

**The Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory School Board
Members**

Presented by

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For Reflection

I have accepted the invitation to become a member of this school board.

I bring the following gifts . . .

I need to learn more about the following areas . . .

During the upcoming year, I will . . .

**Material taken from Building Better Boards: A Handbook for Board
Members in Catholic Education by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D.
Published by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA),
1990**

A Board Member's Prayer

I have been asked to serve, Lord and I have agreed.

Help me to know my fellow board members: their gifts, their concerns, their lives. I am doing your work, Lord, and your love for me and for them is, above all, personal.

Help me to welcome conflict as a sign of the diversity in this board, as an opportunity to reach for creative solutions.

Help me to recognize this diversity as a sign of your capacity to love us all and help me to cherish it as a great strength.

Help me to approach issues with an open, inquiring mind, free from prejudice, with my spirit depending on yours for the strength to make hard decisions.

Help me to listen; to know when and to whom I should listen.

Help me to learn to use my own gifts to promote thorough, thoughtful discussion of important concerns in our Catholic community.

Help me to develop my skills as a peacemaker, to know how and when to mediate, to conciliate, to negotiate.

Help me to enjoy doing your work and to remember your promise; whenever two of us are gathered in your name, you are with us.

Sit with me now. Amen

Building Better Boards: A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education, NCEA, 1990

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States

Adult faith formation also benefits children and youth. An adult community whose faith is well-formed and lively will more effectively pass that faith on to the next generation. Moreover, the witness of adults actively continuing with their own formation shows children and youth that growth in faith is lifelong and does not end up reaching adulthood. (40)

Like all living things, a living faith needs nourishment, which the mature adult disciple finds above all in union with Christ – “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn14:6). “This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is maintained by the spiritual helps common to all the faithful, chiefly by active participation in the liturgy.” It is also maintained by

- Frequent reading of the word of God, sacred writings of our tradition, and the official documents of the Church
- Involvement in the community life and mission of the Church
- Personal prayer
- Participation in the works of justice and service to the poor
- The fulfillment of our human obligations in family and society through the active practice of love for God and neighbor (51)

Teaching and Sharing Our Faith: Lifelong formation and Education in the Archdiocese of Louisville

We strongly assert the importance of lifelong learning. Persons do not reach their full potential at age 12 or 18 or 30 or even 50. Because we are constantly growing, Catholic education and faith formation should nourish, as ever stage of life, a deeper understanding and experience of one's faith and a deeper spirituality. There is never a time when we shouldn't be asking. "How do I live and develop my faith today?" (28)

Research shows that parents are the primary influence in their children's faith development. Since parents have this foundational role, it is imperative that they be involved, actively and creatively, in the education and formation of their children. The meaningful involvement of parents requires that we truly embrace the vision of lifelong and development. (37)

Membership Qualifications

Membership requirements are set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the school board.

Are you a person who is . . .

- A member of the parish?
- Eighteen years of age or older?
- Interested in Catholic schools?
- Able to work well with others in achieving consensus in decisions for the good of the entire school community?
- Able and willing to make necessary and substantial time commitments for thought and study as well as for meetings and related board activities, including development?
- Willing to maintain high levels of integrity and confidentiality?
- Willing to disclose any existing or potential conflicts of interest?
- Willing to attend periodic professional development programs?
- Willing to support school/archdiocesan philosophy and mission?
- Future oriented with a vision for the school?
- Is a credible witness of the Catholic faith to the school and beyond?

Most Difficult Things for Board Members to Learn

- Determining what your function is on the board and how to accomplish it effectively.
- That no matter what you think you know about board service when you first come on the board, you still have a lot to learn.
- Learning to acknowledge publicly that you have no power and authority as an individual board member; that only the board as a whole can function.
- Recognizing the difference between formulating policy (the board's job) and administering the school (the principal's job).
- That you must represent all the parents/students. Your decision must be made in the interest of the total school and not made solely for special groups or interests.
- Learning how to respond to the complaints and concerns of parents, school administrators, and other staff.
- That change comes slowly.
- That you can't solve everyone's problems by yourself.
- That you must think deeply and sometimes accept a reality that is contrary to your own beliefs.
- That effective board service means being able to hold the minority viewpoint when voting on a given issue; then openly supporting the majority vote or consensus position in your community.
- Discovering how the school is funded.

What is a Catholic School Board?

A Catholic school board is a body whose members are selected and/or elected to participate in decision-making in designated areas of responsibility.

The principal and pastor are also members of the school board.

Other school board members may include PTO president, finance committee members and faculty representative.

Consultative Board's

A consultative board is one that cooperates in the policy-making process by formulating and adapting, but never enacting policy. The pastor enacts the policy, and the principal implements the policy.

The board is consultative to the principal and pastor.

Why Do We Have School Boards?

- Promote the concept of lay ministry
- Develop ownership and stability for the future through long-range planning
- Offer financial advice
- Develop and defend policy
- Serve as a good public relations source
- Provide parents/guardians with a voice in their children's education
- Enable the principal to spend adequate time as an instructional leader.

Areas of School Board Responsibility

- Planning
- Policy Formulation
- Offer Financial Advice
- Selection/Appointment of the Principal
- Development
- Evaluation

PLANNING

When the plan, including specific actions and strategies, is completed, it becomes the basic guideline document for the principal, pastor and school board.

The plan should be reviewed, refined, and updated on an annual basis, so that it continually looks into the future.

Areas of Planning

- Catholic Identity
- Ownership/Governance
- Administration and Staffing
- Plan and Facilities
- Curriculum
- Public Relations and Development
- Enrollment
- Finances

POLICY FORMATION

What is policy?

Policy is “a guide for discretionary action.” It tells people what the school board expects, but not how to accomplish it. Policies are broad, general, and direction-setting statements.

Formulating policy is a responsibility of the school board. Determining how policy is to be implemented is a responsibility of the principal.

The term “regulation” is used to describe the principal’s means for specifying how people are to act or how something is to be done. In addition to regulations, principals may also use programs, procedures, and organizational structures for getting the administrative job done.

Some things Policy Can Do

- Give general direction to the administration
- Anticipate and forestall crises
- Clarify expectations for students, parents, teachers and others
- Codify and preserve the school board's decisions
- Reduce subjectivity, inconsistency and arbitrariness

Some Things Policy Can't Do

- Control or supervise administration
- Resolve specific problems after the fact
- Address isolated cases or petty items
- Substitute for programs

When Do Policies Get Developed?

- Annual goal setting of the school board
- When there is a problem to be resolved or a decision to be made, and there is neither a local guideline nor a guideline from a higher level of governance
- Regular review of policies

Getting to Policy

- Determine the need
- Identify the issues involved and the facts surrounding them
- Gather data
- Draft the policy
- First reading
- Consultation
- Second reading
- Approval
- Enactment/Promulgation
- Follow-up

Areas Which Need Policies

- Admissions criteria and priorities
- Discipline/Suspension and dismissal
- Field Trips
- Uniforms
- Tuition payments
- School visitors
- Safety/Crisis plans
- Child abuse

Many policies are determined at the archdiocesan level.

Local policy may be more specific than archdiocesan policy; however, it may not contradict archdiocesan policy.

Four Aspects to Policy

1. Formation – Responsibility of school board
2. Enactment – Function of authority (Pastor writes letter “enacting” policy)
3. Promulgation – Policy is distributed
4. Implementation – Responsibility of the principal

FINANCES

- How are Catholic schools funded?

Catholic schools are funded from a combination of tuition, subsidies (parish, archdiocesan, religious congregation, contributed services), fundraising and development.
- The annual budget is the key to financial control and is based on the philosophy, mission statement and long-range plan of the school.
- A regular, scheduled approach to budget preparation through the use of a calendar/timeline can provide the necessary structuring to the budget process for a school.
- The school board should receive financial reports on a regular basis so that the budget can be monitored responsibly.
- Provisions for financial assistance should be included in budgets to insure that Catholic school education remains available for students regardless of their socioeconomic status.

APPOINTMENT/SELECTION OF THE PRINCIPAL

- Contact Personnel Services coordinator for assistance
- Pastor forms a search committee
- Formulate a job description
- Conduct search
- Screen the responses
- Conduct interviews
- Reach consensus on candidate to be recommended to the pastor

DEVELOPMENT

- Contact Planning and Development Consultant

Public Relations

The role of the board in public relations is primarily to provide direction.

Good public relations enables people to understand the school and to stimulate their support of it in its mission.

Marketing

If the school is to succeed, it must analyze whose needs it serves, what service these people are looking for, and how the school can meet that particular need.

EVALUATION

The Board and Its Own Evaluation

A school board has responsibilities to evaluate its own internal and external performance.

Internal Functions

Leadership, membership, level of participation, agenda, preparation for meetings, board committee structure.

External Functions

Planning, finance, policy formulation, development, relationships with pastor, principal, parish committees, parents, etc.

Evaluation may be formal and informal. It is recommended that the board formally evaluate itself at least once a year.

Evaluating the Instructional Program

The evaluation of the school's instructional program is the responsibility of the principal and educators. However, it is important the school board be kept informed.

The board should know when evaluations are occurring and receive the results in a summary fashion. The principal may report this information to the board in the monthly administrator's report.

The Role of the Board in Evaluating the Principal

The pastor is the one responsible for ensuring that the principal is evaluated according to an appropriate process. The school board may be consulted for input as part of the overall evaluation process.

Code of Ethics for Catholic School Board Members

As a member of a Catholic school board, I

- Acknowledge that schools are a significant expression of the teaching mission of the Catholic church and function within its structure.
- Will become more knowledgeable about the mission of Catholic education, as expressed in this school, and sincerely promote it to the various publics with whom I have influence.
- Recognize the need for continuing education about my responsibilities and know that I do not represent the board officially unless explicitly authorized to do so.
- Will be fully and carefully prepared for each meeting by doing the required readings and completing necessary tasks for committee work and reports.
- Support the principal in authorized functions and avoid intruding on administrative details unless requested to do so.
- Will be loyal to board decisions even though personally opposed to the final recommendations and decisions
- Will be alert to alternate solutions to problems by keeping an open mind.
- Will disqualify myself from discussion and vote on an issue where there is a conflict of interest with my family or business interests or if the outcome will grant me any pecuniary or material benefits.
- Pray often for other members of the board, this Catholic school and the community it serves.

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