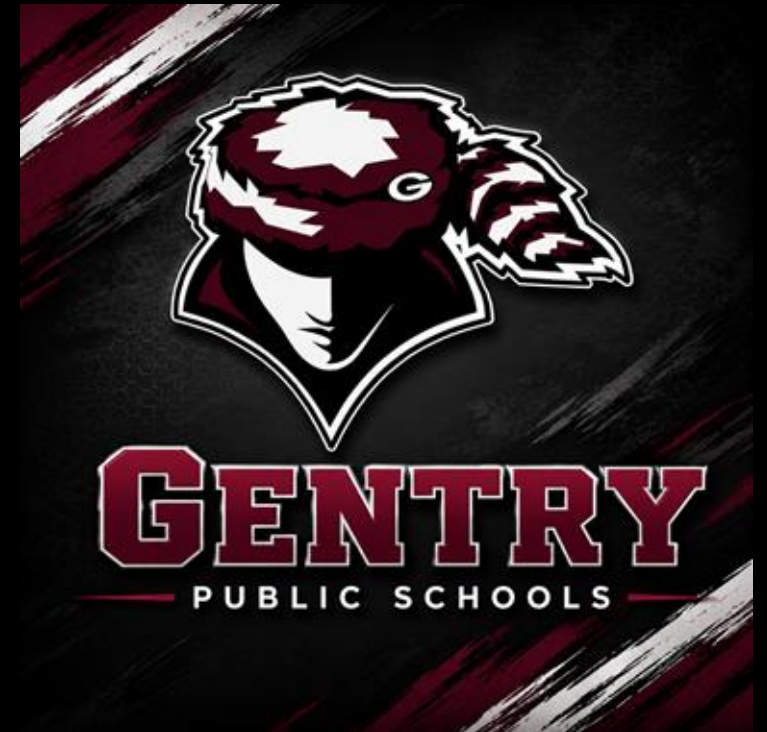


The Multi-Hat Leader: Navigating the Realities of Modern School Administration

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Overview

- Public education is changing faster than ever before.
- Families have more choices and higher expectations.
- Districts face increasing legal requirements, workforce challenges, public scrutiny, and evolving stakeholder expectations.
- Successful districts require strong leadership partnerships between Boards and Superintendents.
- The relationship between governance and administration sets the tone for the entire organization.

“We are in the kid business.”

— Steve Anderson

KEY POINT

Leading schools is different in 2026. Families have more choices than ever.

The Role of the Board: Governance, Not Management

- The Board's primary responsibility is governance.
- The Board establishes policy, provides direction, and ensures accountability.
- The Superintendent is responsible for the administration and day-to-day operation of the district.

“You cannot ask someone to be responsible for the outcome while limiting their ability to influence the outcome.”



Board Responsibilities

- Establish vision and direction
- Develop and approve policy
- Evaluate the Superintendent
- Provide fiscal oversight
- Ensure accountability



Superintendent Responsibilities

- Implement Board priorities
- Manage daily operations
- Lead and supervise employees
- Make personnel decisions
- Execute the district vision

KEY POINT *Support your Superintendent by allowing them to do the job you hired them to do.*

EXCEPTION, NOT THE NORM

When Board Involvement May Be Appropriate

Board involvement in administrative decisions should be the exception, not the norm.

The Superintendent should be empowered to make daily operational decisions. However, some issues may be so significant, sensitive, or politically charged that Board direction may be appropriate.

-  Major decisions with significant community impact
-  Highly sensitive issues affecting district reputation
-  Decisions involving significant financial implications
-  Issues receiving extraordinary public attention
-  Circumstances where the Board has a responsibility to provide direction

IMPORTANT BALANCE The Board should not manage the daily operations of the district. The Superintendent should also understand that some decisions may require Board involvement because of the Board's ultimate responsibility.

KEY POINT *A strong Superintendent knows that sometimes the Board may need to be involved in some day-to-day decisions.*

The Board-Superintendent Relationship Sets the Culture

- Protect the chain of command.
- Employees watch how leadership works together.
- The Board and Superintendent relationship influences the culture of the district.
- Unity at the leadership level creates stability throughout the organization.
- An undermining of the superintendent or the board is witnessed and sets a tone.

STRONG BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIPS:

-  Build confidence
-  Encourage employee trust
-  Improve decision-making
-  Strengthen community perception
-  Allow the district to move forward

KEY POINT *It is normal for board members to get questions. The response to these instances is how a culture is created.*

Winning in the Era of School Choice: Tell Your Story

- Families have more educational choices than ever before.
- Districts must be intentional about communication and community engagement.
- Great things happen every day in schools — but people need to know about them.
- If districts do not tell their story, someone else may tell it for them.

“Perception is reality.”

— Dr. Tyler Broyles

DISTRICTS MUST SHOWCASE:



Student opportunities



Academic achievements



Activities and programs



Staff accomplishments



Community impact

Key Point *Tell your story, or someone else will. It's not about making yourself sound the best. It's about informing families of what you offer.*

Common Communication Mistakes Districts Make



1

Not Explaining the Why

- Announcing decisions without explaining the reasoning creates confusion
- People are more likely to support decisions when they understand the purpose behind them.
- Even when stakeholders disagree with the “what,” understanding the “why” builds trust.

“Tell the why behind the what.”



2

Waiting Until There Is a Problem

- Reactive communication often means someone else controls the conversation.
- Successful districts anticipate questions and concerns before they become issues.
- Getting ahead of challenges reduces misinformation.



3

Relying Only on Social Media

- Social media is an important tool, but it was never designed to be the only communication strategy.
- Social media should support communication — not replace it.
- Important information should be shared through multiple appropriate channels.

— Dr. Tyler Broyles

People Are the Foundation of Your District

- The most important decisions a district makes are people decisions.
- Culture is built one hire at a time.
- Hiring is about more than finding someone who can perform the job — it is about finding someone who aligns with the mission and values of the organization.

EXPECTATIONS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH:



Job descriptions



Applications



Interview questions



Onboarding



Leadership and supervision

KEY POINT *The hiring process is the first opportunity to define your culture. Great people are the key. Attitude over experience.*

Example: Setting Expectations From the Beginning

THE JOB POSTING

Professional Expectations in Gentry Public Schools Job Postings

“ At Gentry Public Schools, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of professionalism at all times, both in the school setting and beyond. This includes maintaining a positive and respectful presence on social media and in our community interactions.

“ Staff members are expected to model this professionalism consistently and set a strong example for students, colleagues, and the community.

“ Exemplify professional excellence in the school, community, and on social media.

“ Serve as a strong advocate for the school district, promoting its values and achievements both internally and in the broader community.

“ Maintain a positive attitude and actively contribute to a supportive and constructive work environment, avoiding negativity.

Example: Setting Expectations From the Beginning

THE JOB APPLICATION

Professional Expectations in Gentry Public Schools Job Applications



Before beginning your application, please ensure that all sections are completed in full. Incomplete applications may not be considered. A complete application includes an accurate and up-to-date list of references with current contact information — email addresses when available, and direct phone numbers (not main office lines). At least one reference should be a former employer or supervisor. Applications that are missing information or contain unverifiable references may impact consideration for an interview or employment.



Public school employees are held to a high standard of professionalism. Do you agree to adhere to Gentry Public Schools' high standards of professionalism, both in and outside of school, including on social media, to set a positive example for our students, staff, and community? - Yes or No



Please provide additional information about why you are interested in leaving your current position. If you are not currently employed, please enter NA here



Serve as a strong advocate for the school district, promoting its values and achievements both internally and in the broader community



Maintain a positive attitude and actively contribute to a supportive and constructive work environment, avoiding negativity

Reference Checking

JOB PERFORMANCE VS. ATTITUDE: I WANT BOTH TO BE GOOD. BUT I CAN FIX WORK PERFORMANCE ISSUES THROUGH MENTORING. THAT'S WHAT BUILDING ADMIN, THE COOP, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS FOR. IF I CAN ONLY HAVE ONE AT FIRST, THEN GIVE ME SOMEONE WITH A GOOD ATTITUDE, BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW GOOD SOMEONE IS AT THEIR JOB, I CANNOT FIX A BAD ATTITUDE! THAT'S AN INNATE CHARACTERISTIC THAT IS FOREVER!

How well would you say this person responds to supervision?

How would you rate this person's attendance?

How would you rate this person's dependability?

How would you rate this person's willingness to assume responsibility?

How would you rate this person's ability to follow instructions?

How would you rate this person's quality of work?

How would you rate this person's attitude and positivity in the workplace?

How would you rate this person's ability to handle challenges without unnecessary complaining or negativity?

How would you rate this person's overall impact on team morale and workplace culture?

How would you rate this person's ability to follow through on responsibilities without creating additional work for others?

How would you rate this person's ability to be flexible, cooperative, and easy to work with?

How would you rate this person's professionalism both in the workplace and on social media?

How would you rate this person's ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with coworkers, supervisors, and stakeholders?

What is the reason for this person's separation from employment?

If given the opportunity, would you reemploy this person?

What are this person's strong points?

What are this person's weak points?

Would you like to add any additional comments?

HR Employability Checks Post Process

Hello,

I have completed the reference and social media checks for John Doe, who has been recommended for a paraprofessional position.

The candidate has extensive experience as both a classroom teacher and a self-employed childcare provider. Overall, the references were very positive. I also contacted Previous Employer #1, which confirmed the candidate is eligible for rehire. I left a voicemail with Previous Employer #2 but have not yet received a response. Since that employment occurred many years ago, I do not believe it is necessary to delay the hiring process while awaiting a reply.

Based on the information gathered, I feel comfortable recommending this candidate for hire. My notes are below. Please let me know if we can move forward with the hiring process.

Professional References

- Reference #1 – Client and personal acquaintance. Completed a reference survey and submitted a recommendation letter. Shared that their children were under the candidate's care for several years and spoke very positively about the candidate's professionalism, reliability, and care for children. Would rehire. Noted that the candidate occasionally takes on too much responsibility but never complains about the workload.
- Reference #2 – Former coworker. Completed a reference survey and submitted a recommendation letter. Would rehire. Highlighted the candidate's ability to mentor and support less experienced colleagues.
- Previous Employer #1 – Human Resources confirmed the candidate's previous employment dates and verified the candidate is eligible for rehire.
- Previous Employer #2 – Left a voicemail with Human Resources requesting employment verification. No response received at the time of this summary.

Personal Reference

- Reference #3 – Friend. Completed a reference survey and submitted a recommendation letter. Shared numerous positive comments regarding the candidate's character, dependability, and dedication to children. Mentioned that the candidate tends to prioritize students and families over administrative tasks.

Social Media Review

- Facebook – Multiple accounts found. Unable to confidently verify ownership of a specific account.
- Instagram – Multiple accounts found. Unable to confidently verify ownership of a specific account.
- TikTok – Multiple accounts found. Unable to confidently verify ownership of a specific account.

Building a Culture of Accountability: Courage & Fairness

- Leadership decisions are not always easy.
- Holding people accountable creates uncomfortable conversations.
- It can cause stress, conflict, and strained relationships in small communities.



ACCOUNTABILITY MUST BE CONSISTENT REGARDLESS OF:

- Position
- Last name
- Family relationships
- Community connections
- Personal friendships



BOARD RESPONSIBILITY:

- Board members must remain impartial regarding personnel matters.
- Personnel discipline belongs with administration and, when applicable, the Board acting as a fact finder during a formal hearing.
- Board members should not become involved in individual personnel matters before those processes occur.

KEY POINT *Being a board member is hard. You can listen, but it is essential to refer issues back to the administration to avoid a bad culture.*

The Formula for District Success



A Board That:

- Governs effectively
- Supports leadership
- Provides stability
- Builds trust



A Superintendent Who:

- Leads confidently
- Communicates effectively
- Develops people
- Executes the district vision



A Community That:

- Understands the district story
- Trusts the process
- Feels connected

The strongest districts are not built by one person. They are built by leaders working together with trust, unity, and a shared commitment to students.

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