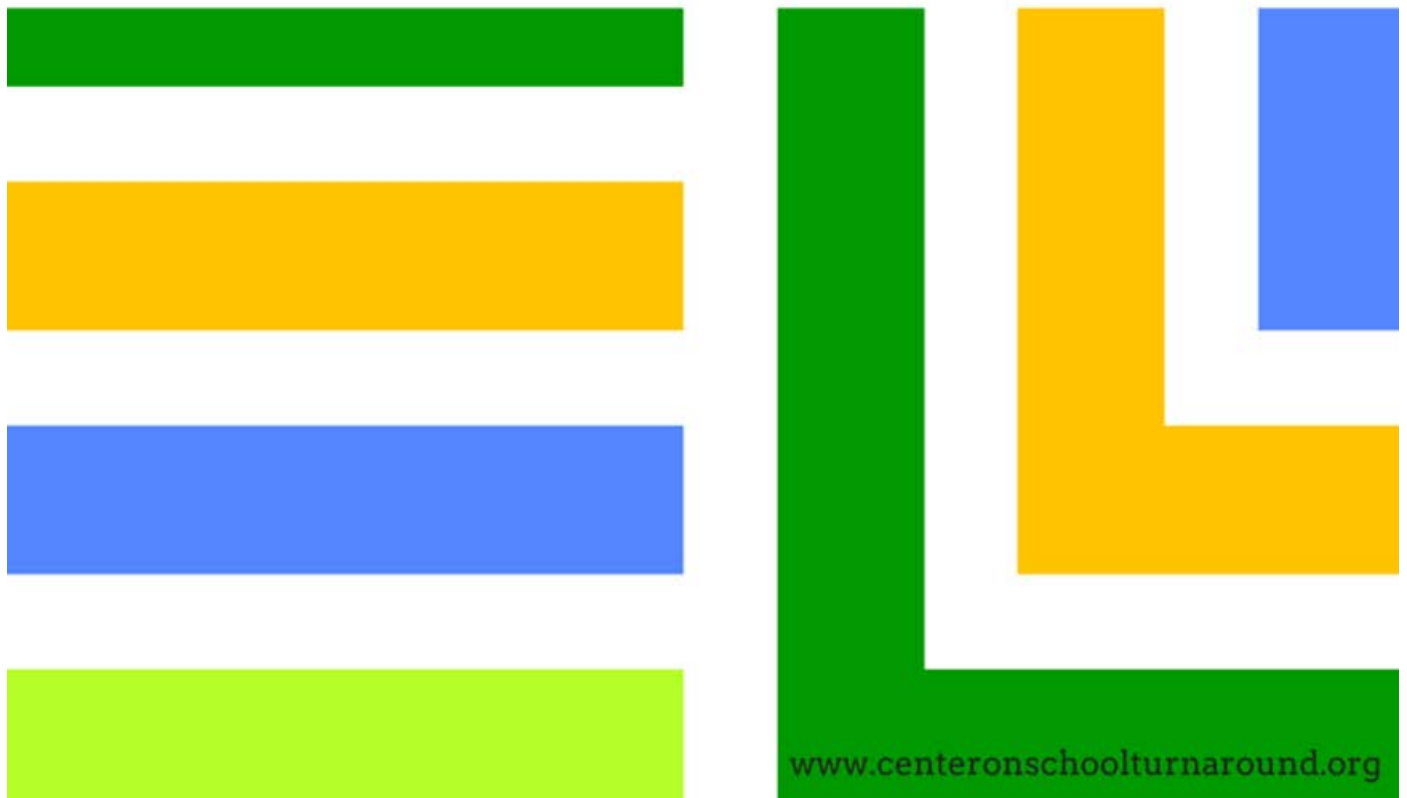


CST School Board TRAINING TOOLKIT

Building Board Capacity to Oversee
Improvement and Turnaround Processes
Center on School Turnaround at WestEd



CST School Board Training Toolkit

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- Updated October 2017 -

About the CST School Board Training

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) works to turn around schools and districts by building capacity across the education system. This training is designed to support local school board members as they learn about district and school improvement policies and processes, including turnaround. This toolkit includes case studies of two school boards that played particularly strong roles in their Local Education Agencies' (LEAs) efforts to dramatically improve student performance. The case studies are supported by guiding discussion questions and brief self-assessments. The toolkit also includes a review of CST's *Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework* and discussion of how the framework might be useful in district and school improvement efforts.

The objectives for school boards using the CST School Board Training are to:

Phase I

1. Assess the school board's areas of strength, inconsistency, and opportunity relative to its oversight of district improvement, school improvement, and turnaround.
2. Learn from the experience of other school boards by reading and discussing a report about school boards and two case studies.
3. Understand the CST's *Four Domains for Rapid Improvement* and how this framework might provide a conceptual structure for district and school improvement processes.
4. Itemize possible "next steps" the board may take in response to the information and understandings acquired through the training.

Phase II

5. Option: Develop an action plan for strengthening the school board's effectiveness in: (a) setting policies related to continuous district improvement, school improvement, and turnaround; (b) overseeing the implementation of these policies. Implement the action plan and monitor the progress for several months.

The CST School Board Training process may be administered by the school board itself or with the assistance of an external facilitator. This toolkit provides the facilitator with all of the resources he/she may need to manage the training program. Facilitators can contact boards@adi.org with specific questions.

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Introduction

All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) continuously manage two central processes: (1) the process by which the LEA itself improves; and (2) the way the LEA directs and supports the improvement of each of its schools. Many LEAs tackle a third task: facilitating turnaround in their lowest performing schools. Local school boards carry a huge responsibility in setting the policies that underlie LEA and school improvement processes and the LEA's management of school turnaround.

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) created this training to help a local school board build its own capacity to set effective policy on improvement and turnaround processes. The toolkit is designed to take a limited amount of time from each monthly board meeting over the course of six months. Elements of the training and toolkit may be used by new board members, who take office after the six-month initial focused training is completed. An optional Phase II which includes planning and implementing changes in policy and process is also included.

The CST School Board Training guides board members through a series of readings and activities. Boards may speed up or slow down the proposed timeline based on their members' needs. For example, if the board is able to meet for large blocks of time, activities for multiple months may be combined. The timeline proposed here is based on the assumption that the school board must schedule this project within its regular, monthly business meetings at which much other work must be done. This timeline limits the time required during board meetings by asking school board members to read case studies and complete self-assessments individually, outside the board meetings.

Proposed Timeline for CST School Board Project

Activity	When?	What?	How Much Time?	Which Toolkit Resources?
Phase I: Building Board Capacity for Improvement and Turnaround				
Activity 1	Month 0	Introduction & Overview	15 minutes at board meeting	FAQs (pgs. 5–7)
Activity 2	Month 1	Board Self-Assessment (1)	30 minutes for each board member, outside of board meetings	Online self-assessment (pg. 7)
Activity 3	Month 2	Reading 1: <i>Killer B's</i>	45 minutes outside of board meeting	<i>Moving Beyond the Killer B's</i> (pg. 8 and link on CST's website)
Activity 4		Idea Exchange A: Discuss <i>Killer B's</i>	20–30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 8) Discussion question notes (pg. 18)
Activity 5	Month 3	Reading 2: Wichita Case Study	30 minutes outside of board meeting	Wichita Case Study (link on CST's website)
Activity 6		Idea Exchange B: Discuss Wichita Case Study	20–30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 9) Discussion question notes (pg. 19)
Activity 7	Month 4	Reading 3: New Haven Case Study	30 minutes outside of board meeting	New Haven Case Study (link on CST's website)
Activity 8		Idea Exchange C: Discuss New Haven Case Study	20–30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 10) Discussion question notes (pgs. 20-21)
Activity 9	Month 5	Read Four Domains for Boards Document	20-30 minutes outside of board meeting	Four Domains for School Boards (link on CST's website)
Activity 10		Idea Exchange D: Discuss Wow and Wonder from Four Domains for Board document	20-30 minutes at board meeting	Four Domains for School Boards (link on CST's website)

Activity 11	Month 6	Review Self-Assessment Report	30 minutes outside of board meeting	Self-Assessment Report generated from CST
Activity 12		12.a Idea Exchange E: Discuss aggregated report compiled from individual self-assessments and 12.b complete Phase I Exit Survey	20 minutes at board meeting for discussion, 10 minutes for post-training survey	Self-Assessment Report generated from CST Phase I Exit Survey (online via email)
Phase II: Action Plan to Initiate Change in Board Policy or Procedure (Optional)				
Activity 13	Month 7	Action Planning	30 minutes at board meeting	Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet (pgs. 14-16)
Activity 14	Ongoing	Progress Monitor Action Plans	10–15 minutes at board meeting	Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet (pgs. 14-16)
Activity 15	Month 12	Board Self-Assessment (2)	30 minutes for each board member, outside of board meetings	Online self-assessment
Activity 16		Idea Exchange F: Discuss aggregated Self-Assessment Report and compare to first assessment	30 minutes at board meeting	Guiding questions (pg. 17); Comparison Report (generated from CST website)
		Facilitator Survey	15 minutes of facilitator’s time	Instructions (pg. 17)
Activity 17	Thereafter	Complete a new Action Planning worksheet (optional)	As needed	Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet (pgs. 14-16)

Phase I: Building Board Capacity for Improvement and Turnaround

Activity 0: Initiating the Training

Month 0: 15–30 minutes for facilitator

Instructions:

To begin the CST School Board Training, the facilitator should send an email to boards@adi.org with the following information:

- Facilitator name
- Facilitator role (for example, superintendent, board chair, consultant, or representative of state school board association)
- Facilitator email
- Facilitator phone number
- LEA name
- LEA city and state
- Number of LEA board members, and
- Anticipated timeline to start the training

CST will then provide the facilitator a password to log into the CST board training Project Facilitator site via email. Once logged in, the facilitator will add each board member's information to the Project Facilitator site.

Note: Expand your screen fully to see all the activities and information on the Project Facilitator website.

Adding Board Member Instructions:

1. Log into the Project Facilitator Login on the [CST website](#)
2. Click on "Board Members"
3. Click "Add Board Member"
4. Enter the board member's name and email address
5. Click "save"
6. Continue adding board members until complete

Detailed instructions, with screen shots, on how to use the Project Facilitator site will be available on the [CST website](#).

Completing Activities:

As each activity is completed, please check off each completed activity.

1. Log into the Project Facilitator Login on the [CST website](#)

2. As activities are completed, check off the appropriate box in the right column. The site will automatically add a timestamp.

Activity 1: Introduction and Overview of the Project

Month 0: 15 minutes at board meeting

Instructions

1. Introduce and briefly discuss the CST School Board Training, especially focusing on the Frequently Asked Questions below.
2. If not previously determined, designate a facilitator to guide the school board through this project.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of this training?

This training is designed to build the capacity of local school board members to form policies and oversee processes for district improvement, school improvement, and school turnaround.

What do the training and toolkit include?

This training and toolkit include a background reading, case studies of two school boards that played particularly strong roles in their LEAs' efforts to dramatically improve student performance, a self-assessment for board members, discussion questions to lead conversations among board members, and several worksheets/templates to guide future actions.

Who should use this training?

This training is specifically designed for school boards of LEAs that have one or more schools in need of substantial improvement or turnaround, but any local school board could benefit from the readings, discussions, and action planning steps.

Who leads the process?

Each school board nominates one person to act as facilitator. The facilitator could be the board chair, the superintendent, an external consultant, a representative from the state association of school boards, or someone from the state education agency (SEA). The facilitator coordinates the members to take the self-assessment, retrieves the self-assessment report from the CST website, facilitates the discussions during board meetings, and submits a copy of the action planning worksheet to CST.

What are the responsibilities of the facilitator?

Primary responsibilities of the facilitator include:

- Contact CST to initiate the training program.



- Be present at all board meetings that include components of this training.
- Register in the online system and add each board member's contact information.
- Check off which activities are completed on the project facilitator website.
- Send self-assessment to the board members.
- Distribute the readings to board members.
- Facilitate discussions with the board members about each reading.
- Facilitate a discussion about the local board, using the Self-Assessment Report as a foundation for discussion.
- Work with the board to complete the Summary and Next Steps Worksheet.
- Submit the Summary and Next Steps Worksheet.
- Coordinate the administration of the second self-assessment (approximately one year after the first assessment is administered).
- Complete the facilitator assessment at the conclusion of the training.

How much time does the project take?

The project is designed to occur over a six-month period with monitoring of progress at board meetings thereafter. As designed, the project includes activities conducted by board members outside their meetings (a 30 minute self-assessment, three 30–45 minute reading assignments) and 20–30 minutes of discussion during each board meeting. If larger blocks of time are available to the board, the activities may be completed in a shorter span of time. A second self-assessment is completed at the 12-month mark to monitor progress.

Who sees the results of the self-assessments and survey?

The results of the self-assessments and survey are anonymous, and specific answers will not be attributed to individuals. The questionnaires are completed via a link from the CST website. The CST website tool aggregates the results of each board member's assessment and makes a report available to the facilitator when the agenda calls for discussion. The facilitator then shares the report with the rest of the board and leads a discussion about the report. The state partner will also have access to the aggregated results of the self-assessment(s) and survey.

Nationally, the results of the self-assessment(s) and survey may be gathered for research purposes. But, the results will be anonymous and not attributed to any individual or a specific district.

How can boards discuss their own functionality with open meeting laws?

Local boards are often apprehensive about discussing their own functionality and effectiveness due to open meeting laws and the need for public transparency, and such topics are not cause for going into executive session. By reading and discussing case studies of other school districts, board members will be able to speak about similar issues that they may or may not experience in a neutral manner. After discussing other districts for several months, it may be easier to identify areas of strength and weakness for the board.

What are the outcomes of the training?

At the end of the training, the board should have a better understanding of how to: (1) manage the continuous improvement of the school district; (2) better support schools in their continuous improvement; and (3) better direct and support schools undergoing significant improvement or turnaround efforts. Board members will also have developed a background of specific strategies used by effective boards. In addition, the board will have an action plan to work on identified opportunity areas. This action plan will be implemented and progress monitored by the board after the initial project is complete.

How do facilitators access the online Project Facilitator site?

The facilitators may access the CST board training Project Facilitator site via [CSTs website](#).

Instructions on how to navigate the site are found included in the various activities in the toolkit. Detailed instructions, with screen shots, are available on the [CST website](#).

Board members do not require access to the Project Facilitator site but may access the readings via [CST's website](#).

Activity 2: Online Self-Assessment

Month 1: 30 minutes outside of board meeting

Instructions

1. Facilitator logs into CST board training Project Facilitator site.
2. Click on “Board Members” tab.
3. Click on the boxes next to each member’s name (or click on the top box on the left side to select all) and click “send surveys selected.”
4. When the dialogue box opens, check off “1st school board self assessment.”
5. Click submit.
6. Each board member will receive an email with a unique link to their survey to complete the online school board self-assessment on their own
7. If a board member needs the survey re-sent, complete steps 1–5 and only select the box next to that board member’s name.
8. If a board member does not receive the email, please double check their email address by clicking on their name under the “Board Members” tab.

This online self-assessment is designed to collect information about an LEA’s school board. The anonymous self-assessment collects information in the following areas:

- Board Culture
- Relationship with Superintendent
- Training for Board Members
- Strategic Planning
- Differentiating Needs for Schools
- Monitoring Progress
- Sustainability of Improvements
- Allocation of Resources

Each board member will complete the self-assessment anonymously. Once each member completes the survey, his/her results are automatically added to the Project Facilitator site and aggregated into a report which may be downloaded by the facilitator. This report can be used as a data point for board discussion and reflection. The survey items can be found in Appendix C.

The facilitator will refrain from sharing the assessment report with the board members until the readings have been discussed. It is best to not allow the LEA's assessment results to cloud the discussions about the readings.

Follow up Self-Assessment (see Activity 15)

The self-assessment will be administered again 12 months after the initial assessment is provided. This second assessment will be used to create a comparison report for the board members and to monitor progress.

Activity 3: Read *Killer B's*

Month 2: 45 minutes outside of board meeting for each board member

Instructions

Read *Moving Beyond the Killer B's: The Role of School Boards in Accountability and Transformation*.

The reading can be accessed via the following [link](#) or via the online CST board training page at [CST website](#)

Activity 4: Idea Exchange—Discuss *Killer B's*

Month 2: 20–30 minutes during board meeting

Instructions

Discuss *Killer B's* using the following guiding questions:

1. What are some common characteristics of local school boards and members?
2. Why are small district school boards more likely to participate in managerial tasks than large boards?
3. What are the primary roles of a school board?
4. What are some of the common challenges board members experience?
5. What has your board's role, related to turning around the district's lowest performing schools, been to date?
6. What are your biggest takeaways from this publication?

See Facilitator discussion notes in Appendix A.

Activity 5: Read Wichita Case Study

Month 3: 30 minutes outside of board meeting for each board member

Instructions

Read Wichita School District (KS) case study

The case study for Wichita can be accessed via the following [link](#).

Activity 6: Idea Exchange—Discuss Wichita Case Study

Month 3: 20–30 minutes during board meeting

Instructions

Discuss the Wichita case study using the following guiding questions:

1. What are some of the context pieces, external factors, or conditions that led to where Wichita is today (in relation to the functionality of the school board)?
2. What are the structural aspects of the school board that contribute to the effectiveness of the board?
3. What are some of the key district programs or practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board AND the district?
4. How did a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) change the way Wichita's board works?
5. What are some of the shared beliefs that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board?
6. What are some areas that Wichita could strengthen (related to the school board)?
7. What Wichita School Board polices or practices would you most want to emulate with your school board? What steps are necessary to implement them?

See Facilitator discussion notes in Appendix A.

Activity 7: Read New Haven Case Study

Month 4: 30 minutes outside board meeting for each board member

Instructions

Read the New Haven (CT) case study

The New Haven case study can be accessed at the following [link](#).

Activity 8: Idea Exchange—Discuss New Haven Case Study

Month 4: 20–30 minutes during board meeting

Instructions

Discuss the New Haven case study using the following guiding questions:

1. What are some of the context pieces, external factors, or conditions that led to where New Haven is today (in relation to the functionality of the school board)?
2. What are the structural and procedural aspects of the school board that contribute to the effectiveness of the board?
3. What are the some of the key district programs, structures, or practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board AND the district?
4. How did the School Change Initiative impact the role of New Haven's board?
5. What are some of the shared beliefs that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board?
6. What are some areas that New Haven could strengthen (related to the school board)?
7. What New Haven School Board polices or practices would you most want to emulate with your school board? What steps are necessary to implement them?

See Facilitator discussion notes in Appendix A.

Activity 9: Review Four Domains for School Boards

Month 5: 30 minutes outside board meeting for each board member

Four Domains for School Boards

1. Read the *Four Domains for School Boards* document.
2. Complete the Wow and Wonder activity as described in the document: "review the indicators on the following pages and identify at least one from each page that makes you "wow" and at least one that makes you "wonder". You can circle, star, or write down the indicators to remind you of your choices. An example for the last page (Other Systems and Structures) might be:
 - WOW – it'd be great if our district had all vendors on performance contracts.
 - WONDER – have any of our schools completed an asset scan of all of our community resources recently?"
3. The reading can be accessed at the [CST website](#).

Activity 10: Idea Exchange: Discuss Four Domains for School Boards

Instructions

1. Identify the Wow and Wonder indicators (one page at a time) for each of the board members
2. Discuss similarities and differences.
3. How do the four domains expand your thinking about school and district improvement?
4. As a board, have we acknowledged and addressed the district/LEA systemic level indicators that impact school improvement? If yes, identify some examples. If not, discuss why that level of implementation hasn't been done previously.

Activity 11: Review Self-Assessment Report

Month 6: 30 minutes outside board meeting for each board member

Instructions

Self-Assessment

1. Facilitator logs into Project Facilitator site.
2. Facilitator clicks on the “Reports” tab.
3. Facilitator checks off which report to run (1st school board self-assessment).
4. Facilitator scrolls to the bottom of the report and hits “Submit.” This step sends the report to the state facilitator and CST.
5. Facilitator clicks on the appropriate icon to select a format for downloading (PDF, Word, or Excel options).
6. The report will automatically download to the user’s computer.
7. Facilitator distributes the Self-Assessment Report to the members via email or hard copy.
8. Each board member reads the aggregated Self-Assessment Report.

Activity 12a: Idea Exchange—Discuss Board Self-Assessment Report

Month 6: 30 minutes during board meeting

1. Discuss the aggregated Self-Assessment Report using the following guiding questions:
 - a. What questions require further conversation due to inconsistent answers amongst board members (i.e. responses spread across several options)?
 - b. What questions and responses surprise you?
 - c. What do you think are areas of strength?
 - d. What areas does the board need to strengthen?
5. Take notes to prepare for the next meeting and Activity 11.

Some suggested other areas of discussion:

- General—some of the board members in one district may report that the members are elected, while others noted hybrid (elected & appointed)
- E1 and E2 are opposite questions designed to 1) check for close reading and 2) provide discussion about what approach to differentiation a board and district should have for their schools.
- E3—if the members select agree or strongly agree, what autonomies and flexibilities are offered?
- F1– F7—How often do board members believe they should have access to and discuss this data? What is both reasonable and what is needed?

Activity 12b. Complete the Phase I Exit Survey

Month 6: 5 minutes after board meeting

1. Facilitator logs into CST board training Project Facilitator site.
2. Click on “Board Members” tab.
3. Click on the boxes next to each member’s name (or click on the top box on the left side to select all) and click “send surveys selected.”
4. When the dialogue box opens, check off “Phase I Exit Survey.”
5. Click submit.
6. Each board member will receive an email with a unique link to their survey to complete the online survey on their own.
7. If a board member needs the survey re-sent, complete steps 1–5, but only select the box next to that board member’s name.
8. If a board member does not receive the email, please double check their email address by clicking on their name under the “Board Members” tab.

After the board members have completed the survey. Submit the Phase I Exit Survey to CST and the state partner.

1. Facilitator logs into Project Facilitator site.
2. Facilitator clicks on the “Reports” tab.
3. Facilitator checks off which report to run (Phase I Exit Survey).
4. Facilitator scrolls to the bottom of the report and hits “Submit.” This step sends the report to the state facilitator and CST.
5. Facilitator clicks on the appropriate icon to select a format for downloading (PDF, Word, or Excel options).
6. The report will automatically download to the user’s computer.

Required: Facilitator Survey

If the board chooses NOT to complete Phase II, please complete the facilitator survey, at the conclusion of Activity 12. If the board chooses to complete Phase II, please complete the facilitator survey at the conclusion of Activity 16.

Instructions

1. Facilitator logs into Project Facilitator site.
2. Facilitator clicks on the “Survey” tab.
3. Complete the survey.
4. Click “Save and Submit” on the bottom left side.

Phase II: Action Plan to Initiate Change in Board Policy or Procedure (Optional)

Activity 13: Action Planning

Month 7: 30 minutes during board meeting

Instructions

1. Log into the Project Facilitator site.
2. Click on “Plan.”
3. Add text to the “inconsistencies” and “strengths” text boxes.
4. Add text to each of the “opportunity areas” text boxes (you may add additional opportunities by clicking on the “+”, or delete areas by clicking on the “X”).
5. For each opportunity area, fill out the A. Action Step, B. Person(s) responsible, and C. Deadline. You may add additional action steps by clicking on the “+”, or delete areas by clicking on the “X.”
6. Do not fill out D. Updates or E. Next Step(s) yet (you will do this in Activity 12).
7. When complete, click “Submit.” The worksheet is automatically submitted to CST.
8. If the facilitator would like a copy of the report, click on the PDF, Word, or Excel icons and the report will download.

Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet

NOTE: Please use the CST board training Project Facilitator website to fill out and submit your Action Planning & Monitoring Worksheet. The information below is provided for informational purposes only.

This worksheet allows the school board members to determine areas of strength, areas of opportunity, and next steps to improve board effectiveness in serving all schools, especially those schools that have a history of low performance.

Based on the readings, case study discussions, and self-assessment results, please note areas of opportunity for your board. Identify possible action steps to address that area and nominate a person responsible for implementing the action steps.

Facilitator Instructions:

- Please fill out Parts I, II, and III (Columns A, B, & C) as part of Activity 11. Submit to CST.
- Please fill out Part III (Columns D & E) as part of Activity 12. Submit to CST.

Part I. Areas of Inconsistency

Please note self-assessment questions and topics that require further conversation due to lack of consistency (i.e. several board members noting the area as effective, while other board members selecting the area as ineffective):

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

Part II. Areas of Strength

Based on the readings, case study discussions, and self-assessment results, please note areas of strength of your board:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

Part III. Areas of Opportunity

Based on the readings, case study discussions, and self-assessment results, please note at least 3 areas of opportunity for your board. Identify possible action steps to address that area and nominate a person responsible for implementing the action steps.

Facilitator note: Please fill out Columns A, B, & C as part of Activity 11, and Columns D & E as part of Activity 12.

Opportunity Area 1. _____

A. Action Step(s)	B. Person(s) Responsible	C. Deadline(s)	D. Update(s)	E. Next Step(s)
1.				
2.				
3.				

Opportunity Area 2. _____

A. Action Step(s)	B. Person(s) Responsible	C. Deadline(s)	D. Update(s)	E. Next Step(s)
1.				
2.				
3.				

Opportunity Area 3. _____

A. Action Step(s)	B. Person(s) Responsible	C. Deadline(s)	D. Update(s)	E. Next Step(s)
1.				
2.				
3.				

Opportunity Area 4. _____ (if applicable)

A. Action Step(s)	B. Person(s) Responsible	C. Deadline(s)	D. Update(s)	E. Next Step(s)
1.				
2.				
3.				

Opportunity Area 5. _____ (if applicable)

A. Action Step(s)	B. Person(s) Responsible	C. Deadlines	D. Updates	E. Next Steps
1.				
2.				
3.				

Note to facilitators:

- Please submit the form using the links in the web Project Facilitator site at the completion of both Activities 13 and 14.

Activity 14: Progress Monitoring

Month: Each subsequent board meeting—15 minute progress review

Instructions

1. Log into the Project Facilitator site.
2. Click on “Plan.”
3. For each opportunity area, fill out D. Updates or E. Next Step(s). You may add additional action steps by clicking on the “+.” Please do not delete existing action items, but instead state they are no longer applicable in the “D. Updates” field.
4. When complete, click “Submit.” The worksheet is automatically submitted to CST.
5. If the facilitator would like a copy of the report, click on the PDF, Word, or Excel icons, and the report will download.

Activity 15: Complete Second Board Self-Assessment

Month 12: 30 minutes outside board meeting for each board member

Instructions to Send Survey

1. Facilitator logs into CST board training Project Facilitator site.
2. Click on “Board Members” tab.
3. Click on the boxes next to each member’s name (or click on the top box on the left side to select all) and click “send surveys selected.”
4. When the dialogue box opens, check off “2nd school board self assessment.”
5. Click submit.
6. Each board member will receive an email with a unique link to their survey to complete the online school board self-assessment on their own
7. If a board member needs the survey re-sent, complete steps 1–5 and only select the box next to that board member’s name.

8. If a board member does not receive the email, please double check their email address by clicking on their name under the “Board Members” tab.

Instructions to Generate Aggregated Report

1. Facilitator logs into Project Facilitator site.
2. Facilitator clicks on the “Report” tab.
3. Facilitator checks off which report to run (2nd school board self-assessment).
4. Facilitator scrolls to the bottom of the report and hits “Submit.” This step sends the report to the state facilitator and CST.
5. Facilitator clicks on the appropriate icon to select a format for downloading (PDF, Word, or Excel options).
6. The report will automatically download to the user’s computer.
7. Facilitator distributes the Self-Assessment Report to the members via email or hard copy.
8. Each board member reviews the Comparison Self-Assessment Report on their own time.

Activity 16: Idea Exchange—Discuss Second Board Self-Assessment

Month 13: 30 minutes at board meeting

Instructions

Discuss the second board self-assessment report and its comparison with the first self-assessment completed by the board, using the following guiding questions:

1. In what areas did we progress over the past year?
2. In what areas did we regress over the past year?
3. What areas should we work on next?

Required: Facilitator Survey

At the conclusion Activity 16, please complete the facilitator survey.

Instructions

5. Facilitator logs into Project Facilitator site.
6. Facilitator clicks on the “Survey” tab.
7. Complete the survey.
8. Click “Save and Submit” on the bottom left side.

Activity 17: Additional Action Planning (Optional)

Month—each month thereafter consider if new items should be added to Action Planning and Monitoring Worksheet.

Appendix A: Discussion Questions with Notes for Facilitator

Below are some notes to help the facilitator guide the discussions of the various readings. These notes are not all-inclusive. You and your board may highlight and identify other answers to the questions.

Moving Beyond the Killer B's

1. What are some common characteristics of local school boards and members?
 - Elected
 - 4 year terms
 - Educated (with bachelor's degrees)
 - Increasingly more diverse members
 - 15–40 hours of work per month
 - Minimal to no compensation for services
2. What are the key responsibilities of local school boards?
 - Hiring and supervising the superintendent
 - Developing policies
 - Overseeing district budgets
3. Why are small district boards more likely to participate in managerial tasks than large boards?
 - Fewer fulltime staff to do the needed work
 - Fewer decision-making policies in place
4. What are some of the common challenges board members experience?
 - Receiving enough information to make educated decisions
 - Having enough time to do the background work/research, stakeholder engagement, and community participation
 - Having the right skill sets to understand all issues—ranging from budgets and construction schedules to contract law/negotiations and federal policy
 - Tendency for some board members to focus on micro issues that should be left to the district staff
 - Changing state and federal policies
 - Difficulty receiving high quality and relevant training
5. What has your board's role, related to turning around the district's lowest performing schools, been to date?
6. What are your biggest takeaways from this publication?

Wichita Public Schools (KS)

1. What are some of the context pieces, external factors, or conditions that led to where Wichita is today (in relation to the functionality of the school board)?
 - Changing statewide assessment system
 - Frequent budget cuts from state
 - High student mobility rates
 - Political pressures of Koch brothers
 - History of desegregation order
 - Same superintendent for more than six years
 - Several long-serving board members
 - Development of strategic plan

2. What are the structural and procedural aspects of the school board that contribute to the effectiveness of the board?
 - Apolitical—board members are not political figures
 - Clear understanding of board roles and desire to not micromanage the district
 - Regular formal and informal communication with the superintendent
 - Members come to meetings prepared to make decisions
 - Efficient and civil meetings

3. What are the some of the key district programs, structures, or practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board AND the district?
 - The MTSS combined behavioral expectations and increased academic standards and supports
 - Creation of the Academic Leadership Team and the MTSS District Leadership Team
 - Implementation of a performance management system
 - Use of a problem-solving protocol

4. How did MTSS change the way Wichita's board works?
 - Created a foundation to link behavioral and academic needs
 - Gave board members a clear vision of what to work on and what to leave up to the district
 - Provided a programmatic and practical basis to develop board policies around

5. What are some of the shared beliefs that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board?
 - Trust the superintendent
 - Trust that the board members are all making decisions for the best interest of students
 - Keep meetings civil and focused on the work
 - Some schools require different supports than others
 - Stay transparent
 - Do the work and put in the time to make educated decisions

6. What are some areas that could be strengthened in Wichita (related to the school board)?
 - Collection and analysis of additional data points to demonstrate progress (beyond state assessments)
 - Finding a way to better monitor the board's functionality
 - Plan for sustainability of practices for future staff transitions
7. What Wichita school board polices or practices would you most want to emulate with your school board? What steps are necessary to implement them?

New Haven Public Schools (CT)

1. What are some of the context pieces, external factors, or conditions that led to where New Haven is today (in relation to the functionality of the school board)?
 - Long-serving superintendent and mayor
 - Strong and positive working relationship between board, superintendent, and mayor
 - Appointed board
 - Low income city, surrounded by wealthier communities
 - Presence of Yale University
 - Hired new superintendent to continue and enhance reforms
 - Sheff v. O'Neill ruling
 - Strong teacher contract—negotiated through positive collaboration with the teacher's union
2. What are the structural and procedural aspects of the school board that contribute to the effectiveness of the board?
 - Mayoral-appointed board (recent shift to hybrid elected/appointed)
 - Active mayor on board
 - Apolitical members
 - Term limits for board members (3 4-year terms) before 2-year break is required
 - Recent changes in committee structure
 - Two meetings each month—1 workshop and 1 formal meeting
 - Regular communication between superintendent and board members
 - Use of monthly workshop meetings gain deeper understanding of issues or programs
3. What are the some of the key district programs, structures, or practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board AND the district?
 - Increased and refined accountability structures, including monthly monitoring protocols
 - Assessment of the needs of schools and placing them in tiers
 - Differentiated supports provided to schools
 - Additional professional development options for teaching and leadership staff
 - Additional sources of revenue to cover capital improvements and new construction
 - Creation of the new balanced progress report

- Use of magnet schools
 - Presence of suburban/urban exchange
4. How did The School Change Initiative impact the role of New Haven's board?
- Provided a vision to lead all work and a strategic plan to guide implementation
 - Provided a baseline reality check of achievement gap and equity issues
 - Included a variety of stakeholders
 - Refocused the district on meeting the needs of students and the schools
 - Incorporated all other aspects of the education system
 - Provided a chance to revisit (keep, modify, or drop) all existing policies
5. What are some of the shared beliefs that contribute to the effectiveness of the school board?
- Share ownership and responsibility—all entities are part of the problem and the solution
 - Understand that schools have different needs and require different supports to improve
 - Desire to do what's best for the students
 - Hire a strong superintendent and let him/her lead the district
 - Be willing to adjust structures to better meet the needs of the district
 - Hold everyone accountable (from the top to the bottom)
6. What are some areas that New Haven could strengthen (related to the school board)?
- Succession planning for board members, mayor, and district staff
7. What New Haven School Board polices or practices would you most want to emulate with your school board? What steps are necessary to implement them?

Appendix B: Phase I Exit Survey Items

At the conclusion of Phase I, all board members should complete the below survey items.

SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

- SD D A SA 1. Since completing Phase I, I have a better understanding of our board's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunity areas.
- SD D A SA 2. Since completing Phase I, I have a better understanding of what actions the board need to take to improve.
- SD D A SA 3. My knowledge of school and district improvement policies and processes increased because of Phase I's readings and discussions.
- SD D A SA 4. My knowledge of school turnaround policies and processes increased because of Phase I's readings and discussions.
- SD D A SA 5. My knowledge of effective school board practices improved because of Phase I's readings and discussions.
- SD D A SA 6. Phase I of the board training was useful for me.
- SD D A SA 7. Phase I of the board training was useful for the board.
- SD D A SA 8. Phase I of the board training was relevant to my role.
- SD D A SA 9. The materials and process of Phase I of the board training were of high quality.
10. Please identify any next steps that you plan to take based on Phase I of the school board training program. (Narrative Response)
11. Would you recommend that the board apply the knowledge learned from Phase I by continuing this work with action planning in Phase II. (Yes / No)

Appendix C: School Board Self-Assessment Items

School Board Self-Assessment

Center on School Turnaround at WestEd

The purpose of this self-assessment is to assist the local school board in examining its role in school turnaround and improvement policies, processes, and strategies. Based on this self-assessment, a school board may identify areas it chooses to strengthen.

The CST self-assessment is organized around the following categories:

- A. Board Culture
- B. Relationship with Superintendent
- C. Training
- D. Strategic Planning
- E. Differentiating Needs
- F. Monitoring Progress
- G. Sustainability
- H. Allocation of Resources

A. Context

1. I've been a board member for: <1 year, 1–4 years, 5–9 years, >10 years

B. Board Culture

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | |
|----|---|---|----|---|
| SD | D | A | SA | 1. Board discussions and actions focus on how best to improve educational opportunity for our students. |
| SD | D | A | SA | 2. The board operates with a high level of trust among its members. |
| SD | D | A | SA | 3. School board members air their differences in a constructive, problem-solving manner. |
| SD | D | A | SA | 4. The bulk of discussion occurs in committees, which then bring their conclusions and recommendations to the full board. |

- SD D A SA 5. Committee meetings are regularly attended by at least 80% of their members.
- SD D A SA 6. Board meetings follow the prepared agendas.
- SD D A SA 7. Board discussions stay focused on the agenda topics.
- SD D A SA 8. Board meetings are under 2 hours.

C. Relationship with Superintendent

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

- SD D A SA 9. Board members have sufficient access to the superintendent to ask questions and get information necessary to make decisions.
- SD D A SA 10. Board members receive sufficient data and background information from the superintendent/district to make good decisions.
- SD D A SA 11. Board members are comfortable communicating directly with the superintendent.
- SD D A SA 12. The superintendent regularly informs the board about the academic performance of our students.

D. Training for School Board Members

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Our school board:

- SD D A SA 13. Receives training on DISTRICT policies, strategies, and processes to support the lowest-performing schools.
- SD D A SA 14. Receives ongoing training on SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT policies, strategies, and processes.
- SD D A SA 15. Receives ongoing training on SCHOOL TURNAROUND policies, strategies, and processes.
- SD D A SA 16. Receives training on the implications of schools being state-identified as priority or focus.
- SD D A SA 17. Understands the differences between improvement and turnaround.

E. Strategic Planning

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Our school board:

- SD D A SA 18. Operates with a multi-year strategic plan.
- SD D A SA 19. Annually reviews and revises the strategic plan.
- SD D A SA 20. Includes district improvement processes in the strategic plan.
- SD D A SA 21. Includes school improvement processes and supports in the strategic plan.
- SD D A SA 22. Includes school turnaround processes and supports in the strategic plan.

F. Differentiating Needs of Schools

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Our school board:

- SD D A SA 23. Treats all schools, regardless of performance, the same.
- SD D A SA 24. Differentiates the supports provided to schools based on their needs.
- SD D A SA 25. Differentiates the autonomies and flexibilities to schools based on their needs.
- SD D A SA 26. Ensures that high capacity staff work in the lowest-performing schools.
- SD D A SA 27. Has established policies and procedures for differentiating supports for schools based on each school's performance and progress.
- SD D A SA 28. Has established policies and procedures for initiating and supporting supports for the lowest-performing schools.

G. Monitoring Progress

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Our school board:

- SD D A SA 29. Reviews and discusses student performance data, at least quarterly.
- SD D A SA 30. Reviews and discusses personnel performance data, at least quarterly.
- SD D A SA 31. Reviews and discusses district improvement data, at least quarterly.

- SD D A SA 32. Reviews and discusses school improvement data, at least quarterly.
- SD D A SA 33. Reviews and discusses data from community surveys, at least quarterly.
- SD D A SA 34. Reviews and discusses progress with the district improvement process, at least monthly.
- SD D A SA 35. Reviews and discusses the progress of the lowest-performing schools, at least monthly.
- SD D A SA 36. Uses data to adjust the services and supports provided to the lowest-performing schools.
- SD D A SA 37. Recognizes district personnel for district-level gains in student performance.
- SD D A SA 38. Recognizes school personnel for school-level gains in student performance.
- SD D A SA 39. Includes student performance in evaluation criteria for the superintendent.
- SD D A SA 40. Includes student performance in evaluation criteria for other central office personnel.
- SD D A SA 41. Includes student performance in evaluation criteria for principals.
- SD D A SA 42. Includes student performance in evaluation criteria for teachers.

H. Sustainability of Improvements

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Our school board:

- SD D A SA 43. Has the opportunity to examine multiple options when forming new improvement and turnaround policies.
- SD D A SA 44. Bases policy decisions on data.
- SD D A SA 45. Has a process in place to solicit community input in forming new policies.
- SD D A SA 46. Has established policies about ongoing district improvement planning and strategies.
- SD D A SA 47. Has established policies to support the lowest-performing schools.
- SD D A SA 48. Identifies successful district practices and formalizes them in policy.
- SD D A SA 49. Identifies successful school practices and formalizes them in policy.

I. Allocation of Resources

Check your response for each item as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Our school board:

- SD D A SA 50. Reviews, discusses, and approves the annual district budget.
- SD D A SA 51. Reviews, discusses, and approves each school's annual budget.
- SD D A SA 52. Allocates DISTRICT resources based on analysis of data and district priorities.
- SD D A SA 53. Allocates SCHOOL resources based on analysis of data and district priorities.
- SD D A SA 54. Allocates school resources based on school performance and progress.
- SD D A SA 55. Allocates school resources based on data analysis and school priorities.