



5 Strategies for Superintendents to Improve Conversations with the School Board

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As the year wraps up, many Superintendents are preparing for their evaluation and contract discussions. While these discussions are great opportunities for you to receive feedback from your Board on your performance and what they would like you to focus in the next year, it can be nerve wracking if you do not invest the time to prepare your Board for the conversation around your compensation.

With that in mind, here are five strategies to improve the conversation with your Board around your compensation:

1. Start Early

Just like saving for retirement or having any major conversations with your Board, start the process early. You cannot bring them requests the week before the meeting and expect the Board to be fully prepared to approve the items. Think about what is important to you and begin strategizing on how to best start the conversation and present the information to meet both your goals and the objectives of the Board.

2. Know the Data

Districts routinely do compensation studies to ensure they are on-market with how they are compensating their teachers, principals, and other staff. However, when was the last time the Board went through a similar exercise for their one employee? Working with a third-party to conduct this analysis can help provide context to the discussion. Data points should include base salary and total compensation of state and regional peers, data of Districts the Board aspires to be like, similar student demographics and operating budget, and Superintendent tenure.



3. Discuss your Goals with the Board President

Your Board President will be the one leading the discussion about your compensation to the rest of the Board, so it is important they understand what you are requesting, how it works, its impact on the total compensation, and, most importantly, why it matters to you. Maybe you are getting closer to being retirement eligible making creditable compensation important, or maybe you need additional cash flow to help pay for your child's college education, or you are looking for a sign of a long-term commitment. Each of these can be rationale for certain compensation items and making sure your Board President is aware will help them justify your request.

4. Educate the Board on your State's Pension System

Most Board members do not understand the critical importance of your pension on your long-term financial future or how your pension works. Taking the time to help them understand the basics of the benefit and what it means to you helps give additional purpose to the conversation rather than just the perception of asking for additional dollars.

5. Keep it Simple

Where you can, keep it simple. Think of benefits that might align with the goals of the Board or that are easily understood. Some benefits can be complex just by their nature, but many can be straightforward and put in simple terms for the Board to understand. Also, keeping the compensation request limited to two or three items makes it more digestible for the Board and easier for them to understand versus walking in with a full page of items.

Keeping these principles in mind when beginning your contract discussions for the year will help lead to a more productive conversation. By starting early in your education of the Board and helping them understand how certain benefits can impact your long-term financial stability can bring clarity to the discussion and lead to agreements that the Board can better understand, support, and articulate to the community.

If you would like to talk about your unique strategy, please schedule a virtual meeting with Mason Moses at www.tcgservices.com/mmoses.