rub-ber-stamp
[ruhb-er-stamp]

-verb (used with object)

1. To imprint with a rubber stamp.
2. To give approval automatically without consideration: to rubber-stamp the president's proposals.

Nothing more accurately portrays the concept of rubber-stamping than the performance evaluations of Kentucky’s school district superintendents.

Kentucky’s recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) proficiency rates in math, reading and writing were abysmal. According to the NAEP, little more than one out of three fourth-grade students are proficient in math and reading, while in eighth grade, the most recent data show scarcely more than one in four students are proficient in math and writing.¹

Furthermore, a 2010 news release from the Kentucky Department of Education identified 13 school districts that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind for an astonishing eight years or more. Eight years! Think about how many students graduated in that time and suffered through their school district’s underperformance.

Still, regardless of performance, Kentucky superintendents generally receive rave reviews that are not based on the achievement of goals and school performance. For example, Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman, whose salary is $260,000 a year plus benefits, was praised by his board in May 2010 for his talent as an “engaging public speaker” and in the area of labor relations. Meanwhile, thousands of children are getting left behind in their educational opportunities in the 41 schools in Berman’s district that failed to make AYP in 2009. The JCPS school board’s evaluation of Berman is long on flowery language about Berman’s speaking qualities but short on measurable results. Yet somehow – despite the results – these evaluations almost always are accompanied by a salary increase.

This graph shows the National Assessment for Educational Progress proficiency rates for 4th and 8th grade reading and math in 2009 as well as 8th grade writing in 2007.

The fact that proficiency does not even reach 50% of Kentucky’s students on the NAEP tests is alarming.
The district superintendent is the highest paid, most knowledgeable education executive in a school district. This role demands that superintendents take responsibility to enhance the performance of individual schools and the district as a whole to ensure that students are receiving a quality education.

This is obviously not happening.

According to the 2009 Kentucky No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reports, 461 schools in the state failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (known as “AYP,” which is the minimum and most basic level of progress required by NCLB). Those 461 schools account for 39.8 percent of the schools in Kentucky. In 2010, the number of schools failing to make AYP rose to 511 (44.4 percent).²

What is more alarming is that 100 school districts (57 percent) failed to meet these minimum requirements in 2009. In 2010, the number of failing districts rose to 114 (65.5 percent).

This performance is a pattern, not an anomaly. Many of these districts and schools have been in a systemic rut of failing to meet these basic standards for years, and as NCLB continues, more districts are failing. In some cases, schools have not achieved this goal for ten consecutive years. For school districts, failures have occurred for eight or more years.

The question becomes: Who is being held accountable for this?

In the private sector, the responsibility and accountability would fall on the shoulders of a company’s CEO. The CEO sets the pace, direction and culture of an organization. The CEO is responsible for empowering a staff that can be effective and fulfill the goals of the organization. If the organization fails to meet its goals, the CEO is terminated.

Kentucky’s school organizations’ goals have not been met. Yet the school system continues to reward failure by approving raises for school districts’ “CEOs” with very little feedback, much less any kind of focused plan for improvement.

Why does Kentucky’s school system continue to reward failure?
Kentucky Open Records Act in action…

In the summer of 2010, The Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions sought out the performance evaluations for superintendents of underperforming school districts in Kentucky. These evaluations were obtained via open records requests to the superintendents’ respective school boards.

These evaluations were collected so that the process of accountability in the leadership role of the state’s education system could be assessed.

Two pieces of information were sought in the requests:

1. The criteria for which the superintendent is evaluated
2. A copy of the most recent superintendent performance evaluation

All of the information collected was archived on The Bluegrass Institute’s collaborative and public database, FreedomKentucky.org.

Example Evaluations

Following are four evaluations from school districts in Kentucky. Three of the four have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress for eight consecutive years.3 These districts are placed in the worst-possible category and represent just a small fraction of the systems experiencing continued failure.

Three of the four districts discussed were targeted by the Kentucky Department of Education in a 2010 press release for assistance due to persistent underperformance.6 The evaluations that follow took place long before this press release however, the targeted assistance is a result of years of failure.

Each district featured here is accompanied by an image of the actual performance evaluation obtained via open records requests. The performance evaluations have not been altered from the original version received by the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions.

Common threads in these evaluations include:

• Lack of detail
• No mention of goals or metrics
• No mention of individual school performance
• Rave reviews and high praise
• Excuses for lack of progress.

Would these characteristics be acceptable for private sector performance evaluations? The students, parents and educators in our school systems deserve more accountability than what these evaluations provide.
The Carter County Public Schools superintendent evaluation for the 2008-09 school year is nothing short of unacceptable. Despite the district’s proven inability to meet even the most watered-down standards of No Child Left Behind, its superintendent received nothing but positive feedback during the evaluation.

**What is in the evaluation...**

- The superintendent meets all the standards for re-employment
- The local board is satisfied with the superintendent's community involvement
- Excuses provided for low morale and lack of staff buy-in

**NOT in the evaluation...**

- Any mention of underperforming schools
- The fact the district has not made Adequate Yearly Progress in eight years
- Any mention of goals or metrics
- Reference to any input/review by the Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Commissioner of Education or the Kentucky School Board

**The Rubber Stamp...**

It is puzzling to think that despite:

- Eight years without making Adequate Yearly Progress,
- Five of 10 schools in the district not performing at the base NCLB level,
- No mention of goals or metrics,
- The existence of “low morale” and a lack of staff buy-in,

the Carter County School Board rated its superintendent as “meets expectations.”

It is troublesome that being present in classrooms and at district events is celebrated while the district falters year after year in academic performance. The need for a focus on improving the education performance of students is imperative. In comparison, the other matters are just eyewash.

The Carter County School District was one of 13 persistently low-performing school districts identified by the Kentucky Department of Education in 2010. But, the superintendent’s evaluation fails to offer even so much as a hint that the district’s academic performance was in any state of disrepair.

How can the persistent under-performance of the school district escape the evaluation of that district’s most knowledgeable and highest paid education official?
CARTER COUNTY SCHOOLS
SUPERINTENDENT SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

(This summarizes all the evaluation data including formative data, products and performances, portfolio materials, professional development activities, conferences, work samples, reports developed, and other documentation.)

Evaluator: Dehlene Gee  Position: Superintendent
Evaluator: Position: Board Members
School/Work Site: Carter County Board of Education

Date(s) of Conference(s) 1st  2nd  3rd  4th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator Standards</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>&quot;Does Not Meet</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Community Relationships</td>
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<td>2. Relationship with the Board</td>
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<td>3. Business and Finance</td>
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<td>4. Staff and Personnel Relationships</td>
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<td>5. Educational Leadership</td>
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<td>6. Personal Qualities</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Exhibits Professionalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Meets Job Expectations</td>
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Overall Rating: 

Individual professional growth plan reflects a desire/need to acquire further knowledge/skills in the standard number(s) checked below:

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.

Evaluatee’s Comments: See Attached Sheet

Evaluators Comments: You are doing a good job like the fact you attend so many school function and visit classrooms, the community notices this too and have made several good comments to this fact.

To be signed after all information above has been completed and discussed:

Evaluatee:  
Agree with this summative evaluation  
Disagree with this summative evaluation

Evaluator:  

Signature:  
Date: 7-20-09

Opportunities for appeal processes at both the local and state levels are a part of 

district evaluation plan.

Employment Recommendation to Central Office

Meets administrator standards for re-employment

Does not meet administrator standards for re-employment

Certified employees must make their appeals to this summative evaluation within the time frames, mandated in 704 KAR 3.345 Sections 5, 8, 9 and the local district plan.

*Any rating in the “does not meet” column requires the development of an Individual Corrective Action Plan.
NOTES:
2.1 - People out in community knows about personal (leaving/returning) before me.
4.2 - morale at school level may need work. But this is probably a reflection of the principal.

4.6 Would like to see more input from school personnel on procedures and policy.
5.3 The community needs active participation more. They may feel they don’t know how to present to us.
5.7 Some need to be updated or reviewed.
7.4 Make staff accountable and liable for not maintaining or growing.
7.8 Some staff says the instruction are not consistent; probably the chain of command may not be communicating.

Overall - Ms. Ge does an very good job at this position. She has shown some great leadership and skills to make Carter Co a great district. She just needs to get some staff buy-in on her ideas.
What you WILL find in the evaluation...

• High average ratings in all categories
• Vaguely worded strengths such as “good people skills” and “visionary”
• “Too trusting” listed under weaknesses, the sole weakness listed

What you WILL NOT find...

• Any discussion of goals or metrics related to school performance
• Individual ratings from school board members
• Any mention of repeated underperformance for 8 years

The rubber stamping...

There is an alarming lack of detail in this evaluation. While it is possible that more detail was available in the individual evaluations conducted by the school board members, any greater level of detail should carry over to the public document. Taxpayers and parents have the right to know how the school board rates the district’s leader beyond a few arbitrary numbers and vague phrases describing “strengths” and “weaknesses”.

One aspect of this evaluation that should be looked at a bit more closely is the perfect rating (6.0) in the category of “instruction.” The description of the “instruction” category describes the ideal behavior as “provides instructional leadership and is actively involved in the implementation of instructional programs throughout the District.” Eight consecutive years of failure hardly seems to qualify for perfect.

Knox County Schools were also identified as one of the 13 persistently low-performing school districts by the Kentucky Department of Education in 2010. This trend of poor performance is in no way communicated in the superintendent’s review. In fact, the opposite is implied with the superintendent receiving a perfect score in the “instruction” category.

Why did the school board fail to acknowledge this performance trend in the evaluation of its leadership?
Evaluation of the Superintendent

PROCESS
Annually at a date, time and place determined by the Board and the Superintendent, the Board members shall conduct an evaluation of the Superintendent.

In closed session the Board will compile the evaluations and discuss the results with the Superintendent. The Superintendent will have the opportunity to attach written statements to the evaluation form. The Superintendent and the Board Chairperson shall sign and date the evaluation document. The document shall be filed in the Superintendent’s personnel folder located in the Central Office.

RATING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>Exemplary fulfillment of performance criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Exceeds performance criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Commendable</td>
<td>Meets performance criteria and in some cases goes beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Generally meets established criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>Falls short of meeting established performance criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

1) General Supervision - Provides general supervision for the school system with specific attention to day-to-day operations.

2) Planning - Plans effectively from year to year and gives specific attention to the Board’s long-term goals.

3) Budget - Reflects an accurate knowledge of income in the development of the budget. Expenditures reflect an appropriate delivery of services as dictated by the Board.

4) Board Meetings - Plans monthly meetings of the Board to meet the needs of the district’s schools.

5) Programs - Presents programs in a timely manner for Board approval and answers questions in a satisfactory manner.

6) Personnel - Informs Board members in a timely manner of all personnel actions taken.

7) Buildings and Grounds - Ensures satisfactory maintenance of school buildings and grounds.

8) Instruction - Provides instructional leadership and is actively involved in the implementation of instructional programs throughout the District.

9) Transportation - Attends local and state meetings to keep abreast of changes affecting the District and disseminates the information to Board members.

10) Public Relations - Represents the Board as an ambassador of the school system for positive public relations for the entire district.

11) Communications - Attends local and state meetings to keep abreast of changes affecting the District and disseminates the information to Board members.

12) Miscellaneous - Performs other duties as assigned by the Board.
EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Strengths:

- Good people skills
- Good organization
- Visionary
- Great work ethic

Weaknesses:

- Too trusting

Comments:

I believe the performance of the Superintendent is: satisfactory or not satisfactory

S. [Signature]
Board Chairman

June 7, 2010
Date
Not only is Jefferson County Kentucky’s largest school district, it’s also one of its poorest-performing in terms of academic achievement. The superintendent’s performance evaluation was also the most elaborate in terms of length however it lacked any mention of significant information.

**What you WILL find in the evaluation...**
- A recommendation provided by the superintendent on how he should be evaluated.
- Praise for the superintendent’s ability as a public speaker, management of budgets
- Excuses for why goals have not been met
- Praise for the adoption of “innovative teaching strategies”

**What you WILL NOT find...**
- Quantifiable metrics
- Any mention of underperforming schools
- Any discussion on the fact that the district has 47 schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress.
- Goals outlining what progress looks like for the district

**The rubber stamp...**
It is difficult to fail when you provide a document recommending the terms of your own evaluation. This is an evaluation based on labor relations and public speaking that completely ignores the state of the education provided to children in Jefferson County.

How does the superintendent of a district in the shape of Jefferson County escape without a single mention of the serious academic performance issue?

As with Carter and Knox counties, Jefferson County was among the 13 persistently low-performing school districts identified by the Kentucky Department of Education. This should come as no surprise given the fact that 41 of the 132 schools in the district failed to achieve NCLB’s adequate yearly progress in the 2009 report.

In November 2010, the Jefferson Count School Board held a special-called meeting behind closed doors to evaluate Superintendent Sheldon Berman’s performance. The school board decided against renewing Berman’s contract. However, only a few months earlier in June 2010, the board had provided a very favorable evaluation to Berman. Which begs the question: What had changed? And, what had changed from a year earlier when Berman received the glowing evaluation included in this report?

After all, any reasonable inspection of CATS scores, ACT, EXPLORE and PLAN scores, and NCLB results shows low performance in many Jefferson County schools was readily apparent by 2009. How could the Jefferson County Board of Education have missed all those strong indications of trouble?

Surely the signs of a persistently low-performing district were there a few months before. After all, the district itself had not achieved adequate yearly progress in nearly a decade.
Superintendent Evaluation  
Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D  
2008-2009

The Jefferson County Board of Education met on May 11, 2009 and again on May 15, 2009 to conduct Superintendent Sheldon Berman’s annual performance evaluation. The Board based its evaluation on the broad areas of responsibility encompassed by the superintendent’s role in the school district and community, and on the superintendent’s progress towards meeting the goals outlined in the 2008-09 Comprehensive District Improvement Plan and Strategic Action Plan.

This evaluation was influenced by events over the course of the year that were unusually challenging for staff and community. These issues tested the Superintendent’s leadership and teamwork, including the death of a student following a school athletic practice; management of a controversial teacher assignment at an elementary school; the downturn of the economy and its effect on our district budget; serious labor/management issues; and natural weather-related disasters. The Board recognizes the importance of the need for strong leadership in reacting to these situations and our overall evaluation is influenced by the Superintendent’s management of these difficult matters.

Dr. Berman and the district’s leadership team developed four goals for the district along with strategies to achieve those goals. The district’s goals are to enhance effective teaching, enhance effective leadership, strengthen organizational culture and improve organizational effectiveness. The Board appreciates Dr. Berman’s collaborative effort in establishing these goals and for establishing the strategies to implement these goals. Dr. Berman is executing his vision through the development of leadership and teaching competencies and classroom instructional frameworks – all efforts to drive the vision to the classroom level.

While the Board believes that it is too early in Dr. Berman’s tenure to determine the district’s progress towards meeting these goals, the Board is supportive of the initiatives developed to implement the goals, among them: the reorganization of the Gheens Institute for Innovation, the initiation of freshman academies, the elementary redesign program, the changes in the district’s career and technical education program and the “nurses in schools” initiative. The Board looks forward to the development of measurable student outcomes (such as academic achievement and suspension, attendance, and graduation rates) to measure progress towards meeting the district’s goals and to the Board’s increased involvement in planning future goals and strategies for the district.

The Board recognizes Dr. Berman’s leadership in the wake of the Supreme Court Decision in Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education and his continued work toward the district’s goal of diversity in the district’s student assignment plan. As implementation of the new student assignment plan begins, the Board anticipates that Dr. Berman will devote equal time to this phase and continue to monitor the district’s success in adhering to the Guiding Principles for Student Assignment and in building support for the plan throughout the community.
The Board believes that management of curriculum and instruction is Dr. Berman's greatest strength. The Board is pleased that the superintendent strives for JCPS to be a national leader in adopting innovative teaching strategies that make a real difference in student outcomes. Dr. Berman has indicated a vision and has shown enthusiasm for implementing his initiatives in curriculum and instruction, including building on the existing GE Foundation-supported initiative and adopting an inquiry-based math and science curriculum, promoting a civics initiative - One Community, One Nation - and expanding online curriculum offerings. These initiatives are supported by embedded professional development for our teachers. The Board applauds Dr. Berman for this work and looks forward to the development of measures to track how these programs ultimately affect student achievement. Dr. Berman is making his mark on an already highly-regarded, successful school district with the prospect of even higher achievement with focus on his instructional goals.

Dr. Berman has provided strong leadership in the development of a positive school and classroom culture. He has implemented CARE for Kids in 28 elementary schools and all of the district's sixth grade classrooms. The Board supports this initiative and believes it is a strong program that has already made a difference in our classrooms. The Board looks forward to the expansion of CARE for Kids and to the continual improvement of the climate in our schools. The Board also appreciates Dr. Berman for the "nurses in schools" initiative and looks forward to reviewing how this program enhances attendance at participating schools.

The Board believes that the district's budget is well prepared and well managed. The Board recognizes the hard work of Dr. Berman and district staff during the budget crisis brought on by the nation's current economic climate and appreciates his response to the opposition raised to some proposed budget cuts. The Board recognizes Dr. Berman's efforts to seek additional funding through the preparation of grant applications and proposals to various funding agencies and foundations. However, the Board encourages the appropriate balance between the search for funding and day-to-day operation of the school system. The Board appreciates Dr. Berman's willingness to seek the advice and support of district staff in managing the district's business affairs. The Board encourages Dr. Berman to continue to focus on the fiscal management of the district in partnership with our CFO and to ensure that the district continues its history of maintaining sufficient reserves to see the district through future budget cuts. The Board will work with Dr. Berman to follow through on our commitment to facilitate a management audit of the District.

Dr. Berman has properly maintained the district's physical facilities and continued the implementation of the district's long-range facility plan. The Board recognizes the immediate and appropriate response of Dr. Berman and district staff resulting from the unusual wind and ice storms that affected the district this year and for the immediate actions taken during the recent water main break. Dr. Berman has also responded quickly to facility changes needed for the success of the district's magnet programs.

Dr. Berman has provided the Board with updates on facilities management, including information on the age of all district facilities and on the plans in place to meet the district's needs. The district's facilities are well maintained and it is evident that district staff takes great pride in the facilities under their care.

The Board believes that Dr. Berman communicates well, is generally responsive to members' inquiries and keeps the Board informed about issues facing the district through a variety of means. However, in order to enhance the information exchange, the Board requests that Dr. Berman regularly provide a summary of his upcoming scheduled activities and meetings. The Board encourages Dr. Berman to
continue to hold periodic meetings with individual Board members to discuss emergent issues and to respond to concerns that arise.

Dr. Berman’s recommendations to the Board are well considered with input from appropriate staff. On most issues, Dr. Berman provides the Board with the information necessary for the Board to make informed decisions. During the coming year, the Board looks forward to increased collaboration with Dr. Berman on district programs and issues facing the district.

Dr. Berman’s knowledge and enthusiasm combine to make him an engaging public speaker and advocate for education causes. The Board appreciates his involvement in community-wide programs. JCPS is unique in its partnerships with business and community organizations and the Board supports continuation of these important relationships. The Board recognizes Dr. Berman’s efforts in seeking financial support from community businesses and organizations, but encourages him to continue to seek ways to keep these organizations meaningfully involved in ongoing activities that can impact student success, including increasing volunteers in schools.

Dr. Berman serves on a variety of boards on a local, state and national level. The Board recognizes the significant demands on Dr. Berman’s time. The Board encourages him to place a higher priority on events and programs in the local community.

The Board appreciates Dr. Berman’s efforts in keeping parents and the community well informed on district programs through various district publications and other means. The Board encourages Dr. Berman to continue to seek feedback and welcome involvement from parents and the community. The Board has long held that family and community involvement is an essential element of JCPS success, and we respect and applaud those who spend time in partnerships with us, and we expect our leadership to reflect that value.

The Board believes that personnel management and staff relations are Dr. Berman’s greatest challenge. Now that some important initiatives are underway, the Board encourages Dr. Berman to spend more time focusing on these areas. We encourage Dr. Berman to have a larger presence in the district, to increase his collaboration with appropriate district staff, and to make decisions that support an organizational structure that promotes efficient and effective operations at the school level. The Board supports Dr. Berman’s intentions with regard to personnel issues that are crucial to improving the quality of the district’s educational program. Furthermore, the Board asks Dr. Berman to strive for productive labor/management relations, keeping lines of communication open and seeking feedback from union representatives prior to implementing decisions that will materially affect district/union relations, as well as employees. The Board encourages continued analysis of issues that need to be addressed to ensure both a supportive professional culture and high educational attainment.

The Board also encourages Dr. Berman to continue his practice of visiting schools and collaborating with principals and other administrative staff. The Board encourages him to increase the involvement of staff at all levels in the decision-making process. As decisions must be made in response to budget constraints, this communication is essential to facilitate understanding and support. We believe this practice will go far towards improving the morale of district staff. The Board values a positive climate of respect and support for staff members so that they can perform at high levels, as well.

The Board believes that there are good systems in place for the hiring and training of high quality administrators, faculty and staff. The Board appreciates Dr. Berman for his leadership in this area and applauds his personal involvement in the interviewing and hiring of district administrative staff. The
Board encourages Dr. Berman to take a more active role in managing significant issues that arise in the district.

Dr. Berman is a knowledgeable educator who is committed to moving the district to higher levels. To meet this goal, the Board encourages Dr. Berman to work towards developing a relationship of mutual respect with district staff. The Board believes that by improving his relationship with staff, Dr. Berman will become an even more effective leader that staff will gladly follow.

Overall, the Board believes that Dr. Berman is a high level thinker with an excellent vision for the district. This year, Dr. Berman has begun the realization of that vision by initiating CARE for Kids in 28 elementary schools and all of the district’s sixth grade classrooms, creating freshman academies to support the transition to high school, implementing a new civics course, placing thirteen nurses in the district’s most challenged schools, beginning the development of One Community, One Nation and redesigning the district’s career and technical education program. While initiating all of these programs, Dr. Berman has led the district in revising the student assignment plan in the wake of the Supreme Court Decision in Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education.

The Board expects Dr. Berman in the coming year to continue his emphasis as instructional leader of the district while increasing his focus on operations of the district and personnel management. We support Dr. Berman’s recent statement that he will shift from new initiatives to deepening those we have currently undertaken and we encourage him to support the effective implementation of successful ongoing programs that were underway in the District.

Dr. Berman has begun the implementation of many great initiatives for the district. The Board looks forward to reviewing the measurable results of the programs that Dr. Berman has initiated and to ultimately celebrating the effect those programs will have on increasing the achievement of all of the district’s students. In realizing his vision for the district, the Board supports Dr. Berman in being mindful of budgetary constraints and working within the confines of the district’s available resources.

Jefferson County Board of Education
Jefferson County, Kentucky

Debbie Wesslund, Board Chairwoman
Carol Haddad, Vice Chairwoman
Linda Duncan
Ann Elmore
Joe Hardesty
Larry Hujo
Stephen Imhoff

Jun 27, 2009
The review for Newport Independent Schools in Northern Kentucky is worth taking a look at simply because superintendent Brandt is among the highest paid of his peers statewide. Newport is another consistently underperforming district that has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (as determined by No Child Left Behind in 2010) for three consecutive years.

What you WILL find in the evaluation…

- A great deal of time spent discussing the setup, big plans and vision for success in the district. Unfortunately these plans are not accompanied by any concrete metrics or goals.
- An expression of overall satisfaction with performance.

What you WILL NOT find in the evaluation…

- Any suggestions to improve superintendent performance relating to student achievement.
- Any mention of specific goals or metrics that were used by the Newport Independent school board to evaluate the performance of the superintendent.
- Any mention of underperformance by the district or individual schools.

The rubber stamp…

Without any mention of specific goals or metrics, the parents of children in the Newport Independent school district are without a basis for understanding the true performance of the leader of the school district.

A copy of the evaluation obtained through the Kentucky Open Records Act contained only composite scores from all the board members making it impossible to see how individual members rated the superintendent. The composite scores were all between “meets expectations” and “exceeds expectations”.

If this evaluation was the only information that a parent had for an understanding of the performance of the district, they may think that the district was one of the best in the state. There is no indication that the district has failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for three consecutive years or that according to 2010 No Child Left Behind results, not one school in the district made Adequate Yearly progress in the previous year.
June 22, 2009

Evaluation of the Superintendent

Addendum

This instrument is being completed for the following purpose:

☐ Formative (Mid-Year) Evaluation [ ] Summative (Final) Evaluation

A. Community Relationships

Comments and/or Suggestions:

- Mr. Brandt has excellent understanding of factors that may affect school performance, and does a good job interpreting data and sharing results with the community. During this period he has shown a great willingness and ability in addressing sensitive issues. Mr. Brandt is widely recognized as a leader in the educational community as evidenced by his participation as a founding member of the Strive Executive Committee. He has also earned a great deal of respect for his collaborative work with Children, Inc. on behalf of Newport Schools.
- Attends neighborhood club events; Attends funerals of community members.
- This is an area where opportunities exist. More face-to-face time with the community could be very beneficial to the district by helping to get the message out and get the community more involved and aware of the vision.

B. Relationship with the Board

Comments and/or Suggestions:

- Mr. Brandt always maintains a professional and positive relationship with the Board and its individual members and has shown very strong diplomatic skills in this regard. He adequately informs the Board of issues, needs and relevant and federal legislation.

C. Business and Finance

Comments and/or Suggestions:

- Much improvement in this area since the last evaluation. There seems to be a better understanding of duties, responsibilities and goals. Financially this is a challenging time, a closer working relationship between the Board Treasurer and Superintendent will benefit the district.
- Mr. Brandt appropriately delegates physical plant and operations issues to Asst. Superintendent Sowinsky, ensuring through him excellent performance in these areas. He is more directly involved in financial and budgetary matters, and has shown, during this extremely challenging period, excellent follow through, monitoring skills, and ability to make necessary financial adjustments.
June 22, 2009

Evaluation of the Superintendent

Addendum

D.  Staff and Personnel Relationships

COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS:

- Mr. Brandt has been able to cultivate good staff morale and loyalty, even while establishing high performance expectations in a culture that can be resistant to change. Mr. Brandt will want to continue to establish stretching goals and expect staff to work hard in meeting these challenges.

E.  Educational Leadership

COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS:

- Great educational guidance for the district in setting the plans, getting the educational resources and seeing the vision. Standard are being set higher, now we need to focus on accountability to those standards.
- Mr. Brandt’s leadership in program and curriculum development is to be commended. While he meets expectations in setting high standards for educators, the District may experience greater success as Mr. Brandt even more strongly encourages higher staff standards.

F.  Student Achievement

COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS:

- Read 180; MAP; Ramp-up
- Mr. Brandt continues to meet student achievement challenges on a school by school basis. He appropriately delegates a great deal of program reporting responsibilities to Asst Superintendent Rye, and does a very good job overseeing that process. He has shown during this period excellent skill and determination in working with staff to improve student performance, and the record of test results clearly show that effort. He will want to continue these efforts as the 2014 deadline for meeting proficiency nears.
- Improvements in pre-school, elementary and middle school have been achieved. Focus now should be on closing the gap in the high school.
June 22, 2009

Evaluation of the Superintendent

Addendum

G. Personal Qualities

COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS:

- A man of integrity and vision.
- Mr. Brandt shows high personal standards and integrity. During this period he has shown a great ability to remain poised, even while defending his principles under pressure.

SIGNATURES:

Superintendent/Date

Board Chairperson/Date
THE SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE CHANGED

 Granted, the four reviews discussed here do not cover the entire Kentucky school system. However they do expose a serious lack of accountability at the highest level in many districts across the state.

Kentucky can no longer afford to reward failure in the public education system. This is unacceptable in the private sector industries, so why is it the norm in Kentucky’s education?

School board members must be trained if they are to continue evaluating superintendents. While elected school boards serve a great purpose in representing the community’s voice in the school system, in the end they are laypersons who are often not equipped to judge the performance of an education professional.

The use of metrics in the evaluations would go a long way toward providing an objective framework to assess performance. Otherwise, these evaluations are nothing more than subjective fluff based on public speaking and event attendance.

Accountability standards need to be established and well-defined for local school boards and superintendents across the state.

One way Frankfort’s highly paid education professionals could demonstrate real value is by mandating use of a uniform evaluation form for use by all 174 school districts.

These evaluations should serve as a way to affirm good performance and show areas for improvement in the superintendent position so that these education leaders will be incentivized to quickly address academic challenges in the school district.

Kentucky’s students and parents deserve a more honest look at the leadership of public schools. The current system for evaluating school district superintendents does not provide accountability based on metrics, school performance and student achievement.

It is time to take a step forward with accountability in Kentucky’s education system.


Cover by Nick Oberg