Evaluation of the Head of School

An ISACS Monograph

Evaluating the head of school is a major responsibility of the board of trustees and is a requirement for ISACS accreditation. Evaluation should be conducted annually, typically at the end of the school year, in May or June.

Evaluation should include input from the entire board and be based on three considerations:

- The head’s job description (a sample is included in the ISACS monographs);
- The head’s professional and personal skills (sample below); and
- The head’s goals for the year, developed jointly by the head and the board and approved by the board at the beginning of the year.

The instrument

An efficient way to accomplish the evaluation is to use an instrument such as Survey Monkey to poll each board member using a scale from one to five plus “not applicable/no knowledge (NA/NK)” with space to comment on each item. An open-ended question or two at the end, such as “What were the head’s greatest strengths/accomplishments this year? What needs improvement? Where should the head concentrate his/her efforts next year?” is recommended. Here is a sample instrument:

Rate the head’s performance in the following areas (5=highest rating, 1-lowest):

**Job Description**
- Board Relations
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Student Life
- Business, Finance, and Plant Operations
- Admissions, Marketing and Financial Aid
- Advancement and Fund Raising

**Professional Skills and Relationships**
- Knowledge and Skills as an Educator
- Business and Financial Skills
- Administrative and Organizational Skills
- Fund-Raising Skills
- Communication Skills – Interpersonal
- Communication Skills – Writing
- Communication Skills – Public Speaking
- Constituent Relations – Board of Trustees
- Constituent Relations – Students
- Constituent Relations – Parents
- Constituent Relations – Faculty

**Goals for the Year**
- Goal 1
- Goal 2
- Goal 3
- Goal 4
- Goal 5 (if set)

**What were the head’s greatest strengths and accomplishments in the past year?**

**What areas would you suggest for improvement?**

The numerical ratings from the evaluation instrument can be averaged to provide hard data that becomes valuable for comparisons between items and year to year for each item. The open-ended items should be scrutinized for general thoughts where there is some consensus. Individual responses that do not reflect
consensus should be ignored, unless the group thinks they are particularly helpful. A written document should be prepared and should include the numerical averages on each item as well as some general overall comments.

Roles and responsibilities

The board chair, usually with the help of the executive committee, trusteeship committee, or a special committee set up for the purpose, initiates the survey and collates the results. ISACS recommends that the officers of the board do this, especially if the board understands that this aspect of the head evaluation is part of the duties of their officers when they are nominated and elected.

In the spirit of sharing leadership and offering the head a broad base of feedback and counsel, the board chair should not conduct this process alone. On the other hand, given the importance of the board chair-head partnership and the fact that the chair may be privy to a level of operational detail beyond that of the full executive committee, a head’s evaluation committee that excludes the board chair seems ill-advised.

The board chair, sometimes accompanied by the vice chair and/or past chair, should meet with the head to go over and discuss the results and plans for the future. A summary of this process, along with the collated results, should be presented to the full board.

While seeking feedback from all constituents, as in a 360-degree evaluation, can be very useful for the head of school, we recommend this only as a head-initiated process for professional growth and not as a tool for meeting the board’s responsibility to evaluate the head.

Recommended reading

General resources from NAIS:

http://www.nais.org/Bookstore/Pages/ProductDetail.aspx?productid=%7b4CCD9104-BC67-E111-9A8C-00505683000D%7d

“Evaluating the head of school.” NAIS, April 20, 2008.  
http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/Evaluating-the-Head-of-School.aspx

http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/Board-Participation-in-Head-of-School-Evaluation.aspx

Relevant to 360-degree feedback processes:


Littleford, J. “Comparables and the importance of evaluation.” In “Executive compensation: The process, pitfalls, and opportunities.”  

http://drsteverobinson.wordpress.com/tag/evaluation/

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