



Oversight or Overstepping???

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What is Oversight?

Defined:

- *“the process of supervising and monitoring a project.”*
- *“watchful and responsible care.”*
- *“supervision; watchful care.”*
- *“responsible for making sure that it works efficiently and correctly.”*



What is Overstepping?

Defined:

- *“pass beyond or exceed (a limit or standard).”*
- *“to go beyond what is proper or allowed by (something).”*
- *“to go further than what is considered acceptable or correct.”*



What is Oversight?

Board Governs:

- Hires/Evaluates Superintendent
- Adopts Policy (District Laws)
- Adopts Budget (Finances)
- Determines vision/mission/goals
- Assesses Results

Superintendent Manages:

- Develops plans, systems, programs, hires people to accomplish Board vision, mission, goals.
- Monitors effectiveness and results.
- Adjusts as needed.



What is Overstepping?

When a school board or an individual board member steps:

- Out of the school board's governance and oversight authority.
- Into the superintendent's district management authority.



What is Overstepping?

When a school board or an individual board member steps:

- Tells the superintendent or staff how to do their jobs.
- Does the job of the superintendent or the staff.
- “Checks on” progress outside of the designed monitoring and reporting systems.



Micromanagement

Micromanagement occurs when a person in one role tries to assume the functions and responsibilities of someone in another role.



MICRO MANAGING

Hire intelligent, competent people to do the job, then watch every move they make!

Micromanaging **slows or halts** momentum and can sap energy by pitting roles against each other.

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10 Reasons for Micromanagement

1. Specific **roles/jobs** are not understood.
2. There is not a clear, common **vision** for the future.
3. The board is too narrowly **focused**.
4. Political and personal **differences** exist.
5. Board members see staff as personal **employees**.



10 Reasons for Micromanagement

6. Operating **norms** haven't been established.
7. No process or **governance structure** is in place.
8. No **chain of command** exists.
9. Board members have **too much time** on their hands.
10. Boards members don't **trust** the superintendent.

Adapted from NSBA Annual Conference workshop April 2011



You might be micro-managing . .

. . . if what you are doing . . .

1. . . . has to do with the **day to day operations** of the school district.
2. . . . is part of a staff member's **job description**.
3. . . . takes a board member out of the **chain of command** (communication) as established by your board policy and best practices.
4. . . . should only be undertaken as part of a **whole board** deliberation, not as an individual acting alone.



Personnel – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The school board and superintendent develop a profile of the type of principal they want in the district.
- The superintendent posts a principal position and receives applications.
- One board member asks if the superintendent will interview an acquaintance of the board member.



Personnel – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The superintendent completes the application process and brings to the board a recommendation for hiring. The board rejects the superintendent's recommendation and insists the superintendent promote another employee.



Personnel – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- Board member Agate reviews board policy and determines that she needs to submit a request to the Superintendent and/or the Board President to place an item on the agenda.
- Board member Agate contacts the Board President and requests that the volleyball coach be placed on the agenda to discuss her recent bad behavior during the final match of the season in closed session at the November Board meeting.



Facilities – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The board participates in a strategic plan process one part of which is devoted to the construction, maintenance and use of facilities.
- The board approves the facilities master plan.



Facilities – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- When the facilities master plan is presented to the community, several community members express anger at closing their local school.
- One board member meets with a group of community members to listen to their complaints.
- She helps them to organize a protest of the plan.



Complaints – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The board has approved a policy that dictates the process for complaints by employees.
- One board member receives a call from a district employee complaining about adverse treatment by his supervisor. The board member advises the employee to follow the grievance procedure outlined in policy.



Complaints – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The employee calls again and says he is afraid to lodge a formal complaint because he is afraid of retaliation.
- The board member listens at length and tells the employee he will handle it.
- The board member contacts the employee's supervisor and asks questions to get more information about the situation.



Complaints – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The board member discusses the situation with two other board members.
- The board member calls the superintendent to direct the superintendent to look into the situation and report back to the board.
- The employee follows the grievance procedure and the board reviews the actions in a Level III Personnel Hearing.



Finances – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- The board hires an independent auditor and approves the audit report which finds two areas of noncompliance in the district's record keeping.
- The board directs the superintendent to look into and correct the two areas and report back to the board.



Finances – *Oversight or Overstepping?*

- Based on the audit report, one board member goes to the chief financial officer and asks the CFO to walk her through all the internal procedures in place so she can feel confident in the CFO's competence.
- The board member publicly criticizes the CFO.
- The board requests the superintendent to review the internal audit procedures and correct them if necessary.



Oversight or Overstepping?

- A constituent stops a Board member in the grocery store to say he received an email from another Board member, sent from the school district email account, supporting a specific candidate in the upcoming Board election.
- The constituent asked if the support of this candidate was a position the entire Board had adopted since the message came from the school email account and, if not, why the Board member had used the school email account to send this message.



Oversight or Overstepping?



How many school board members does it take to change a light bulb?



What is Governance?

- Providing direction by:
 - Adopting district vision and goals
 - Adopting district policies
- Judging accomplishment of goals and effectiveness of policies by:
 - Evaluating superintendent performance
 - Assessing district results



What is Management?

- Putting plans, systems, and procedures in place to accomplish desired outcomes and priorities
- Monitoring plans, systems, and procedures for effectiveness in accomplishing desired results
- Adjusting plans, systems, and procedures as needed to accomplish desired results



What is Oversight of Management?

- Making sure there are desired results in place and that they are appropriate and clearly defined
- Making sure plans, systems, and procedures designed to achieve desired results exist
- Making sure the existing plans, systems, and procedures are monitored for effectiveness and changed if necessary



Distinguishing Oversight from Overstepping (Micromanagement)

- **Oversight**
 - Focuses on the management system

- **Overstepping or Micromanagement**
 - Focuses on individual actions



The Impact of Overstepping

- The undermining of the **authority** of the superintendent
- Staff **confusion**
- **Dissent** between the board and the superintendent
- Can create costly **inefficiencies** among the staff



The Impact of Overstepping

- The undermining of **trust** between board members and between the superintendent and board members
- The diversion of the board's **attention** from district priorities
- *An investigation by the state and the possible loss of the board's governance authority (?)*



May be a Symptom of Other Problems

- The board or the board member does not know how to appropriately carry out its legitimate **governance** and oversight authority.
- The board or the board member does not know the appropriate board vehicle or mechanism for addressing a perceived **problem or concern**.



May be a Symptom of Other Problems

- The board or the board member does not accept the **authority** of the superintendent.
- The board and the superintendent team has no shared understanding of how the team members define and implement the separate, yet interdependent, **leadership roles** of the board and the superintendent.



May be a Symptom of Other Problems

- The board or the board member does not have the **information** from the superintendent needed to effectively perform the appropriate governance or oversight roles.
- The superintendent is **not performing** his/her job to the satisfaction of the board.



May be a Symptom of Other Problems

- The **trust** level between the board and the superintendent is low or non-existent.
- Some sub-systems of the larger school district system are not accomplishing the **results** expected by the board.



Questions for Consideration

1. What can your Board and superintendent do to ensure clear lines of responsibility so that overstepping doesn't become an issue?
2. Can a superintendent overstep too? What are some examples?
3. Other questions?



QUESTIONS?



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