

School Board Survey

Statewide Annual Board Development Tool reports boards' successes and areas of focus

Sue Peterson



School boards across the state of Wisconsin report they have set a high priority on ensuring school safety, establishing positive learning environments and improving student achievement. That's according to the aggregate reports of the 2015-16 Wisconsin Annual Board Development Tool summary released by School Perceptions, LLC, the company that partners with the WASB to provide the planning survey tool to every school board in the state.

The online survey was designed based on elements of the National School Boards Association's guidelines, known as The Key Work of School Boards, which includes board/

superintendent relationships, vision, accountability, community leadership and policy. The Annual Board Development Tool is broken into nine sections. Respondents are asked to evaluate board performance in each category: Data-Driven Decision Making, Board Operations, Culture, Planning, Budgeting, District Operations, Community Engagement, Policy and Vision. Items in each category are scored against the following rubric:

- **Fully Achieved:** An area of notable strength that could serve as a model for other districts.
- **Mostly Achieved:** Performance is acceptable, but future improvements might be considered over the coming years.

- **Partially Achieved:** Performance needs improvement this year.
- **Not Achieved or Started:** An area where immediate improvements should be considered.
- **Not Sure:** An area where the respondent neither observed nor has knowledge of the district's practices.

"Each board member brings an expertise and areas of interest to a board," shares Bill Foster, founder and president of School Perceptions. "The tool allows member to see where their expertise and interests align with one another and where additional dialogue and planning is needed."

A summary of this year's data

2015-16 Annual Board Development Tool Comparison

Averages were calculated based on the following weighting:

4 = Fully achieved; 3 = mostly achieved; 2 = partially achieved; 1 = not achieved or started

Item	2015	2016	DIFFERENCE
We regularly communicate with our legislators on a particular subject or bill.	1.74	2.25	+ 0.51
We have initiatives in place to facilitate leadership succession in key administrative positions.	1.99	2.49	+ 0.50
We have a legislative advocacy process to monitor issues and communicate our position to our legislators and the WASB.	2.02	2.52	+ 0.50
Our vision and top priority is student achievement.	2.91	3.33	+ 0.42
We regularly discuss legislative issues during board meetings.	2.18	2.57	+ 0.39

“The tool is designed to increase efficiencies by identifying where a board should focus their time and training.”

from school boards across the state showed boards are reporting greatest achievement in:

- Preparing for meetings by reading board packets and asking clarifying questions;
- Having clear policies that promote safe schools and positive learning environments;
- Considering referenda in the budgeting process;
- Maintaining student achievement as a top priority; and
- Having an ongoing process to review and update board policies.

“We know that school boards have a multitude of responsibilities that are critical to the success of the district,” states Foster. “The tool is designed to increase efficiencies by identifying where a board should

focus their time and training.”

According to the report, the areas where school boards identified the greatest need included:

- Inviting legislators to tour schools and discuss important education issues;
- Regularly communicating with legislators on particular bills;
- Having an orientation process for new board members;
- Creating an administrative succession plan for key positions; and
- Developing a legislative advocacy process to monitor issues and communicate to legislators and the WASB.

Despite scoring lower, the report showed that many of these areas have improved since last year. The greatest areas of growth across the state came

in legislative advocacy and developing leadership succession plans.

This is a result of the WASB working with school boards that completed the tool.

“Each district report provides us with a clear direction to customize the training needs and define the areas of focus for the local school board,” shares John Ashley, executive director of the WASB. “The tool also allows each board to monitor their progress by completing the tool annually. They can then quantify growth and establish new priorities.”

“We’ve seen boards make great strides and tackle key issues as a result of using the tool’s data,” Ashley said. ■

Sue Peterson is a project manager with School Perceptions. For more information, visit schoolperceptions.com.



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