

CHAPTER 1

Prioritize Board Relations

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I served as superintendent and chief executive officer in six different communities over the course of twenty-seven years. Among the many lessons I learned, the most important was how to work effectively with the school board.

My First Lesson

In the summer of 1994, before becoming superintendent in Fabens Independent School District (ISD), I was serving as the assistant superintendent in Grand Prairie Independent School District, a Dallas suburb. Much to my own surprise as a kid from the 'hood, I thrived in this suburban education environment, rising from a high school assistant principal to the superintendent's right-hand man in less than four years. The superintendent was a hard-charging leader with a "take no prisoners" mindset, and I think that he identified me for promotion because I was very much the same. My stubborn, intense, and direct demeanor motivated me to make something of myself. Coming from the inner-city, where you always must watch your back, I had learned to subscribe to the idea that "if you're not with me, you're against me." In the streets of Oak Cliff or on the pick-up basketball courts of West Dallas, any slights—real or perceived—had to be answered forcefully. Trying to make peace was often seen as a sign of weakness. These traits might have made for a good assistant superintendent attack dog, viciously protecting the man who rapidly promoted me, but they didn't make for a good strategic leader and decision-maker.

This was never more evident than when I devised a plan to deal with a particularly pesky teacher and labor leader. The superintendent's support from the school board had begun to wane, and the head of a local teacher organization, who was the planetarium instructor at one of the district's two high schools, started publicly criticizing the superintendent at every school board meeting. After one particularly brutal board meeting, the superintendent asked me—as the head of human resources—what certifications this teacher possessed. When I found out that he was dually certified in math and science, we vindictively decided to reassign him to an open position at the district's toughest middle school.

This response was not the wisest of choices. Rather than considering what we could do to mend the divide with this influential teacher and community member, we instead reacted negatively and

turned someone who had a good-faith policy dispute into a permanent enemy. The teacher was understandably upset and filed a formal grievance against the superintendent. Although the administration's decision was upheld, our reactive decision-making was wrong on both ethical and strategic levels. Unsatisfied, the teacher filed a lawsuit against the district, which resulted in a small out-of-court settlement covering only attorney's fees. Naïvely, we thought that was the last of it. Instead of accepting the settlement as the end of the matter, the teacher decided to run for school board himself and won. Reading the writing on the wall, the superintendent and I knew it was time to leave the district. By seeking to stifle the dissent we feared would poison the board against us, our shortsighted and stubborn reactivity directly caused the situation we were trying to avoid. It's not what happens to you, it's how you respond, and we responded poorly.

This story illustrates how complex it is to work in the public sector with elected officials. Over time, I learned lessons about what to do and what not to do by observing the actions of people I respected. Eventually, with support from a former successful superintendent at Spring Independent School District, I developed what I called the Success Triangle.

Hinojosa-ism

It's not what happens to you, it's how you respond.

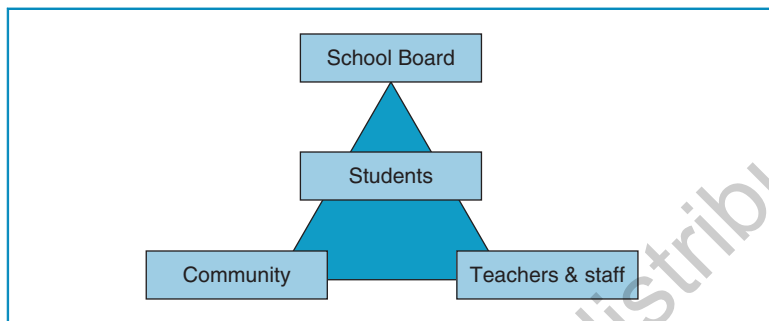
Bad things happen to good people. Good things happen to bad people. Being responsible is about having the ability to respond to the situation appropriately.

The Success Triangle

The Success Triangle (see Figure 1.1) is the idea that all parts of the school community— particularly the school board, the community, and the teachers and staff—are interconnected and serve to meet the needs of the students. The superintendent's job is to maintain a balance so that the needs of one group do not outweigh any of the others and they all work in concert to keep the district functioning properly. In the middle of the triangle are the students. They are your primary customers. All products and services should be aligned so

that student achievement outcomes are the highest priority of the entire system.

Figure 1.1 The Success Triangle



At the top of the triangle is the school board, which in most public education systems is elected by the public. *They are your bosses; you are not their boss.* The board members come from different walks of life and professional backgrounds, and they often do not have the same educational training and experiences as the administration. In most states the school board has three major functions.

Functions of a School Board

1. Adopt a budget as recommended by the superintendent.
2. Adopt policies that will govern and oversee the management of the school system.
3. Hire and/or fire the chief executive officer, also known as the superintendent of schools.

In one corner of the triangle are the teachers and staff. The staff is made up of a diverse array of positions, including direct reports to the superintendent, central office staff, and campus staff who are key to implementing strategy and ensuring positive educational outcomes for students.

In the other corner of the triangle is the community, which is also very diverse. Every member of the community has experience

with schooling, whether it be public or private. Adult members of the community pay taxes that fund the school system, and many entrust the school system with the education of their own children.

It is imperative that the superintendent have strong relationships with all groups in the Success Triangle. If all three parts of the triangle are balanced, then student achievement outcomes will be significant and great opportunities for students and families will be developed and implemented. The district and the superintendent will thrive. If all three parts of the triangle are not balanced, then the district and the superintendent may be able to survive, but probably not for long. As an example, if the board and staff love the superintendent but the community does not like specific district policies, then one school board election could change everything. School board elections typically have the lowest turnouts of any elected office. Thus, it takes fewer voters to change who sits on the board. If the superintendent does not have support from all three corners of the Success Triangle, it's very possible that separation from employment will become imminent.

PRO TIP

Color-code your calendar to make sure you're spending time with each key segment of the Success Triangle.

I applied that learning to my leadership strategy for the balance of my career. My calendar became color-coded, with each portion of the triangle represented by a different color. Because I was strategic in this approach and did not micromanage my direct reports, I was able to spend quality time with my family and exercise regularly. I learned that it was my job to coach rather than play in each portion of the triangle, which helped me create a work-life balance. In this chapter I share strategies that I hope will help you in developing productive relationships with school board members. Chapters 2 and 4 offer strategies for developing productive relationships with members of the community, and Chapter 3 offers strategies for developing productive relationships with staff.

Making a Positive Start

It is often extremely difficult to get hired as a superintendent. Among a sea of applicants, approximately five to seven are selected for an interview but only one candidate gets hired. Most boards understand that this is a recruitment and selection process much beyond an interview. The interview and presentation are important, but more significant is the body of actual work accomplished.

Customer Intimacy

A marketing and relationship-building strategy where brands work to acquire extensive knowledge about their customers, and then use that data to meet their customers' needs in unique and personalized ways.

As a candidate, do your due diligence. Have a strong understanding of who the people are on the hiring committee and gather important information about the district, particularly quantitative data. Customer intimacy, although an unconventional term in the world of education, is critical. A candidate should know more about the district than the incumbent board members. Building relationships with your board members starts preemployment. As a candidate, I was always very clear and transparent about what is important to me. I would give them answers to the questions I knew they wanted to ask but couldn't.

Create an Organic Entry Plan

The preemployment research pays off once you are hired and begin to develop an entry plan. An entry plan is designed to help superintendents who are new to a community systematically collect information about their new school district. But don't make the mistake of executing an entry plan off the shelf. It needs to come about organically, as the key players in every district are different.

I learned about the power of an entry plan from Dr. Marvin Crawford—the man who gave me my first job in school district administration, and Tony Trujillo, a former superintendent of Ysleta Independent School District, who taught me that you get

power by giving it away. With these lessons in mind, I developed a robust entry plan that allowed me to identify the people with whom I need to build consensus. I carry this strategy with me to every new job I take.

Most superintendents come into a new job overwhelmed, especially when they are not promoted from within. Oftentimes, their entry plans are totally scripted because they think they already know exactly what needs to be done, or they are generic and scattershot because they have no idea what to do. Mine is focused and research based, with the intent to build consensus in three months. It requires patience, precision, and discipline. It is hard work, but the payoff is significant.

I implemented my first entry plan when I took my first job as superintendent, at Fabens Independent School District, a tiny district outside of El Paso, Texas. Implementing it only took thirty days because the district was so small. As I implemented entry plans in other districts, my system evolved. The basic premise behind my entry plan is to conduct an interactive, qualitative analysis of the status of the district. Quantitative data in any district is plentiful—there are accountability reports, financial and program audits, and depending on the quality of the research department there could be many evaluation reports that are readily available. But what is typically not available are the stories behind the numbers. When you are new on the job, I urge you to ask the questions that will mitigate the false positives that emerge when only focusing on the numbers.

In smaller districts, I met with thirty people in thirty days. In the first week you can unpack, get acclimated to the new surroundings, and meet all the school board members. In the second week you can meet with all direct reports to the superintendent and all principals. In the next two weeks schedule meetings with the remaining stakeholders. In medium-size districts, I met with sixty people in sixty days; in large districts, I met with one hundred people in one hundred days. In every district, I met with each trustee individually, starting with the board president. Then, I met with the direct reports to the superintendent. To each meeting I would bring a one-page document with blank spaces next to prompts such as “Education,” “Work History,” “Family,” “Hobbies,”

and “Interests.” I would fill out the document during our conversation and keep it on hand so that I could remember them better in future encounters. The goal of the meeting would be to build relationships and a personal connection. In smaller districts, I met with every principal. In larger districts, I met with a sampling of the principals and key department heads. Toward the end of the process, I met with leaders of employee groups, key community leaders such as the mayor, and key elected officials.

In every system I used the same first five questions to help me identify where the district is, where it should go, and the people who could help me get there.

Key Questions to Ask Stakeholders

1. What is the most important expectation you have of the superintendent?
2. If you were in my shoes, what would you focus on first?
3. What three things do we have to do to make this the best district in the county, city, or state?
4. Who are the most respected people on staff and why?
5. Who are the external stakeholders that are critical to our future success?

The first three questions are similar but worded in three different ways to avoid false positives. They help identify high-priority issues that are top of mind to key leaders. These items that emerge require attention early on. Questions four and five are power questions. They identify the internal and external leaders who will be crucial when making consensus decisions. Depending on circumstances in a particular district, additional questions can be developed if certain matters require specific attention. Strategy and focus become extremely obvious if the process is followed rigorously. Doing this when you start your job as superintendent (aka chief executive officer) in your community will help you expand your circle of influence and narrow your circle of concern. If you believe in consensus decision-making, this strategy will help you identify the internal and external stakeholders that will help you make and implement your most

important decisions. Figure 1.2 includes guidance to help you plan for these meetings.

Figure 1.2 Organic Entry Plan Essentials

People to meet with in the first three months	Materials to gather in advance of each meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each board member, beginning with the chair • All direct reports to the superintendent • Key department heads • Random sampling of principals • Teacher leaders, especially of labor organizations • Community leaders, such as the mayor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on everything about them personally and professionally • A one-page document with prompts next to blank spaces to get to know them on a personal level (this applies to all employees) • Conduct an internet search to find relevant stories in the media

To get acquainted with your district, make a plan to meet with the following people:

- Each school board trustee individually, starting with the board president and working through the officers
- Your direct team (superintendent direct reports), reviewing their one-page document prior to the meeting
- All principals (small districts) or a sampling of principals and key department heads (larger districts)
- Leaders of employee groups and important community leaders such as the mayor and key elected officials

Have a goal of meeting people to help get acclimated and learn as much as you can about the district—thirty people in thirty days (small districts), sixty people in sixty days (medium-sized districts), and one hundred people in one hundred days (large districts). Every school board that hired me was extremely complimentary of my discipline to execute this entry plan. I typically reported the results to the board in public before the end of the hundred days.

Accept Responsibility and Solve Problems

Unless you are the very first superintendent of a new school district, you will inevitably inherit situations from your predecessor. I inherited several scandals in my first few years in Dallas Independent School District. Resolutions to those matters had to be implemented before stability set in.

One scandal in particular stands out. In 2008, my chief of staff told me that our chief operations officer (COO) had just informed him that there was a significant problem with the district's annual budget. The COO had been very successful with numerous businesses and was hired because the Operations Division had been by far the weakest division in the school district. While well-intentioned and clearly competent in his former roles, the COO did not understand government accounting and was in over his head regarding school finance. But he was too proud to admit it.

The district found itself facing a \$64 million deficit and only had \$32 million in the reserve account. It became clear to me that the COO had no understanding of just how precarious the situation was when he told me that this represented "only" 5 percent of our annual budget. As a numbers person who had spent the preceding twenty-five years in school district administration, the stakes were immediately apparent to me. Unlike at the federal level, municipal governments are unable to engage in deficit spending to finance operational expenses. Instead, every dollar must be accounted for and the district's revenue—in the form of property taxes and funding received from the state based on student population—can never fall below its obligated spending. Unlike a private business that could have covered a 5 percent deficit by seeking a line of credit, such a shortfall would have sent the district into complete insolvency, with disastrous consequences for the city and the community.

In the event of a school district not being able to meet its financial obligations to employees and vendors, the state has the power to take it over entirely. If we did not act fast, the Texas Education Agency would have appointed a master and a board of managers—essentially removing all authority from myself as superintendent and the school board as representatives of the community—to make the necessary changes to put the district back on firm financial footing. As this distressing reality washed over me, I realized that I had two choices: I could immediately resign in disgrace, or I could stay in my position

and deal with the difficult reality of fixing the budget no matter how unpopular I became. I chose the latter because I believe it's not what happens to you, it's how you respond that determines your destiny.

My chief of staff and I moved into action immediately. I dismissed the COO, and within three hours the two of us worked through the problem and found a solution that we knew would be extraordinarily painful but had to be done. We determined that the shortfall was not the result of any malfeasance or corruption but instead it was the product of a patchwork bureaucratic system that had been haphazardly rolling along for decades. No money was missing or stolen; instead, the district had been over-hiring for years. Most districts have systems called "position controls," which ensure that each position is adequately funded. Dallas lacked these systems, and hiring decisions were made based on appeals to our budgeting director by understaffed principals. Over time, the slow drip of over-hiring had become a tsunami that threatened to wash away a key entity of the Dallas community. There was not one villain, but instead a system that was in desperate need of modernization.

Before we could address the underlying problem, we had to stop the flood with what we knew would be a painful solution—we had to lay off a thousand employees, mostly teachers. The only way to do so would be for the school board to declare financial exigency—announcing to the world that we were broke. Without it, we could not have broken contracts and laid off staff. I could have felt sorry for myself, pointed fingers, and played the victim. But I knew that my resignation would only serve to throw the district into chaos and delay the ultimate, inescapable solution. I knew that this move would understandably anger the board and the community and that, as the man at the top of the chain of command, I would have to shoulder the blame. I could have shrunk from the fight, but I knew that the district that had given me my education and the opportunity to change the trajectory of my family's story was more important than my ego.

As the superintendent and CEO, the buck stopped with me. I could not shirk my responsibilities. My staff could have delivered the news to the board, but I couldn't let others do the dirty work for me. I had my chief of staff invite our senior staff to my office where I laid out the problem and the painful solution. I called my wife and asked her to tell my family about the problem and then personally called each board member to describe the problem and let them know that I already had a solution, even if it was an extremely difficult one.

I called a news conference for that very afternoon to reveal my findings to the media, and in turn the staff and the community.

This kicked off the most stressful period of my professional career. My adrenaline kicked in and I immediately went into problem-solving mode. Over the course of the next several weeks, I lost significant weight. I had no appetite, and I didn't go out in public as much as before. Prominent members of the community and the local media started to question my leadership. For weeks, I had to wake my boys up early on Saturday mornings so we could leave our house before scores of protesters showed up demanding my resignation. Rather than feeling sorry for myself, I knew that responsibility is the ability to choose your response.

Over the next few months, we kept in constant communication with the school board and carried out our plan with single-minded intensity and focus. Our plan involved

- immediately reducing overstaffing and preparing a balanced budget for the next year,
- hiring the best chief financial officer in the state who had fixed similar situations in two other high-profile districts in Texas and giving him total autonomy and authority, and
- changing the audit firm we worked with to one that would identify Material Weaknesses and Significant Deficiencies and create a plan to resolve the matter long term, especially regarding position control.

We understood the pain that it would cause, but we also understood that it had to be done. Slowly but surely, we got the budget under control and stabilized the district, which enabled us to rehire more than six hundred of the one thousand employees that we were forced to let go as vacancies opened naturally throughout the district. This time, however, we did so with systems in place that allowed us to be sure that a crisis like this would never happen again. By the end of the school year, we turned a \$64 million deficit into a \$30 million surplus. In fact, by the end of my second tenure as superintendent of Dallas ISD, in 2022, the district had never been financially stronger, with more than \$700 million in reserves. Our newfound financial stability allowed us to deal with numerous other crises that arose during my second superintendency—from a vicious tornado that

destroyed three of our schools to the COVID-19 pandemic, where we successfully got computers and broadband access to 145,000 low-income students as we were all forced into remote learning.

The lessons I had internalized earlier gave me the tools I needed to face the worst moment of my professional career. It is not what happens to you, it is how you respond. The school board let me stay and, in fact, most of the same board rehired me in 2015 because I took responsibility and I communicated with them directly.

Strategies for Building Positive Relationships With Board Members

It would be an oversimplification to say that the school board hires those they like and fires those they don't, but there is a kernel of truth there. To lead effectively, it is essential to build positive relationships with all the board members. When you have strong, positive relationships with the school board members, they are more likely to offer grace and extend flexibility to you as you correct your mistakes or work through challenging circumstances. Faulty relationships with board members can lead to mistrust, unnecessary scrutiny, judgment, and potentially even public exposure or embarrassment. Being able to survive a significant crisis is based upon many hours of building significant capital with school board members over time. It is too late to start the process when the crisis emerges.

Hinojosa-ism

The school board hires those they like and fires those they don't.

Dr. Bob Thompson runs a superintendents' academy. He is known to say, "If you are likeable, they will overlook many of your mistakes. If you are a jerk, they will look at every email, text, expense report and memo to find something to take you down."

My strategies for building positive relationships with school board members include (1) scheduling recurring meetings with the board president and other members, (2) planning off-site retreats for a deep review of a few items critical to future success, and (3) getting

to know the personality types of the individual board members and the most effective strategies for communicating with people with those personality types. In the section below, I develop each of these ideas in more depth.

Hold Regular Meetings

The most significant relationship is with the board president or chairperson. Like it or not, this individual wields significant power. An easy way to build rapport with the board president is through regular meetings and interactions. These meetings enable communication, strategy building, and the exchange of general routine information. In my experience, the longer I was in the district or the longer the president served in their role, the less frequent the meetings became. Each president I worked with had a unique style. I found myself needing to learn and adapt so that I was using a communication style and approach that worked best with each one. For example, some wanted structured meetings in offices. Others wanted to meet in more casual settings, such as lunch or the occasional happy hour. And the meetings were not all business—we had conversations about topics of mutual interest such as sports, hobbies, and family. This helped to build trust and rapport and mutual respect for the work we each did to support the success of the school district.

Relationships with the board officers are also vital, especially with the ones who do not support you and are very public about it. I attempted to meet with each board member at least once every other month. These sessions should be routine, casual, and well-documented. They typically occurred over lunch, which I chose never to seek reimbursement for. I never felt it necessary for taxpayers' dollars to be used in this way. Very few, but some board members refused to meet with me, and I always felt it a good idea to document attempted meetings in case that information should ever be requested. The purpose of these meetings is to get to know what drives them personally and professionally and to determine if there are areas where you both agree and can jointly support. Some board members run for office and get elected on the board to drive a particular agenda. It is imperative that you are aware of those people and their agendas.

Clear and consistent communication is also critical to building effective relationships with school board members. During my

twenty-seven years as a superintendent, I developed three types of communications that I sent to the board:

- ▶ *Board Update Report:* Sent weekly (typically on Friday mornings), these reports were intended to keep them apprised of key issues in the district and anticipated future issues.
- ▶ *Trustee Notices:* These emails were sent to the entire board only as needed when “hot issues” arose that might appear in the media. They were always generated by the chief of communications to ensure that the board members understood the matter was urgent.
- ▶ *Highly Urgent and Sensitive News:* When the news was big and bad, I and only I called each board member directly and would answer all their questions personally.

Another effective way to build relationships and rapport with the school board is to have members of the district leadership team serve as trustee liaisons. Not all members of the senior staff had the ability to work closely with board members, but those who did met regularly with the board to discuss key initiatives and to seek input on ideas. Each board member was assigned a specific chief (district leader) who would be their main point of contact. They would navigate the bureaucracy and meet with the trustee regularly, especially before board meetings, to answer their questions. Board members loved working with the trustee liaisons because it made them more effective as a result of their access to information and the relationships they formed with the liaisons. The selected chiefs enjoyed being “stretched” professionally and having actual experiences with elected officials. And because other district leaders were spending focused time with the trustees, it gave me more time to spend in the other parts of the Success Triangle. Seldom did I have to change the liaison once the relationships began. This distributive leadership strategy built the capacity of key leaders, many of whom later became superintendents. Depending on the size of the district, the behavior of the board members, and the capacity of my senior leaders, this strategy evolved over time. The confidence that I gained through experience allowed me to get more power by giving it away to key direct reports.

Create Off-Site Retreats

There was also power in having off-site retreats with the board. Despite having one board chair who did not believe in them, these sessions were very powerful. These are legally called meetings, which must follow posting requirements. But they are designed in a way in which no official proceedings or actions would be taken. There was always only a few items on the agenda—these were important but not urgent items for dialogue. This gave the board the opportunity to go into deep review of a few items that were critical to the future success of the school district. Goal setting, budget prioritization, preparing for significant referenda, and dreaming about the future would typically be the types of topics we discussed.

Tactical projects, such as creating or updating Board Operating Procedures, are also something that can be accomplished in a retreat setting. This type of manual or document outlines in writing the process, procedures, and protocols for most matters that a board will face, such as meeting procedures and individual board members' conduct. A written protocol will avoid confusion and will provide clarity for all board members.

PRO TIP

It is not the job of the superintendent to police the behavior of the board or its individual members. If the board does not handle this themselves, then there is nothing the superintendent can do about it.

Know Personality Styles

Knowing the personality style of each board member can also be extremely helpful in building strong relationships. There are many expensive products that will help identify personality styles in any group. There are also products that are not proprietary and rather simple to execute. The one I use puts members of the group into four quadrants: driver, expressive, analytical, and amiable. All four are very important in any group because they typically depend on the others to make better decisions. However, because these personality

styles are so different, they sometimes do not appreciate the style of other personality types.

A *driver* typically wants action. The driver is dynamic and active. The driver is difficult to discourage. They are natural-born leaders who are typically visionary and at times could care less about details. In making a decision, the driver can be described as one who follows the sequence of ready, fire, aim. A driver wants action now and typically does not care for long-winded discussions. A driver makes things happen but makes mistakes because not all data in making the decision were considered. The feelings of people may not be considered. Building support and ownership are less of a priority, but decisions are made readily. Every team needs at least one driver, but it wouldn't be good to have a team made up only of drivers.

An *expressive* is the life of any party. They are outgoing. They are in every photo op. The expressive loves to have fun and is very charismatic and persuasive. In making a decision, the expressive follows the sequence of ready, aim, please take a picture of me before I fire. The expressive is often seen as shallow or undisciplined and loud. They are usually the champions for the group. They typically are the very vocal ambassadors for the team. Every team needs at least one expressive, but not all.

An *analytical* is the serious, thoughtful person who has very high standards and depends significantly on data. The analytical is orderly and organized and is intolerant of those who are not. In making a decision, the analytical follows the sequence of ready, aim, aim, aim, aim, and typically never fires because they do not have enough data. They are often seen as indecisive or uncooperative due to the constant number of questions they ask on every issue. They usually help the team make much better decisions due to the quality of the information they gather. Every team needs at least one analytical, but not all.

The *amiable* is sympathetic and empathetic. These individuals are quiet and are always concerned about how people will feel about the decision. They agonize about the impact of decisions on every stakeholder group. They are seen as gentle people who will avoid conflict at all costs. In making a decision, the amiable follows the sequence of ready, aim, oh *mijo*, please don't aim that gun. Can't we all just hold hands and sing "Kumbaya"? The amiable forces the team to consider the impact on people. They play a very powerful role. Every team needs at least one amiable, but not all.

Every team needs diversity in every sense of the word. The school board and the superintendent are a team. The superintendent should fill the void in the above-referenced team if a personality style is missing. Every superintendent has a preferred style, but you do not get to pick the school board. In fact, the board changes every time there is an election. A savvy superintendent is wise to take this into consideration.

Being a successful superintendent is not a linear endeavor. You have to do you, but it is not about you. The district is not your district. It belongs to the people who you serve—the school board, the staff, and the community—so that the students can be successful.

Hinojosa-ism

You have to do you, but it is not about you.

Be proud of who you are and where you come from. Never apologize for your set of experiences. But remember, you are here to serve the people you lead.

The Big Ideas

Being a successful superintendent means building relationships with the school board. Here are the big ideas I shared in Chapter 1:

- ▶ *Utilize the Success Triangle.* The Success Triangle is made up of the school board, the community, and the teachers and staff. The students are at the center. In order for the district to function and for you to do well in your job, all sections of the triangle must be balanced.
- ▶ *Know what you're getting into before you apply.* Do your due diligence and apply the concept of customer intimacy to get to know the board during the interview phase.
- ▶ *Create your entry plan organically.* Meet with board members, key district and school leaders, and community members and ask them qualitative questions to get the true story behind the quantitative data.

- ▶ *Get to know board members' personality styles.* It is much easier to be effective when you know who you're working with and how they like to work. And remember, as the makeup of the board changes, you will have to adapt how you work with them!

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**CHAPTER
#1****Reflect and Act**

Now it's time to reflect on what you've read and decide how you can best apply the insights gained from the chapter in practical ways within your district. Use this modified "five 'A's" protocol (Agree, Argue, Apply, Actions, and Accountable) to journal your ideas.

What do you **agree** with in the chapter?

What do you want to **argue** about within the chapter?

How can you **apply** the information from this chapter to your own district?

What **actions** can you take after reading this chapter? And how will you hold yourself **accountable**?

Adapted from Judith Gray, "Four 'A's Text Protocol," National School Reform Faculty (2005), www.nsrffharmony.org.