

The Lighthouse Study: School Boards

The table below compares school boards who participated in the Lighthouse Study* that were either **Moving** forward with clear plans to improve student achievement, or who were **Stuck** with little improvement evident.

Conditions	Moving	Stuck
Shared Leadership	Knowledgeable about learning conditions in schools and needs of students	Could not discuss existing improvement plans
	Could describe what was happening in classrooms	Said it wasn't their job to know what was happening in classrooms
	"We can't just let them fall through the cracks."	"You can't reach all kids."
	High expectations for students	Limited expectations for students
Continuous Improvement	Internal desire to improve	Referred to external pressures for improving (ex: test scores)
	Belief that all children can learn; poverty, lack of parental involvement, etc. described as challenges, not excuses	Factors that kept students from achieving: Poverty, lack of parental involvement, etc.
	Expected quick results in student achievement	Expected it would take years to see improvements in student achievement
Ability to Create and Sustain Initiatives	Described specific ways board actions were communicated to staff	No clear processes to link board actions and goals with that of staff
	Goal-setting exercises	Believed it the superintendent's responsibility to learn, interpret information and recommend solutions to problems
	Could describe teaching teams, faculty committees and how they related to school improvement	Could not describe interactions between teachers and administrators regarding improvement efforts
	Described learning together as a board; studied an issue before making a decision	Learned only what was presented to them by the superintendent and staff
Supportive Workplace for Staff	Had a high level of confidence in staff; could identify specific examples of ways the board showed appreciation to staff	Tended to make negative comments about staff
	Believed that changes could happen with existing people	Believed that new staff members, more involved parents, higher income families,

		or even different students would be needed to impact student achievement
Staff Development	Described staff development and link between teacher training and board or district goals for students	Described staff development as chosen by individual teachers or as required for certification
Support for School Sites through Data and Information	Received information from many sources, both inside and outside of the district	Referred to the superintendent as the primary source of information
	Student-Data driven decision making	Student achievement data was reported but rarely used in decision making
	Clear about the decision making process: studying, learning, reading, listening, receiving data, questioning, discussing and then deciding and evaluating	Decision making process involved discussing a recommendation from the superintendent
Community Involvement	Sought out ways to connect with and listen to the community; expressed pride in community	Described parents' lack of interest and education as barrier to student learning; identified few efforts to improve involvement
	Named specific ways the district was involving parents and community and expressed desire for more involvement	Expressed belief that there wasn't much they could do about involvement

*The Lighthouse Study was conducted by the Iowa Association of School Boards.