The Lighthouse Phase Overview

Phase I
Orientation and Foundational Learning

In this phase, the board and superintendent increase their understanding of the research about board/superintendent leadership for student achievement and about what boards and districts can achieve when there is effective districtwide leadership for student learning. They work to develop shared understanding about these issues and practice speaking as one board about their commitment to improving their leadership for student learning. When suitable, they apply this learning in conversations with constituents and in their regular board meetings to begin sharing the knowledge with others in the district and community. As part of this phase, boards and superintendents get a clear picture of the work that they will be doing in the next few years of engaging with this work.

Committing to High Expectations and Improved Instruction for All Students
This segment’s outcomes include instilling a sense of urgency that school boards/districts can no longer afford to be content with being ‘good enough’ but should strive to be great. Boards look at what is possible to accomplish by looking at other districts’ successes, get a glimpse of what it could take to improve districtwide student achievement (teacher professional development focused on teaching & learning in a narrow/specific academic area such as reading comprehension), confront their current beliefs about what is possible for the district to achieve, and learn about the initial Lighthouse study, 1998-2000.

Understanding the Role of the Board in Student Achievement:
Introduction to the Lighthouse Research
This segment is designed to help board members and participating administrators gain a deeper understanding of the initial Lighthouse study findings – the differences in ‘elevating’ and ‘accepting’ beliefs about what students can achieve and what the district can do to ensure their achievement, the 7 Conditions of Effective School Renewal, and the board’s role in leading for districtwide high and equitable student achievement.

Getting Clear on the Current Status of Student Learning
This segment focuses on introducing how boards should study data as they lead for improved student learning across the district. The objectives for this segment include the board increasing its understanding of the current status of student achievement within the state and district, be able to articulate what needs to change based on what research shows is possible in the area of student achievement, and learn to speak with one voice on the current status of achievement and areas of needed improvement.
Phase II
Defining, Implementing and Monitoring Improvement Work

In this phase, the board and superintendent work with a district leadership team to identify a focus area of improvement through study of student learning data, set specific targets for making those improvements, define actions that they will take and monitor to work towards those targets, and finalize a plan for monitoring those actions and their impact on the district and on student learning. They then implement the plan that they have developed. The focus is on taking action across the district to improve instruction in order to improve student learning and studying the impact of those actions. Through coordinated data collection and study, the board and district leadership regularly discuss how the work is progressing, what support and possible changes are needed and what impact is evident from the work in the classrooms and student learning results. The materials for the phase focus on tools, frameworks and tip sheets with which the board, superintendent and district leadership team can define and conduct their work. Over the course of this Phase, the facilitator gradually recedes from center stage facilitation of the work to more of a coaching role as leaders from the board, superintendent and district leadership team take a more active role in guiding their own improvement work.

Establishing a Districtwide Leadership Continuum

This segment focuses on connecting the board and superintendent with leadership from within the district, a partnership that is at the heart of successfully improving student learning districtwide. After looking at the research on effective practice in this area, the board and superintendent agree on the criteria for forming a leadership team with representation from across the district that will collaborate closely with the board and superintendent to guide and lead the improvement work in the district around the board’s focus area. In this segment, the superintendent will define the district leadership team membership in preparation for involving them in the work of future segments, including in some of the board development sessions themselves.

Creating a Clear Focus for Improvement of Student Learning

The purpose of this segment is for the board to increase its understanding of the importance of having a narrow focus for improving student learning in the area of greatest student need. The board will use data to identify the key needs within the district, communicate the key points related to the improvement focus area and plan to connect with a district leadership team to finalize the focus for improvement in the district and set specific targets to measure results. In order to achieve the outcomes of this segment, boards and superintendents will need multiple meetings with the district leadership team.

Understanding and Monitoring Your District’s Working Culture

In this segment, the board and superintendent turn their attention to the data collected through the surveys on beliefs and 7 conditions taken across the district at the beginning of this project. Studying data from the beliefs survey provides the board/superintendent team with information about the beliefs of people working in the system about what is possible. Studying data from the conditions survey enables the board/superintendent team to understand perceptions about the working culture and the presence of the 7 conditions within the district. This knowledge helps the board and superintendent consider the strengths and needs related to the working culture. These are data points that the board/superintendent team will continue to monitor over the course of the Lighthouse project to watch for important
shifts in the district working culture and to identify areas of needed board leadership in order to improve district capacity for improving student learning.

Professional Development
This segment begins with a study of research on the characteristics of professional development that produce positive change in student learning. The board studies the kinds of support that are needed from the board in order for effective professional development to flourish district-wide.

Defining Implementation, Monitoring, Corrective Action
This segment sets the stage for the district to begin implementing improvement work through the coordinated action, data collection and study, and decision making of the board, superintendent and district leadership team. Working in close collaboration, the board, superintendent and district leadership team define the improvement work for reaching the achievement goals in the focus area, the professional development activities that will be involved, the data that will be collected to monitor implementation and evaluate impact. They will also define how they will monitor and communicate about the data and a process for providing appropriate support and taking corrective action based on the data collected through monitoring. The board, superintendent and district leadership team should plan on multiple meetings in order to make these decisions. During this segment the role of the facilitator shifts from providing content instruction to facilitating decisions at the district level and ensuring that the district creates the structures for implementing and monitoring those decisions.

Implementing, Monitoring, Corrective Action
Based on the structures and agreements established in the previous segment, the district's implementation of the improvement work. They regularly monitor and communicate about the implementation and impact data and the board provides appropriate support and takes corrective action based on the data collected through monitoring. Over the course of this work, the facilitator shifts from active facilitation to a coaching role as the board, superintendent and district leadership team gain experience and confidence in working together this way. This phase and segment may last for months or even over a year. By the end of the Phase or Segment, the board, superintendent and district leadership team should have firmly established habits of working together to improve student achievement that reflect the concepts and practices emphasized in the Lighthouse work to date. As they gain confidence, they will naturally begin to look at applying these approaches to other focus areas of improvement and/or at embedding these practices into the policy structures of the district. This is the transition into Phase III work.

Phase III
Embedding Improvement in the Culture

Leading effective improvement should not only create better outcomes in the present but should also increase the district’s capacity to improve continuously into the future. There are two indicators that the time is ripe for institutionalizing the approaches to leadership for districtwide improvement of student learning in order to carry them into the future, beyond the involvement of particular individuals or groups:
the board, superintendent and district leadership team have developed and defined new habits of working together based on the work that has preceded this phase, and

the board, superintendent and district leadership team begin looking at the next focus area(s) in which they will use these habits to continuously lead for improved student learning.

There are many opportunities for the board and superintendent to embed the leadership processes and characteristics into district structures to ensure their continuation. Some of this may have already taken place earlier in the work, if the opportunity has already presented itself. Some of the more frequent levers for embedding improvement work in the district include:

- Policy**
- Superintendent selection and evaluation
- Board candidate orientation and recruitment
- Board/superintendent operating agreements
- Board self-evaluation processes
- District strategic planning

During this phase of the work, the facilitator is acting as a resource and friendly critic to the board and superintendent as they seek to embed the work in their district. This can take the shape of facilitating the development of specific policies or discussions in which the board and superintendent set criteria for recruitment, collaboration, evaluation, etc. It can also focus more on identifying the relevant materials and research covered during prior phases that can inform the development of policies and agreements.

** Building the Community Connection

With the improvement work of the district determined that includes a clear and narrow focus (goal) with specific improvement targets, and implementation of improvement strategies begun, the district is now poised to engage its public around these efforts. Understanding what engagement entails and how that can be included in the district’s current public engagement efforts is the focus of this segment. The board will look at research and the district’s current efforts to decide if it needs to take any action to influence the public’s will to succeed.

** Deliberative Policy** Development

This practice comes significantly later than any of the others. As boards work within their leadership roles and begin to see consistency in these behaviors, they will want to ensure that this continues with future boards as “the way we do things around here” and embed those behaviors in policy. This segment is designed to assist the board through a process of deliberation regarding values with the express purpose of crafting policy that will embed new board behaviors in the district’s culture. This work is done with specific changes in mind and may take several meetings to complete.

** In Oregon “policy” as it’s used here is guiding principles.
WHAT DOES A LIGHTHOUSE BOARD LOOK LIKE?

A Lighthouse Board:

- Focuses relentlessly on the improvement of student achievement for all students
  - Board meeting agendas reflect this focus
  - Board members reflect beliefs that high achievement for all students is an attainable goal
- Works effectively with the superintendent as a collaborative leadership team to focus priorities around high achievement for all students in the district
  - The Board maintains a close relationship of trust with the superintendent and strives to facilitate his/her success
- Acts as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to develop abilities around the roles of the Board in leading, but not managing, the accomplishment of district improvement goals
- Makes decisions based on analysis of relevant research and data
- Analyzes and monitors disaggregated student performance data by grade and by school as presented by the District-level Distributed Leadership Team (DDLT)
- Develops a vision based on core values and beliefs of the district and community and effectively communicates that vision to all stakeholders
- Communicates clearly the goals and expectations for the district, staff, and students with an emphasis on high achievement for all students in the district
- Bases decisions about resources and budget on goals and vision for the district with high achievement and continuous improvement for all students as the priority
- Provides the resources necessary for the approved improvement efforts
  - The Board adopts a fiscally responsible budget based on the district’s vision and goals and regularly monitors the fiscal health of the district
- Demonstrates a belief that high quality instruction in every classroom is the foundation for high achievement for all students
Holds the district accountable for providing high quality, aligned professional development that includes imbedded coaching and other supports to assure implementation of approved strategies and programs

- Monitors the conditions and beliefs necessary for improving teaching and learning in the district and provides leadership to address issues around those conditions and beliefs

- Monitors and holds the district accountable for implementation of the District’s efforts for increasing student learning

  - As demonstrated by its work, the Board promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the district

- Acts as a problem solving team with the DDLT when impediments to implementation of the improvement efforts cannot be resolved within the school district by staff and/or the DDLT

- Self-monitors to ensure that the Board remains focused on district priorities and continuous improvement using an instrument accepted by the Board to measure its own effectiveness

- Conducts meetings that are efficient and effective that focus primarily on student achievement and other district priorities

- Treats fellow Board members, the superintendent, staff, and members of the public with respect

- Evaluates the superintendent based on progress toward attainment of predetermined goals and the effectiveness of his/her leadership in implementation of the district’s improvement efforts

- Participates in deliberative policy review and development to reflect a commitment to and focus on policies that support high achievement for all students

  - Ensures that its reform priorities are codified in policy and provide for sustaining reform/change in support of student achievement initiatives

- Works to promote the accomplishments of the district within the district and community at large and to elicit community discourse and support for the goals of the district