Board members could talk about data on the dropout rate, test scores and student needs. They talked about receiving information on a routine basis, such as monthly reports.

Board members in *low-achieving districts* referred to data used in decisions based on anecdotal and personal experiences. Data on student achievement was received as a report to the board, but rarely linked to a decision. The board members talked very generally about the test scores and relied on the interpretation made by the superintendent.

School board/superintendent teams that commit to improving achievement create accountability of the school system and staff. There is accountability for improvement because it is the right thing to do for students and, requires a need for increased measurement and analysis. Accountability is positive, as it is necessary to cause change.

BOARD LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

"Success is the progressive realization of a predetermined goal."
~ John C. Maxwell

The Lighthouse Research studies frame **six principal leadership roles of the board related to improving student learning and achievement,** as well as the appropriate action within the parameters of the board's governance role.

I.   Leadership – A focus on student learning through a shared and clear vision, high expectations, and dynamic leadership at all levels.

- **Define, adopt, and uphold a district vision.**
  Rationale: Vision describes where the district is going and the quality of school district the leadership team aspires to create for the future. The board, through their proper governance role, works collaboratively with administration to define a vision and goals to support student learning and achievement, budget appropriate and necessary resources to support the identified needs, ensure the district provides appropriate and timely staff development to grow and improve classroom instruction, and communicate continuously and openly with the community.

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- **Establish a clear focus for improvement – define, adopt, and execute growth and improvement goals.**

  Rationale: Goals are action statements describing how the leadership team will measure success. Effective goals include target areas such as student achievement, quality instruction, safe and efficient learning environment, and community engagement. Identify and adopt high expectations to support student learning and achievement.

- **Understand improved instruction and the district's student learning and achievement needs.**

  Rationale: The board's most important role is to work cooperatively with administration to establish a district vision and goals to support growth and improved student learning and achievement. The board must then ensure the district employs a sound educational leader empowered to ensure district policy and resources to meet the expectations defined through the vision and goals of the district.

Leadership Assessment

A focus on student learning through a shared and clear vision, high expectations, and dynamic leadership at all levels.

- ☐ Board members are knowledgeable about the learning conditions in the schools, alternatives for improving education, and the needs of students. Board members can mention specific initiatives that are underway and can explain the initiative and identify specific ways that the board contributed to the initiative.

- ☐ Boards members can describe a clear direction and focus on specific goals related to improving student achievement. Board members can describe the work of staff around the goals in clear, specific terms.

- ☐ Board members express their focus on finding ways to ensure a quality education for all children.

- ☐ Board members have high expectations for all students.

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II.   Analysis of Assessment Data – Utilize data and information relative to student needs to ensure informed decision-making and modifications as necessary to meet the needs of the district and building level.

- **Demonstrate commitment to the improvement through board actions and decisions.**
  Rationale: Through the assessment of data, the board is engaged and empowered through a sound working knowledge and understanding of the district's learning needs. The board, working as a team with administration, must consistently ensure staff and students that the purpose of data assessment is to promote growth and a mechanism to sustain improvement. Effective district leadership models a progressive climate and culture by encouraging and supporting staff, focusing on purpose, ensuring that reports to the board inform and educate the members of the need and resources required to achieve growth and improvement.

Analysis of Assessment Data
Utilize data and information relative to student needs to ensure informed decision-making and modifications as necessary to meet the needs of the district and building level.

- ☐ Board members receive information from many sources including, but not limited to the superintendent, curriculum director, principals, teachers, along with sources outside of the district, such as information about exemplary programs and practices. Information is received by all board members and shared at the board table.
- ☐ Board members often refer to student needs – as shown through data about students and groups of students – as the focus for decision-making. Board members mention data on the dropout rate, test scores, and student needs. We talk about receiving information on a routine basis, such as monthly reports.
- ☐ Board members can usually be very clear about the decision-making process in terms of study, learning, reading, listening, receiving data, questioning, discussing, and then deciding and evaluating.

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III. Supportive Climate/Culture – Provide a supportive work environment and culture that enables staff to succeed in their roles.

- **Support quality professional development.**
  Rationale: The board must ensure adequate supports and resources to improve student learning through the prioritization of funding and human resources centered on student learning goals. Further, the board must understand and allow for appropriate professional development to support instruction and advance district improvement initiatives.

- **Continuously review, define, and adopt effective district policy to support instruction and learning.**
  Rationale: The capacity for change is through policy, planning, and practice. Align all parts of the system around the learning needs of students (curriculum, instruction, assessment; goals, actions, resource allocation; etc.)

Supportive Climate/Culture Assessment
Provide a supportive work environment and culture that enables staff to succeed in their roles.

- ☐ Board members express a high level of confidence in staff. Make frequent positive comments about staff and articulate examples of how staff models a commitment, how staff is growing instructionally, and how staff members are working to help students learn.
- ☐ Board members can describe staff development activities in the district and can describe the link between teacher training and board or district goals for students.
- ☐ Board members describe a belief in the importance of staff development activities focused on student needs.
- ☐ Board members can identify specific examples of the way the board shows its appreciation for staff, such as recognition at board meetings.
- ☐ Board members express their belief that change can happen with existing people, including students, staff, and community.

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IV.   Monitor progress/success – Continuous focus on improving education with high levels of involvement and shared decision-making.

- **Use data regularly and extensively to monitor and measure progress/success.**
  Rationale: Assessing student data enables the board and administration to analyze the success of student learning and achievement to support purposeful decision-making.

- **Ensure proper and appropriate accountability.**
  Rationale: Empower the superintendent (the district's educational leader) to fulfill his/her primary role, which is to lead staff to meet growth and improved learning and achievement for all students. The board must hold the superintendent accountable to demonstrate reasonable progress toward district goals. District accountability is how a district models an expectation of high achievement for all students.

Continuous Improvement Assessment
Continuous focus on improving education with high levels of involvement and shared decision-making.

- ☐ Board members possess the desire to support improvement. The board talks about the importance of improving education for all students.
- ☐ Board members consistently express their belief that all children can learn and can give specific examples of ways that learning has improved as a result of initiatives in the district. Poverty, lack of parental involvement, and other factors are described as challenges to be overcome, not as excuses.
- ☐ Board members expect to see improvements in student achievement as a result of initiatives.

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V.   Engage Community – Connection between the school district, parents, and community members.

- **Communicate and grow awareness of district needs.**
  Rationale: Communicate the progress and goals to the community to impart an understanding of the strengths of the district as well as areas of growth and improvement.

- **Engage and connect with the community.**
  Rationale: Develop a shared vision for education with the community and sustain the working relationship through continuous and appropriate communications.

Community Engagement Assessment
Connection between the school district, parents, and community members.

☐ Board members identify methods to connect with and listen to the community.
☐ Board members express pride in their community and in their efforts to be involved and connected with the school district.
☐ Board members can name specific ways the district is involving parents and community members and all indicate a desire for more involvement.

VI.   Shared Leadership
- Establish board learning time
- Learn together
- Talk to each other – extensive board conversations
- Develop a willingness and readiness to lead and allow others to lead
- Build commitment to the focus through shared information and discussion

The board/superintendent leadership team fosters a commitment to improved learning by committing board learning and agenda time to understanding school improvement; regularly evaluating the board according to best practice leadership and governance roles; and developing an interdependent leadership between the board and superintendent.

Each identified role is important; however, together they can be powerful enough to move the district toward providing the best for all students.