The AAIE-A/OS Good Governance Project

Head of School Evaluation

Setting goals, assessing progress, and evaluating performance are at the heart of any community of learners, particularly international schools. That ethos holds true when it comes to school administrators as well, and conducting an annual evaluation of the Head is one of a Board's cornerstone responsibilities.

NAIS International Trustees Handbook, 2019

Background

No, it's not a report card, not a "gotcha" opportunity for the Board, and not a collection of anecdotes about the Head of School's performance. Rather, the Head of School evaluation is a vital component of the Board-Head relationship and the overall functioning of an effective school.

The Head of School evaluation is meant to enhance professional development, as a growth- and improvement-focused exercise. The instrument used to facilitate/document the evaluation of the Head of School should be viewed primarily as a prompt for discussion between Board and Head to clarify her/his performance and inform goal setting and professional development strategies.

The benefits of a sound, proven-practice-based Head of School evaluation process are many:

Board benefits

- A good evaluation process enhances communication between the Board and the Head of School and strengthens that collaborative relationship.
- Evaluation facilitates the board's oversight function.
- Identifying Head of School strengths and needs enables the Head to better support the work of the Board.

Head of School

- Constructive feedback is the best guide to show what works and where change is needed.
- Self-evaluation as part of the process forces the Head to reconcile his or her own weaknesses and strengths — and then to improve them or to build on them.
- Clarifying expectations for the coming year highlights the Board's priorities for the Head's performance.
- Clear and frank feedback to the Head on her/his performance enables the Head to engage in professional development strategies that address areas of need.

The School

- Affirming and aligning expectations of the Board and Head promotes clarity in forging strategic direction and implementing policies and procedures.

The Process

Evaluating the Head of School is the Board's responsibility and task; only the Board really can judge the full scope of the Head of School's job performance. The foundation of an effective Head of School evaluation process is clear mutual understanding of expectations, including

- those established in the Job Description, as based on accepted professional standards (see Appendix I, *Academy of International School Heads Professional Standards for The Head of an International School*),
- collaboratively developed and Board-approved annual Head of School goals, and
- other documented goals that might arise during the school year.

The Head of School evaluation process and instrument should be designed collaboratively by Board (Chair or Governance Committee) and Head of School. Measures of performance should be linked to rubrics and data based on specific expectations previously identified. The "data gathering" should include self-appraisal by the Head as well as input from all Trustees. [Note: caution in applying the "360" model to a HoS evaluation - not a good fit for the international school context. See Appendix II, *The 360° Evaluation Model for Appraising the Head of School in International Schools; Challenges and Solutions*] Typically, "data gathering" takes place continually (if only through the observations by Trustees at Board meetings), while the formal "annual evaluation" session occurs near the end of the school year. In the meantime, if the Chair-Head relationship is what it should be, the Chair will be giving feedback to the Head (and the Head will be seeking it) continually. And, depending on the nature of the Board's engagement with the Head, a mid-year less formal "conversation" about the Head's performance can be constructive.

The Instrument

There are many types of Head of School Evaluation Instruments in use today, ranging from the perfunctory rating scale model to the open-ended narrative form. The optimum instrument should balance the merits of both; addressing a comprehensive spectrum of relevant Head of School performance factors efficiently while allowing for constructive elaboration of particular aspects of that performance not easily reduced to a five-point scale. Resolving this "Goldilocks" dilemma depends entirely upon the local context; ~~i~~n most cases a combination of the two is preferable. (See Appendix III, *The AAIE-A/OS Good Governance Project EXEMPLAR Head of School Evaluation Instrument*)

[Note: One promising practice offering a third option is submission of a professional practice portfolio by the Head of School, leading to an evidence-based performance evaluation by the Board and Head together. Such a portfolio might contain correspondence, written reports, videos, reflections, diary entries, submissions by stakeholders, etc.]

Conclusion

Clearly, the Head of School evaluation is important, part of the Board's role in supporting and nurturing the Head. Thoughtfully conducted and mindfully acknowledged, the process enhances the performance of both the Head and the Board. As one governance consultant notes, "Poor Heads of Schools NEED an evaluation; good Heads DESERVE one."

February 22, 2021

APPENDIX I

Academy of International School Heads
Professional Standards
The Head of an International School

September, 2019

1. **MISSION FOR LEARNING** ....leads with a mission and vision that focuses on the desired results for student learning.
   a) Energizes the school community with a clear, contemporary and contextual mission to build understanding and commitment for high expectations.
   b) Uses a definition of learning, developed from the school's shared culture and context, to guide curriculum planning, instruction and assessment so that classroom practices align with research and provide a medium for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
   c) Ensures a coherent curriculum derived backwards from agreed upon student outcomes and rooted in best practices to support the achievement of all students.
   d) Builds organizational structures and fosters practices for collaboration that increase teacher effectiveness and have the optimal impact on learning.
   e) Develops, implements and monitors data-based actions to ensure systematic student progress and program improvements.
   f) Advances the development of intercultural competencies in the school for students and staff to gain insights about themselves and others, build connections and to demonstrate respect and empathy.
   g) Communicates regularly the achievement of the school's mission and vision to provide evidence of measurable gain, celebrate student progress, and to use the information for further improvements.
   h) Ensures that the school's mission, vision, values, policies and practices reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

2. **GOVERNANCE** . . . in partnership with the governing body, develops a culture of responsibility and accountability for the fulfillment of the school's mission.
   a) Supports the Board in the review and periodic revision of the mission, the development of school policies, and the setting of the strategic direction and priorities for the long-term sustainability of the school.
   b) Develops effective working relationships with Board members and establishes clarity of roles and responsibilities in order to have an atmosphere of trust to promote candor and transparency that honors the school's established values and leads to a positive culture of governance.
   c) Collaborates with the Board to focus the agendas, attention and discussion on the substantive, strategic and symbolically important issues for the school.
   d) Ensures that, together with the Board, there is a thorough understanding and implementation of best practices in Board governance for the long-term sustainability of the school.

e) Works in tandem with the Board to develop and implement an effective and relevant professional and personal growth and development plan for the Head of School that supports the successful fulfillment of the mission.
f) Promotes the professional growth of the Board, including knowledge of educational research and emerging trends in teaching and learning so that the Board can establish the mission and fulfill its oversight responsibilities for student learning.

3. **HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT** . . . enacts legal and ethical practices to safeguard students' well-being and sets high levels of performance in staff so that each student can attain academic success.
   a) Ensures that recruitment and retention practices are in alignment with the school's mission, vision
      and values and reflect the school's unwavering commitment to child protection.
   b) Provides, participates and personally leads professional development guided by principles of learning so that staff continues to develop their knowledge and skill, working together to improve learning.
   c) Utilizes performance standards for staff with ongoing coaching, mentoring and feedback to evaluate impact on learning, and to build a school of empowered leaders.
   d) Creates a climate that supports collaboration focused on improving learning.
   e) Energizes staff to examine, practice and innovate to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students.
   f) Creates a diverse, high-performing, collaborative leadership team in order to make good decisions and advance the mission and vision of the school.

4. **OPERATIONS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT** . . . ensures a safe, secure and supportive environment that is strategically resourced to achieve the mission and vision.
   a) Strategically aligns fiscal resources to support the mission and vision. Seeks avenues for raising additional resources to support the mission and create opportunities for students and staff. Manages and monitors facilities, grounds and equipment to provide for an optimal learning environment.
   b) Oversees the admission of students to the school to ensure alignment with the family and the school's mission.
   c) Enforces legal requirements and regulations of the host country for the sustainable development of the school.
   d) Establishes effective procedures for student behavior and school safety that ensure an environment where learning is paramount.
   e) Supports operational functions with data and communication systems that allow for efficiency and goal attainment.

5. **SCHOOL-HOME-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS** . . . cultivates positive relationships with families and the community to achieve partnerships that will benefit student outcomes.
   a) Builds connections between home and school, intentionally promoting inclusivity and a culture that provides support for students to achieve learning goals.
   b) Empowers parents to make meaningful and valued contributions in the school, building on the strengths and assets of a school's diverse communities, knowing that parental involvement is key to student success.

c) Communicates effectively with the community, utilizing formal processes and informal exchanges, to build positive partnerships that benefit students.
d) Utilizes the external environment as a resource for learning, engaging individuals and organizations in promoting high standards that advance the mission.

6. **PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY** . . . models behavior consistent with the school's values and is continuously improving to meet the challenges and opportunities of leading a high-performing school.
   a) Creates a climate of trust and evidence-based professionalism, honoring commitments, and handling conflict directly and respectfully.
   b) Demonstrates organizational and self-management skills to focus on the priorities of the school.
   c) Seeks and uses critical reflection as part of continual improvement and sustainability of one's own and the school's performance.
   d) Uses data to support changes and effectively leads innovations that result in improved learning.
   e) Builds external relationships and networks outside of the school for support and improvement, as well as to contribute to the future of learning and leading.
   f) Demonstrates a passion and energy for improving learning that can be seen in actions, decisions and student learning gains.

https://issuu.com/aishleadership/docs/introductory_section_sept_2019_final

APPENDIX II

The 360º Evaluation Model for Appraising the Head of School in International Schools Challenges and Solutions

While the intent of utilizing the 360º model in evaluating the Head of School is well-placed, the practicalities of doing so offer several significant challenges, some of which can undermine the whole evaluation process as well as create other unintended outcomes. For this reason, as indicated in the 2015 AISH Survey, the conventional 360º process is not commonly used in the Head's performance assessment.

The Challenges

1. The Board, and only the Board, is fully responsible for hiring, supporting, evaluating, and, if necessary, terminating the Head of School. While "evaluating" her/his performance should entail a broad perspective, the ultimate responsibility for assessing the strengths and weaknesses therein is the Board's. Members of the school community are not fully aware of the expectations and priorities the board has established for the Head of School' only the Board knows the context of the Head of School's work.

2. Performance review of the Head of School should be focused on her/his achieving the results the board has identified as goals. While the Head of School's skills and behavior directly influence her/his leadership in achieving those results, they are secondary to the "main thing." Thus, canvassing the school community about how the Head of School does her/his job rather than assessing if the results were achieved personalizes what should be an objective assessment. [Note: this is not to exclude "style" related questions, e.g. about communications, school culture, etc., which reflect the Head of School's leadership without directly asking for an assessment of her/him.]

3. Unfortunately, community members with a gripe are much more likely to give "feedback," given the opportunity, than folks who are generally satisfied with things.

4. Absent a 100% trusting school culture (and 100% is rare!), the 360º model can end up diminishing, rather than enhancing trust within the school community. Even if unfounded, the <u>perception</u> that "politics" plays a role in the process can be present.

5. In its worst light, the 360º model suggests that how the stakeholders <u>feel</u> about the Head of School personally is the basis for her/his performance assessment, which logically suggests that a Head of School should prioritize making people feel good about her/him, not the focus of a good leader.

6. Some 360º models engage a "representative" bank of stakeholders to give feedback, which, in spite of best intentions and transparent selection process, can be misinterpreted as "loading the deck" with supporters/detractors, rendering the whole process suspect.

7. The 360º process can generate undue expectations of community members who may think the Board should act on their feedback. For someone who took the time to respond to a 360º request, feedback unheeded can fester and engender the perception that "the Board ignored my concerns".

The Solutions

a) Ask the Head of School to conduct her/his own "feedback from the stakeholders" process, analyze the results, and report to the Board what s/he learned in regards to her/his performance.

b) Include in the annual survey of the school community questions about achievement of the priorities and expectations the Board has tasked the Head of School with (e.g. strategic goals, school improvement initiatives, etc.).

c) Ask specific questions about school culture, communications, trust in the school, empowerment, morale, commitment, etc. that inherently reflect on the leadership without personalizing.

d) Incorporate in the evaluation process input from the Head of School citing evidence of effective leadership, such as data about staff supervision (evaluation and professional development); newsletter articles, letters, and reports demonstrating effective communications; examples of both sound delegation on one hand, and hands-on involvement of the Head of School on the other; a self-report by the Head of School citing her/his role in achieving the results established as goals by the Board; etc.

e) Conduct a mid-cycle performance review of the Head of School both to preview emerging strengths and weaknesses, but also to determine areas where the Board feels it has inadequate information to properly assess the Head of School's performance and collaboratively identify indicators that will fill that void.

Results of a 2015 survey of 30 International Schools
reported by the Academy of International School Heads

- Only one school in 27 confirms that they have a full 360 evaluation.
- 66% of schools do not include survey results in their evaluation, although many Directors seek out and use survey results as part of their self-evaluation and goal
- setting process (often using specific school survey questions as points of feedback).
- Of the schools who do use survey results for the Director's evaluation, 75% either do not have a bonus or tie the results to the bonus.
- Of the schools who do use survey results for the Director's evaluation, 55% leave the gathering of the data to the Director/Admin. Of the 44% of schools who do
- not have the Director collect their own data, two of these schools do not have a bonus scheme; one school only surveys the board and the other school uses
- Survey Monkey and the raw data is not shown to the Director. This one school who does not share the raw data with the Director is the only school that confirms
- that they do have a full 360 evaluation process.
- The overall feeling was not in favor of a 360 evaluation model for Directors. And, an overwhelming affirmation that the appraisal process in meant for improvement
- and should be collegial and in the hands of the Director.

APPENDIX III

The AAIE-A/OS Good Governance Project

EXEMPLAR
Head of School Evaluation Instrument

Ratings:

(1) Needs Strengthening *(2) Satisfactory Performance* *(3) Consistently good results* *(4) Superior* *(5) Insufficient knowledge to judge.*

The Head of School……

A. Relationship with the Board	1	2	3	4	5
1. Maintains a strong working relationship with the Board.					
2. Demonstrates respect and trust in dealing with the Board.					
3. Promotes effective communication with members.					
4. Supports the Board in fulfilling its strategic and fiduciary responsibilities.					
5. Collaborates with the board by demonstrating an understanding of and commitment to principles of good governance.					
6. Implements Board Policies effectively; advises the Board in revising/developing Policies as needed.					

B. Administrative Responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
1. Communicates effectively with the parents and community, building positive partnerships that benefit students.					
2. Engages staff in developing and implementing school improvement measures.					
3. Makes sound, deliberate decisions and follows through effectively.					
4. Strategically aligns fiscal, matériel, and human resources to support the School's mission and vision.					
5. Effectively advances the strategic plan and schoolwide initiatives.					
6. Enforces legal requirements and regulations, sound safety and security systems, and high degree of operational effectiveness.					
7. Exhibits forward-looking leadership in anticipating the School's future needs.					

C. Educational Leadership					

C. Educational Leadership					
1. Sets high standards of quality for the educational program through effective planning, oversight and management.					
2. Guides curriculum implementation and development, instructional practices, and assessment of learning to achieve the School's Learning Objectives for all students.					
3. Recruits and retains staff whose practice aligns with the school's mission, vision, and values and results in student growth.					
4. Promotes professional development of staff directly linked to enhancing student learning and school improvement.					
5. Effectively uses data-based assessments to ensure systematic student progress and program improvements.					

D. Head of School Goal Achievement					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Identify and comment upon aspects of the Head of School's leadership which you believe were of significant value to the School during this year.

Identify and comment upon significant concerns regarding the Head of School's leadership during this school year.

Identify and comment upon significant challenges and opportunities you see emerging on which the Head of School should focus in the future.

What specific recommendations would you make to the Head of School to help improve his/her effectiveness?