

The Key Work of Boards of Education

Module 2

Participate in this seminar to learn more about strategies and tools for effective school board governance. Module 2 workshop and resource materials include these important topics:

- Strategies for good governance;
- Effective school board leadership;
- Effective school board stewardship;
- Effective school board relationships; and,
- Reflection and discussion on effective educational governance practice.

STEWARDSHIP

RELATIONSHIP

LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

Boards of education play a critical role of local government for education in Saskatchewan. Boards of education can strengthen their governance performance by applying proven approaches.

This handbook is designed as a resource for the Module 2 workshop entitled *The Key Work of Boards of Education*. Module 2 presents strategies and tools to strengthen educational governance and practice. Participants will be engaged in reflecting on effective strategies for board governance and adopting a preferred approach for their school board.

The information in this handbook complements the ideas outlined in the *Handbook for School Board Members 2009-2012*.

This resource provides an outline of effective school board governance. For more information, explore the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) website at www.saskschoolboards.ca.

The SSBA website is the primary source of information that includes:

- Links to most of the other educational organizations mentioned in this handbook;
- Sample policies and innovative ideas from Saskatchewan school divisions;
- Key information and research on educational topics for board members; and,
- Information about Association activities and events.

Governance

The term ‘governance’ comes from the Greek word meaning to steer, as in steering a ship or a company strategy. Governance means to decide.

School boards that govern well attend to the following components of effective practice:

- Leadership;
- Stewardship; and,
- Relationship.

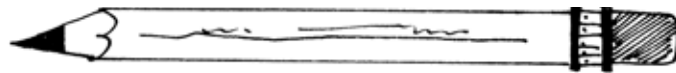
Characteristics of Effective School Boards



School boards that govern well attend to three areas of responsibility: leadership, stewardship and responsibility.

- **Leadership** – Setting a progressive direction for the school system.
- **Stewardship** – Overseeing the successful operation of the school system.
- **Relationship** – Empowering staff and creating connections with all those who have a stake in effective public education for children and youth in Saskatchewan.

Notes



Leadership

Leadership is about direction setting. The board of education has an obligation to think creatively about the future of the school system. The board of education is responsible for shaping the future of education in the community. This requires leadership and planning. Planning includes establishing a compelling vision, mission, and statement of principles to guide school system policy and operations. Strategic planning is an essential tool of board governance.

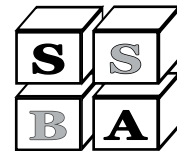
Stewardship

Stewardship is about overseeing the operation of the school system. Boards of education govern by defining desired results. Innovation for strengthening student achievement, teamwork and use of a broad array of effective management tools are common in well performing school systems. Staff know how to roll up their sleeves, work together, and implement effectively. Policy development and monitoring are essential tools for board governance.

Relationship

Relationship is about cultural oversight. This is a new area for contemporary governance. School boards are concerned about building relationships with parents, the community, other governance bodies and other agencies that serve children and youth. Strengthening communication and listening are important to the effective operation of the school system. Developing a successful and productive relationship with the CEO is an essential tool.

Building Board Knowledge



- 1. How do you define board leadership?*

- 2. What are the key components to board stewardship?*

- 3. What are the key components to board relationships?*

Governing Well

Certainly every community expects that their board of education will ensure that resources are used efficiently, that all schools operate effectively and that a safe environment for learning is maintained. In the past, the work of boards was focused primarily on overseeing and managing these inputs.

Today, boards of education are also called upon to ensure results. The board of education must ensure that students are achieving at the desired level.

This understanding is important to how a board of education views itself and its work.

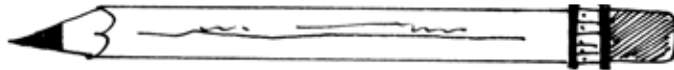
Achievement is the heart and centre of board of education work. Achievement is focused on student achievement. It also includes achieving a safe orderly school environment that is conducive to learning, and achieving equality of opportunity and of outcome for all students. Another aspect of achievement is achieving the vision and goals that the board has created for the school division.

Achievement is the heart and centre of board of education work.

The model of governance described as *The Key Work of Boards of Education* promoted by the SSBA is adapted from the following:

- Government of Manitoba, Office of the Provincial Auditor. (2000). *An examination of school board governance in Manitoba.*
- Ole Ingstrup and Paul Crookall. (2001). *The Three Pillars of Public Management.* McGill-Queen's University Press.
- National School Boards Association. (2003). *The Key Work of School Boards.* www.nsba.org

Notes



Boards of Education

Boards of education are established through legislation. *The Education Act, 1995* in Saskatchewan defines their duties and powers. Boards of education:

- Are responsible for delivering the K-12 education program in their own communities;
- Are elected by the people of their communities;
- Are accountable to the people who elected them;
- Must work within the framework established by *The Education Act, 1995*; and,
- Are responsible for results – students’ academic achievement, a positive school climate, the care and nurturing of children and youth.

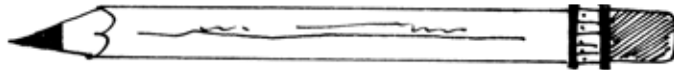
Board Roles and Responsibilities

Members of boards of education serve a three-year term – just over 1,000 days. You can’t change the world in 1,000 days but you can, along with your fellow board members, provide leadership and direction to the schools in your division. You can implement policies that will foster student achievement and make school a safe and welcoming place for all students.

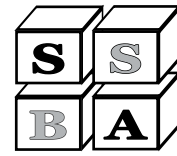
Your schools have probably existed for a number of years and will continue to operate for many more years. You have inherited the contribution of previous school boards and your board will leave a legacy for the future.

As a board member, you are a leader helping to shape the vision for the future; at the same time, however, that vision must be one that reflects your community’s values and priorities.

Notes



Building Board Knowledge



1. *What are your goals as a board member?*

2. *What is the greatest need in your school division?*

3. *What would you like the board to achieve? What legacy would you like to your board to have?*

Evaluating Achievement

Achievement is at the heart and the centre of every board of education's work.

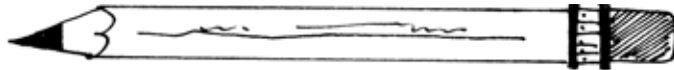
Boards of education are responsible for achieving results. They are responsible for students' academic achievement, for realizing the Goals of Education, for ensuring that all students graduate from Grade 12, and for creating a safe and orderly school environment. They are responsible for ensuring that local schools reflect the community's and Saskatchewan's values and expectations.

Boards of education are also responsible to the community – to the people who elected the board members. They are responsible for ensuring that their decisions reflect community priorities and values and that their decisions are realistic in terms of community demographics and economics.

Aspects of achievement discussed in the sections that follow are:

- Assessing student achievement;
- Assessing whether your board utilize effective practices;
- A vision for the school division; and,
- The scope of the board of education's responsibilities.

Notes



Assessing Student Achievement

Boards of education need information about student progress and achievement in order to know if they are fulfilling their responsibility for the education program.

A board policy of student evaluation is a good way to establish procedures that will ensure boards are getting the information they need about student achievement. A policy on student evaluation has other benefits as well. It helps ensure that evaluation is conducted in accordance with principles of fair student evaluation, it promotes fairness and consistency for all students, and it may reduce the number of problems relating to student evaluation.

For detailed information about developing a student evaluation policy refer to Research Centre Report #99-11, *Using Standards and Assessments to Support Student Learning*. This publication discusses all of the elements that go into a student evaluation policy.

Three important elements of a student evaluation policy are:

- A statement about standardized testing;
- A statement about school division benchmarks and standards; and,
- A statement about the information the board needs.

Each of these important elements of a student evaluation policy is discussed in more detail below.

Standardized Testing

Standardized testing is a controversial topic. Some groups advocate their use and others are opposed. A statement on standardized testing should:

- Specify whether the tests are used for diagnostic purposes, evaluative purposes or both;
- Make a commitment that standardized tests will never be the only tool used to assign a mark. Marks should incorporate the results of several assessment tools such as portfolios of students' work, students' self-assessments, teacher-made tests, homework assignments, students' everyday work and teacher observation; and,
- Provide guidelines for who gets information about the results of the test. Are students and parents informed of the results or is this information held confidential at the school? If students and parents get the results, how is this information provided – in a special letter to the parent, in a parent/teacher interview, only if the parent asks?

School Division Benchmarks and Standards

Some Saskatchewan school divisions are beginning to establish benchmarks and standards to supplement those set through Saskatchewan's Provincial Learning Assessment Program (PLAP) and the national School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP).

A benchmark is a “snapshot” of student achievement at a particular level at a particular moment in time. Benchmarks allow comparison of student achievement from one year to the next within the school division. They also allow school divisions to compare their students' achievement with provincial and national achievement.

Standards describe what student achievement should be in a particular skill area at a particular grade. Comparing students' achievement to the standard tells us whether students are achieving above or below expectations.

Board policy usually describes the processes that will be used to establish benchmarks and standards, rather than specifying the benchmarks and standards themselves, because these can change from year to year.

The process that is frequently used to establish benchmarks involves:

- Collecting samples of students' work;
- Scoring that work using written descriptions of student work at various levels (rubrics) and comparisons with actual students' work at various levels (exemplars); and,
- Returning students' work along with the rubrics and exemplars used for scoring to classroom teachers so that students and teachers can compare individual pieces of work to sample work at various levels.

In addition to being an evaluation tool, benchmarking can play an important role in improving student learning. The rubrics and exemplars provide very clear examples of the criteria that students must meet in order to get a particular mark. When these rubrics and exemplars are distributed to students and teachers, students can compare their work to sample work and identify changes and improvements they need to make in order to reach a higher level of achievement.

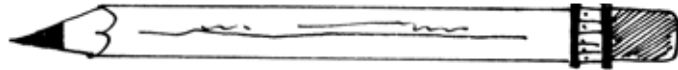
Required Information for Boards of Education

A statement about the information the board needs in order to fulfill its responsibility for the education program. Only in exceptional circumstances, do boards of education have the right to ask for marks or evaluations of individual students. However, boards may ask for general information such as:

- The student retention rate;
- Average marks of students at specific grade levels; and,
- Results of benchmarking and standard setting activities.

The student progress information the board collects should be used as a means to measure progress from year to year and assess whether school division goals are being achieved. For example, if progress is being made from year to year, the board knows that existing programs are working well. If there is little improvement from year to year or a decline, then the board may wish to implement different or more specialized programs in order to respond to students' needs.

Notes



Assessing Effective Practice

The Canadian School Board Association has identified indicators of an effective board of education shown in the box below.

What are the characteristics of an effective board of education?

CSBA has identified 16 Indicators:

- ✓ Develop a shared vision, mission and goals.
- ✓ Focus on the improvement of practice.
- ✓ Build on diversity.
- ✓ Be an advocate for education and students.
- ✓ Establish policies.
- ✓ Allocate resources.
- ✓ Deal openly with all issues.
- ✓ Communicate.
- ✓ Establish decision-making procedures.
- ✓ Maintain supportive relations with staff.
- ✓ Clarify administrative and policy responsibilities.
- ✓ Participate in professional development.
- ✓ Evaluate performance.
- ✓ Build partnerships.
- ✓ Participate in the Association.

Board Self-Evaluation

One indicator of board performance is public feedback. If board members get a lot of complaints about their work from the public, they can assume that the public is not happy and that changes are needed. However, this is an extreme situation and probably can be avoided if the board regularly assesses its own performance and makes changes as needed.

A board self-evaluation often focuses on three areas:

- **Mission and values** – Are the board’s mission and values clearly defined? Does the board observe the mission and value statements?
- **Policy and governance** – Is the board’s approach to governance working?
- **Operational areas** – How is the board performing in areas such as policy development, community relations, communications, finance, transportation, personnel, program, realizing the Goals of Education, board operation and meetings?

Detailed board self-evaluation checklists are provided in Research Report #97-03, *Board-Director Review*, (1997). The procedures and evaluation forms in the *Board-Director Review* are used by many boards in Saskatchewan. When you use them, you are helping to create consistent practice across the province and ensuring that your self-evaluation is consistent from one year to the next.

Chairperson Self-Evaluation

The board chairperson has a very important role. The chairperson is:

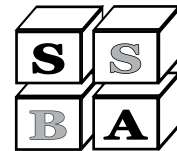
- A captain who teaches others and helps others achieve defined goals;
- An organizer who runs efficient and productive board meetings;
- A policy leader who understands the roles and responsibilities of both the board and the school division administration; and,
- A spokesperson who speaks skillfully and accurately on behalf of the board to the media and the public.

If you are the chairperson – regular self-evaluation is important. You are likely to be your own most severe critic and you will probably be more honest with yourself than your fellow board members will be.

Checklists that the board chair can use to assess his or her performance are provided in:

- SSBA Report, *Becoming a Better Board Chair* (available online); and,
- SSBA Report, Module 12 – *Board-CEO Review* (available online)

Building Board Knowledge



When you are creating a vision for your school division, it may be helpful to ask yourself and the community questions, such as:

1. *What is the mandate of the schools in our division?*
2. *How do we define quality education?*
3. *What should our graduates know, be like and be able to do?*
4. *How do we ensure the system is responsive and proactive?*

A Vision for Your School Division

Boards of education will be more effective at achieving results if they define the results they want, if they have a clear vision of what success looks like. Many boards of education develop a vision to guide their work. The vision is expressed as part of a plan for mission, core values and priorities.

When a board has a strong vision for the future and clearly defined values and beliefs, board members can consider each potential decision in light of their vision and core values and beliefs. They can ask questions such as:

- Will this decision help us achieve our vision of education? If so, how?
- Is this action consistent with our core values and beliefs?

It is important that the board's vision and statements of values and beliefs be developed in collaboration with students, teachers, parents and community. Collaboration will help ensure that the vision and/or core principles and beliefs reflect the community's priorities and values. It is also important that the board's vision and core values and beliefs be shared with these students, parents, teachers, and community at the beginning of each school year.

Board of Education Responsibilities

The Education Act, 1995 provides specific details about the duties of boards of education. Ultimately, however, boards are responsible not for buildings, playgrounds, budgets or buses, but for achieving results. Decisions concerning buses, school maintenance and the like are not ends in themselves, but rather the board's means to achieving their vision for education in their school division.

Many aspects of the education system are in the provincial sphere and beyond the control of boards of education. These include:

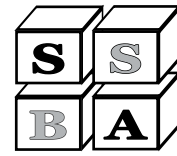
- Some elements of the educational program;
- Teacher salaries and benefits;
- Teacher certification; and,
- Occupational health and safety regulations.

Boards of education do have control over many aspects of education, however. These include:

- Some aspects of the educational program;
- The organizational culture of the school division;
- The quality of the teachers and principals they hire; and,
- Issues that are bargained locally such as sabbatical and education leave for teachers.

By directing their energies into those elements they can control, boards can help ensure success for all students.

Building Board Knowledge

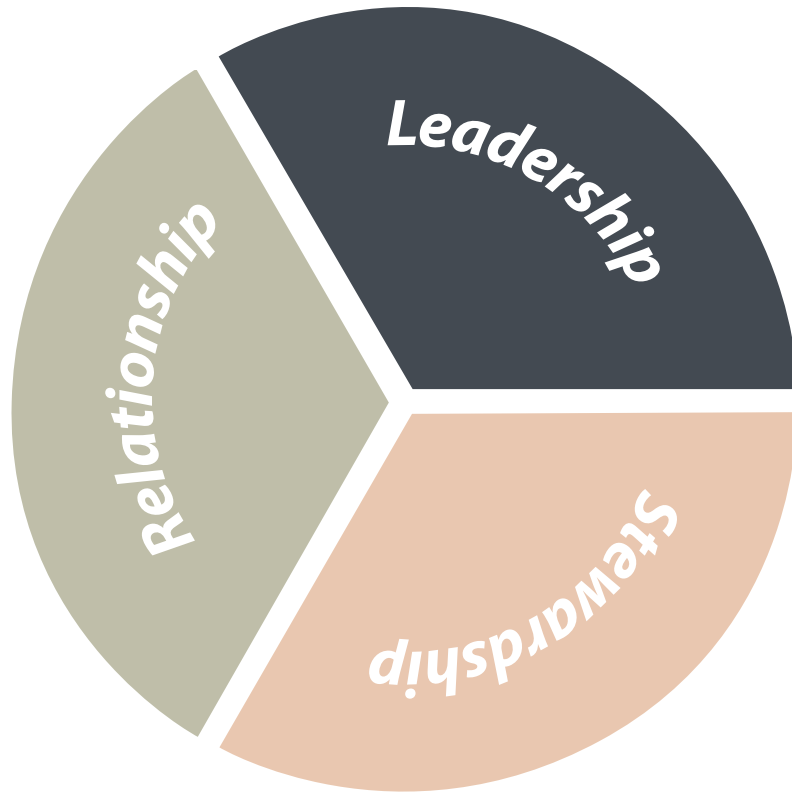


- 1. What would happen if boards of education did not fulfill their responsibility to achieve results? How do we define quality education?*
- 2. What would happen if boards of education did not fulfill their responsibility to represent the people who elected them?*
- 3. Does your board of education use a mission statement, vision statement, and statement of core values and beliefs?*
- 4. If you have one or more of these tools, what action have you taken to make students, teachers and community aware of them?*

Leadership

Boards of education are leaders. They lead community, school division staff and students in developing the plans, policies and procedures necessary to implement their vision for education. Aspects of leadership discussed in the sections that follow include:

- Accomplishing goals; and,
- Leading the educational program.



Accomplishing Goals

Although the duties and powers of boards of education are defined in *The Education Act 1995*, little guidance is provided to boards regarding how they should function. Boards are free to perform their duties in any ways that work for them provided they:

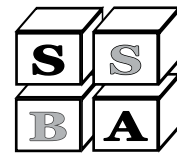
- Act prudently;
- Act ethically;
- Act legally; and,
- Fulfill the mandate specified in the legislation.

Because the legislation gives boards little direction for routine operation, many boards have created their own procedures and processes to achieve goals. Two areas that boards of education may wish to consider are:

- Decision-making; and,
- Strategic planning.

Building Board Knowledge

1. *How often does your board bring up its mission statement, beliefs and values, and/or vision statement when making decisions?*



Decision-Making

The board of education's job is to lead by making decisions and ensuring these decisions are implemented by the director of education and other staff. The decision-making process is illustrated in Figure 2. Each of the steps in this process is described below.

Recognize the Need for a Decision

It is important that boards spend their time and energy on matters that count. It sometimes may be appropriate to ask whether a particular issue is one that warrants the time and energy involved in decision making or whether the issue will resolve itself.

Collect Information

The type of information and the sources of information will vary depending on the issue. Questions to ask when collecting information include:

- How are our students achieving in this area?
- What is our student retention rate?
- Do students feel safe at school?
- What are national and international trends regarding this issue?
- What does *The Education Act, 1995* say about this issue?
- How does this relate to Core Curriculum and other provincial initiatives?
- What are other Saskatchewan school divisions doing about this issue?
- What do students, teachers, parents and the general community think about this issue?

Identify Potential Options

Occasionally a situation calls for a yes/no decision. Most often, however, a number of options are possible.

Evaluate Each Option in Terms of the System's Capacity

Questions you may want to ask at this stage include:

- Is our school big enough for this program?
- Can our computer system handle this?
- What demands will this make on teachers' time?
- Will this option require additional professional and/or support staff?
- Do we have enough textbooks and audiovisual materials to support this?
- How many community volunteers can we count on?

Evaluate Each Option in Terms of Cost

A thorough cost analysis of each option you are considering is critical.

Evaluate Each Option in Terms of Your Board's Vision, Mission, Core Values and Principles

The questions, "Will this help us achieve our vision of education?" And "How does this relate to our core values and principles?" are central to every decision.

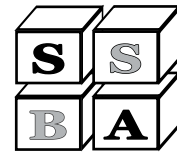
Make a Decision

After the analysis is complete, make a decision that is consistent with your community's priorities and values. Be sure the decision is affordable and that it reflects your school division's core values and principles.

Implement the Decision

Most board decisions are expressed as resolutions, bylaws or policies. The next section of this handbook discusses policy leadership and talks about how decisions are put into practice.

Building Board Knowledge



1. *How does a board know when it begins to manage more than govern? What indicators are there?*

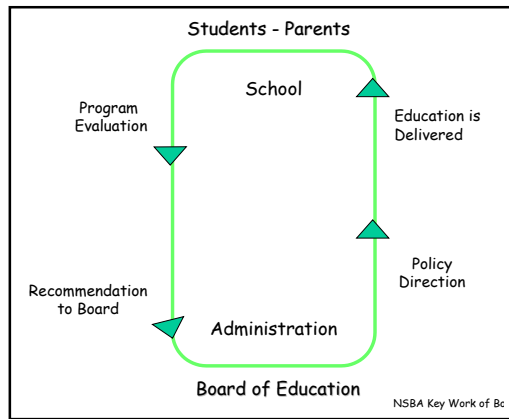
Leading the Educational Program

Some aspects of the educational program are determined by the province. For example, The Education Act, 1995 gives the provincial government authority to determine the curriculum that will be taught in the schools. However, boards of education have control over many aspects of the educational program. Two examples are:

Locally-Determined Options – Because priorities vary from one community to the next, Core Curriculum provides for locally-determined options. Typically these are courses such as Native studies, religious instruction or second language instruction that are relevant to a particular community. Locally-determined options can also include locally-developed courses such as local history. The board can play a major role in deciding what (if any) locally-determined options are to be taught in the school division.

Programs relating to the school environment – These types of programs include conflict resolution training for students and teachers, peer mediation programs, anti-violence programs and other programs to create a positive, safe school environment. Such programs can be established at the discretion of the board.

The diagram below shows how boards usually make decision about the educational program. Students/parents, school administration and board of education all play a role. Typically, the process begins with evaluation of a particular educational program. During the evaluation, information is usually collected from students and teachers.

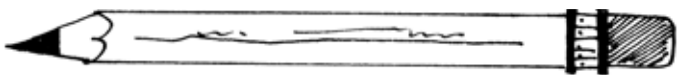


In response to the evaluation, the school administration makes recommendations to the board. These recommendations may identify how future actions can build on strengths or remedy weaknesses.

The board establishes a policy direction in response to recommendations made by the school administration. The board may involve teachers, students, parents and the community as a whole in policy development.

School division staff (teachers, principals, support staff) deliver education in a manner consistent with the policy established by the board.

Notes



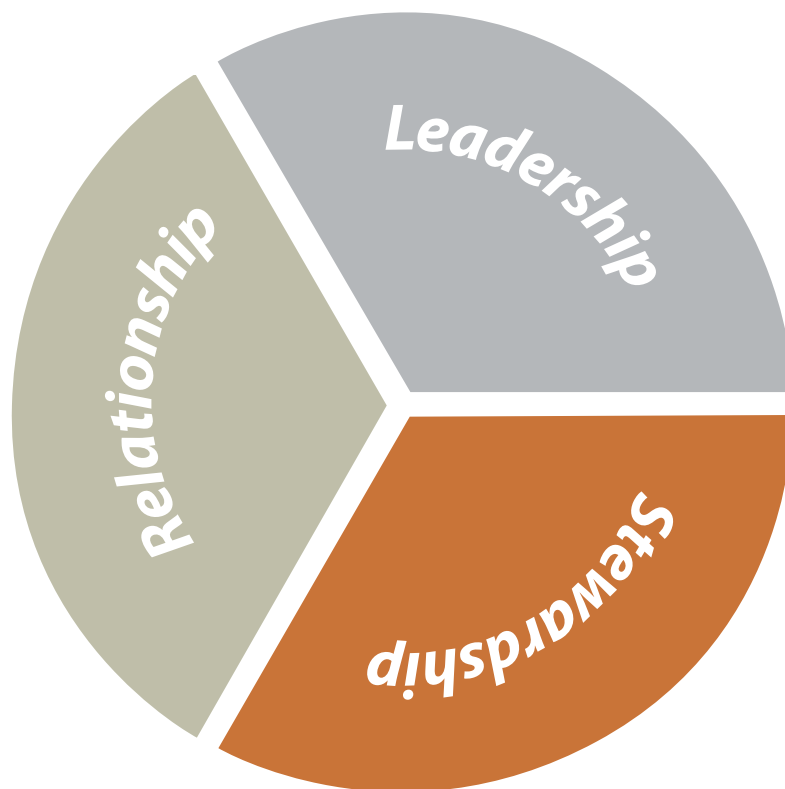
Stewardship

Boards of education are stewards. They are responsible for ensuring that all board activities reflect Saskatchewan's legal and regulatory framework. They act for the citizens they represent and they have authority over their organization and its resources. As good stewards, boards of education must honour the trust that citizens have placed in them.

The stewardship responsibility of boards of education gives them the mandate to deliver education within their school divisions.

Three aspects of stewardship are discussed in the sections that follow:

- The context within which stewardship takes place;
- The board of education's stewardship responsibility for the educational program; and,
- Using board policy as a key governance tool.



Contexts of Board of Education Stewardship

Three different contexts are described in the sections that follow. They are the:

- Legal context;
- Corporate context; and,
- Financial context.

Legal Context

In Saskatchewan, boards of education have a mandate to deliver K-12 education. The federal government has no responsibility for K-12 education. The federal government transferred authority for K-12 education to the provinces when Canada was created (*Constitution Act, 1867*). When Saskatchewan was established (*The Saskatchewan Act, 1905*) the authority to deliver K-12 education was transferred to boards of education (*The Education Act, 1995*).

The Education Act, 1995 and its accompanying regulations provides a framework for K-12 education in Saskatchewan. This Act describes the duties and powers of boards of education and the conseil scolaire, the Minister of Education, teachers, principals and students. It also describes processes such as organization and management of schools, hiring and firing of teachers, school finance, and collective bargaining.

In Saskatchewan, each board of education governs education in a school division.

The school division is the basic organizational unit of Saskatchewan's publicly-funded education system. School divisions fall into three categories: public, separate and Francophone. Saskatchewan taxpayers declare themselves supporters of one of these systems and their education tax dollars are directed accordingly. Separate schools are organized by the religious minority in an area, which is usually Catholic. At the present time, there is one Protestant separate board of education in Saskatchewan. There is one Francophone school division (officially known as the Francophone education area) that is organized by minority language (French) parents.

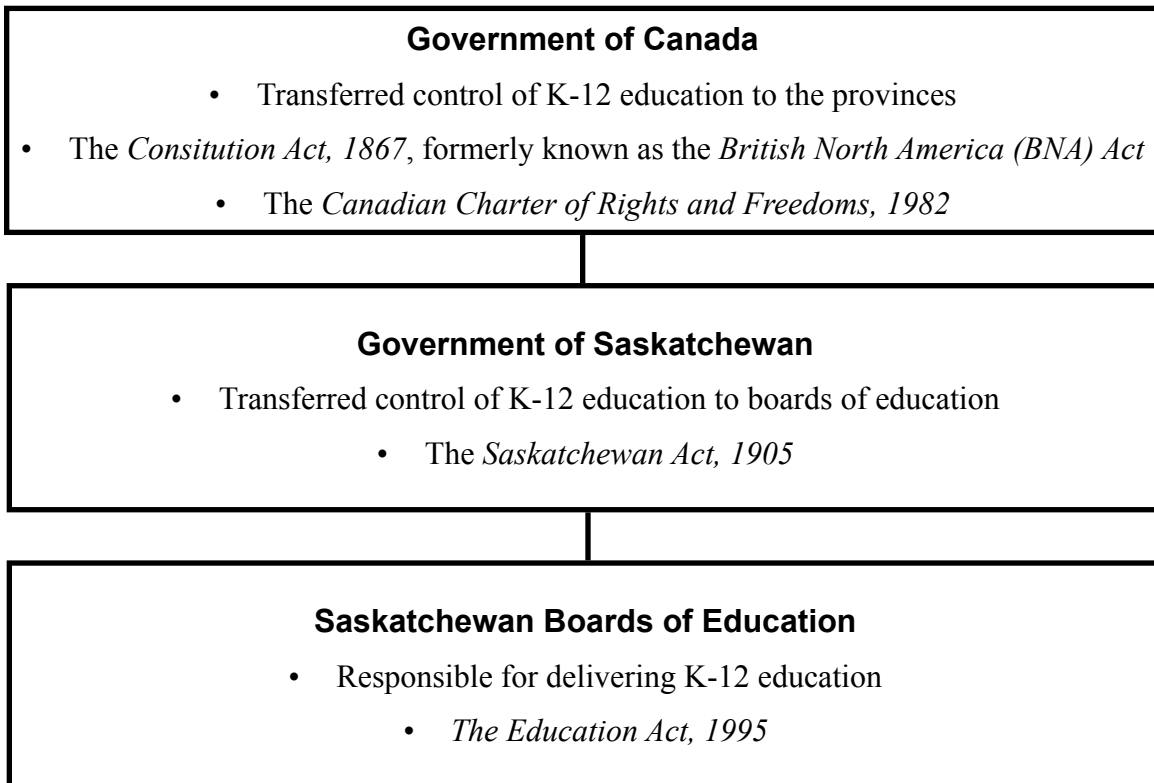
The separate school divisions cover the same geographic areas as some of the public school divisions. For example, most Saskatchewan cities have both a public and a separate school division. The Francophone education area covers the entire province.

In the Francophone education area, the board of education is called the conseil scolaire.

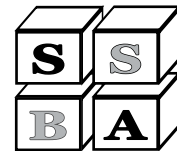
The elected members of a board of education are officially known as members of the board of education, but in everyday language, they are often called school trustees.

Each school is required to establish a School Community Council to support student learning. *The Education Act, 1995* sets out the duties of the school community council. However, boards of education may delegate a wide range of responsibilities to the school community council.

Figure 1: The Legal Context of Education in Saskatchewan



Building Board Knowledge



1. *What does your board policy say about public engagement?*

2. *What are the expectations of School Community Councils?*

Duties and Powers of Boards of Education

The duties and powers of boards of education and the conseil scolaire are described in sections 85 to 91 of The Education Act, 1995. These sections provide detailed listings of items that boards are responsible for.

Boards' duties and powers can be grouped into three categories: legislative, executive and judicial.

Legislative

Boards of education make decisions to govern their school divisions, for example, they determine the classrooms and schools that will be kept operational (Section 85(1) (h) of The Act).

Executive

Boards of education set up procedures to ensure the school division is run efficiently, for example, they ensure that accurate financial records are kept (Section 85 (1)(r) of The Act).

Judicial

Boards of education make judgements about various aspects of the education program. For example, they suspend and expel pupils (Section 85 (1) (o) of The Act).

Within each function there will be a role for both the board and the administration
For each of the following actions:

- Determine whether the function is Legislative, Executive or Judicial in nature; and,
- Within each function, who is responsible for the decision-making the board or the administration?

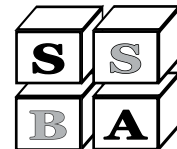
Duties and Powers of Boards of Education

Duties are things the board must do. In The Education Act, 1995, duties are identified by the phrase, "**a board of education shall**". Section 85 of The Act describes the duties of boards of education.

Powers are permissible, but optional, things the board may do. In The Education Act, 1995, powers are identified by the phrase, "**a board of education may**". Section 87 of The Act describes the powers of boards of education.

<i>Scenario</i>		<i>Leg</i>	<i>Exec</i>	<i>Jud</i>
<p><i>1. Authorize weekend use of school facilities for activities by a religious organization.</i></p>	<i>Board</i>			
	<i>Admin</i>			
<p><i>2. Change attendance boundaries that will cause 10 per cent of the population to attend different schools the following year.</i></p>	<i>Board</i>			
	<i>Admin</i>			
<p><i>3. Conduct a show cause hearing for a principal demotion.</i></p>	<i>Board</i>			
	<i>Admin</i>			
<p><i>4. Grant a teacher request for one day off, with pay, for personal leave.</i></p>	<i>Board</i>			
	<i>Admin</i>			

Building Board Knowledge



1. What are some examples of legislative, executive and judicial functions that your board has carried or will have to carry out?

Corporate Context

Boards of education are legal entities separate and apart from the individual members who comprise them. Power to establish and operate schools is delegated to boards of education and the conseil scolaire by the provincial government – but, as a safeguard – this power is given to the board of education as a whole.

As an individual, a member of a board of education cannot offer a job, promise a contract, make demands on personnel, look through student or staff files, promote or dismiss people. The board of education can do any or all of these things and may even delegate particular responsibilities to individual board members. But, only the board, in a formal meeting, and acting within the powers given to it by law, can make decisions that are binding upon the board.

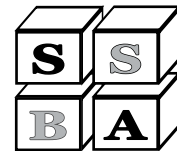
Boards of education are corporations created by an act of the legislature and, as such, have only those powers which the legislature, by law, has provided. Because boards of education are corporate entities under provincial legislation, the policies adopted by a board have the same force in law as those passed by the provincial legislature.

There are procedures which define when “the board” is acting as opposed to the actions of individuals. This means that there are requirements which define a properly constituted board meeting. Boards must follow these procedures in order for their actions to be legal.

Individual board members have no authority. Only the board of education is recognized. A board of education is a legal entity that can enter into contracts, sue and be sued.

Building Board Knowledge

- 1. What lessons can boards of education learn from corporate operations?*



Financial Context

School divisions are responsible for the operation of schools in their area and for the quality of the education program. The money that school divisions need to operate schools comes from and the provincial government.

Provincial Government

As of 2009, the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility for funding K-12 education in Saskatchewan.

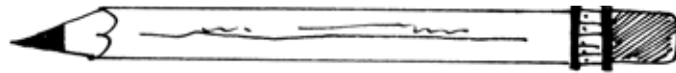
About 98 per cent of funding comes from the provincial government through property tax and grants.

The remaining 2 per cent proportion of education funding is generated from other revenue such as interest on investments, donations and business partnerships, school fees and/or fundraising.

Some school divisions also receive revenue in the form of education service agreements (tuition fees) paid by First Nations or other school divisions.

Boards of education must work within a set budget. Although the provincial funding formula is subject to change, board of education budgets for each specific year are fixed, so boards must use the dollars available for services and programs that will best help them achieve the Goals of Education and their vision for education in their school division.

Notes



Stewardship of the Educational Program

Some aspects of the educational program are determined by the province and some by the board of education.

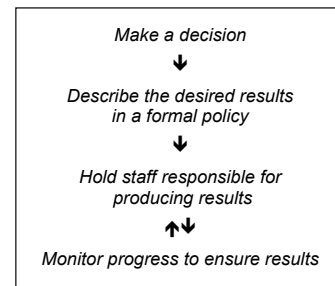
The curriculum is the most significant aspect of the educational program that is determined by the province. Saskatchewan's curriculum is usually called the Core Curriculum. The board of education's stewardship responsibility includes ensuring that Core Curriculum is implemented in their school division and ensuring that appropriate curricula are used in specific subject areas.

Boards of education also have a stewardship responsibility for ensuring that the school environment is safe, orderly and caring and that an atmosphere of respect prevails.

Policy Leadership

A board of education's job is to govern those aspects of the education system that, under legislation, fall under its jurisdiction. Most boards of education do this through policy leadership. Policy leadership means that board decisions are formulated as policies, principles or guidelines for staff to follow. The board makes a decision, describes the decision in a policy, asks the director of education and other staff to ensure that the decision is implemented, and monitors progress to ensure that the desired results are being achieved.

Figure 3: Policy Leadership



With policy leadership, the board's role might be compared to that of a bandmaster or orchestra conductor. The bandmaster and conductor lead the musicians, they ensure that everyone is playing from the same music score and that everyone is in tune, but they don't play individual musical instruments. Similarly, the board leads the school division and makes sure that staff members' actions are consistent with the board's decisions. But the board doesn't become involved in routine operations such as evaluating teachers' work, ordering supplies and checking schools for cleanliness.

When boards formulate their decisions as principles or guidelines for staff to follow and apply, it is more likely that:

- Board decisions will be based on principles and that these principles will be explicit and deliberated;
- Staff will act according to the principles established by the board, but still be able to use their own expertise; or,
- The board will have more time to focus on what is important.

It is best to develop several comprehensive policies that provide frameworks and guidelines reflecting the board’s core values and beliefs. Avoid developing dozens of highly specific policies for individual situations. Policies have leadership value only if they are used and applied.

Policy leadership has three components:

- Describe the desired results in a formal policy;
- Hold school division staff responsible for producing the desired results; and,
- Monitor progress to ensure that the desired results are being achieved.

Each of these components is discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

Describe the Desired Results in a Formal Policy

When developing board policy, a good place to start is with the board’s core values and beliefs. Those core values and beliefs can be expressed as a mission statement or simply as a list of basic principles that guide all board action.

There are several different ways that policies can be developed. Different methods are appropriate for different circumstances and each method has advantages and disadvantages. The most common methods are listed in the discussion box on the next page.

The major variable in different methods of policy development listed in the box below is the amount of public consultation and involvement. Public involvement can vary from none to intense. Generally, the more potentially controversial a policy is, the more public involvement is appropriate. In addition, the people who will be affected by a policy should have input into its development. Although public involvement increases the time required for policy development and makes policy development more complex, it usually results in greater acceptance and implementation of the policy.

Types of Policies

Generally boards of education develop four different kinds of policies:

- **Policies that specify the results the board wants to achieve** – for example, a policy that will produce a fair and equitable student evaluation system.
- **Policies that define the authority of the director of education and other staff** – for example a policy specifying that the director of education and staff will provide the board with a regular report on the status of Core Curriculum implementation.
- **Policies that prescribe how the board itself will operate** – for example, a policy that describes how and when the board seeks opinion from the community.
- **Policies that describe how governance is linked to management** – for example, a policy that lists the category of decisions that the director of education can make without reference to the board.

Policy Development Process	When might this approach be appropriate?	What are the advantages of this approach?	What are the disadvantages of this approach?
A senior administrator writes a draft policy for review by the board.			
A senior administrator writes a draft policy for review by the board and by affected groups and individuals.			
The board asks a stakeholder group to write a policy for the board's review.			
The board gets opinion from the public, asks a committee composed of stakeholders to write a draft policy. The board asks for public feedback on the draft policy before it is finalized.			

Hold School Division Staff Responsible for Producing the Desired Results

Writing the policy is just the first stage in policy leadership. The next step is implementing the policy and ensuring that it becomes the basis for action and decision making within the school division. Typically, the board delegates responsibility for this stage to the director of education.

Boards usually expect two things of the director of education and others responsible for implementing policy:

That they make the policy known to those affected by it. For example, if the board has created a policy on missed tests or exams, it is reasonable to expect that the policy will be explained to students at the beginning the school year, that it will be posted in every classroom and that the policy will be reviewed before each important exam.

That they take actions to produce the desired results specified by the policy. For example, it is appropriate to expect teachers to handle all instances of missed tests in accordance with the policy.

Be sure that everyone affected by a policy knows about its existence. A policy is not useful and does not improve teaching and learning if it is simply filed in a policy manual and is not incorporated into school division activities.

Monitor Progress to Ensure that the Desired Results Are Being Achieved

Developing a policy and delegating responsibility for implementing it are two important components of policy leadership. The third component of policy leadership is regularly monitoring progress to ensure that progress is being made toward the desired objective.

Establish Criteria for Success

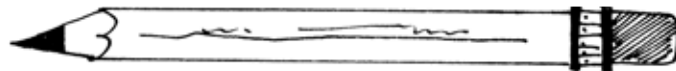
Criteria for success help you answer questions such as, “Have we met our goals” and “What progress have we made since last year in meeting our goals?” If, for example, you want to increase the number of people volunteering at the school, you might say that your criterion for success is 10 percent more volunteers this year than last year.

Collect Data

As part of the monitoring process, the board asks the people responsible for implementing the policy (director of education, secretary-treasurer, principals, teachers) to collect statistical and qualitative data. This data can then be used by the board to determine whether progress is being made toward achieving success. For example, if a goal is to increase the number of volunteers by 10 percent, it is vitally important that accurate records be kept regarding the number of volunteers, the amount of time each one spends at the school, and the type of tasks each volunteer is doing.

For more information about policy leadership, refer to Research Centre Report #02-99, *A Pathway to Effective Board Policy Development*, and Research Report #99-09, *Policy Leadership*.

Notes



Relationship

Most of the work of boards of education is accomplished through relationships with staff including the director of education, principals and teachers. As well, boards must maintain strong relationships with the communities they represent in order to reflect the community's priorities and values.

Relationships discussed include:

- The relationship between the board of education and the director of education;
- Board members' relationships with each other;
- The relationship between the board and its employees; and,
- The relationship between the board and the community.



Board-Director Relationship

The director of education is the chief executive officer of the school division. The director is hired by the board and is accountable to the board.

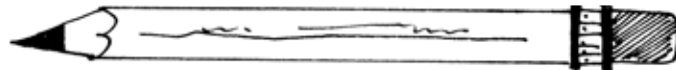
It is sometimes said that the board of education has one employee – the director of education – because the director is responsible for implementing policies developed by the board. The board works through the director in order to get things done. In some cases, committees comprised of board members, director of education, teachers, students and parents may be formed to make certain decisions or implement certain policies. These committees are formed at the discretion of the board. In most cases, it is inappropriate for board members to bypass the director of education and give instructions directly to a principal, teacher, support staff, or student.

But responsibility is a two-way street. The director of education is responsible to the board, and the board also has responsibilities to the director of education. The board must create an environment that makes it possible for the director to do her or his job effectively. Effective boards:

Develop a job description for the director of education. A typical job description may contain sections on the personal/professional qualities of the director. For example:

- The director's ability to be aware of and act within the purpose and direction set by the board;
- The director's technical/managerial skills;
- The director's role as an educational leader; and,
- The director's political skills.

Notes



The job description is reviewed and revised at regular intervals to be sure it is consistent with the board’s expectations and current educational practice.

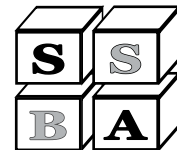
Develop guidelines for the director’s role and the board’s role. Such formal guidelines will help prevent ambiguity and duplication of effort. These guidelines might address items such as:

- Categories of decisions the director of education can make without referring to the board;
- The type and frequency of reporting the board requires from the director; and,
- Categories of tasks that the board as a whole or individual board members will be responsible for.

Regularly evaluate the director’s work performance. Regular evaluation benefits both board and director. Feedback helps the director adjust his or her work so that it meets board expectations, and it helps the board more clearly define their expectations to the director.

Use standard and accepted guidelines when writing the director’s job description, describing the relationship between the director and the board, and evaluating the director’s work. Standard guidelines mean that practice will be consistent with other Saskatchewan school divisions and that evaluation of the director will be done consistently each time. Recommended guidelines are provided in Research Report #97-03, *Board-CEO Review*.

Building Board Knowledge



1. *Does your board have a written job description for your director of education? If yes, how often is the director’s job description reviewed and revised (annually, every five years, never, etc.)?*
2. *Does your board have written guidelines concerning tasks the director will do and tasks the board will do?*
3. *Does your board regularly evaluate the director’s work? If yes, how often do you evaluate the director’s work?*

Relationships with Fellow Board Members

Boards of education accomplish their work through meetings. The board of education as a whole is a legal entity. Decisions made by the board at a properly constituted meeting are legal and binding.

Decisions made at a meeting that does not meet the specifications of *The Education Act, 1995* are not legal. Similarly, decisions made by an individual member of the board are not legal, unless the board has delegated, in writing, responsibility for a particular decision to that individual.

A Properly Constituted Meeting

The Education Act, 1995 defines a properly constituted board of education meeting.

Meetings must be called in a specific way. Boards may decide by resolution to hold regular meetings on specific dates. Such a resolution must be made at a meeting where all members are present.

Board meetings may be held at other times at the call of the chairperson or any three members of the board. In this case, notice of the meeting must be given by:

- Giving at least six days notice to each member by registered mail;
- Delivering a written notice to each member in person at least three days before the meeting; or
- Leaving a written notice with an adult at each member's home at least three days before the meeting.

Boards may, by unanimous written consent, waive the requirement for notice and hold a meeting at any time.

There must be a quorum at all meetings. A quorum is defined as the majority of the members required on the board by the Minister's Order.

Boards of education must meet at least six times per year.

Conducting a Meeting

The Education Act, 1995 provides rules for the way a board meeting must be conducted:

- Voting in meetings must follow procedures prescribed by *The Education Act, 1995*;
- All questions are submitted to the board through a motion by the chairperson or any other board member and no seconder is required;
- Questions are decided by a majority of votes. The chairperson has a vote, but if there is a tie, the motion is defeated;
- If the chairperson and vice-chairperson are absent, the board members present may elect one of themselves to be chairperson for the meeting;
- Meetings of boards of education are open to the public and votes on motions must be made in meetings that are open to the public, but members of the public can be excluded for improper conduct and sensitive issues may be discussed in a closed session, if the board so resolves, but votes on the issues must be held in a public session.

Rate Your Board Meetings			
	Always	Sometimes	Never
<i>There is a formal agenda for meetings.</i>			
<i>Discussion stays on the topic.</i>			
<i>Roberts' Rules of Order are followed for voting.</i>			
<i>All board members get equal time to talk.</i>			
<i>Decisions for board action are approved by a formal motion</i>			
<i>Appropriate resource people are invited to present ideas and information to the board</i>			
<i>All motions and votes are written down.</i>			
<i>Meetings are not more than 2.5 hours long.</i>			

In addition to the requirements above which are specified in *The Education Act, 1995* board meetings follow commonly accepted procedures.

The chairperson prepares the agenda, keeps the meeting on track, ensures that everyone gets equal time to speak, and ensures that meetings start and end on time.

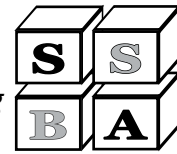
Roberts' Rules of Order, Revised are followed for procedures such as amending and withdrawing motions.

Motions are presented in the positive, outlining action the board should take; not in the negative, stating actions the board should not take.

A recording secretary records motions and keeps track of votes.

For more information on conducting board meetings refer to the SSBA website and search for Module 12 – *Becoming a Better Board Chair*.

Building Board Knowledge



1. *What are your feelings about members of the public attending board of education meetings? How many members of the public attend each of your board's meetings? Does your board have written guidelines concerning tasks the director will do and tasks the board will do?*
2. *What are your feelings about posting the minutes in the school division office, at the high school, in the grocery store, on a web site?*
3. *Has your board discussed the effectiveness of your meetings? Have you discussed or made plans to strengthen aspects of your meetings that you aren't satisfied with?*

Board Relationship with Employees

Boards of education are governing, decision-making bodies. They are also employers, with dozens of teachers, principals and support staff on the payroll.

Two aspects of the employer's role that concern all boards of education are:

- Empowering employees; and,
- Collective bargaining.

Empowering Employees

Everyone likes to have some say in how they do their job and to have opportunities to use their expertise. Policy leadership makes this possible. With policy leadership, the board defines the desired results and sets up monitoring systems to ensure the results are being achieved. This approach gives teachers, administrators and other staff an opportunity to use their expertise and to develop creative and innovative ways of achieving the desired results.

Everyone likes to feel that their work is appreciated and to feel that they are important. One way of showing appreciation is to become appropriately involved in school division and school activities. Be sure that a board representative attends the division science fair and the division track meet and congratulates all students and teachers, not just the prize winners. If a school invites the board to attend its Christmas concert, be sure that a couple of members go. Show your appreciation for the hard work of administrators, teachers and support staff. Congratulate students for their efforts and their achievements.

Collective Bargaining

The Education Act 1995 provides for bi-level bargaining with teachers.

Items negotiated at the provincial level are:

- Salaries of teachers;
- Allowances of principals and vice-principals;
- Superannuation of teachers;
- Group life insurance for teachers;
- Criteria for the designation of persons as not being teachers within the meaning of *The Education Act, 1995*; and,
- Period of the agreement.

Items negotiated at the local level by individual boards are:

- Sabbatical leave for teachers;
- Educational leave for teachers;
- Salaries for substitute teachers;
- Pay periods for teachers;
- Special allowances for teachers; and,
- The period of the local agreement.

The Education Act, 1995 allows additional matters to be bargained at the provincial and local levels if agreed by both parties. Either party has the right to refuse to negotiate an additional request by the other. This provision is intended to ensure that only those additional matters agreed to by both parties are bargained.

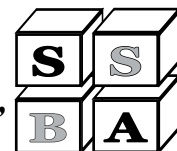
The Education Act, 1995 prohibits negotiation of the following at both the provincial and local levels:

- Selection of teachers;
- Courses of study;
- The program of studies; and,
- The professional methods and techniques used by a teacher.

Collective bargaining is a problem-solving process. Both board members and teachers are focused on the same goal – the best education possible for all students. There may be differing perspectives about how to achieve this goal. The solution to the problem is arriving at an agreement that puts children first and that both parties feel good about.

Building Board Knowledge

1. *Can you summarize the terms of your local agreement? If not, how can you get this information?*



Board Relationship with the Community

Boards of education are expected to reflect the values, interests and priorities of the communities they serve. This isn't always an easy task, since there are often different values and opinions within the community.

Boards of education work within a context of competing/conflicting interests and differing opinions. For example, there may be tension between:

Centralized Authority and Local Control

There can be tension between the provincial department of education and school boards, or tension between the school board and individual schools.

Professional Authority and Public Interest

Professional educators and members of the public both feel they know best about education.

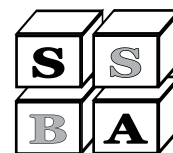
Conflicting Special Interest Groups

Many special interest groups (cultural, linguistic, religious, occupational, political) feel that their priorities should be reflected in the school program.

Differing philosophical views of the desired outcomes of education. For example, some people advocate that schools emphasize cooperation, others would prefer an intensely competitive environment; some people advocate a highly academic education, others believe in a diverse program that exposes students to a broad range of topics and subjects.

Over time, the balance point for any or all of these tensions may shift, as the composition of the community and public opinion changes. What has remained constant over time is the belief that locally elected school boards are the best way to reflect the values, beliefs and needs of communities.

Building Board Knowledge



1. *What are some of the differing opinions and competing interests in your community?*

2. *Has your board discussed the extent to which it is accountable to its various constituencies? If so, what were your conclusions?*

3. *As a board member, would you base decisions on majority opinion in your community, even if it differs from your own?*

Boards of Education and School^{PLUS}

School^{PLUS} is having children and youth achieve success in learning and in life and working with the community to do so. School^{PLUS} complements and extends the key work of boards of education. It does not replace the mandate of school boards but challenges them to carry it out in new and intensified ways.

School^{PLUS} supports the three pillars of the school board mandate – leadership, stewardship and relationship – but asks that it be carried out with new considerations. School boards are challenged to provide leadership in setting direction for the future of the school division within an environment of change and with significant involvement of those who are affected by school board decisions. Stewardship of school division operations should involve participation in defining desired educational and developmental results and in formulating policy to monitor the outcomes. Relationships with members of the learning community and the community at large become essential for shared decision-making processes and for keeping current with community values and priorities.

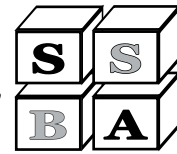
While boards of education have operated in an open environment, the emphasis expands to transparency and active participation of the various publics. This involvement in decision-making and planning requires more time and is more complex but inevitably leads to greater acceptance and implementation.

A board of education governs. It makes decisions linked to the school division's mission and establishes policies and mechanisms to allocate power, to determine decision-making processes; to establish organizational culture; and to set up procedures for performing specific tasks. A board of education does not manage.

School^{PLUS} supports the belief that school boards are the best way to reflect the values, beliefs and needs of communities and that they do so by keeping the pulse of the community through frequent contact, dialogue and authentic consultation.

School^{PLUS} school boards lead with data. They monitor progress of defined expectations and desired measurable results and communicating these to the various publics. The goal is improvement in teaching, learning and support for children and youth.

Building Board Knowledge



1. How can boards of education engage the learning community and the community at large in the operation and governance of the division?

2. Will participants in decision-making be satisfied with having a voice without having a vote?

Board Member Code of Ethics

School board members are expected to be honest and sincere, to make decisions that are in the best interests of students, to avoid conflicts of interest and to attend meetings regularly.

Boards of education are expected to adopt a code of ethics and expect all members to adhere to the code.

Some boards also develop norms or a code of conduct for how they will do business.

Trustees Share a Code of Ethics



How do you want to do business?

1. Motivated primarily by desire to serve.
2. I will attend board meetings.
3. Protect school funds.
4. No personal advantage.
5. Maintain the integrity of trusteeship.
6. Listen.
7. Observe proper decorum and behavior.
8. Make honest and respectful comments.
9. Authority rests with the board.
10. Abide by majority decisions.
11. Business is confidential.
12. Keep informed.
13. Interpret needs into the educational program.

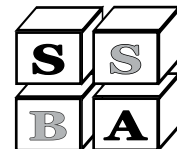
Conclusion

In summary:

- School board members are politicians;
- Boards of education are accountable to the Minister of Education and their electorate;
- Boards of education are responsible for results;
- Effective relationships contribute to a stronger organization; and,
- Boards of education are advocates for publicly-funded education and for their communities.

Building Board Knowledge

1. *What is the key work for boards of education?*



Case Studies

Case Study #1

When Diane's youngest son was diagnosed with a mild learning disability, she wasn't surprised. She'd known for years that Real, her fourth child, had trouble with speech and letter recognition, skills that had come easily to her older children.

While Real's school did provide some extra help, the boy wasn't considered disabled enough to get the help his mother felt he needed.

So Diane started taking her son for special tutoring through a private company called the Navlys Learning Centre. It was a two-hour drive from their family farm. But she felt she had no choice. Her child means everything.

At the time, Real, who was in Grade 4, was reading at a Grade 1 level. In just one month with Navlys, her son improved a whole grade level. Success led to further success.

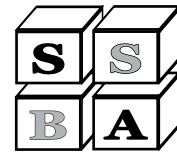
Diane loved what the centre was doing for Real. Soon a dozen like-minded parents approached the board of education and asked for help. To their delight, the board struck a deal with the Navlys Learning Centre. The board agreed to lease the Centre two unused classrooms in the high school, so the company could provide on-site after-school tutoring for local students.

The parents were thrilled. The politics and ideology of public education weren't questioned by these parents.

Jim Eugra, president of the Navlys Learning Centres, explained that Navlys exists because there is a great need for it. "The bottom line is that we're giving people something they can't get in the schools. We're giving parents a choice," said Eugra. "Navlys' standardized approach is more efficient than anything the public school curriculum can offer. And the fact that Navlys' teachers don't get union wages or benefits adds more efficiency still...School boards buy their textbooks from private, for-profit companies. They contract their psychological counselling services out to private companies ... Why shouldn't they contract out their tutoring work in just the same way?"

Adapted from a true story reported in the *Edmonton Journal*, October 22, 2000

Case Study #1



1. Are tutoring services sold in your community?

2. Should parents have to pay to “top up” their children’s education?

3. What would you advise this board of education to do?

Case Study #2

Bob and Alice wanted to be supportive. Each year they went to the parent-teacher interviews to ask “How is our daughter doing?” And every year the teacher responded, “Fine, your daughter is a fine student. You have nothing to worry about.”

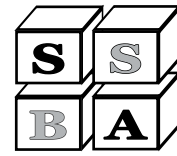
But Bob and Alice were concerned. They wanted better information. Sometimes they sensed that their daughter was struggling with her studies. Sometimes she received high marks but didn’t seem confident about what she knew. Bob and Alice were also concerned that the kids weren’t being challenged. Too much school time seemed to be getting lost in social activities, class outings and days off for teacher planning. Student attitudes were also of concern. They asked themselves, “Shouldn’t the school support parents in expecting students to demonstrate good judgement and good character?”

Were Bob and Alice overreacting? Most parents didn’t appear to be involved with the school. A Herculean effort was often needed to get the school to respond to a concern. Most parents were just too busy with their own lives. “Do people realize that a good education is more important than ever in this globally competitive, knowledge-based economy?” Alice asked herself. So Alice ran for a seat on the board of education. And she was successful!

Alice’s first surprise as a board member, was to learn that board members did not receive information about the effectiveness of school programs or how well students were doing. Most of the board’s discussions were about busing, buildings, bargaining or budget setting. Alice had a difficult time convincing other board members that the board needed information about student achievement and program reviews as a basis for decision-making. Reviewing results was barely on the board agenda.

Alice’s second surprise as a board member, was to learn that the professional staff were unable or reluctant to provide information about results. The director of education responded to questions about how well students were performing academically with “Fine, we have fine students. You have nothing to be concerned about.” Teachers opposed any form of common assessments. Professional staff appeared to lack experience and confidence in talking about results and trustees weren’t sure what questions to ask, so discussions often took on a defensive or combative tone.

Case Study #2



- 1. Does your school board receive the information it needs to determine the effectiveness of school programs?*
- 2. What can the board of education do when professional staff are reluctant, unwilling or unable to report on results?*
- 3. What would you advise this board of education to do?*

Reflection

Three key ideas from this module are:

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My questions are:

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	Ideas I Want to Learn More About	Ideas for My Board to Consider
To Be An Effective Board Member		
To Be an Effective Board		

My Personal Plan of Action

Area – State the Area You Want to Improve	I Commit Myself to the Following Course of Action	Timeline: When Will I Do This?	Evaluation: How Will I Know I Have Been Successful?



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