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Excellence in North Dakota public education through local school board governance ■ VOL XLV ISSUE 10

2021 ND Teacher of the Year Announced

State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler and Gov. Doug Burgum recently announced that Kristi Reinke, a social studies teacher at Jim Hill Middle School in Minot, has been named the 2021 North Dakota Teacher of the Year.

Reinke was chosen from a group of four finalists for the annual honor. The other finalists were Jana Gudmundson, a technology integration specialist and instructional coach at Park River Area Schools; Dana Kasowski, a Wahpeton Middle School special education teacher; and Cory Volk, a science teacher at Bismarck's South Central High School.

"Every day, Ms. Reinke's goal is to do her best to create a sense of community in her classroom, the hallways, with her colleagues, and within her district," Baesler said. "She believes it is important to lead by example and to set the foundation for positive relationships with everyone around her.

"Ms. Reinke is a shining example of the best our teaching profession has to offer, in North Dakota or anywhere else in our country," Baesler said.

Baesler has expanded the state's



North Dakota 2021 Teacher of the Year Kristi Reinke (center) is pictured with Gov. Doug Burgum and State School Supt. Kirsten Baesler.

Teacher of the Year program as part of her efforts to celebrate, honor, and recognize North Dakota teachers. She sought nominations for the honor from across North Dakota and earlier named Teachers of the Year from 19 counties. Four of those county Teachers of the Year were named as finalists for the state honor.

An eight-member selection committee interviewed the finalists and chose Reinke as the 2021 Teacher of the Year.

She succeeds Sara Medalen, a reading and math interventionist at Sunnyside Elementary School in Minot.

Reinke is now a candidate for the national Teacher of the Year award, who is named by the Council of Chief State School Officers in Washington, D.C. The organization typically names four finalists in January and the national Teacher of the Year honoree in the spring.

Congratulations to Ms. Reinke, Minot Public Schools, all the county Teachers of the Year, and their school districts!

K-12 Smart Restart Guidance Updated

The K-12 Smart Restart Healthy Return to Learning guidance was recently updated. The most recent version of the guidance can be found at <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/sites/www/files/documents/Covid-19/NDK12restartguide.pdf>. The bulk of the changes focus on not tying your district's plan to the county colors, policy updates regarding the quarantine exemption when all are

wearing masks, and merging the academic aspects of the previous K-12 Smart Restart guidance with the Healthy Return to Learning Smart School Response Guidance.

As always, NDSBA encourages boards to continually evaluate their plans, reference the most recent guidance from NDDoH, CDC, etc., and adjust their plans if necessary for your individual district and community.

Essential Worker Guidance

NDSBA recently released K-12 Essential Worker Guidance. This guidance and related documents from the CDC are available on NDSBA's COVID-19 resource page at www.ndsba.org.



Legal Spotlight

It's That Time of Year Again: Superintendent Evaluations

by Amy De Kok, NDSBA Legal Counsel

One of the most important functions of a school board is the evaluation of its superintendent. Evaluating the superintendent is the key to documentation of unsatisfactory performance and is required in order to pursue nonrenewal of the superintendent's contract, if desired. An extremely important fact to keep in mind, however, is that evaluations are most effective when they are designed and used for improving existing performance and communicating future expectations—not simply for punitive reasons and reviewing past performance. The statutory evaluation requirements reviewed below should be viewed as minimum, not maximum, standards. Done correctly, an evaluation is a useful governance tool that helps drive school improvement. In fact, a high quality evaluation process helps develop positive school board/superintendent relationships, clarifies leadership roles, creates common

understandings, and provides a mechanism for satisfying the public's desire for accountability.

A quality superintendent evaluation process provides benefits not only for a school board and its superintendent but also benefits the school community and the community at large by:

- allowing school board members to follow school district progress and learn about a superintendent's ongoing professional development;
- providing input, feedback, and support for a superintendent to help him/her improve throughout the school year;
- creating and establishing a climate of trust and collaboration;
- providing the school community and the community at large with assurance that their priorities are being addressed; and
- providing oversight and assurance that a school board's vision, priorities, and policies are being implemented as intended.

Under North Dakota Law (NDCC § 15.1-12-02), all superintendents must receive two written performance reviews each year based on the terms of their contract, their job description, and any other performance standards established by the board. The first evaluation is treated by most boards as a **formative evaluation** of the superintendent's performance and must be completed and adopted by a majority vote of the school board **on or before November 15**. The second evaluation is treated by most boards as a **summative evaluation** of the superintendent's performance and must be completed and adopted by a majority vote of the school board **on or before March 15**. The purpose of the first evaluation should be to place the superintendent on notice as to deficient or unacceptable performance and areas for improvement, while the second should document the continued existence or correction of those deficiencies. North Dakota law does not make this distinction between the two required evaluations; however,

some boards may do so by policy and/or practice.

While every evaluation process will include some degree of subjectivity, using effective tools and procedures will make the process more objective. The components listed below are key in any quality evaluation process.

- **Documentation.** An evaluation is more than a checklist – it requires careful consideration of supporting documented evidence to determine whether expectations are being met. School board members and their superintendent should work together to reach consensus on the evidence to be used, keeping in mind that school districts already produce a variety of annual reports, curriculum studies, budget printouts, contracts, meeting minutes, etc., all of which could be used to document a superintendent's progress and accomplishments relative to the established goals.
- **Criteria and Ratings.** An effective evaluation requires school board members to rate performance through the use of criteria that are mutually agreed upon, understandable, realistic, and measurable.
- **Written Comments.** Written comments are essential as they offer school board members the opportunity to provide specific constructive praise and criticism, and they provide the superintendent with useful information that he/she can use to continually improve.
- **Evaluation Conferences.** Face-to-face meetings between a school board and its superintendent are essential. Meetings should occur to discuss evaluation criteria, establish goals, determine the evaluation instrument and process, present supporting evidence, and discuss the results of the school board's formative and summative evaluations.

In terms of the process of evaluation, each board member should individually evaluate the superintendent in a

Continued on page 3

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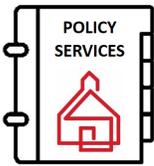
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NDSBA Policy Resources



The primary job of a school board is to establish board policy. As a new or long-standing board member, this process can be overwhelming. You may

be asking yourself: What is a policy, what is the process for adopting policy, or what policy motions can be made? These questions can be answered by reviewing resources on policy adoption that NDSBA Policy Services has created to guide you through the process. Resources include presentations on *School Board Policy* and *NDSBA Policy Adoption Process*; and reference guides on *Differences Between a Policy, Regulation and Exhibit* and *Sample Motions for Policy Adoption*.

Policy Services members can find these resources in the October edition of *Policy Ponderings* at <http://policy.ndsba.org/>. Members will need to be logged in to access this information. Contact our office at 1-800-932-8791 if you have questions or need assistance logging in to the Policy Services website.

NDSBA Seeks Student Artwork

NDSBA is seeking winter-themed student artwork to be featured on our holiday cards. Artwork should be landscape-oriented and 5.5x4.75 inches. The student whose artwork is chosen will be recognized in the December issue of the *Bulletin* and receive a \$50 Barnes & Noble gift card. NDSBA will also make a \$200 donation to the student's classroom.

Artwork can be submitted in two ways:

1. Original artwork can be mailed to NDSBA, PO Box 7128, Bismarck ND 58507.

2. High quality scans (300 dpi or greater) of original artwork can be emailed to linnae.brew@ndsba.org.

All submissions should include the name and grade of the student, the name of the student's teacher, and the school district. Artwork must be received in the NDSBA office by **December 1**.

Legal Spotlight

range of substantive areas as set by the board and reflected in the job description. NDSBA recommends that the board president give an evaluation instrument for this purpose to each board member at least one month prior to the evaluation deadline. Board members should rate the superintendent's performance as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory in each area of performance identified in the job description. If a board member rates the superintendent as unsatisfactory in any area, the board member should provide an explanation and recommendations for improvement in the evaluation. Even in areas where a board member rates the superintendent as satisfactory, it is appropriate to provide comments and recommendations for improvement, if any.

Individual comments from each board member should be compiled onto one collective evaluation form prior to discussion of the evaluation at an upcoming meeting of the board. The evaluation must be voted on by members of the board. Any discrepancies among board members about the superintendent's rating in any of the performance areas evaluated should be discussed during the open meeting and a decision reached through roll call vote. If an unsatisfactory rating is given by the board in any area, the board should detail its findings and provide recommendations for improvement. If an improvement plan or professional development plan is needed, this can be done after the evaluation is completed and approved by the board. The improvement plan should detail each area that needs improvement and provide recommendations and goals for improvement. Even in areas

Business Manager Performance Evaluations

This month's Legal Spotlight focuses on the importance of a thorough superintendent evaluation, but it is equally important for the board to do the same for the business manager.

Unlike teachers and administrators, there are no statutory requirements for business manager evaluations; however, it is essential to properly measure their job performance and assess their

where the board evaluation rates the superintendent as satisfactory, the board is encouraged to provide comments and recommendations for improvement or areas of focus.

Approval of the evaluation must be by a simple majority vote of the board at the open meeting at which the evaluation is discussed. The board **SHOULD NOT** give the superintendent an overall rating. Upon approval of the evaluation, the board president shall present it to the superintendent. A copy of both the formative and summative evaluation should be placed in the superintendent's personnel file and a copy should be provided to the superintendent. After receiving the evaluation, the superintendent may provide a written response to the board. The superintendent's response must be placed in the superintendent's personnel file along with the evaluation.

Superintendents are encouraged to engage in an annual self-evaluation of their progress toward meeting performance goals and/or to reflect on their professional experience. Self-evaluation provides a structure for considering future goals and determining strategies for achieving them.

NDSBA recommends adoption of a policy on superintendent evaluation to guide boards through this process. NDSBA has established template policies in this regard, as well as a sample job description and evaluation instrument for use by our member districts. NDSBA also offers a superintendent evaluation software program. Please contact NDSBA for additional information and guidance as you tackle the important task of evaluating your superintendent.

strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, a performance evaluation can provide a stepping stone for the business manager and the board to identify and discuss where performance can be improved. It also offers an important opportunity for expectations to be reinforced or clarified. Performance evaluations can result in uncomfortable interactions be-

Continued from page 2

Continued on page 4



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■ Business Manager Evaluations

tween supervisors and employees, but when managed professionally, openly, and honestly, they can enhance working relationships and performance with both parties benefiting.

NDSBA has developed policies and templates for its members that address the hiring, supervision, and evaluation of contracted staff (teachers, adminis-



BoardBook Premier

BoardBook Premier is now available to North

Dakota school districts, political subdivisions, and businesses. BoardBook Premier is a paperless meeting and document storage program designed by school boards and is the new standard in board agenda preparation and decision making. Visit www.ndsba.org for more information.

Continued from page 3

trators) and at-will employees (business manager, secretary, cooks, janitors, etc.). NDSBA resources pertaining to the business manager include policy DFA, *Supervision and Evaluation*, a list of duties as required by state statute, a sample job description, and an evaluation template. We encourage your board to review these resources. Many of these documents can be found on the NDSBA website under Resources at <http://ndsba.org/index.php/resources/>. Policy Services members may inquire about NDSBA policy templates by contacting our office at 1-800-932-8791.



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mark your calendar

2020 NDSBA Delegate Assembly
October 30, 2020 - 3:00 p.m.
Virtual Event

2021 NDSBA Negotiations Seminar
February 4-5, 2021
National Energy Center of Excellence, Bismarck

2021 NDSBA Annual Convention
October 28-29, 2021
Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck