Seattle Public Schools Governance Assessment

Moss Adams Final Report

Seattle Public Schools is committed to making its online information accessible and usable to all people, regardless of ability or technology. Meeting web accessibility guidelines and standards is an ongoing process that we are consistently working to improve.

While Seattle Public Schools endeavors to only post documents optimized for accessibility, due to the nature and complexity of some documents, an accessible version of the document may not be available. In these limited circumstances, the District will provide equally effective alternate access.

For questions and more information about this document, please contact the following:

School Board Office
boardoffice@seattleschools.org

This report was prepared by Moss Adams for presentation to the Seattle School Board.

FINAL REPORT

Seattle Public Schools

GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT

December 6, 2024

Moss Adams LLP
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2800
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 302-6500

MOSSADAMS

Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

Seattle Public Schools (the District, SPS) is the largest school district in Washington, educating around 50,000 students. In the 2018 Teaching and Learning Efficiency Study conducted by Moss Adams LLP (Moss Adams), the District received the recommendation to "Adopt a policy governance model, focusing the Board on policy and strategy with delegation of operations and monitoring to staff, and reassess communications protocols." In response, SPS chose to adopt the Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) framework in 2021 as their policy governance model. While positive progress has been made to adopt this model, there remain challenges to fully implementing effective practices.

To identify opportunities for and roadblocks to policy governance implementation, Moss Adams was contracted to assess roles, responsibilities, and implementation challenges related to the District's shift to the SOFG framework. The primary goal of this work is to identify barriers to fully implementing the policy governance model and recommend options to move the District forward.

This analysis was informed by interviews, document reviews, peer benchmarking, and research on industry best practices. The study was conducted between July 2024 and October 2024, and consisted of four major phases: startup, fact finding, analysis, and reporting.

B. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observation and recommendations are grouped into the three key sections—Transition to Policy Governance, Leadership Engagement, and Governance Process. Observations and recommendations are summarized below, and with greater details and actionable recommendations listed in Section IV of this report.

	OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Transition to Policy Governance	
1.	**Observation**	While implementation efforts have taken place, SPS has not developed a comprehensive plan that outlines how Board and staff members will implement the policy governance model across the District.
	Recommendation	Collaboratively develop a unified plan to guide implementation activities at both the Board and management level.
2.	**Observation**	Without a comprehensive change management strategy that encompasses District-wide communication and training, many members of the organization remain unaware of SOFG and its practical implications on their roles within the District.

		OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
	Recommendation	To effectively embed the SOFG framework within the District, SPS should implement a comprehensive communication, training, and onboarding plan that includes change management practices, ongoing coaching, and clear role documentation.
	Leadership Engagement	
3.	**Observation**	While the Board has made positive progress toward implementing a policy governance framework, there are still significant challenges to ensuring that this framework is fully understood, adhered to, and carried forward.
	Recommendation	Enhance the Board's effectiveness in applying the policy governance framework by reinforcing practical skills and establishing structured approaches for oversight and community engagement, ensuring alignment with District goals, and responsive support for constituents.
4.	**Observation**	The Superintendent, Cabinet, and other teams across the District are responsible for engaging with and championing the SOFG framework—especially in relation to the goals and guardrails structure. Additional support, clarity, and buy-in is needed for successfully implementation.
	Recommendation	Continue current efforts to clarify roles, incorporate responsibilities into standard practices and expectations, and make full use of the project management infrastructure to ensure that work is moving forward.
5.	**Observation**	There are opportunities to increase Board Office support to ensure that the Board and the Superintendent's Office are appropriately resourced.
	Recommendation	Conduct a comprehensive staffing analysis to assess whether the current roles within the Board Office align with the needs and priorities of the Board.
	Governance Process	
6.	**Observation**	Under the SOFG model, it is important that the strategic goals and guardrails are based on the needs of the community and for the goals to cascade throughout the organization. The District is in the process of implementing this model, but further work remains.
	Recommendation	Expand current efforts to ensure strong stakeholder input during the goal setting process and take steps to establish a cascading goal structure.
7	**Observation**	The District has made some positive progress toward implementing new structures to support progress monitoring. However, challenges remain to ensuring that data is gathered, reported, and acted upon in a productive manner.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
	Recommendation	Empower the Accountability Office with access to essential data, incorporate educator input into data metrics, and strengthen the structured review process to ensure timely, informed decision-making that supports improved student outcomes.
8	**Observation**	SPS has struggled to cultivate a culture of healthy accountability, which impedes the execution of District-wide initiatives, including the policy governance framework.
	Recommendation	Foster a cohesive accountability culture within SPS by clarifying expectations, empowering the Accountability Office, and supporting consistent, equitable implementation of District initiatives.
9	**Observation**	The District has not established a centralized compliance function. Instead, individual departments and teams are responsible for various aspects of compliance monitoring and reporting with limited coordination. As a result, there is a risk of noncompliance, and it is challenging to see a holistic picture of compliance activities across the District.
	Recommendation	Consider establishing a compliance matrix and creating a position to provide centralized compliance oversight.
10	**Observation**	In the past, the District's risk management activities have primarily focused on operational and tactical issues. Currently, the District's risk management function is going through a period of transition, as the new Risk Manager refocuses their role to provide more strategic enterprise risk management leadership.
	Recommendation	Continue current efforts to strengthen the enterprise risk management function and ensure that the Risk Manager can operate at a strategic level.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Policy Governance Recommendation

In 2018, Moss Adams assessed the structure and management of the District's Teaching and Learning (T&L) division. In the report, Moss Adams noted that SPS's Board "operates at more of a tactical level than a strategic level. Many decisions go through Board processes, no matter their size. This culture is typical of organizations with high elected official and staff turnover, and creates a perception of mistrust between the staff and Board. Additionally, the Board participates in discussions that typically occur at the staff level. The level of detail in these requests for information about programs, policies, and overall operations result in significant additional work for District staff. This practice ultimately takes time away from staff who would otherwise be advancing the work of the District."

To mitigate these issues, Moss Adams recommended that SPS adopt a policy governance model, a framework in which the Board focuses on high-level policy and strategic goals, while operational responsibilities are delegated to the Superintendent.

A policy governance model establishes a clear division of roles: the Board sets goals and policy, known as "end policies," which outline expected student outcomes, and defines boundaries through executive limitations that guide how those outcomes are achieved. By evaluating district and superintendent performance based on these policies, the Board can oversee strategy and accountability without interfering in day-to-day operations. This approach intends to create greater operational efficiency and a sharper focus on the District's mission.

Student Outcomes Focused Governance

Based on this recommendation, the Board adopted the Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) framework in 2021. This policy governance model provides a research-based approach specifically aimed at improving student outcomes. The SOFG framework consists of six key competencies:

- **Vision & Goals:** Boards collaborate with the superintendent to set specific, measurable goals focused on student outcomes, involving students, parents, and the community in goal development.

- **Values & Guardrails:** Boards work with the superintendent to establish SMART guardrails rooted in community values that set clear boundaries in pursuit of goals, fostering shared ownership.

- **Monitoring & Accountability:** Boards dedicate substantial time to tracking progress, using a structured calendar, and allocating at least half of meeting time to reviewing goals and superintendent performance.

- **Communication & Collaboration:** Boards lead transparently and inclusively, ensuring all members have equal information access, engaging stakeholders, and keeping meetings focused.

- **Unity & Trust:** Boards operate as a unified voice, setting ethical standards, conducting self-evaluations, and prioritizing the needs of all students.

- **Continuous Improvement:** Boards commit to regular self-assessment, celebrate achievements, and provide ongoing SOFG training, including student involvement.

Within this context, the SOFG framework encourages school boards to shift from operational involvement to strategic oversight, creating a governance environment that supports accountability, collaboration, and a strong focus on student success.

The SOFG framework has been adopted by many school districts across the United States. The framework is generally well-aligned with policy governance best practices and with local guidance. For example, the model directly supports the Washington State School Directors' Association Washington School Board Standards (see Appendix A for more details).[1]

B. SCOPE

Moss Adams was contracted to assess roles, responsibilities, and implementation challenges related to the District's shift to the SOFG framework. The primary goal of this work is to identify barriers to fully implementing SOFG framework and recommend options to move the District forward. As part of this assessment, the Moss Adams team:

- Assessed roles, responsibilities, and gaps across the School Board, Board Office, Superintendent Office, and District departments related to governance, progress monitoring, risk management, and compliance tracking
- Assessed the current state of support for policy governance and student outcomes focused framework
- Benchmarked the District against similarly situated school districts utilizing SOFG to gain perspective on best practices
- Provided recommendations to help the District gain the full benefits of the SOFG model

C. METHODOLOGY

This analysis was informed by interviews, document reviews, peer benchmarking, and research on industry best practices. The study was conducted between July and October 2024, and consisted of four major phases:

	PHASE		DESCRIPTION
1	Start-Up and Management	←	This phase concentrated on comprehensive project planning and project management including scope setting, identifying staff to interview and documents to review, communicating the plan, and establishing a game plan for execution.
2	Fact Finding	←	This phase included interviews, document review, peer benchmarking, and research into industry standards. We worked with SPS staff to obtain the most currently available information and insights. • *Interviews*: We conducted interviews with 29 employees and members of the SPS Board. • *Document Review*: We reviewed documents including policies and procedures, plans, SOFG tools and results, and job descriptions.

---

[1] Washington State School Directors' Association. (2023). Washington School Board Standards: A research-based framework for effective school board governance: https://wssda.app.box.com/s/smd5n3ykrkeq2publ7k9gjw2dj67rlzs

	PHASE		DESCRIPTION
			• *Peer Benchmarking*: We conducted peer benchmarking at ten peer institutions that have adopted some version of the SOFG model (see Appendix F). • *Industry Standards and Best Practice Research*: We conducted research to ascertain industry standards and best practices.
3	Analysis	←	We evaluated the importance, impact, and scope of our observations to develop recommendations to support the SOFG implementation. We leveraged best practices to inform our assessment and conducted peer benchmarking to provide comparative data from other school districts that have implemented SOFG.
4	Reporting	←	In the final phase, we concluded the project by communicating observations and recommendations through reports and presentations. We delivered both draft and final reports to SPS leadership.

D. COMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights gathered throughout our assessment, we noted some areas of strength at SPS that can be leveraged for further improvement across the organization.

- **Commitment to Students:** Many interviewees expressed a strong commitment to placing student outcomes at the center of the District's work.

- **Recognition of Need:** There is a general understanding across the organization that the implementation of a policy governance framework has not gone as planned, and a recognition that change is required for the governance model to be successful.

- **Leadership Commitment to SOFG:** SPS's board leadership appear to be committed to implementing SOFG as their policy governance framework because they believe it is what's best for students.

- **Positive Progress:** While implementation is not fully complete, there have been positive strides made to put new processes, reports, and teams in place to support this work.

We would like to thank SPS employees and leadership for their participation in this assessment. These commendations, coupled with our observations and recommendations, provide an overview of areas of strengths and weaknesses that can help improve operations at the District.

III. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the input gathered from interviews, document review, and peer benchmarking, as well as comparisons to best practices, we prepared a comprehensive set of observations and recommendations.

A. TRANSITION TO POLICY GOVERNANCE

Implementation Planning

1.	Observation	While implementation efforts have taken place, SPS has not developed a comprehensive plan that outlines how Board and staff members will implement the policy governance model across the District.
	Recommendation	Collaboratively develop a unified plan to guide implementation activities at both the Board and management level.

Observation

In early 2021, the Board adopted a policy governance model for the District. This choice represented a significant transition in how the Board focuses its time, engages with its constituents, and manages the working relationship with the Superintendent and the Central Office.

Historically, the Board has taken a more operational approach. This involvement often blurred the lines between District governance (which should be the Board's primary focus) and District management (which is the main responsibility of the Superintendent and their staff). By transitioning to the SOFG model, the Board aimed to embrace a policy governance model and concentrating its efforts on issues directly related to improving student outcomes.

To support this transition, the Board drafted and approved the Seattle School Board SOFG Implementation Timeline. This timeline outlined 64 Board-specific tasks that were to be complete between March 1, 2021 and November 30, 2023 in order for the Board to have fully implemented the SOFG framework. Using this timeline, the Board took significant steps towards aligning its practices and policies with the SOFG framework, as detailed in the Observation 2. However, as of the writing of this report, the timeline has not been consistently updated; currently, 16 of the 64 tasks remain incomplete with a due date of "TBD."

In contrast to the Board, the District staff did not develop a documented rollout plan that includes activities to be completed by the Central Office and staff at individual schools. Nonetheless, the District has initiated some significant changes to support the implementation of SOFG—especially within the past 6-12 months. These activities include, but not limited to:

- Developing a progress monitoring calendar for 2024-2025
- Creating internal protocols to develop the progress monitoring reports
- Assigning executive sponsors and business owners for each goal and guardrail
- Establishing the Plans and Programs office to support implementation of strategies and initiatives

Without a comprehensive implementation plan that integrates both Board-level and District-wide activities, it is challenging to see the full picture of work or ensure that steps are being taken at appropriate times. According to interview feedback and analysis for events influencing SPS, several interrelated challenges have hindered the creation of a comprehensive implementation plan that could be used in transitioning to the SOFG framework:

- **Superintendent Transition:** At the time SOFG was selected, SPS was also undergoing a transition in leadership. Denise Juneau resigned as Superintendent on May 1, 2021 and Dr. Brent Jones was appointed as the Interim Superintendent[2], a position he held until March 2022 when he signed a two-year contract with SPS[3] to serve as the full-time Superintendent.

- **Reopening Schools:** In March 2021, Dr. Jones announced that SPS would return to full-time, in-person instruction for all students starting with the 2021–2022 school year. As a result, staff reported that the Central Office was focused on safely reopening classrooms during the 2022–2023 academic year.

- **Initiative Fatigue:** As noted in the 2018 Teaching and Learning Efficiency Study, the District has historically struggled to sustain new changes effectively and inspire staff to adopt new systems, processes, and programs. Multiple interviewees observed that SPS excels at initiating projects, but has often failed to see them through to full implementation. Given this history, employees are reportedly very hesitant to invest effort in new initiatives believing that another initiative will likely be announced soon. This resistance to change is understandable, but creates a high barrier to fully implementing SOFG.

- **High Leadership Turnover:** The District has experienced high levels of turnover among leadership—especially at the Board, Superintendent, Cabinet, and Principal levels. While Board turnover is to be expected as these are elected positions, leadership turnover at all levels has contributed to a lack of continuity regarding initiatives and priorities.

- **Fatigue from COVID:** As is common in public school districts across the country, interviewees acknowledged the ongoing impacts of COVID. Responding and managing through the height of COVID took a physical and emotional toll on at each level of the District and the broader District community. Some interviewees noted that this is the first year that District operations are beginning to feel more normalized.

- **Strained Labor/Management Relationship:** Multiple interviewees and past assessments have noted a lack of trust between employees at individual schools and District administration. Without strong alignment and collaboration between SPS administration and school-level leadership and staff, it is challenging to implement District-wide initiatives like SOFG.

- **Ongoing Operational Priorities:** There are multiple high-profile operational issues within the past year that have required significant focus and investment of time from SPS leadership and employees. These include bus driver shortages, student safety and well-being, and the ongoing, severe structural budget deficit. Addressing these critical issues has reportedly taken focus away from some of the District's longer-term strategic initiatives.

---

[2] The Seattle Times. (2021, April 8). Denise Juneau, Seattle school superintendent, resigning earlier than planned. *The Seattle Times*. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/education/denise-juneau-seattle-school-superintendent-resigning-earlier-than-planned/

[3] Seattle Public Schools. (n.d.). Superintendent search. *Seattle Public Schools*. https://www.seattleschools.org/news/superintendent-search/

Overall, the absence of a comprehensive implementation plan that effectively integrates both Board-level and District-wide activities—coupled with the challenges outlined above and the limited communication and change management discussed in Observation 2—has posed obstacles to fully establishing the SOFG framework. Consequently, the complete implementation of the policy governance framework is taking longer than the Board initially anticipated.

Recommendations

- The Board, Superintendent, and Senior Cabinet (the District's 10-member senior leadership team) should collaborate to develop a unified SOFG implementation plan that includes activities at both the Board and management level.
  - The plan should define clear goals, tasks, responsible parties, target timelines, and any relevant performance measures. Building a structured timeline with key milestones allows for ongoing monitoring and ensures the initiative stays on track.
  - The plan should be vetted by both the Board and the Senior Cabinet to ensure it is coordinated. It may also be beneficial to incorporate broader input from Central Office staff to gain broader buy-in and ensure the plan is feasible.
  - The plan should also be aligned with the District's annual budgeting process so that required resources can be identified.
  - Once the implementation plan is in place, the District should develop a monitoring process to regularly assess progress and designate an individual responsible for tracking its execution. This could be a member of staff or an external project manager. This methodical approach not only improves the likelihood of successful implementation but also reinforces trust and accountability across stakeholders.

Communication and Change Management

2.	Observation	Without a comprehensive change management strategy that encompasses District-wide communication and training, many members of the organization remain unaware of SOFG and its practical implications on their roles within the District.
	Recommendation	To effectively embed the SOFG framework within the District, SPS should implement a comprehensive communication, training, and onboarding plan that includes change management practices, ongoing coaching, and clear role documentation.

Observation

Transformative organizational change is a process that involves significant shifts in mission, strategy, structure, performance, and processes. When the Board finalized its decision to implement the policy governance framework in 2021, they initiated a transformational change. While SOFG as a policy governance model primarily impacts Board operations, the central philosophy of the model—which places student outcomes at the center of strategic decisions—and the structures and processes that support it have implications across many roles within the District. Given the magnitude and complexity of this transition, along with the initiative fatigue and other challenges faced by SPS (see Observation 1), the successful implementation of the SOFG framework across the District would benefit from a comprehensive change management plan.

Like many resource-constrained public organizations, the District has historically struggled with effective change management, not only in relation to policy governance but across many organization-wide initiatives (see Observation 6 in the 2018 Teaching and Learning Efficiency Study for further details). As a result, different areas of the organization have approached the implementation in inconsistent ways, leading to varying degrees of understanding and adoption.

Board-Level Communication and Change Management

To support communication and change management at the Board level, the District implemented a full onboarding and coaching framework. For example, the Board received initial training on the SOFG model and ongoing coaching from the Council of the Great City Schools. The Board also received implementation tools (including the self-evaluation and time study tools) and the SOFG Manual, which includes:

- Details of the framework, including definitions of key words and phrases
- Examples of goals, guardrails, and theory of action
- Links to sources for further study
- Explanations of progress monitoring and practical questions to use
- Board Quarterly Self-Evaluation tool
- Board Continuous Improvement Evaluation tool
- Superintendent Annual Evaluation tool

As part of their engagement with SOFG, several Board members were also given the chance to be a part of a Council of the Great City Schools peer cohort, which they reported was beneficial to the Board's understanding of SOFG.

The Board's commitment to these initiatives has resulted in a strong understanding of SOFG and its implications for their roles as the governing body of SPS. While Board members are still experiencing challenges to fully applying the framework (see Observation 3), actively engaging in training and building their foundational knowledge is the first step to ensure that the Board is well equipped to navigate the complexities of a policy governance framework.

Staff-Level Communication and Change Management

There is a lack of consistent understanding and awareness of SOFG throughout the District, particularly below the Cabinet level of the District. Many interviewees reported that they do not have a clear understanding of SOFG, its implications for their roles within the District, and/or how to practically operate within the framework. Interviews revealed varying levels of understanding within different parts of the organization:

- **Senior Management Understanding:** The Superintendent and most Cabinet members demonstrated a strong theoretical grasp of SOFG. However, not all Cabinet members appeared to be committed to this framework, which may impact how they do or do not engage with related activities (see Observation 3).
- **Central Office Staff:** Central Office staff exhibited mixed levels of knowledge about SOFG and its influence on their roles within the District. In particular, multiple interviewees within internal service departments noted the perception that the framework had little implication for their responsibilities, as they saw it primarily as a Board-focused and/or academic-focused model.

- **Regional Executive Directors and Principals:** While some interviewees recognized the name or the SOFG model, there was not a consistent understanding of its meaning or its implications for school-level operations. While it is not necessary for school-based staff to have a deep understanding of the SOFG model, they should have general awareness about what it means and how it may impact their work, especially when it comes to goals and guardrails, progress monitoring, data gathering and reporting, and accountability. Positively, interviewees noted the opinion that the majority of school-based staff are aware of the District's goals and each school's Continuous School Improvement Plans are aligned with the goals.

The lack of clarity surrounding roles and responsibilities District-wide is a result of insufficient communication and professional development. Although Central Office staff received some initial training and communication when SOFG was adopted in 2021, there has been no ongoing training since then, and we did not receive any evidence of communication to school-based leadership regarding SOFG adoption. SOFG has not been incorporated into new hire onboarding processes, and while the District has a webpage.[4] that provides a high-level overview of SOFG, it has not created any internal documentation that clearly outlines roles and responsibilities or operational procedures within the framework.

Employees across the District (at both Central Office and schools) reported a struggle to understand who to contact to address questions, concerns, or support needs related to SOFG. While the Moss Adams team was provided with an organizational chart for the Central Office that is published on the District's website, multiple interviewees reported that they were not aware of an organizational chart, nor had one been shared with them. In addition, the District's website does not include all current teams, such as the Plans and Programs Office, and team names are not consistent or aligned with the organizational chart[5]. Finally, the organizational chart does not list office, department, or team names—which makes it challenging to see a wholistic picture of the District's structure.

This limited awareness hinders District-wide adoption and implementation of SOFG principles, impeding progress toward achieving the desired student-focused outcomes. A key consequence is the misallocation of resources, as individuals may not prioritize work aligned with SOFG goals due to a lack of understanding or perceived relevance to their role. This disconnect further contributes to the feeling of "initiative fatigue" and perpetuates a cycle of ineffective implementation. Ultimately, the lack of a shared understanding and commitment to SOFG hinders its potential to drive meaningful and lasting change within the District.

Recommendations

- As part of the implementation plan (see Observation 1), SPS should incorporate communication and change management practices to ensure all members of the organization are informed about SOFG and its implications for their work. The following are key elements for implementing a successful change management strategy.
  - **Communicate the Change:** Many members of SPS are unaware of the SOFG framework and how it affects their roles within the District. SPS leadership should build awareness of the

---

[4] Student Outcomes Focused Governance: https://www.seattleschools.org/about/school-board/student-outcomes-focused-governance/

[5] Seattle Public Schools Departments and Services: https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/

new governance framework, the reasons that the change was made, and how the change impacts the day-to-day operations of the District.

- ○ **Understand the Ramifications of the Change:** Clearly outline the changes brought by the SOFG governance framework and what adjustments are needed for its implementation. This process should be multi-step, well-communicated, and include thorough training to avoid surprises for staff. Key messages should be crafted and shared to keep staff informed about implementation progress and the impact of SOFG on the District.

- ○ **Consider and Design a Method for Staff Education:** Develop and implement a robust training program for all staff and Board members, focusing on the SOFG framework, roles, responsibilities, and practical applications. Utilize this program throughout the SOFG implementation and beyond to reinforce learning. Encourage employee feedback on the change process, adjusting as needed. Support consistent adoption of SOFG by establishing clear policies, procedures, and performance measures that reflect the changes and serve as essential resources for staff.

- ○ **Coaching for the Board and Cabinet:** Continue to encourage coaching for Board members and explore opportunities for a member of the Council of the Great City Schools team to coach Cabinet members to ensure buy-in and ongoing advancement toward effective use of the SOFG model.

- To fully embed SOFG within the District's culture, it is essential to complement the training for current staff with a comprehensive onboarding strategy for new staff and Board members. This strategy will introduce new staff and Board members to the SOFG framework, ensure they understand the overall mission and priorities of the District, and ensure they understand SOFG (or its related process') impact on their specific role.

- Document and publicize roles and responsibilities within the District to enhance overall clarity of roles (including, but not limited to, SOFG-related roles) and make it easier to connect with the correct Central Office staff. In particular, it will be helpful to expand the Central Office organizational chart with enough detail to make it a practical tool. Ideally, this would be paired with narrative descriptions of each department and unit to help employees find the contacts and resources they need. As part of this work, the District should establish a process for regularly updating the organizational chart and the related website content.

B. LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Board Engagement

3.	Observation	While the Board has made positive progress toward implementing a policy governance framework, there are still significant challenges to ensuring that this framework is fully understood, adhered to, and carried forward.
	Recommendation	Enhance the Board's effectiveness in applying the policy governance framework by reinforcing practical skills and establishing structured approaches for oversight and community engagement, ensuring alignment with District goals, and responsive support for constituents.

Observation

Roles and Responsiblities

While the Board shows a strong theoretical understanding of SOFG and demonstrates a general commitment to implementing the framework, they face challenges when it comes to consistent application. Both Board and management interviewees noted that the Board "understands the theory, but not the application." This difficulty in operationalizing policy governance principles is evident in the Board's continued involvement in operational issues that should fall under the responsibility of District management. For instance, interviewees comments and meeting minutes indicate that the Board often addresses operational concerns raised by constituents, despite these matters being outside their defined role within the policy governance framework as defined by the SOFG Manual found in Appendix B.

Recognizing that there are mandated roles and tasks the Board must fulfill, the SOFG Manual provides a comprehensive framework for the duties of the Board and how they should spend their time when not focused on mandated roles and tasks. According to the SOFG Manual, the duties of the Board are as follows:

- **Vision and Goals:** The Board and Superintendent should set 1–5 SMART goals focused on student outcomes, with specific measures and interim targets for monitoring progress.
- **Values and Guardrails:** Establish 1–5 guardrails that reflect community values, outlining actions the Superintendent cannot take. Interim targets for each guardrail should be measurable, with public feedback gathered pre-adoption.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Dedicate at least 50% of monthly public meetings to reviewing goals and guardrails. A monitoring calendar should guide regular progress reviews, and Board meeting time should focus on SOFG-aligned goals.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Limit public Board meetings to four per month, lasting no more than three hours, with up to five discussion topics. Policies should only address legal mandates or goal/guardrail-related issues, with materials provided three days before the meeting.
- **Unity and Trust:** The Board's Ethics and Conflict Statement should prevent members from directing staff and require recusal in cases of campaign or appointment-related conflicts. Regular self-evaluations help ensure ethical adherence.

- **Continuous Improvement:** The Board should conduct regular self-evaluations, using tools provided in the SOFG Manual. Boards scoring below 80 should evaluate quarterly, while others may do so annually, formally adopting evaluation results.

SOFG Progress Measures

In addition to outlining the non-mandated duties of the Board, the SOFG Manual provides various tools for evaluating and tracking the Board's progress in adopting the model. Analyzing SPS's results using these tools highlights gaps in the implementation of the policy governance model.

- **Time Study:** Since 2023, the Board has conducted time studies of their meeting minutes in alignment with the SOFG model. As noted previously, SOFG boards are expected to allocate at least 50% of their public meeting time each month to setting and monitoring goals. However, as shown in Appendix D, only 4.91% of Board meeting time in 2024 has been dedicated to goal setting and monitoring, which the SOFG Manual categorizes as "Not Student Outcomes Focused." As discussed in Observation 7, there appear to be discrepancies in how this number was calculated. However, even if there are some inconsistencies in the methodology, it does not appear that the Board is approaching the target of allocating 50% of their meeting times to monitoring goals.

- **Board Quarterly Evaluation Tool:** In alignment with the SOFG model, the Board has recently begun the practice of quarterly self-evaluations. As detailed in Appendix D, the Board has performed two self-evaluations (one in April and one in June). Both assessments resulted in an implementation score of 41 out of 100, with the goal of reaching 76 by June 2025. However, despite giving themselves a score of 10 in the "Monitoring & Accountability" category, their actual focus on goals accounted for only 4.91%of their time, as noted above. The limited focus suggests a more accurate rating of 0 in that category, reducing their overall implementation score to 31.

  ○ As shown in Appendix F, three peer districts have made their current quarterly evaluations available: Atlanta Public Schools rated themselves at 15, San Francisco Public Schools at 26.3, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools at 67. The average score across these districts is 36.1, placing SPS just below or just above the average depending on which score is used; however, this figure is skewed due to the limited number of available evaluations and Charlotte-Mecklenburg's self-assessment, which indicates they are significantly further along in the process compared to the other two districts.

- **Board Continuous Improvement Evaluation:** As the Board has only begun implementing quarterly evaluations, they have not yet utilized this tool (which summarizes and track trends in the quarterly evaluations).

- **Superintendent Annual Evaluation:** It was reported that the Board used a version of the evaluation framework this past year, but did not find it useful. As a result, the Board has adopted a new Superintended Evaluation Form is based on the SOFG model and customized for the unique needs of SPS.

Constituent Services

Communication with Community Members: A key challenge for the Board in implementing a policy governance framework is how the framework addresses constituent services. Like other elected roles, SPS' community members frequently approach their elected board members for assistance with operational issues or raise these concerns during public comment at meetings. However, the policy governance framework is designed to shift the Board's focus from direct involvement in these matters to a more strategic policy governance role centered on goals, guardrails, and policy direction. Instead, members of the community are encouraged to take their questions and concerns to staff in

the individual schools or Central Office and seek resolution at the lowest level possible, in accordance with best practice.

The District has implemented the "Let's Talk" system that centralizes and routes incoming questions and requests. However, the Board does not have visibility into whether constituent concerns and questions raised through the "Let's Talk" system are being handled efficiently and effectively. In addition, the Board often serves as an escalation point when community members feel the prescribed methods have not resolved their issue satisfactorily. Some interviewed board members expressed feeling unprepared and uncertain about how to effectively address constituent concerns and ensure that these voices are heard, creating a barrier to providing effective constituent services.

A 2024 report by the Puget Sound Educational Service District[6] highlighted many similar issues related to the District's communication processes. In particular, they focused on public testimony at board meeting, unclear staff roles and responsibilities, and inconsistent communication pathways. The report emphasized the need to provide clear guidance and processes to that staff and families can have their concerns addressed without having to navigate or understand the internal complexities of the District.

Communication with Staff: The 2018 Teaching and Learning study noted, "District staff report that their work is highly reactive to requests for information, making it difficult to prioritize tasks and focus efforts to pursue the District's strategic plan." Subsequently, the District adopted a policy that requires Board members to communicate with staff solely through the Superintendent and in writing. While this policy aligns with the intent of a policy governance framework by keeping the Board focused on managing through the Superintendent, it limits opportunities for timely follow-up and collaborative discussion, and restricts the Board's ability to ensure staff have received and addressed constituent concerns quickly and effectively.

School Visitation: SPS does not have a Board Visitation policy in place. An essential responsibility of any elected official, and explicitly outlined in the SOFG framework, is the ability of Board members to effectively represent their community. While much of this work is embedded in specific processes—such as gathering community input during goal setting (see Observation 6 for details)— interviewees identified additional opportunities to enhance Board members' understanding of their communities. Notably, several interviewees expressed a desire for Board members to be more visibly present on school campuses. The belief is that by gaining a deeper understanding of the activities and dynamics within the schools in their geographic district, Board members would be better equipped to understand student outcomes and represent the interests of the students.

In the absence of a policy that defines expectations for Board member school visits, there have been instances where Board members have either not visited schools at all or over-visited schools unannounced. Either scenario can create challenges. A clear Board Visitation policy would ensure that each school is visited at appropriate intervals and both school staff and Board members have clear expectations for the visits.

---

[6] Puget Sound Educational Service District. (2024). Seattle Public Schools Rainier View Elementary School Process Review https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25038291-sps-rainier-view-es-process-review-report-june-2024-6

Recommendations

- Continue to strengthen the Board's proficiency with SOFG tools and practices. To ensure this is consistently achieved moving forward:
  - Continue to enlist coaching from the Council of the Great City Schools to assist with further implementation and use of the framework.
  - Develop policies, procedures, and trainings to ensure consistent use of the tools provided in the SOFG Manual.
  - Commit to utilizing the provided tools to track Board engagement and make adjustments as needed to continue advancement toward "Mastering Student Outcomes Focus."

- To improve communication, continue to clarify and reinforce the appropriate channels to respond to constituent concerns. Activities should include, but may not be limited to, developing a framework for communication and handling of operational issues that have escalated to the board level.

- To enhance Board member engagement with the schools they represent and deepen their understanding of the communities they serve, the District should establish a School Visitation policy. This policy should include guidelines for visitations; for example, the policy should provide clear guidance on when Board members can visit schools, the steps for coordinating school visits, clarity around appropriate behavior during visits, and expectations about how often Board members may visit schools in their geographic area.

Central Office Engagement

4.	Observation	The Superintendent, Cabinet, and other teams across the District are responsible for engaging with and championing the SOFG framework—especially in relation to the goals and guardrails structure. Additional support, clarity, and buy-in is needed for successfully implementation.
	Recommendation	Continue current efforts to clarify roles, incorporate responsibilities into standard practices and expectations, and make full use of the project management infrastructure to ensure that work is moving forward.

Observation

In addition to the Board, the SOFG model is supported by management and staff across the District. According to the SOFG model, SPS' organizational structure, and provided documentation, several key players within the District's Central Office have SOFG-specific roles and responsibilities:

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES AND PURPOSE
Superintendent	- Responsible for collaborating with the Board to set and monitor SMART goals focused on improving student outcomes. - Provides regular updates on progress, develops strategies in response to performance data, and ensures that all actions align with the Board's goals and community values. - Engages with stakeholders, ensuring transparency and collaboration, while maintaining compliance with Board-adopted guardrails that guide operational decisions.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES AND PURPOSE
	• Supports the Board's continuous improvement efforts through regular self-evaluation and professional development. • Is evaluated annually based on the achievement of these goals and is accountable for the overall performance of the school system.
Senior Cabinet	• In partnership with the Superintendent, champions the SOFG framework. • Serve as executive sponsors to ensure progress on goals and guardrails. • Develops strategies to improve student outcomes and works in partnership with the Plans and Programs office to implement these initiatives.
Accountability Office	• Ensures that the District's goals (especially those related to student outcomes) are met and that the goals are aligned across different departments and schools. • Collects, analyzes, and interprets data to assess the District's performance on goals and determine whether initiatives are working correctly. They ensure that the data is accurate, timely, and actionable. • Ensures that staff and leadership adhere to the established guardrails (e.g., equity in access to services and proper use of instructional materials). • Provides feedback to departments and schools to help refine their strategies and action plans to support continuous improvement.
Plans and Programs Office	• Provides management and support for the District's initiatives and programs. In this role, they are meant to be responsible for holding goal and guardrail sponsors accountable to implementing strategies and initiatives. • Uses program management best practices to align business and technology resources with the District's academic goals. • Provides enterprise project management for District-wide initiatives and strategies, including SOFG.

As noted previously, these roles are only partially fulfilled. Interviews also revealed specific, role-related challenges that have complicated the execution of duties:

- **Superintendent:** During interviews, it was noted that while the Superintendent is fully or partially fulfilling many of the tasks outlined above, there appears to be less visible leadership in championing the implementation of SOFG across the District and ensuring accountability to adopt strategies that will move SPS toward achieving their student-focused goals.

- **Senior Cabinet:** While all Cabinet members share the general responsibility of supporting the SOFG work, the Superintendent has charged specific members (namely the Associate Superintendent of Student & School Support, Assistant Superintendent of Academics, Assistant Superintendent of Technology & Optimization, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, and the Chief of Staff) to be executive sponsors of individual goals and guardrails. Based on interview responses, some Cabinet members are highly engaged with the SOFG framework, while others expressed concerns about its relevance or struggled to see its connection to their areas of responsibility. Not all Cabinet members participated in the interviews, so our understanding of their perspective is incomplete.

- **Accountability Office:** As explored in Observation 7 and Observation 8, the Accountability Office has not been fully empowered to ensure District-wide accountability for implementation fidelity of initiatives and academic strategies, and has faced challenges in consistently obtaining the data needed to support effective progress monitoring.

- **Plans and Programs Office:** Several interviewees noted that the Plans and Programs Office is a relatively new group that is in the midst of building out its internal processes. Interviewees generally expressed positive sentiment about this group, while also recognizing that there are opportunities to increase the impact of this work as it becomes more formalized. While some interviewees reported that Plans and Programs Office project management structure (where business owners, project managers, and subject matter experts routinely conduct check-ins, make adjustments, and gain direction from executive sponsors) was in place, other reported a lack of knowledge about this work. It is unclear whether this is due to a lack of communication or a lack of full process implementation.

SPS has not yet fully integrated the SOFG framework into the District's standard operations. Based on interviews and the documents provided, we identified the following gaps:

- Lack of SOFG-related onboarding and training (Observation 2).
- Lack of a well-publicized organizational chart and documented roles and responsibilities (Observation 2).
- Responsibilities related to sponsoring, monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting goals and guardrails have not yet been incorporated into job descriptions or employee performance evaluations.

For implementation of the SOFG framework to be fully realized, Central Office leadership and staff need to engage in a consistent, effective, and efficient manner.

Recommendations

- It is important to align all Central Office parties by clearly defining and communicating their roles and responsibilities. The District should:
  - Develop and disseminate an updated organizational chart that holistically outlines the roles of key District teams (see Observation 2 for more details).
  - Explore options to incorporate SOFG-related responsibilities into relevant job descriptions in a way that is clearly articulated and measurable.
  - Explore opportunities to include SOFG-related responsibilities in performance evaluations— starting with the Cabinet members—to fostering accountability and commitment across the organization.
- Continue to promote alignment and collaboration between the Superintendent and Cabinet members using regularly scheduled meeting to discuss progress, challenges, and strategies for effective implementation of the framework. They may include continuing the strengthen the use of the Plans and Programs Office and the related project management infrastructure.
- Continue current efforts to establish SOFG coaching for Cabinet Members to enhance their understanding of the framework and its implications on their work.

Board Office Support

5.	Observation	There are opportunities to increase Board Office support to ensure that the Board and the Superintendent's Office are appropriately resourced.
	Recommendation	Assess whether the current roles within the Board Office align with the needs and priorities of the Board.

Observation

Per Washington state law, school board members are volunteers. Since most board members hold other employment, they lack the capacity to manage administrative tasks equivalent to those of a full-time role. To address this, like many peer districts, SPS has established a Board Office staffed with four full-time budgeted positions. According to the SPS website[7], this office has two primary functions: (1) assisting the Board with the preparation and planning of meetings to ensure they run smoothly and promote public awareness and engagement, and (2) supporting Board members in their roles as Directors. It was reported that these staff members also provide support to the Superintendent and some cabinet members, though this is not officially listed on the website.

The Board Office is comprised of the following positions:

- Chief of Staff
- Director of Policy and Board Initiatives
- Director of Board Relations and Strategic Initiatives
- Communications Specialist (currently vacant)
- Legislative Executive Assistant (currently vacant)

During the interviews, Both Board members and senior leadership recognized the need for expanded support within the Board Office. They highlighted the importance of increasing resources for managing constituent communications as well as enhancing government relations and legislative affairs support.

As displayed in the table below, there is no consistent standard regarding for the number or structure of positions that support a school board. There is only one other school district with a higher ratio of school board support staff—which may suggest that SPS has an appropriate number of overall positions. However, while the table shows the number of board support staff and their titles, no consistent documentation could be found to show what percentage of each roles time was spent on board support versus senior leadership team support.

---

[7] Seattle Public Schools Board Office: https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/board-office

SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT STAFF				
School District	Number of Staff that Support School Board	Position Titles of Support Staff	Ratio of Board Staff per 50 Schools	Ratio of Board Staff per 10,000 students
Seattle Public Schools	4	• Director of Policy and Board Initiatives • Director of Board Relations and Strategic Initiatives • Communications Specialist (vacant) • Legislative Executive Assistant (vacant)	1.92:50	0.78:10k
Atlanta Public Schools	2	• Executive Director to the Board • Executive Director of Internal Audit	1.15:50	0.40:10k
Portland Public Schools	2	• Senior Manager • Executive Assistant	1.27:50	0.44:10k
Minneapolis Public Schools	4	• Assistant to the Superintendent and Board • Lobbyist • Director, Office of the Ombudsperson (Families and Community) • Director, Office of Ombudsperson (Staff)	2.06:50	1.33:10k
Oakland Public Schools	3	• Administrative Coordinator • Manager, Legislative Services and Operations • Executive Assistant and Parliamentarian to the Board; and Form 700 Filing Officer	1.79:50	0.87:10k
Long Beach Public Schools	1	• Executive Secretary to the Board of Education and Superintendent	0.60:50	0.15:10k
Austin Independent School Districts	2	• Chief Officer, Governmental Relations, and Board Services • Board Secretary	0.80:50	0.27:10k

Recommendations

- With two key positions vacant, assess if these roles need to be filled or if adjustments to the current structure could better support both the Board and the Superintendent, especially in constituent communications and legislative affairs.

- To enhance efficiency, support Board members, and serve the Superintendent more effectively, SPS should consider conducting a strategic review of the Board Office's current roles and responsibilities to align staff demands and optimize resource allocation.

- Evaluate current roles within the Board Office, focusing on functions of each position. Gather input from Board members, the Superintendent, and staff to understand time allocation and identify any overlaps or gaps.

- Define the responsibilities of each position, distinguishing roles that support the Board from those assisting the Superintendent and Cabinet members. The clarity will reduce confusion and allow staff to focus on their primary tasks.

- Establish a framework for ongoing evaluation of the Board Office's effectiveness, including regular feedback from Board members and senior leadership. This will support timely adjustments to roles and responsibilities as needs evolve.

C. GOVERNANCE PROCESS

Strategic Planning and Goal Setting

6.	Observation	Under the SOFG model, it is important that the strategic goals and guardrails are based on the needs of the community and for the goals to cascade throughout the organization. The District is in the process of implementing this model, but further work remains.
	Recommendation	Expand current efforts to ensure strong stakeholder input during the goal setting process and take steps to establish a cascading goal structure.

Observation

Strategic Planning Process

Under a policy governance model, an elected board defines community expectations for outcomes through goals and policies, and staff executes. In the SOFG framework, the "job of a school system is to improve student outcomes," while the school board's role is to "represent the vision and values of the community."[8] To fulfill these responsibilities effectively, the board must first collaboratively set SMART goals—clear, specific, and measurable objectives that define what students should know and be able to do. The SOFG framework establishes non-negotiable values, or "guardrails," to ensure that the path to achieving these goals reflects the community's core values.

The framework recommends a robust engagement process to develop these goals and guardrails, incorporating input from students, parents, staff, and community members to ensure alignment with shared aspirations.

The District's current goals and guardrails are based on the priorities outlined in the 2019-2024 strategic plan. As a result, while community engagement was used to inform the strategic plan goals (that were then retrofitted into the SOFG framework), interviewees noted that there was some confusion as to whether the goals and guardrails actually incorporated community input.

---

[8] AJ Crabill, *Great on Their Behalf: Why School Boards Fail, How Yours Can Become Effective* (Effective School Boards), audiobook edition, Lioncrest Publishing, March 28, 2023.

Historically, interviewees noted that the Board and Central Office have not consistently engaged school-based staff or included a comprehensive assessment of student needs during strategic planning processes. Some interviewees observed that this lack of engagement leaves school-based staff feeling that their expertise and insights are undervalued, as decisions are frequently made at the senior leadership level without a full understanding of the realities at the school level. This limited engagement with school staff may also impact buy-in, making it challenging for SPS to foster support for new strategic plan goals.

In its current strategic planning efforts, SPS has taken steps to reflect the community's voice more fully. For example:

Community Partner Input: According to the SPS Board of Directors & Community Partner Meetings Feedback Analysis Memo, SPS engaged with approximately 380 individuals from 20 community partners or groups in Spring 2024 to gather valuable insights for the strategic planning process. These partners were specifically selected to represent key groups within the SPS community, providing a well-rounded sample for feedback on the District's goals and guardrails. The groups that SPS consulted with included:

○ Alliance for Education
○ Black Prisoners Caucus
○ Concord Elementary – Spanish speaking families
○ Ethnic Studies Now
○ Garifuna Women
○ Google AI
○ Head Start
○ Kids in the Middle/Nesholm Foundation
○ Kraken/One Roof
○ Lake City Collective
○ Movemiento Afro Latino

○ Murano Senior Living
○ NAACP Youth Council
○ Recovery High School – Interagency
○ Seattle Special Education Parent, Teacher, and Student Association
○ Seattle World School – Multilingual Learner, immigrant, and refugee
○ Somali families
○ Southeast Seattle Education Coalition
○ Students at Lincoln High School
○ University Ballard Lions Club

- **Community Engagement Survey:** SPS conducted a community survey in July to gather input from stakeholders. The SPS School Board Community Engagement Survey Thematic Summary of Participants reports that 886 people responded to the survey. The breakdown of those who participated as follows:
  ○ SPS Parents/Guardians: 77% (approximately 682)
  ○ SPS School-based Staff: 12% (approximately 106)
  ○ Community Members: 5% (approximately 44)
  ○ SPS Students: 4% (approximately 35)
  ○ SPS Central Staff: 1% (approximately 9)
- **Public Comment:** The Board held three public meetings that were designed to give the community a chance to provide input into the strategic planning process. Recognizing that people are busy, the Board chose to have two of these meetings in person, and one virtual in an effort to provide options for community input. Additionally, the Board Monthly Time Use Evaluations from the last calendar year shows that the Board also heard from the community for 90 minutes during

the May 2024 meeting, and 153 minutes during the June 2024 meeting regarding goals and guardrails.

- **Student Needs Assessment:** The SOFG framework recommends conducting a comprehensive student needs assessment (or using a similar tool) to guide the development of strategic goals and guardrails. SPS completed a Student Needs Assessment in partnership with The Council of the Great City Schools performed a student needs assessment designed to provide a high-level understanding of SPS' current performance status relative to peer districts across the country and state. The assessment reviewed student data through 2023-2024 and was used to inform the District's current strategic planning process. If the District can incorporate the findings from this assessment into goalsetting and guardrails development, that will further strengthen the District's alignment with best practices and reinforces its commitment to student-centered outcomes.

Cascading Goals

Interviewees report that goalsetting at the department and school levels is often conducted in silos, resulting in fragmented efforts rather than a unified approach to District-wide goals. As recommended in the 2018 Teaching and Learning study, strategic goals in the District should cascade throughout all levels, translating high-level strategic goals into specific, measurable objectives across divisions, departments, schools, and even individual employees. This structure fosters alignment and coherence, ensuring that all efforts contribute toward the same overarching objectives.

Recommendations

- Continue to strengthen alignment of the Board's strategic goals and guardrails (along with the Superintendents interim goals and guardrails) to reflect the community's vision and values by enhancing feedback strategies:
  - Continue to provide a variety of opportunities for community members to provide feedback as part of the strategic planning process.
  - Provide accessible ways for SPS employees (especially school-based staff) to engage in the strategic planning process. This can strengthen the plan itself by including the expertise and insights of District staff, and also help to increase buy-in for the plan.
  - Continue to conduct a comprehensive student needs assessment or similar evaluation to inform future strategic planning processes.
- Take steps to implement a cascading goal framework that translates the District-wide goals into measurable objectives at each level: divisions, departments, schools, and individual roles.

Data and Progress Monitoring

7.	Observation	The District has made some positive progress toward implementing new structures to support progress monitoring. However, challenges remain to ensuring that data is gathered, reported, and acted upon in a productive manner.
	Recommendation	Empower the Accountability Office with access to essential data, incorporate educator input into data metrics, and strengthen the structured review process to ensure timely, informed decision-making that supports improved student outcomes.

Observation

Progress Monitoring

The SOFG framework requires the Board to dedicate a significant portion of its open meeting time to "Monitoring and Accountability" activities to ensure consistent progress toward established goals. To support this, the SOFG Manual mandates that both the District and the Board use monitoring reports, which it defines as "a report that provides evidence of progress to the Board regarding their adopted goals and guardrails." Each monitoring report must include: (1) the specific goal or guardrail being tracked, (2) interim goals or guardrails displaying data from the previous three reporting periods, the current period, and the annual and final targets, (3) the Superintendent's evaluation of performance, using labels such as "red/yellow/green," "on track/partially off/off track," or similar, and (4) supporting documentation that shows evidence and outlines any necessary next steps.

District management developed a progress monitoring calendar to guide the presentations to the Board. School Board meeting minutes from the past year (September 2023 to August 2024) indicate that the Board used these monitoring reports to track both goals and guardrails, with each goal reviewed twice and each guardrail once.

DATE	VISION AND GOALS	VALUES AND GUARDRAILS
September 2023	N/A	N/A
October 2023	Goal #1 Goal #2	N/A
November 2023	Goal #1 Goal #2	N/A
December 2023	N/A	N/A
January 2024	Goal #3	N/A
February 2024	Goal #1 Goal #2	N/A
March 2024	N/A	N/A
April 2024	Goal #3	N/A

DATE	VISION AND GOALS	VALUES AND GUARDRAILS
May 2024	N/A	Guardrail #4 Guardrail #5
June 2024	N/A	Guardrail #1 Guardrail #2 Guardrail #3
July 2024	N/A	N/A
August 2024	N/A	N/A

However, as noted in Observation 3, time-use data indicates that, while goals and guardrails were monitored throughout the year, only 4.91% of the Board's time was dedicated to goal setting and monitoring. In analyzing the documents provided by SPS and the interviews conducted, three factors have contributed to this discrepancy:

1. The Board rotates who is responsible for completing the time studies each meeting. As a result, there appears to be a lack of consistency and accuracy in how time is being tracked and allocated. For example, meeting minutes show that Goal #3 was discussed in April 2024, but the time evaluation sheet records 0 minutes spent on goal monitoring.

2. As discussed in Observation 3, the Board continues to engage with operational issues that are better suited for the District management team.

3. The Board is making progress but has not yet consistently reached the "Meeting Student Outcomes Focus" stage of Communication and Collaboration. To achieve this level, the Board needs to hold no more than four authorized public meetings per month with none lasting more than three hours and have no more than five topics for discussion during any one Board-authorized public meeting. As seen in Appendix E, over the last year the "Regular Board Meetings" have averaged 3 hours and 28 minutes with an average of 7.7 Topics (excluding Call to Order and Adjourn) and 20.1 subtopics. However, the Board has recently shifted to one meeting per month (averaging 4.2 hours), indicating that they are making positive progress in this area.

Data Development and Collection

To create monitoring reports for the school board, the District needs data that is accurate, reliable, and useful. However, interviewees consistently noted that the usefulness of the data in current reports could be improved. The Accountability Office has tried to collect alternative data but has reportedly encountered challenges reportedly due to limited internal collaboration. Currently, the Reporting and Data Analysis Division is housed within the Curriculum Office and reports to the Assistant Superintendent of Academics, thus giving the Accountability Officer no direct oversight. This separation can lead to conflicting priorities or a lack of incentive to respond fully to Accountability Office requests.

The process for gathering data across the District also often relies on cooperation and time investment at the individual school level, where barriers to buy-in and collaboration have posed challenges (See Observation 8). First, interviewees noted that data is sometimes not collected at the school level due to challenges with non-compliance on testing. Second, interviewees highlighted that educators, who are key to data collection, have limited opportunities to provide input on the data

points they are asked to report. Without being included in the creation of data points, staff noted they were not able to add context, suggest improvements, or recommend alternative approaches that could enhance data quality or relevance. These structural and participatory issues collectively hinder the effectiveness of the District's monitoring efforts.

As shown in Appendix F, two primary structures exist for reporting and data oversight: one option is for the department to report to an academic-focused leader, as is currently the case at SPS, and the other is to report to a strategy-focused leader. Among the seven peer districts with departments similar to SPS's Reporting and Analysis Division, five report to leaders in strategic operations roles while two report to academic administrators, as shown in the table below.

DISTRICT	REPORTING TO	FUNCTION
Atlanta	Chief Performance Officer	Strategic
Austin	Chief Officer Governmental Relations and Board Services	Strategic
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	Strategy & Innovation Officer	Strategic
Long Beach	Assistant Superintendent of School Support	Academic
Oakland	Chief Academic Officer	Academic
San Antonio	Chief of Data Operations	Strategic
San Francisco	Head of Research & Development	Strategic

Use of Data

SPS has set goals and interim metrics to track progress; however, the District's current approach to data use is not effectively supporting timely decision-making or progress towards these goals. For example, the goal of improving early literacy among Black boys is measured by tracking the percentage who meet or exceed proficiency in English Language Arts on the 3rd grade Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) test. Interim measures include the Fall 3rd grade and Spring 2nd grade Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) reading assessments, which predict proficiency on the SBA. SPS predominantly relies on lagging indicators, creating a gap between when data is collected and when actionable insights are available. Although lagging indicators help track long-term trends, they limit the District's ability to make timely adjustments to meet urgent educational needs.

Multiple interviewees noted that it would be helpful to collect and report on a wider range of data, including activity and output-level data, to better track interim steps and identify incremental progress over time. While this may not be appropriate to report at the Board level, this type of information may be most helpful at the Cabinet, department, or individual school level.

Most importantly, the collected data should be actively used to make decisions and drive toward improving student outcomes. A key SOFG principle is the use of ongoing data analysis to evaluate performance and drive improvements. Yet, multiple stakeholders reported that structured discussions about the effectiveness of strategies, interventions, and initiatives are inconsistent, especially at the

Cabinet and department levels. During the course of this assessment, the District formalized and documented the process by which monitoring memos are developed and reviewed. As part of this process, the following individuals or groups are meant to review monitoring data:

- Business Owner
- Regional Executive Directors
- Principals
- Executive Sponsor
- Plans and Programs Office
- Accountability Office
- Superintendent

This structure presents an opportunity to ensure that regular, focused dialogue takes place to not only review the monitoring data, but also to evaluate and refine strategies. This will enable SPS to engage in earlier intervention and course correction—factors critical to achieving goals, particularly in essential areas such as early literacy.

Recommendations

- Enable the Accountability Office to effectively collect relevant data needed to monitor progress. This may involve ensuring that it has the appropriate authority to request and receive relevant data from both Central Office and school-based staff, creating clear procedural protocols for requesting data, and/or exploring options to shift the reporting structure of the Reporting and Data Analysis Division.

- Ensure that new data points and reports reflect the on-the-ground realities that educators experience by establishing a process for gathering input from educators when developing or refining data metrics and reports. This collaborative approach will provide insights that make data more actionable and meaningful, improving both classroom-level support and strategic decision-making across the District.

- Continue to expand current efforts to ensure that the collected data is actively used to make decisions and drive toward improving student outcomes. In particular, the District should update the current monitoring report development process to clarify expectations for holding structured discussions of monitoring outcomes and taking appropriate follow-up actions on findings.

Accountability

8.	Observation	SPS has struggled to cultivate a culture of healthy accountability, which impedes the execution of District-wide initiatives, including the policy governance framework.
	Recommendation	Foster a cohesive accountability culture within SPS by clarifying expectations, empowering the Accountability Office, and supporting consistent, equitable implementation of District initiatives.

Observation

For SPS to function effectively, it is essential to foster a culture of healthy accountability. Such a culture depends on clearly communicating expectations to all employees and establishing rewards

and consequences that encourage individuals to meet these expectations. Accountability becomes especially critical when implementing new initiatives or making operational or academic improvements. Without strong accountability mechanisms, it is difficult to ensure the adoption, implementation, and cooperation needed to achieve District-wide goals such as SOFG.

Over the years, multiple assessments have documented SPS's significant challenges in building a culture of healthy accountability. Reports such as the 1990 Washington State Report on the Evaluation of Seattle Public Schools, and the 2018 Teaching and Learning Efficiency Study, amongst others, have all highlighted these persistent issues. These challenges, as noted by multiple interviewees, are present at every level of the District and continue to hinder the execution of District-wide initiatives, including the implementation of the policy governance framework. Additionally, the absence of a cohesive accountability structure has resulted in siloed school-level operations, contributing to inconsistencies and potential inequities across SPS.

Interviewees shared several factors they believed contributed to the lack of accountability within SPS:

- **Lack of Trust in Central Office:** Interviewees commonly cited that school-level staff do not trust Central Office leadership, believing that their interests are not understood or prioritized. Historically, challenging labor relationships have further complicated this picture.

- **Lack of Enforcement Mechanisms:** Many interviewees noted that the District has not developed and/or implemented true accountability mechanisms. While the Accountability Office was established, in part, to ensure that District strategies to support student achievement are faithfully adopted and measured (as part of the continuous improvement cycle), this office does not have the authority to enforce consequences if their guidance is not followed.

- **Shifting Priorities:** When the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting school operations across the country, there was a general shift away from an emphasis on testing data to focus on student well-being. Once operations had returned to a more usual cadence, the emphasis on testing data re-emerged. Some interviewees noted that these rapid shifts contributed to a lack of continuity.

- **Individual School Operations:** SPS has historically allowed schools to operate more like individual entities than branches of the same organization. As noted as far back as the 1990 Washington State Report of an Evaluation of the Seattle Public Schools, school-based management can provide benefits (as schools can be responsive to their local needs), but the lack of sufficient District-wide management and support can create inconsistencies and inequities. For example, several interviewees noted that some schools have declined to implement new District-wide curriculum. Especially as the District strives to implement changes, it will be challenging to understand what is working and what isn't if new initiatives are not implemented and measured in a consistent manner.

- **Principal Concerns:** Some interviewees noted that principals are often in the difficult position of being asked to implement or enforce District policies or decisions, without sufficient support from Central Office. Recognizing that their staff could pass a vote of no confidence, they are disincentivized to implement initiatives that are unpopular with their staff.

Creating a culture of healthy accountability ultimately falls to the Superintendent. However, this requires active engagement and commitment from all levels of the organization, especially Central Office leadership, to build trust and establish a unified approach to accountability. Without a robust accountability culture, SPS will continue to struggle with inconsistent policy implementation and inequitable educational outcomes.

Recommendations

- Grant the Accountability Office appropriate authority to ensure District-wide initiatives are adopted and implemented consistently, including the ability to track compliance and establish corrective actions if guidance is not followed. As part of this work, it will be important to:
  - Develop and communicate clear, measurable expectations for accountability at each level of the organization, ensuring that all employees understand their roles in implementing District-wide goals and related work.
  - Develop a system that not only includes consequences for non-compliance, but also recognition of meeting or exceeding expectations. Ensure that this system is applied fairly across all levels to reinforce a culture of accountability and commitment to District-wide goals.

- Continue to strengthen collaboration between Central Office and school-level staff to address mutual concerns and foster trust. A key factor of this work will be to strengthen support of principals, especially in implementing and enforcing District policies. The District should offer additional resources, support, guidance, and training to help principals implement policies effectively while fostering a collaborative relationship with their staff. The Regional Executive Directors will be important partners in this work and can provide useful perspective on the needs of principals and school-based staff.

- Ensure that the Superintendent and Central Office leadership actively demonstrate commitment to accountability by participating in regular, visible, accountability practices. This visible leadership may help unify the organization around a cohesive approach to accountability.

Compliance Oversight

9.	Observation	The District has not established a centralized compliance function. Instead, individual departments and teams are responsible for various aspects of compliance monitoring and reporting with limited coordination. As a result, there is a risk of noncompliance, and it is challenging to see a holistic picture of compliance activities across the District.
	Recommendation	Consider establishing a compliance matrix and creating a position to provide centralized compliance oversight.

Observation

A key component of the Board's oversight responsibilities is ensuring that the District consistently adheres to internal policies and external regulations. Currently, compliance activities within SPS are decentralized, with each department independently tracking, reporting, and managing compliance issues relevant to their areas, but without the support of a centralized compliance team. Introducing a centralized compliance role could enhance departmental efforts by providing consistent guidance, resources, and oversight. This role would serve as a collaborative partner, helping departments stay aligned with compliance standards and fostering a unified approach across the District. Notably, 60% of peer districts have established a dedicated compliance role, with an average allocation of 1.25 FTE's for this function.

The primary groups supporting compliance within SPS include:

- **Office of Internal Audit:** Conducts audits to uphold integrity, accountability, and transparency related to internal financial controls and the District's fiscal compliance.

- **Legal Department:** Provides legal services and ensures compliance with legal requirements across all District operations, working to minimize potential liabilities.

- **Finance Services Division:** Supports external audits of financial statements, grants, and financial processes and serves as the primary liaison with the Washington State Auditor's Office.

- **Reporting and Data Analysis Division:** Oversees compliance reporting, including state-level reporting for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Basic Enrollment Reporting (P223) and Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), and federal reporting for the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).

In addition to these groups, specialized compliance functions are distributed across SPS. For example, Facility Operations is primarily responsible for environmental health and safety compliance, as well as ADA compliance.

This decentralized approach has limited the Board's ability to maintain holistic oversight. Interviewees noted that without a centralized compliance oversight function, it is unclear whether SPS is fully aligned with all state and federal requirements.

Additionally, the implementation of the SOFG framework has introduced unique compliance concerns. In some cases, strict adherence to SOFG principles may conflict with state or local regulations. For instance, the Board is sometimes required by law to vote on operational issues and provide opportunities for public comment, even when these matters do not directly impact student outcomes. The Director of Policy and Board Initiatives is responsible for identifying and flagging potential non-compliance issues related to the SOFG framework.

Recommendations

- Establish a District Compliance Matrix to centralize tracking and improve accountability. A compliance matrix is a framework that helps ensure an organization's compliance with laws, regulations, standards, and policies. Typically, compliance matrices include information about various regulations and their implications for the District, along with critical deadlines and assigned leads for each area. The matrix should be regularly updated and periodically reviewed to reflect any regulatory changes of new District polices, thereby enhancing overall compliance management.

- Consider establishing a full-time compliance role responsible for overseeing adherence to legal and policy requirements across SPS, promoting consistent compliance and reduction of operational silos. This position would maintain the compliance matrix, provide support and guidance to departments, and serve as the central point of contact for all compliance-related activities. The role would facilitate cross-departmental communication, ensuring that each department is aware of its obligations and has the necessary resources to meet them. Ultimately, this initiative will strengthen the District's ability to uphold a unified compliance strategy.

Risk Management

10.	**Observation**	In the past, the District's risk management activities have primarily focused on operational and tactical issues. Currently, the District's risk management function is going through a period of transition, as the new Risk Manager refocuses their role to provide more strategic enterprise risk management leadership.
	Recommendation	Continue current efforts to strengthen the enterprise risk management function and ensure that the Risk Manager can operate at a strategic level.

Observation

The SPS 6500 Risk Management Policy highlights the critical role of enterprise risk management (ERM) in ensuring the responsible stewardship of public resources, smooth daily operations, and progress toward the District's strategic goals. To lead these efforts, SPS established a dedicated Risk Manager role to drive ERM initiatives across the organization.

Currently, the District's risk management function is undergoing a transition. Staff reported that following the vacancy in the Risk Manager position in 2023, SPS reshaped the role. The position was moved from the Financial Services Division to the Legal Department, with an expanded mandate emphasizing District-wide risk management. This restructured role is designed to shift focus from tactical, task-oriented activities—such as field trip approvals—toward a more strategic approach that supports risk management across all areas of SPS.

In line with this broadened focus, the Risk Manager is actively redefining roles and responsibilities within the risk management function. However, with only one full-time position dedicated to this work, SPS falls below the average staffing level of 3.5 FTE positions in peer districts with dedicated risk management departments as seen in Appendix F. This limited staffing leaves certain traditional risk management responsibilities housed in other departments, such as the oversight of the worker's compensation program, which remains within the Human Resources Department.

Even with limited staff resources, SPS has integrated many industry best practices to strengthen its risk management framework. The District conducts periodic enterprise risk assessments (most recently in 2021, led by the Office of Internal Audit), maintains a comprehensive risk register, and provides quarterly ERM updates to the SPS Audit Committee. Additionally, the Risk Manager is updating the District's risk register, aiming for validation of the revised version by Q1 of 2025. SPS is also implementing a cloud-based software system to improve tracking and communication within the risk management function.

This transition reflects SPS's commitment to embedding ERM throughout the District, aligning risk management efforts with both operational needs and strategic objectives.

Recommendations

- Continue current efforts to strengthen the ERM function and ensure that the Risk Manager can operate at a strategic level.
- As resources allow, consider hiring additional personnel to support the Risk Manager, aiming to reach at least the 3.5 FTE positions seen in peer districts.

APPENDIX A: WSSDA WASHINGTON SCHOOL BOARD STANDARDS AND SOFG

The Washington State School Director's Association has outlined standards for governance within their Washington School Board Standards: A Research-Based Framework for Effective School Board Governance publication. [9] The table below shows alignment between these standards and the SOFG policy governance model.

WA SCHOOL BOARD STANDARDS		SOFG ALIGNMENT
Standard 1: Responsible School District Governance	Benchmark 1a: Conducting board and district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner. Benchmark 1b: Ensuring the board is accountable and open to the public, including seeking divergent and diverse perspectives in its decision-making process. Benchmark 1c: Respecting and advocating mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendent. Benchmark 1d: Adopting policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that support continuous improvement of student achievement. Benchmark 1e: Promoting healthy relationships by communicating supportively; inspiring, motivating, and empowering others; and exercising influence in a positive manner. Benchmark 1f: Working as an effective and collaborative team.	Both SOFG and Standard 1 highlight the board's role in ensuring responsible and transparent governance focused on student success. SOFG's emphasis on data-driven decisions, SMART goals, and public goal posting mirrors Standard 1's benchmarks for fairness, accountability, and open communication. Clear role delineation between the board and superintendent ensures effective oversight and collaboration.

[9] Washington State School Directors' Association. (2023). Washington School Board Standards: A research-based framework for effective school board governance: https://wssda.app.box.com/s/smd5n3ykrkeq2publ7k9gjw2dj67rlzs

WA SCHOOL BOARD STANDARDS		SOFG ALIGNMENT
Standard 2: Communication of and Commitment to High Expectations for Student Learning	Benchmark 2a: Articulating the conviction that each and every student can learn and the belief that student learning can improve regardless of existing circumstances or resources. Benchmark 2b: Leading the development, articulation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by schools and the community. Benchmark 2c: Adopting a collaboratively developed district strategic plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for each and every student. Benchmark 2d: Ensuring non-negotiable goals for student achievement are established and aligned with the district's strategic plan.	SOFG and Standard 2 share a commitment to setting and communicating high expectations for all students. SOFG's SMART goals and disaggregated data monitoring align with Standard 2's focus on equitable achievement and strategic planning. Both emphasize community engagement to establish a shared vision and align resources to support student success.
Standard 3: Creating Conditions District-Wide for Student and Staff Success	Benchmark 3a: Providing for the safety and wellness of all students and staff. Benchmark 3b: Employing and supporting quality teachers, administrators, and other staff, and providing for their professional development. Benchmark 3c: Providing for learning essentials, including rigorous curriculum, technology, and high-quality facilities. Benchmark 3d: Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for an efficient and effective learning environment. Benchmark 3e: Adopting and monitoring an annual budget that allocates resources based on the district's vision, goals, and priorities for student learning.	SOFG and Standard 3 stress the importance of creating supportive environments for students and staff. SOFG promotes inclusivity and wellness through community-engaged guardrails, while Standard 3 emphasizes policies for safety and support. Both focus on attracting quality staff, aligning resources with goals, and maintaining rigorous curricula and effective management practices.
Standard 4: Holding the District Accountable for Student Learning	Benchmark 4a: Committing to continuous improvement in student achievement at each school and throughout the district. Benchmark 4b: Evaluating the superintendent on clear and focused expectations. Benchmark 4c: Measuring student academic progress and needs based on valid and reliable assessments.	Both SOFG and Standard 4 underscore the board's responsibility to hold the district accountable for student outcomes. SOFG emphasizes data-driven monitoring, formal superintendent evaluations tied to performance goals, and regular progress updates. Standard 4's benchmarks for continuous improvement and transparent communication align with SOFG's structured, outcome-focused approach.

WA SCHOOL BOARD STANDARDS		SOFG ALIGNMENT
Standard 5: Engagement of the Community in Education	Benchmark 5a: Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. Benchmark 5b: Ensuring school board and district transparency through a process that is open and accountable. Benchmark 5c: Ensuring district information and decisions are communicated community-wide. Benchmark 5d: Soliciting input from staff and a wide spectrum of the community so that a diverse range of interest and perspectives on issues is considered.	SOFG and Standard 5 prioritize active collaboration with the community to reflect shared values and expectations. SOFG requires diverse stakeholder input in goal-setting, public posting of goals, and regular reporting on progress. These practices align with Standard 5's emphasis on transparency, accountability, and proactive communication to build trust and inclusivity.

APPENDIX B: SOFG MANUAL

The following tables are from the SOFG Manual and describe the key characteristics of school board operations at each stage of implementation.

VISION & GOALS: The Board will, in collaboration with the Superintendent, adopt goals that are student outcomes focused.			
Not Student Outcomes Focused (0)	**Approaching Student Outcomes Focus (10)**	**Meeting Student Outcomes Focus (25)**	**Mastering Student Outcomes Focus (35)**
The Board is Not Student Outcomes Focused if any of the following are true:	*No items from the Not Student Outcomes Focused column, and:*	*All items from the Approaching Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*	*All items from the Meeting Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*
The Board has not adopted **goals**. The Board has not consistently demonstrated the ability to distinguish between **inputs**, **outputs**, and **outcomes**. The Board has not hosted opportunities to listen to the vision of the community during the previous thirty-six month period.	The Board has adopted, in collaboration with the Superintendent, goals. The Board has adopted only **SMART** goals that include a specific **measure, population, starting point**, an **ending point**, a **starting date,** and an **ending date**. The Board has adopted no fewer than one and no more than five goals. Fewer goals allow for greater focus; more allow for less. The Superintendent has adopted, in collaboration with the Board, one to three **interim goals** to progress monitor each goal, and each interim goal is SMART. The status of each interim goal is able to be updated multiple times during each school year. The Board publicly posted the goals for public comment prior to adoption.	The Board's goals all pertain to desired **student outcomes**. In addition to the goal ending points, the Board has adopted **annual targets**, goal ending points for each year leading up to the ending dates. The Superintendent has provided interim goal ending points for each year leading up to the ending date. All interim goals pertain to **student outputs** or student outcomes, not inputs or adult outputs. The Board included students, parents, staff, and community members in the goal development process. All Board goals last from three to five years; all interim goals last from one to three years. The goals and interim goals will challenge the organization and will require change in adult behaviors.	The Board used a process that included students, parents, staff, and community members in a way that leads them to express ownership of the adopted goals. All of the interim goals are predictive of their respective goals, and are influenceable by the Superintendent (and the Superintendent's team). Predictive suggests that there is some evidence of a correlation between the interim goal and the goal. Influenceable suggests that the Superintendent -- and through them, the staff -- has authority over roughly 80% of whatever the interim goal is measuring. The Board relied on a root cause analysis, comprehensive student needs assessment, and/or similar research-based tool to inform identification of and prioritization of potential goals.

VALUES & GUARDRAILS: The Board will, in collaboration with the Superintendent, adopt guardrails.			
Not Student Outcomes Focused (0)	**Approaching Student Outcomes Focus (5)**	**Meeting Student Outcomes Focus (10)**	**Mastering Student Outcomes Focus (15)**
The Board is Not Student Outcomes Focused if any of the following are true:	*No items from the Not Student Outcomes Focused column, and:*	*All items from the Approaching Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*	*All items from the Meeting Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*
The Board has not adopted goals.	The Board has adopted, in collaboration with the Superintendent, **guardrails** based on the community's values and that do not hinder pursuit of the goals. Each guardrail describes a single operational action or class of actions the Superintendent may not use or allow in pursuit of the goals.	The Superintendent has provided interim guardrail ending points for each year leading up to the ending date.	The Board used a process that included students, parents, staff, and community members in a way that leads them to express ownership of the adopted guardrails and, if applicable, theories of action.
The Board has not hosted opportunities to listen to the **values** of the community during the previous thirty-six month period.		All interim guardrails pertain to **outputs** or outcomes, not inputs.	All of the interim guardrails are predictive of their respective guardrails, and are influenceable by the Superintendent (and the Superintendent's team). Predictive suggests that there is some evidence of a correlation between the interim guardrail and the guardrail. Influenceable suggests that the Superintendent -- and through them, the staff -- has authority over roughly 80% of whatever the interim guardrail is measuring.
	The Board has adopted no fewer than one and no more than five guardrails. Fewer guardrails allow for more focus; more allow for less.	The Board included students, parents, staff, and community members in the guardrail development process.	
	The Superintendent has adopted, in collaboration with the Board, one to three **interim guardrails** for each guardrail, and each interim guardrail is SMART.	The Board has considered adoption of one or more **theories of action** to drive the school system's overall strategic direction. If there is a permanent Superintendent, that person was included in the theory consideration process.	
	The status of each interim guardrail is able to be updated multiple times during each school year.	All Board guardrails last from three to five years; all interim guardrails last from one to three years.	In addition to the guardrails on the Superintendent's authority, the Board has adopted one to five guardrails on its own behavior and evaluates itself against them at least quarterly.
	The Board publicly posted the guardrails for public comment prior to adoption.	The guardrails, interim guardrails, and theories of action will challenge the organization and require change in adult behaviors.	

MONITORING & ACCOUNTABILITY: The Board will devote significant time monthly to monitoring progress toward the goals.			
Not Student Outcomes Focused (0)	**Approaching Student Outcomes Focus (10)**	**Meeting Student Outcomes Focus (20)**	**Mastering Student Outcomes Focus (30)**
The Board is Not Student Outcomes Focused if any of the following are true:	*No items from the Not Student Outcomes Focused column, and:*	*All items from the Approaching Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*	*All items from the Meeting Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*
The Board has not adopted goals.	The Board invests no less than 10% of its total Board-authorized public meeting minutes **monitoring** its goals.	The Board invests no less than 25% of its total Board-authorized public meeting minutes monitoring its goals.	The Board invests no less than 50% of its total Board-authorized public meeting minutes each month into effectively monitoring its goals.
The Board does not schedule each goal to be monitored at least four times per year.	The Superintendent led the interim goals/guardrails and monitoring calendar development processes while working collaboratively with the Board.	No more than two goals are monitored per month.	Only **Board work** was discussed and/or acted on during Board-authorized public meetings.
The Board does not schedule each guardrail to be monitored at least once per year.	The Board has a Board-adopted monitoring calendar.	Every goal is monitored at least four times per year.	The Board modifies its goals, guardrails, and monitoring calendar no more than once during the span of the Board's adopted goals (unless they are met sooner). A longer period allows for more focus; shorter allows for less.
The Board has not adopted a **monitoring calendar**.	The Board's monitoring calendar spans the length of the Board's goals. A longer span allows for more focus; shorter allows for less.	Every guardrail is monitored at least once per year.	
The Board does not track its use of time in **Board-authorized public meetings**.	The Board has received **monitoring reports** in accordance with its monitoring calendar.	The Board has been provided copies of -- but, unless required by law, did not vote to approve / disapprove -- the Superintendent's plan(s) for implementing the Board's goals and worked to ensure that the plan included both an implementation timeline and **implementation instruments**.	The school system has achieved at least half of its interim goals during the previous twelve month period.
The Board has not consistently demonstrated the ability to distinguish between **customer** service/issues and **owner** service/issues.	The Superintendent is evaluated only on performance regarding the Board's goals, guardrails, and interim goals/guardrails. The Board considers Superintendent performance to be indistinguishable from school system performance.	The most recent annual Superintendent evaluation took place no more than twelve months ago.	If the Board approves an annual budget, it does so only after determining that the Board's goals are the first priority for resource allocation.
The school system has not achieved any of its interim goals during the previous twelve month period.			The majority of the Board's monitoring sessions during the period were rated Effective or Highly Effective.

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION: The Board will lead transparently and include stakeholders in the pursuit of the goals.			
Not Student Outcomes Focused (0)	**Approaching Student Outcomes Focus (1)**	**Meeting Student Outcomes Focus (5)**	**Mastering Student Outcomes Focus (10)**
The Board is Not Student Outcomes Focused if any of the following are true:	*No items from the Not Student Outcomes Focused column, and:*	*All items from the Approaching Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*	*All items from the Meeting Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*

The Board has not adopted goals.
 	
The Board did not receive the final version of materials to be voted on at least three calendar days before the Board-authorized public meeting during which the materials would be considered.
 	
There were more than six Board-authorized public meetings in a single month during the previous twelve month period (Board committees are counted in this total).
 	
Any meeting of the Board lasted more than eight hours during the previous twelve month period.
 	
The Board does not use a consent agenda.
 	
The Board has not hosted opportunities to listen to the vision and values of the community during the previous thirty-six month period.
	All **consent-eligible items** were placed on the consent agenda and all but a few were voted on using a consent agenda.
	
	The Board tracks its use of time in Board-authorized public meetings, categorizing every minute used as one of the following:
	  - **Goal Setting:** reviewing, discussing, and/or selecting goals
	  - **Goal Monitoring:** reviewing, discussing, and/or approving/not approving goal monitoring reports
	  - **Guardrail Setting:** reviewing, discussing, and/or selecting guardrails
	  - **Guardrail Monitoring:** reviewing, discussing, and/or approving/not approving guardrail monitoring reports
	  - **Leadership Evaluation:** Board self eval, Board time use eval, and Superintendent eval
	  - **Voting:** debating and voting on any item (these activities are never a form of goal/guardrail monitoring)
	  - **Community Engagement:** two-way communication between the Board and community members
	  - **Other**
		There are no more than four Board-authorized public meetings per month and none lasts more than three hours.
		
		The Board schedules no more than five topics for discussion during any one Board-authorized public meeting.
		
		The Board limits its adoption of Board policies regarding school system operations to matters that are 1) required by law or 2) an appropriate exercise of the Board's oversight authority as defined by the Board's adopted goals and/or guardrails. Existing policies that do not meet one of these criteria have been removed from the Board's policy manual (though the Superintendent may retain them as administrative policy/regulation).
		
		The Board made no edits to the Board's regularly scheduled meeting agenda during the meeting and during the three business days before the meeting unless a state of emergency was declared.
			There are no more than two Board-authorized public meetings per month and none lasts more than two hours.
			
			The Board schedules no more than three topics for discussion during any Board-authorized public meeting.
			
			The Board has adopted few enough policies that the full Board as a whole is able to review every policy at least once during every length of time equal to a Board Member's term of office.
			
			The Board received the final version of materials to be voted on at least seven calendar days before the Board-authorized public meeting during which the materials would be considered.
			
			The Board used a process that included students, parents, staff, and community members in a way that led them to express ownership of the adopted goals and guardrails.

UNITY & TRUST: The Board will lead with one voice in its pursuit of the goals.			
Not Student Outcomes Focused (0)	**Approaching Student Outcomes Focus (1)**	**Meeting Student Outcomes Focus (3)**	**Mastering Student Outcomes Focus (5)**
The Board is Not Student Outcomes Focused if any of the following are true:	*No items from the Not Student Outcomes Focused column, and:*	*All items from the Approaching Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*	*All items from the Meeting Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*
The Board has not adopted goals. The Board has not adopted policies that establish Board operating procedures. Any Board Member voted on an item on which they had a conflict of interest, as defined by law, during the previous three month period. Board Members serve on committees formed by the Superintendent or staff without approval of the Superintendent and a majority of the Board.	Attendance at all regularly scheduled Board meetings was over 80% during the previous three month period. The Board has adopted a policy or procedure requiring that information provided by the Superintendent to one Board Member is provided to all Board Members. The Board reviews all policies governing Board operating procedures at least once during every length of time equal to a Board Member's term of office. The Board has adopted an Ethics & Conflicts of Interest Statement and all Board Members have signed the statement during their current term of office. All Board Members agree that if the Board has committees, their role is only to advise the Board, not to advise the staff.	The Board has included language in its Ethics & Conflicts of Interest Statement requiring that Board Members do not give operational advice or instructions to staff members. The Board has included language in its Ethics & Conflicts of Interest Statement requiring that Board Members are responsible for the outcomes of all students, not just students in their region of the school system. The Board has included language in its Ethics & Conflicts of Interest Statement requiring that Board Members fully recuse themselves from matters involving individuals or organizations who made campaign contributions to them or who appointed them. The Board unanimously agreed during the most recent self-evaluation that all Board Members have honored the three aforementioned ethical boundaries during the previous evaluation period.	The Board unanimously agreed during the most recent self-evaluation that all Board Members adhered to all policies governing Board operating procedures during the previous evaluation period. All Board Members and the Superintendent agreed during the most recent self-evaluation that none of the Board Members have given operational advice or instructions to staff members. All Board Members have memorized all of the Board's goals and the current status of each. The Board conducted a quarterly self-evaluation during the previous three-month period -- or annually if the most recent score was 80 or higher -- and unanimously voted to adopt the results.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: The Board will invest time and resources toward improving its focus on the goals.			
Not Student Outcomes Focused (0)	**Approaching Student Outcomes Focus (1)**	**Meeting Student Outcomes Focus (3)**	**Mastering Student Outcomes Focus (5)**
The Board is Not Student Outcomes Focused if any of the following are true:	*No items from the Not Student Outcomes Focused column, and:*	*All items from the Approaching Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*	*All items from the Meeting Student Outcomes Focus column, and:*
The Board has not adopted goals. The Board has not conducted a self-evaluation during the previous twelve month period. The Board has conducted a self-evaluation during the previous twelve month period but did not vote to adopt the results. The Board has not participated in a **governance team** training or retreat where all members of the governance team were present, during the previous twelve month period.	The Board tracks its use of time and reports monthly the percentage of Board-authorized public meeting time invested in monitoring the Board's goals and interim goals. The Board tracks the estimated annual cost of staff time invested in governance during its annual self-evaluation. This includes the time of any staff members invested in preparing for, attending, and debriefing after meetings. This includes all Board-authorized public meetings as well as all closed sessions and all hearings. The Board has provided time during regularly scheduled Board-authorized public meetings to recognize the accomplishments of its students and staff regarding progress toward goals and interim goals. The most recent Board self-evaluation took place no more than 12 months ago using this instrument or a research-aligned instrument.	The most recent Board annual self-evaluation took place no more than 45 days before the most recent Superintendent evaluation. The Board has hosted and the Board Members have led or co-led at least one training session on Student Outcomes Focused Governance during the previous twelve month period. The Board has continuously updated the status and targets of all goals, guardrails, and interim goals/guardrails, and publicly displays them in the room in which the Board most frequently holds regularly scheduled Board meetings. The Board conducted the most recent self-evaluation and voted to adopt the results.	The Board included students as presenters in at least one of the Student Outcomes Focused Governance training sessions during the previous twelve months. Prior to being selected, all newly selected Board Members received training on Student Outcomes Focused Governance from fellow Board Members on their Board or from a certified Student Outcomes Focused Governance Coach. The Board conducted the most recent quarterly self-evaluation -- or annually if the most recent score was 80 or higher -- and unanimously voted to adopt the results.

APPENDIX C: BOARD TIME USE RESULTS

The following table is based on recent SPS Board Time Use Evaluation results from January to July 2024.

| Task | Total Minutes Used | % of Total Minutes Used | 2024 | | | | | | | Description |
			Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	
Goal Setting	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Reviewing, discussing, and/or selecting goals.
Goal Monitoring	129	4.91%	61	68	0	0	0	0	0	Reviewing, discussing, and/or accepting/not accepting goal monitoring reports in accordance with the monitoring calendar.
Guardrail Setting	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Reviewing, discussing, and/or selecting guardrails.
Guardrail Monitoring	1	0.05%	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	Reviewing, discussing, and/or accepting/not accepting guardrail monitoring reports in accordance with the monitoring calendar.
Superintendent Evaluation	275	13.51%	0	2	0	5	75	193	0	Annual evaluation of Superintendent/District performance.
Voting	26	1.28%	17	0	7	0	9	0	0	The Board debating and/or voting on any item; voting on goal/guardrail adoption and/or scheduled monitoring reports and evals are counted elsewhere. All other incidents of debating/voting

Task	Total Minutes Used	% of Total Minutes Used	2024							Description
			Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	
										are never a form of goals/guardrails "monitoring").
Community Engagement	243	11.94%	0	0	0	0	90	153	0	Two-way communication opportunity where Board Members listen for and discuss the vision / values of their staff and community members
Student/Family Engagement	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Two-way communication opportunity where Board members listen for and discuss the vision/values of their students and family members.
Board Self-Evaluation	99	4.86%	0	0	0	41	0	35	23	Quarterly and/or annual Board self-evaluation using the SOFG instrument.
Board Time Use Evaluation	0	0.00%	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	Meeting evaluation using the time use instrument.
Board Training	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Training for the Board on SOFG and related topics.
Board-Led Community Training	10	0.49%	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	Board-hosted and Board member-led or co-led training on SOFG and related topics.

Task	Total Minutes Used	% of Total Minutes Used	2024							Description
			Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	
Closed Sessions	0	0.00%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Time spent in non-public meetings, consistent with open meetings laws; this time is not calculated.
Other	1,252	61.52%	155	178	583	335	308	176	100	Any time spent on an activity that is not one of the above.
Total Meeting Minutes	**2,626**	**100%**	**233**	**248**	**591**	**381**	**483**	**567**	**123**	**All minutes in Board-authorized public meetings combined.**
Total Student Outcomes Focused Minutes	**129**	**4.91%**	**61**	**68**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**Goal Setting and Goal Monitoring combined.**

APPENDIX D: BOARD QUARTERLY SELF-EVALUATION RESULTS

The SPS Board has performed two self-evaluations: one in April and one in June 2024. The most recent results are included below:

BOARD QUARTERLY SELF-EVALUATION						
Current Date	June /	26	/2024		**Votes For/Against**	/
	January -March	April -June 2024	July -September (estimated)	October -December (estimated)	January -March	Total Possible
Vision & Goals		25	25	35	35	35
Values & Guardrails		5	5	10	15	15
Monitoring & Accountability		10	20	20	20	30
Communication & Collaboration		1	1	5	5	10
Unity & Trust		0	1	1	3	5
Continuous Improvement		0	1	1	3	5
Total		41	53	72	81	100

APPENDIX E: BOARD MEETING TOPICS AND LENGTH

The following table displays the meeting minutes of SPS' Regular School Board Meetings between October 2023 and September 2024.

Date of Meeting	Number of Topics	Topics Without Call to Order and Adjournment	Total Number of Subtopics	Start Time	End Time	Duration
October 11, 2023	10	8	27	4:15 PM	8:16 PM	4:01
October 25, 2023	9	7	10	4:18 PM	5:38 PM	1:20
November 15, 2023	10	8	34	4:18 PM	10:37 PM	6:19
December 13, 2023	9	7	17	4:26 PM	7:04 PM	2:38
January 17, 2024	11	9	20	4:22 PM	8:36 PM	4:14
February 7, 2024	11	9	26	4:21 PM	8:27 PM	4:06
March 6, 2024	11	9	21	4:18 PM	7:48 PM	3:30
March 20, 2024	9	7	18	4:22 PM	8:33 PM	4:11
April 3, 2024	11	9	12	4:38 PM	7:09 PM	2:31
April 25, 2024	9	7	26	4:25 PM	7:38 PM	3:13
May 8, 2024	8	6	21	4:18 PM	7:45 PM	3:27
May 22, 2024	11	9	25	4:20 PM	6:51 PM	2:31
June 26, 2024	10	8	20	4:26 PM	8:44 PM	4:18
July 2, 2024	7	5	5	4:22 PM	6:11 PM	1:49
August 28, 2024	9	7	15	4:19 PM	7:44 PM	3:25

Date of Meeting	Number of Topics	Topics Without Call to Order and Adjournment	Total Number of Subtopics	Start Time	End Time	Duration
September 18, 2024	10	8	25	4:23 PM	8:30 PM	4:07
Average	9.7	7.7	20.1	N/A	N/A	3:28

APPENDIX F: PEER BENCHMARKING

The following school districts were selected as peer districts due to their alignment with the SOFG model, membership in the Council of the Great City Schools, and/or similarities in size and demographics to SPS. The benchmarking information was gathered through a review of publicly available data on the school district websites, analysis of public data sources related to each district, and responses to surveys sent to the districts.

Survey Question		Seattle Public Schools	Atlanta Public Schools	Portland Public Schools	Minneapolis Public Schools	San Francisco Unified School District	Oakland Public Schools	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools	San Antonio Independent School District	Long Beach Unified School District	Denver Public Schools	Austin Independent School District
Number of schools		104	87	79	97	113	84	180	100	84	206	125
Student-to-teacher ratio		17:1	12:1	16:1	14:1	19:1	19:1	16:1	14:1	25:1	14:1	14:1
Number of students		51,443	49,994	45,171	30,115	49,204	34,428	143,244	44,710	67,292	88,911	74,602
Demographics		• 45.4% White • 14.8% Black • 12.6% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander • 13.3% Hispanic/Latino • 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.4% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • 12.3% Two or more races • 0% Unspecified race or ethnicity	• 15.9% White • 72.2% Black • 1% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander • 7.6% Hispanic/Latino • 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • 2.9% Two or more races • 0% Unspecified race or ethnicity	• 55.5% White • 8.5% Black • 5.9% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander • 16.5% Hispanic/Latino • 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.7% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • 11.6% Two or more races • 0% Unspecified race or ethnicity	• 38.5% White • 30.6% Black • 3.8% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander • 17.3% Hispanic/Latino • 3.1% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • 6.6% Two or more races • 0% Unspecified race or ethnicity	• 13.8% White • 6.2% Black • 37.7% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander • 29.6% Hispanic/Latino • 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.8% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • 11.8% Two or more races • 0% Unspecified race or ethnicity	• 10.8% White • 21.4% Black • 11.9% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander • 45% Hispanic/Latino • 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native • 1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • 9.5% Two or more races • 0% Unspecified race or ethnicity	• 36.3% Black or African American • 28.6% Hispanic/Latino • 24.5% White • 7.2% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander • 3.1% Two or more races • 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	• 89.8% Hispanic/Latino • 5.8% Black or African American • 3.1% White • 0.7% Two or more races • 0.5% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander • 0.1% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.0% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	• 58.9% Hispanic/Latino • 12.6% Black or African American • 12.2% White • 10.4% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander • 4.7% Two or more races • 1.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander • 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native	• 52.2% Hispanic/Latino • 25.5% White • 13.4% Black or African American • 4.8% Two or more races • 3.0% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander • 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.5% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	• 54.4% Hispanic/Latino • 30.6% White • 6.4% Black or African American • 4.6% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander • 3.8% Two or more races • 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native • 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Percentage of students learning English		13.9%	3.8%	12.3%	22.9%	33.9%	34.8%	13.5%	19.5%	20.0%	34.2%	34.8%
Test proficiency scores	Elementary Math	60%	19%	45%	30%	48%	30%	37%	13%	53%	23%	29%
	Elementary Reading	65%	24%	56%	36%	50%	32%	40%	21%	57%	32%	40%
	MS Math	53%	18%	47%	17%	43%	21%	36%	13%	45%	20%	33%
	MS Reading	61%	25%	58%	27%	51%	30%	42%	23%	54%	33%	41%

Survey Question	Seattle Public Schools	Atlanta Public Schools	Portland Public Schools	Minneapolis Public Schools	San Francisco Unified School District	Oakland Public Schools	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools	San Antonio Independent School District	Long Beach Unified School District	Denver Public Schools	Austin Independent School District
HS Math	46%	16%	27%	22%	36%	13%	30%	24%	26%	27%	33%
HS Reading	80%	33%	48%	36%	52%	42%	58%	43%	51%	46%	55%
High School College Readiness score	32.9	23	38.8	27.1	44	32.4	34.6	32.9	39.4	41.7	35.4
Class of 2023 graduation rate	88%	86.6%	84.5%	73.6%	86.2%	72.4%	83%	87.2% (2022 number due to lawsuit)	85%	79%	96.3% (2022 number due to lawsuit)
Expense per student	$18,773	$18,127	$15,955	$19,584	$18,396	$17,426	$10,264	$13,655	$13,838	$13,529	$11,611
Year SOFG was implemented	2021	2020	-	-	2022	-	-	-	-	-	2023 (Lone Star Governance)
SOFG Coach on staff	Yes	-	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	Yes (AJ)
Tenure of SOFG Coach	On year 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Ongoing
Used a Strategic Implementation Plan to implement SOFG	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Yes
Used a Communication Plan during the transition	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	No
Used a Change Management Plan during the SOFG transition	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	No
Most recent Board quarterly self-evaluation score	41	15	-	-	26.3	-	67	-	-	-	-
Board member job descriptions have references to the SOFG framework	No	No	-	No	No	No	-	-	No	-	No
Central Office Director job descriptions have references to the SOFG framework	-	No	-	No	No	No	-	-	No	-	No
SOFG training is part of onboarding new Board members	-	-	-	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	Yes
Number of Board support staff	4	2	2	4	-	3	-	-	1	-	2
Titles of Board support staff	• Director of Policy and Board Initiatives • Director of Board	• Executive Director to the Board • Executive Director of Internal Audit	• Senior Manager • Executive Assistant	• Assistant to the Superintendent and Board • Lobbyist • Director, Office of the	-	• Administrative Coordinator • Manager, Legislative Services and Operations;	-	-	• Executive Secretary to the Board of Education and	-	• Chief Officer, Government Relations and Board Services

Survey Question	Seattle Public Schools	Atlanta Public Schools	Portland Public Schools	Minneapolis Public Schools	San Francisco Unified School District	Oakland Public Schools	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools	San Antonio Independent School District	Long Beach Unified School District	Denver Public Schools	Austin Independent School District
	Relations and Strategic Initiatives • Communication Specialist (vacant) • Legislative Executive Assistant (vacant)			Ombudsperson (Families and Community) • Director, Office of the Ombudsperson (Staff)		Executive Assistant and Parliamentarian to the Board; and Form 700 Filing Officer			Superintendent		• Board Secretary
Board support staff job descriptions reference SOFG	-	No	No	No	-	-	-	-	No	-	No
Risk Management Department exists	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Number of FTEs in Risk Management	1	1	8	1	.5	8	1	-	6	4	2
Risk Management job descriptions reference SOFG	-	No	No	No	-	No	-	-	No	-	No
Compliance Department exists	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Number of FTEs in the Compliance Department	N/A	1	-	-	.5	-	3	-	1	-	2
Compliance job descriptions reference SOFG	N/A	No	-	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	No
Educator job descriptions reference SOFG	No	No	No	No	No	No	-	-	-	-	No
Department that owns data relevant to SOFG	Curriculum	Administration	-	-	Research, Planning, and Assessment Department	Research Assessment and Data	Strategy and Innovation	Data Operations and Services	Student Data Systems Office (9 FTE)	-	Accountability and Assessment
Overseer of the department above	-	Chief Performance Officer	-	-	Head of Research, Planning, and Assessment	Chief Academic Officer	Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer	Chief of Data Operations	Assistant Superintendent of School Support Services	-	Chief Officer, Governmental Relations and Board Services
Budget book shows finances tied to SOFG goals	-	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	No	-	Yes

MOSSADAMS

Seattle Public Schools Governance Assessment

December 2024
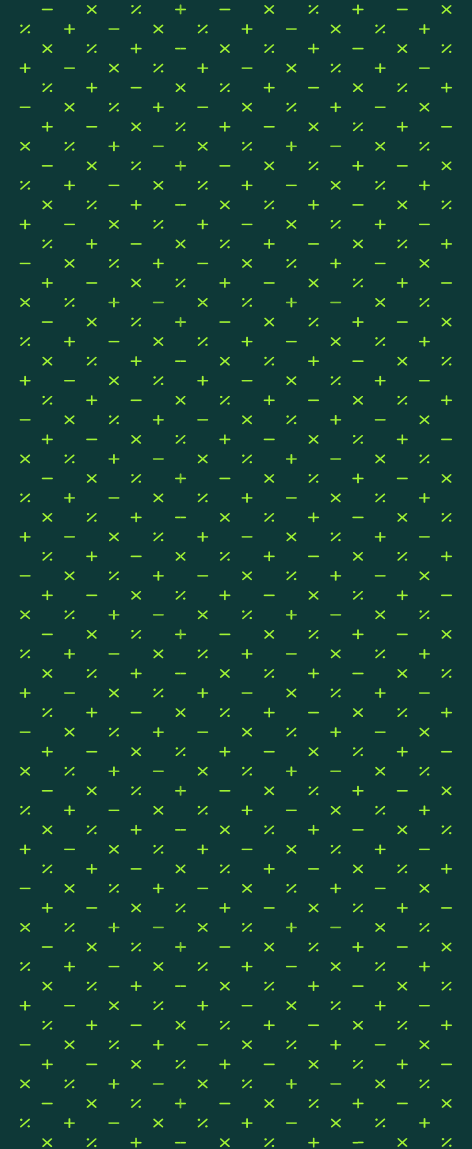
Agenda
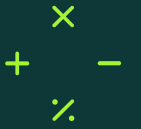
Background

- A 2018 board-commissioned study found the District's governing environment impacted operational efficiency

- The study recommended the District adopt a policy governance model

- The Board adopted Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) as the District's policy governance model in 2021

Scope of Work

- Assessed roles, responsibilities, and gaps across the School Board, Board Office, Superintendent Office, and District departments related to governance, progress monitoring, risk management, and compliance tracking

- Assessed the current state of support for policy governance and the student outcomes focused framework

- Benchmarked the District against similarly situated school districts that are utilizing SOFG to gain perspective on best practices

- Provided recommendations to help the District gain the full benefits of the SOFG model

Methodology

Interviews

Interviews with 29 SPS staff and board members to understand current operations

Data & Document Review

Review of policies and procedures, plans, SOFG tools and results, job descriptions, board meeting minutes
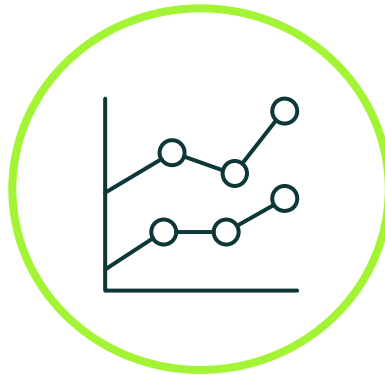
Peer Benchmarking

Review of ten peer institutions that have implemented policy governance/SOFG

Research

Research into industry standards and best practices
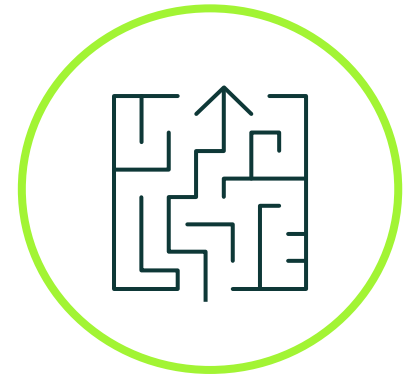
Analysis

Evaluation of the importance, impact, and scope of our observations to develop useful recommendations

Governance Model

Policy Governance

A clear division of roles between board and staff, where the board:

- Sets goals and policies that outline expected outcomes

- Defines boundaries through executive limitations that guide how those outcomes are achieved

- Evaluates district and superintendent performance based on these policies and expected outcomes

Student Outcomes Focused Governance

A policy governance model specifically aimed at improving student outcomes and shifting the board from operational involvement to strategic oversight

Commendations

- *Commitment to Students*: Many interviewees expressed a strong commitment to placing student outcomes at the center of the District's work.

- *Recognition of Need*: There is a general understanding across the organization that the implementation of a policy governance framework has not gone as planned, and a recognition that change is required for the governance model to be successful.

- *Leadership Commitment to SOFG*: SPS's board leadership appear to be committed to implementing SOFG as their policy governance framework because they believe it is what's best for students.

- *Positive Progress*: While implementation is not fully complete, there have been positive strides made to put new processes, reports, and teams in place to support this work.

Transition to Policy Governance RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Implementation Planning:** Collaboratively develop a unified plan to guide implementation activities at both the Board and management level.

2. **Communication and Change Management:** To effectively embed the SOFG framework within the District, SPS should implement a comprehensive communication, training, and onboarding plan that includes change management practices, ongoing coaching, and clear role documentation.

Leadership Engagement RECOMMENDATIONS

3. **Board Engagement:** Enhance the Board's effectiveness in applying the policy governance framework by reinforcing practical skills and establishing structured approaches for oversight and community engagement, ensuring alignment with District goals, and responsive support for constituents.

4. **Central Office Engagement:** Continue current efforts to clarify roles, incorporate responsibilities into standard practices and expectations, and make full use of the project management infrastructure to ensure that work is moving forward.

5. **Board Office Support:** Conduct a staffing analysis to assess whether the current roles within the Board Office align with the needs and priorities of the Board.

Governance Process RECOMMENDATIONS

6. **Strategic Planning and Goal Setting:** Expand current efforts to ensure strong stakeholder input during the goal setting process and take steps to establish a cascading goal structure.

7. **Data and Progress Monitoring:** Empower the Accountability Office with access to essential data, incorporate educator input into data metrics, and strengthen the structured review process to ensure timely, informed decision-making that supports improved student outcomes.

8. **Accountability:** Foster a cohesive accountability culture within SPS by clarifying expectations, empowering the Accountability Office, and supporting consistent, equitable implementation of District initiatives.

9. **Compliance Oversight:** Consider establishing a compliance matrix and creating a position to provide centralized compliance oversight.

10. **Risk Management:** Continue current efforts to strengthen the enterprise risk management function and ensure that the Risk Manager can operate at a strategic level.

Questions?

THANK YOU

POLLING QUESTION #1

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna?

A.   Strongly agree