



Time Saving Tips for New Superintendents Weekly Board Communication

By Dr. Jill M. Gildea

For the first three years as Superintendent at Harrison School District 36, my last task each Friday was the compilation of the dreaded *Superintendent Report to the Board*, a weekly message that updated the Board on activities, events, and happenings across the district.

Initially, I wrote this *Superintendent Report to the Board* from scratch on Friday at the end of the workday. It served as an effective reflection piece from the previous week and was written in a conversational tone not unlike this article.

In talking over this communication tool strategy with mentor superintendents, I gleaned the idea of opening a Word® doc and leaving it as a desktop document throughout the week. Each day, I could then take a few moments at the end of the day to add items of interest to the Board in a bullet list format. On Fridays, I was left with adding an opening and closing paragraph to the document. During these first two versions of the *Superintendent Report to the Board*, the papers were then printed and mailed to members on Friday evening.

After facilitating a more formalized strategic planning process, the memorandum-style of the *Superintendent Report to the Board* communication changed from a random bulleted list to an organized topical listing aligned to the strategic goal areas: communication, curriculum, facility, finance, technology, and transportation. During the week, as an activity or event that supported the area occurred, I'd jot the item down under the specific heading or topic. This approach proved to be a timesaver because when it was time for goal area updates, I had a rich original data source that marked progress by the week on key initiatives.

Next, I added a calendar of events to the bottom of the word document to remind the Board of upcoming activities. These improvements met with positive feedback from the Board, and continued to take a great deal of superintendent time.

As work with Word® and templates continued to develop, so did the weekly information update. I added some color, boxed borders, and other design features to further enhance the weekly publication. This newsletter type communication served as my weekly communication with the Board, so it was created for an audience of seven.

Then, through a district administrator dialogue at a team meeting, I realized that the information flow related to the creation of the Board communication tool was truly a one-way process from the variety of departments to me and then that information was funneled to the Board. The administrative team did not realize how much information that the Board of Education did receive. The approach that I took in positive communication did not promote team collaboration.

The Superintendent Center offers this information for educational purposes. You alone are responsible for determining its relative applicability, legality and effectiveness for your purposes.

This weekly memorandum might take a few hours to draft as the superintendent would need to reflect on their knowledge and proximity to each of the projects in the district. I realized that with the advancement of technology, I could try an updated template model in a Shared Google Doc and save time through creating the *This Week* report.

Now, administrators have an actual weekly deadline of 6:00 p.m. each Thursday to contribute to their department/school section of the *This Week* update. Then, on Friday, administrators are asked to go into the document and read and review the content. This tool has allowed our team to share knowledge across the district in one document that is frequently updated leaving us more time to dive into more strategic dialogue and action planning at our scheduled meetings.

As a superintendent timesaver, I now have the bulk of the content for the *This Week* Superintendent newsletter completed when I come to work on Friday and can then spend just a brief amount of time providing some edits/tweaks before I e-mail the document to Board members on Friday afternoons.

In order to save time on Board of Education weekly communication:

- ✓ Create a shared template document;
- ✓ Invite administrators to contribute;
- ✓ Set a weekly deadline date and time (Thursday, 6 P.M.);
- ✓ Ask collaborators to read the newsletter on Fridays as an internal communication tool;
- ✓ Copy and edit the document; and
- ✓ Send out weekly to keep your Board of Education in the communication loop.

This simple system adjustment improved both administrative and Board communication while saving me a LOT of time!

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Time Saving Tips for New Superintendents: Weekly Board Communication

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Source: AASA The School Superintendents Association Newsletter

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