Directors were unable to reach consensus on a ranking for this goal. Some Directors chose a ranking of Basic while others chose a ranking of Basic+.

### **Next Steps**

As Policy No. 1820 states, the results of this self-evaluation will inform the Board's goal-setting for the subsequent year. The Board will be meeting in a public work session on December 14, 2016 to consider its goals and evaluation processes for the coming year.