

# Manual for Parish Boards of Education



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS  
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# **INTRODUCTION**

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## **Policy Statement**

**Each parish shall have a board of education established in accordance with the *Manual of Parish Boards of Education* published by the Office of Catholic Education and Formation.**

John Cardinal Carberry approved this policy governing the formation and functioning of Parish Boards of Education in 1977. This policy remains in force as a directive of the present Ordinary.

This manual provides guidance and direction for the establishment and operation of parish boards of education and parish school boards. Though these guidelines are written for “parish” boards, they are equally applicable to elementary and secondary school boards and school boards for merged or consolidated schools.

## **Rationale**

The spirit behind the parish board movement can be traced to the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II. The Council called for a greater participation by all members in matters that concern the good of the Church. This theme was made specific by the bishops of the United States in their pastoral letter “To Teach As Jesus Did.” In that document, the bishops urged that representative structures be established for the involvement of laypersons in addressing the fundamental questions of the parish educational programs.

The parish board introduced a new element into the governance of the educational programs. The more traditional model for governance vested the total responsibility for the parish educational ministry in the pastor. The approach recommended by the bishops suggests that the pastor share this responsibility with the board. The existence of a parish board of education does not mean the abdication of authority by the pastor nor permit the administration of the educational programs by the board. Rather, the parish board is a means by which the pastor can share his responsibility for educational policy-making and can benefit from the knowledge and expertise of his parishioners.

The distinction between policy-making and administration is an important one. Policy-making and administration, though closely related, are separable functions. Policy-making sets the direction; it specifies the outcomes of the educational programs and general framework within which the program operates. Administration deals with the means to achieve the ends specified by the policies. Through the parish board, the pastor shares his policy-making authority, but not his administrative activities in the educational program. Though the pastor delegates administrative responsibilities for the educational programs to the school principal or the director of the parish school of religion, he does not authorize the board to assume administrative functions.

The sharing of policy-making responsibility is the concept under which the board operates. The pastor relies on the advice of the parish board of education so that he can

properly balance the rights of the parents, the community, and the Church in developing policy for the parish educational ministry. The board, as a representative structure, allows potentially diverse viewpoints to emerge and to be adequately considered. In sharing his responsibility, the pastor receives guidance from the parish community; he works with the board to balance all positions so that the most effective and beneficial policies can be developed.

Shared responsibility for policy-making has two useful effects. First, it provides a structure through which the pastor can be guaranteed of regular advice and expertise of his parish. Second, shared responsibilities give a sense of shared ownership. Ownership is usually translated into greater concern and support for the parish educational programs.

# STRUCTURE

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## Purpose of the Board

The purpose of the board is to advise the pastor in making policy for the parish educational programs. These programs include the school, the parish school of religion, and other formal educational activities.

## Functions of the Board

The following are functions of the board:

### Mission and Philosophy of the Educational Community

One of the board's most important functions is to develop, with the help of the administrator and staff, a mission and philosophy statement for the parish's educational programs. A mission statement sets clear purpose and direction for the educational community. The philosophy is a statement of beliefs held by the educational community.

Once these statements have been established the board has the responsibility of annually reviewing the mission and philosophy statements. This review should allow the board to: fully understand the origin and rationale for these documents, make necessary changes to better reflect the current educational community, approve the needed changes, ensure the effective communication of these documents to key audiences within the educational community.

### Policy

The board is to advise the pastor in making policy for the parish educational programs.

#### Definition of "Policy"

A policy is a statement which gives direction for administrative action. A policy sets a goal or an end to be achieved. A policy answers the question, "what does the board want to see happen?" However, a policy is more specific than a goal-statement. For example:

**Goal Statement:** The students of the school should have a thorough understanding of Catholic doctrine.

**Policy Statement:** All students in the school shall receive instruction in the Catholic religion, whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic.

In this example, a policy statement takes a step towards making the goal more specific. In this instance, the policy establishes a specific course in religion for all students.

However, the board must be careful about becoming too specific. Greater specificity leads to the determination of not only the end but also the means. The determination of means is actually an administrative role. Such rules are not to be made by the board but by the appropriate administrators. Administrative rules answer the question "who?" "when?" "how?" Examples of administrative rules for the preceding policy are provided below.

**Administrative Rule:** Students in the primary grades will receive religious instruction for thirty minutes each day.

**Administrative Rule:** The \_\_\_series of religion textbooks will be the text used in all religion classes.

The preceding examples should help to clarify the differences among goal statements, policy statements and rules. The policy statement is the method used by the board to make more concrete one or more of its goals. Though giving a specific direction to be followed in the educational programs, the policy statement does not give the method to achieve that purpose. The educational experts, the professional staff, properly determine means and methods. To determine if a statement is a policy or rule the following question may be asked. "Does this statement leave room for discretionary action on the part of the administrator?" If the answer is "yes", it is a policy. If the answer is no, it is a rule.

Policy does the following:

1. Give general direction to the administration
2. Anticipate and forestall crises
3. Clarify expectations for students, parents, teachers and others
4. Codify and preserve the board's decisions
5. Reduce subjectivity, inconsistency and arbitrariness<sup>1\*</sup>

### **Sources of Policy**

The following are sources of policy.

1. The primary condition leading to a policy statement is **a problem in the operation of the educational program**. These problems arise when the administrator is not certain of the action to be taken in a novel situation. After reviewing board policies, the administrator may find no direction given to cover the situation at hand. The administrator in presenting the problem to the board recommends the options deemed most appropriate. The board can then discuss the matter and develop an appropriate policy statement.

While the formulation of local policies most often occurs in response to needs demonstrated to the board by the administrator, this does not mean that the board may not initiate policy action on its own. For the most part policy-making is a reflective process involving analysis of present conditions, past policies, and new alternatives. The administrator is the person who brings all the elements of the analysis together. The board does not merely adopt the policy recommended by the administrator, but it reflects the thinking of the parents and the community in discerning the appropriate policy decision. The process is further augmented by the pastor who, from his position as representative of the Church and as pastoral leader, adds another dimension to the decision.

2. The broad framework of educational policy for Catholic education in the Archdiocese is formulated by the **Archdiocesan Board of Catholic Education** and Office of Catholic Education and Formation. These policies and additional guidelines are disseminated through the Office of Catholic Education and Formation in the *Administrative Manual*.

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<sup>1\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

Many policies of the Archdiocesan Board require no immediate action of the parish board. However, there are some policies that need to be interpreted and applied to the local school. For example, the *Administrative Manual* states that the maximum class size may not exceed thirty-five students. A local board, however, may decide that the class size in the school may not exceed thirty students.

3. Finally, policy statements arise from a number of **external sources**. These sources are federal and state laws affecting educational opportunities for special assistance from another community agency, or the findings of educational research and development.

### **Evolution of a Policy**

Policy development often follows the steps outlined below:

**Determine the need:** The board should ask itself whether the policy they are considering really is the best way to respond to the need. Is it petty? Is it likely to recur? Does it really require a *program* rather than a policy?

**Identify the issues involved and the facts surrounding them:** The board asks the questions: What do we know about the matter? Are there likely to be varying points of view on how to address it? What assumptions, beliefs, and values underlie these points of view? Who has vested interests? What authorities, principles, or laws need to be respected?

**Gather data:** The identification of issues and the facts surrounding them will lead the board to a search for further information to support one (or more) policy options. This information is used for formulating the policy, building the rationale for it, and projecting possible consequences for the position recommended.

**Draft the policy:** The board generally designates one person to write a policy proposal. The recommended policy proposal should be briefly and clearly stated and supported by attached documentation.

**First reading of the policy:** At the first reading of a policy proposal, the policy is presented to the board for understanding and clarification of what is being recommended. This is an opportunity for questions to be answered. The proposal is not debated at this time nor are changes made to it.

**Consult:** If other groups are affected by the policy, there should be sufficient time for these groups to meet and to submit their opinions to the board.

**Second reading of the policy:** The second reading of the policy proposal affords the board formal opportunity for discussion and vote. At this time, the proposal can be accepted, amended and accepted, sent back to the writer for reworking, or rejected.

**Approve policy:** Once passed by the board a policy then must be submitted to the pastor for approval.

**Promulgate policy:** The board should inform all of those affected by board policy when policies are added, deleted, and changed. Those impacted by the policy should receive copies of it.

**Evaluate policy:** It is the responsibility of the board to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies after they have been operative for a reasonable amount of time. This might be several months or a year depending upon the circumstances. A review of this type may demonstrate that the policy is inappropriate or inadequate. This would then necessitate further policy action by the board. The board's evaluative function is part of the mechanisms for accountability. In addition the board should have an internal mechanism for reviewing all policies on a regular basis (perhaps every five years). The board, as representative of the community is responsible for monitoring the programs for the community and for ensuring that the kinds of programs that the community desires are being provided.<sup>2\*</sup>

## **Finances**

In dealing with the finances of the educational community the board has responsibility for:

- **Providing consultation and feedback on the budget prior to the final budget being submitted to the finance committee and the pastor.**

In providing consultation and feedback on a budget a board undertakes the following steps:

- considers the expenditure portion of that budget. In establishing the design of expenditures for the educational programs, the board is exercising its responsibility to give direction to the programs. A budget is a planning tool that allocates the resources to the various programs. The allocation of resources reflects the priorities that the board has developed in its policies and goals and in light of the school's mission and philosophy statements.
  - works closely with the administration. The budget is also a management document. It guides the administrator in making the actual expenditures for the school, and it gives assurance that the money needed to meet expenses will be available to the program. The administrator does the initial formulation of the expenditure part of the budget. Working with the faculty, the administrator assesses the needs of the programs and determines the cost of meeting those needs. The administrator includes in the budget draft, not only those items which are essential to the programs, but also the desirable ones. The budget is prepared in such a way that the priority of needs is noted.
  - reviews the budget draft prepared by the administrator, determining whether the budget adequately reflects the mission, philosophy and policies of the school. The board does not challenge the purchase of materials or question the cost of salaries/benefits. At this point the board and administrator together reallocate resources to make sure that all priority needs are met. The board may review, and possibly endorse new programs proposed by the administrator in the budget. The board also learns about items that are desirable, but not absolutely essential.
- **Determining and securing the needed funding for the educational programs.**

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<sup>2\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.



Once the expenditures of the educational programs have been determined the board must begin to determine and secure the needed revenue. To secure financing for the programs, the board undertakes the following activities:

- recommends the amount of tuition and fees to be assessed each year. When the board can support a position on tuition and fees that is based on a thorough knowledge of the programs and the needs, it greatly assists the pastor in setting these rates. Additionally, the board becomes a guarantee to parents that the financial rates have been determined with their interests fully represented. Beyond the determination of the tuition and fees the board has the responsibility of explaining the need for the increase to the parents. This may require a presentation by the board at a parents' meeting. It may require ongoing dialogue with parents during the school year.

Note: The actual collection of tuition and fees is an administrative function. However, the board can set policy in regard to the collection of delinquent tuition and fees and other needed policies related to these matters.

- reviews the parish subsidy to the educational program. The pastor determines the level of parish support, usually with the assistance of the parish council or finance committee. Though the board's role may be an "advocate" before the parish council or finance committee for increasing the amount of parish subsidy, it must work with the final decision made by others.
- considers other sources of funding to complete the needed financial resources. In this activity the board plays a coordinating role amongst possible fund-raisers for the educational program, rather than acting as a fund-raising agent itself. The board might examine the contributions made by the parent organization, by other parish groups, and by student fund-raising activities. By reviewing these, the board may provide direction and overall coordination.

If the income generated from the above three sources is insufficient to meet the estimated expenditures the board must consider:

- increasing tuition and fees;
- increasing parish subsidy;
- removing items from the budget that are not essential to the program.

A combination of these three activities can bring about a balanced budget.

A realistic timeline for the development of the budget should be established. **(See Appendix 1: Proposed Timetable for Budget Development and Approval)**

Boards are also encouraged to refer to the *Financial Management and Control Manual for Parishes*, published by the Archdiocesan Finance Office, for further direction and guidance in dealing with finances of the educational program.

## **Strategic Planning**

In addition to a board dealing with issues and concerns on a year-to-year basis there is the need to have a vision of the future. Strategic planning is more crucial than ever today. Such planning tries to find an appropriate strategy for forward movement and success that is consistent with the mission of a Catholic educational program.

The ***School Improvement Process*** from the Office of Catholic Education and Formation for elementary schools initiates the planning process by allowing the parish community to assess, evaluate and make plans in regard to Catholic identity, educational issues and institutional issues. The main product of the ***School Improvement Process*** is a long-range plan that will guide the school's future growth and development.

A similar process is available for parish schools of religion. ***“Go Teach All Nations”*** is designed to help a PSR identify its strengths as well as areas of needed improvement. A plan for improvement is the result of this program evaluation process.

The board should have an important role to play in the development of a sound plan that will insure the long-term survival and improvement of the parish educational programs. The board's focus in planning could be the development of a comprehensive list of capital needs or the continuation or expansion of sufficient certified staff for the educational programs.

## **Marketing the Catholic School**

The marketing function of the board is first and foremost a leadership responsibility. Although non board members will implement many of the marketing activities, the board must set the tone both by its own marketing actions and by creating an atmosphere where marketing activities are the expectations and are fully supported.

Marketing the school is of critical importance. People have more educational options today and the cost of Catholic schools is no longer a bargain for many. It can no longer be assumed that every Catholic family will automatically send their child to a Catholic school, nor should it be assumed that all Catholic families are aware of the strengths and value of a Catholic education in general, and of a school's strengths and value in particular. Therefore, it is essential that both formal and informal marketing be done on a regular basis so that all members of a school, parish and neighborhood community are told and reminded on a regular basis of the importance of the school.

### **Formal and Informal Marketing**

Although it is helpful for a school to have a formal marketing plan in place it is equally important that the entire school community – pastor, administrator, faculty, staff, board members, parents and students – are kept informed about school strengths and “selling points” so that they can speak positively about the school at all times, as well as respond to school critics who may not have correct information. Board members must take the lead in this activity by initiating these conversations themselves and possibly overseeing creation of materials – fact sheets, brochures, spirit items, etc. – that will assist the community in its formal and informal school marketing.

The formal marketing plan will include activities strategically designed to meet the school's marketing goals. But this plan is greatly enhanced by continuing communication of positive messages about the school by members of the school community.

Another often-overlooked piece of successful school marketing involves the school making itself more relevant to the parish and neighborhood community. Board members are encouraged to provide suggestion and oversight as to how the school might become more integrated and essential to the parish and neighborhood.

## **Administrator Search**

The board may also have a role in advising the pastor on the hiring of a new principal or director of religious education. The pastor may ask the board to formulate qualifications for the positions in order to assist him in the interviewing process. In some cases board members may be invited to be active members of the search committee and participate in the interview process itself. The role of the search committee is to recommend to the pastor the person they feel best meets the needs of their educational community. The final decision rests with the pastor. The Office of Catholic Education and Formation publishes materials to assist pastors with this process.

## **Board Models**

These guidelines govern the establishment and operation of parish boards of education. However, they are equally applicable to certain acceptable alternative forms that are listed below.

### **School Board**

If the local situation warrants a parish may choose to have a school board rather than a board of education. The difference is that the scope of a school board is limited to the school and does not include the parish school of religion or other formal education activities.

### **Commission/Committee of the Pastoral Council**

The parish may also choose to designate a commission/committee of the Parish Pastoral Council to fulfill the purpose and function of the board. In that case the commission of the Parish Pastoral Council follows all of the guidelines set forth here for the board. The commission may be either an Education Commission or a School Commission according to the distinction made above.

### **Consolidated Board**

A consolidated or a regional board serves more than one parish and membership should be apportioned to provide representation from all parishes. This board is advisory to one or all the pastors participating in the consolidation. Board recommendations may be submitted for their collective approval. It is not the concern of the board to determine how the pastors will work together on matters submitted for their approval.

### **Boards with Limited Jurisdiction**

Boards with limited jurisdiction are boards that have power limited to certain areas of educational concern. It has final, but not total jurisdiction, since the diocesan bishop has jurisdiction over the religious education of all schools, including private schools.<sup>3\*</sup>

### **Regulatory Board**

A regulatory board is a board that enacts or uses existing rules and regulations to govern the operation of its institutions. This type of board is considered administrative rather than policy-making or consultative. Public school boards usually fall into this model.\*

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<sup>3,\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

## **Diocesan Boards**

Diocesan school boards are usually constituted as consultative to the diocesan bishop. The policies that they develop are enacted/approved by the bishop and promulgated to him for implementation in the diocese.<sup>3\*</sup>

## **Relationships with Other Organizations**

### **Parish Pastoral Council**

The parish pastoral council is responsible for assisting the pastor in providing the establishment of parish goals and programming. The consultative board of education works in the context of the parish's mission statement and parish policies which are established by the pastor and parish council. It is the responsibility of the board to bring to the attention of the pastoral council all those matters that are broader than the educational program for which the board is responsible. In the area of finance and in instances where building additions or renovations are involved, the board makes its recommendations to the finance committee of the pastoral council. The board should provide a regular means of communication with the parish pastoral council about educational programming, accomplishments and needs.<sup>4\*</sup>

### **Parent Organization**

The parent organization is responsible for maintaining good communication between the home and school, and for providing a vehicle through which parents can provide service to the school and PSR (for example, volunteers and fundraising) and for offering a mechanism for parent education opportunities. The board of education works closely with the offices of the parent organization in order to understand more fully parents needs and concerns. It works with parent fundraising groups to coordinate the overall financing of the educational programs. The board uses the mechanisms of the parent organization to report to school families about board activities.<sup>5\*</sup>

## **Board Governance**

The operation of the board is governed by the constitution and by-laws adopted by the parish in accord with Archdiocesan guidelines. Members of the board must understand that as individuals they have no authority. It is only when the board is meeting in formal session that it is authorized to act in accord with its constitution and bylaws. Such board meetings shall be regularly scheduled monthly during the school year. By-laws in accord with the constitution may be developed to further specify the internal operation of the board. **(See Appendix 2: Model Board of Education Constitution)**

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<sup>4,5\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

# **MEMBERSHIP**

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## **Number of Board Members**

Two principles govern the determination of the appropriate size for parish boards of education:

1. The number of members should be sufficiently large to ensure that there is adequate representation of the parish.
2. The number of members should be small enough so that efficiently run board meetings are possible.

Practice has shown that a board of six to twelve members can adequately represent the parish and carry on efficient discussion reaching closure on issues presented to it. Larger parishes or consolidated schools, may find that a larger board may be needed to ensure adequate representation. Should a parish or consolidated school determine that a larger number of members is needed then steps should be taken to make certain that meetings proceed in an efficient fashion. One way of doing this is to use board committees to resolve certain issues and present a recommendation to the full board. Acting from committee recommendations, the full board may be able to by-pass lengthy discussion and reach decisions on issues presented in a more efficient fashion.

## **Term of Membership**

A three-year term of membership is standard for most parish board of education. This length of time gives the members time to become familiar with board functions and issues.

In addition, it is recommended that members' service be staggered. For example, on a nine-member board, three new members should be elected each year. For new boards, members may wish to draw lots to determine whether they will serve a one, two or three year terms. Another approach would be to elect or appoint members of a new board for a specific length of service.

Re-election to the board should be permitted. Experienced board members are often better at fulfilling their responsibility. However, to allow for fresh ideas, boards should limit members to two consecutive terms.

## **Types of Members**

The first element in determining members should be representation. All groups within the parish should be taken into account. Groups to consider include:

- Parents (both school and PSR) and parishioners
- age groups
- sex and racial groups
- occupational and income groups

There are two methods of ensuring adequate representation.

1. If some members of the board are elected and the pastor appoints some members, then the pastor can balance representation after the elections have occurred.
2. If the membership is totally elected, then it is necessary for the nominations committee to ensure representation. The committee can review the present membership and those who have been placed in nomination and it can actively recruit potential members from groups which may not be represented. Since in most cases there are not more individuals seeking membership on the parish board than there are seats available, the need for the nominations committee to recruit is always needed.

In determining board membership, consideration should be given to the eligibility of the following individuals:

### **Employees of the Parish Educational Program**

All employees of the parish educational programs are related to the board of education through the administrator. To place an employee on the board is to give that person direct access to the policy group for the program thus circumventing the administrator who is responsible for that employee. Allowing such employees on the board could hinder the administrative effectiveness of the administrator. While the administrator is responsible for seeing that the board knows the staff viewpoint, it is often complicated with the task of balancing differing opinions from staff members. An employee on the board makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the administrator to appropriately represent a balanced staff position on the board.

### **Professional Educators from Other Institutions**

Since the administrator is the professional educator hired to be the expert in educational matters for the parish educational programs, conflict could develop if professional judgment was continuously sought from another educator on the board. A problem may arise if the member is an administrator in another school. The tendency to take on administrative tasks or to give administrative advice easily could be present in this situation. This recommendation is not meant to prevent professional educators from serving on the board in every case. However, the board should recognize the potential dangers that may be present and take steps to avoid administrative disputes.

### **Members from Other Parish Organizations**

Members from other parish organizations serving in an ex officio capacity on the board could become the spokesperson for the other group's viewpoints. Board members are not to be representatives of interest groups. They are representatives of the entire community served by the educational community. Additionally, the use of ex officio members could create an interlocking relationship between parish organizations that may serve to give the appearance of an elite group that is not truly representative of the parish as a whole.

## Qualities of Members

The following is a list of qualities that should be present in each member of the board. A candidate for the parish board of education should be:

- eighteen years of age or older;
- a member of the parish or parent of a child in the program;
- supportive of the parish educational programs, financially and attitudinally;
- sincerely interested in Catholic education;
- willing and able to spend the time to attend meetings;
- capable of a broad vision and not having a specific issue to bring to the board;
- able to express himself/herself in a group
- a good listener;
- capable of reaching consensus on issues;
- willing to be loyal to board decisions even though personally opposed to the final decision.

## Election of Members

The election of a certain number of members to the parish board of education is important. The election process helps the board become more representative of the parish that it is serving. Parishioners can feel more a part of the board's actions if given a role in selecting board members. However, the organization of elections in the parish is not always a simple task. Suggestions for carrying out effective election of board members follow:

### Selecting Candidates

Before any election there must be a selection of viable candidates. A nominations committee can assist in the selection process. Members of the nominations committee may be members of the parish board or they may be non-members. No potential candidates serve on the nominations committee. The pastor is a valuable resource to this committee because of his knowledge of the parish and its members.

A nominations committee can serve two purposes:

1. screening voluntary candidates to determine their qualifications.

A nominations committee can use a questionnaire to assess a candidate's concern for Catholic education and reasons for desiring to be a member of the board. Candidate interviews can supplement or replace the questionnaire. The nominations committee makes a determination of the suitability of each candidate who volunteers for board membership. Because there may be a need for disqualifying certain candidates, the board should include in its constitution an official list of essential characteristics (e.g. eighteen or older, member of the parish, etc.). Candidates who are disqualified are notified as to the reason for this disqualification.

2. recruiting candidates when needed to complete a slate for election or to give adequate representation of the parish

This recruitment can be made easier when the board makes known to the parish exactly what the duties and responsibilities of a board member are. The actual recruitment can then be an encouragement of appropriate parishioners to serve. The screening of the recruited candidates will be less than that of those who volunteer.

The nominations committee makes sure that there are more candidates than vacancies on the board. The election loses an essential quality when all candidates win the election, especially if many are recruited by a nominations committee.

### **Publicity**

While election to the parish board of education does not require a campaign similar to that for public office, the parish members should be familiar with those candidates running for the board. The nominating committee can collect personal data on the candidates at the time of screening or recruitment. This information along with the candidate's statement on reasons for wanting to be a board member can be published in the parish bulletin or in some other fashion. The nominations committee often can speak for all of the candidates, rather than allowing the candidates to publicly seek votes. However, candidates can be given the opportunity to address the parish so that parishioners could become familiar with those seeking board membership.

### **Voting**

The arrangement of voting procedures is an organizational task. Three questions need to be asked:

1. Who is eligible to vote?

Normally, all members of the parish and the parents of those attending the educational programs will be eligible to vote. The stipulation is often made that voters be registered in the parish and that they be financial contributors to the parish. However, the problem of certifying the eligibility of voters may make the casting of votes extremely difficult. If eligibility is to be certified, then a list of eligible voters is required and the names stricken from the list when they are given an official ballot.

2. When and how will the votes be cast?

Commonly used voting methods include:

- mailing an official ballot to each eligible voter. Two ballots could be mailed when there is more than one adult member in the family. After the ballots are marked they are returned to the parish.
- Distributing a paper ballot to each adult entering church on Sunday. The ballots are marked at church and returned at that time.
- Holding elections within a parish assembly. The vote at the assembly can be done by a show of hands, a voice vote, or paper ballot.

3. How will the votes be tabulated?

After the votes are cast, the tabulation is done. The committee that served for nominations can do the tabulation. The official results should be made known to the parish as soon as possible. All candidates are informed of the vote soon after the tabulation and thanked for their willingness to run for the board of education.

In order to avoid the need for a succession of run-off elections; the board's constitution can specify that the election will be by plurality, rather than by majority. In this way those candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be automatically elected, even if none receive the majority.

The board should specify in its constitution when new members will officially take their seats on the board.



## **Administration**

The parish educational programs are administered by the pastor and the administrators of the programs (elementary school principal and director of religious education).

### **Pastor**

The pastor is the canonical administrator of the parish and, as such, could solely govern and administer the parish educational programs. Pastors usually choose to engage others to help him in this administrative task for two reasons. First, a parish board provides an appropriate structure through which the parish community can exercise rights and responsibilities regarding policies for the educational programs. Second, the practical and daily operation of an educational program can be delegated to a professional who is competent in administrative tasks.

The recommended course of action for the pastor is to share the authority for policy-making with a board and to delegate to the administrator the administrative tasks in the school and to the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education in the Parish School of Religion. There is a wide range of both sharing and delegating. A pastor may find it desirable to limit the scope of the board's authority. Because the pastor has other responsibilities both to the educational program and to the parish as a whole, the ideal course would be a total sharing with the board and delegation to other administrators.

Once the decisions have been made by the pastor on the extent of the board's authority (within the guidelines for parish boards of education of the Archdiocese) and on the amount of operating responsibility given to the administrators, these decisions should be communicated to all parties and should be written down in the role descriptions.

While the pastor shares with the board policy-making, he still must be involved in policy-making deliberations and give the final approval. He has the responsibility to balance the interests of the parents, the community, and the Church and give the final ratification to all policy decisions. Additionally, although he delegates the administrative task to administrators, the pastor has a supervisory role over them. In working with the board, he must be observant of two important responsibilities entrusted to him by the Ordinary: the religious education of the parishioners and the financial affairs of the parish.

In addition to these responsibilities, the pastor has others with regard to the educational programs:

### **Spiritual Leadership**

The pastor shares with the bishop the ministries of teaching, sanctifying and governing. This poses responsibilities with regard to the educational program--faculty and students--and to the board. The pastor, as spiritual leader, prays both for and with the faculty and students, and celebrates the liturgy regularly with them. Additionally, his life style is a witness to the Gospel and a model for others to imitate.

His spiritual leadership of the board is similar; there is a need for prayer, liturgy, and instruction to the board members. The pastor's task is to create among the members of the board a community of faith. He calls the board's attention to teachings of the Church at the appropriate point in the board's deliberations and represents the interest of the Church.

### **Pastoral Leadership**

The pastor has a responsibility to share with the parish board of education his knowledge and expertise from his work with the parish. Pastoral leadership suggests that the pastor bring to the board information on the total needs of the parish and the resources available in the parish, including financial information pertinent to the educational programs.

Additionally, pastoral leadership is demonstrated in his support of the educational programs. If the pastor shows his support by his words and actions, then the board and other parishioners will be encouraged in their support.

### **On-going Communication with the Board**

The pastor shares in the bishop's ministry of governing the Church. In authorizing a board of education, the pastor shares his governing authority with the board. The board through its meetings and deliberations exercises that governing authority. The pastor engenders a spirit of trust among all members of the board and keeps the lines of communication open between him and the board. His presence at board meetings will show his concern and interest in issues presented.

### **Administrator**

The administrator has a dual responsibility; both for the administration of the educational programs and for serving as executive secretary to the board. These two responsibilities are closely related. One function of the executive secretary of the board is to implement the policies of the board. The implementation of policies, broadly taken, is the administering of the educational program. However, the division of responsibilities indicates the source of an administrator's authority. The role in the administration of the school is a delegated responsibility. The pastor, as chief administrator of all parish activities, delegates the authority for the operation of the educational program. The role of executive secretary follows from the administrator's relationship to the board. This responsibility is exercised in serving the needs of the board and in carrying out its directions. These functions of the administrator can be grouped into three categories: policy leadership, policy implementation, and information.

In addition to these administrative responsibilities, the administrator has serious responsibilities as spiritual leader of the school. The administrator is the one who assumes responsibility for understanding and accepting the unique role that Catholic schools serve in the educational mission of the Church.<sup>6\*</sup>

### **Policy Leadership**

The purpose of the board is to recommend to the pastor the policies, which govern the operation of the educational program. Because of the administrator's training and experience and because of the position in the school, the administrator is uniquely capable of knowing both the needs for policy decisions and possible solutions for them.

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<sup>6\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

In determining the philosophy and goals of the educational program, the board is performing one of its most important functions. A certain amount of educational expertise, however, is required for the best decisions to be made; and the administrator is in the position to provide leadership. Working with the faculty, the administrator can outline the general dimensions of an appropriate philosophy and meaningful goals to be accomplished by the school. It is not sufficient for these to be done by the school personnel alone. The board should reflect on the proposed philosophy and goals and add to them the insights and the desires of the parents and the parish community. Goal setting requires the involvement of many groups. However, leadership for this effort comes from the administrator.

To determine appropriate general directives for the educational programs operation the board needs to know where problems exist which require new policies to be formulated. The administrator continuously reviews the operation of the school and assesses the validity of present policies and can determine when new ones are needed. In most instances the origin of new policies will be from the administrator. The board also needs suggestions as to possible options and their results. It becomes the administrator's responsibility to present policy options to the board. Whatever policy is adopted the administrator will be the person responsible for implementation. Therefore, a good policy is one that the administrator can implement in a meaningful fashion.

Another area of policy leadership is that of the budget. A budget is not a device for restricting the spending of money; rather it is a tool for educational planning. The budget document should reflect the priorities of educational goals. As a working document it is used to manage the flow of fiscal resources to the appropriate purposes. While the board's responsibility is to see that the financial resources available to the school are used to meet its adopted goals and in conformity with its philosophy and policies, the board is not the appropriate agent to initiate a budget document. The budget reflects need in light of goals. Because the administrator is the most knowledgeable about the need, the initial expenditure portion of the budget document is prepared by the administrator.

### **Policy Implementation**

Policies adopted by a board require administrative implementation. Such implementation is governed by rules which the administrator formulates. As the executive secretary of the board, the administrator has the responsibility for the implementation of policy. For example the board may adopt the policy: "Students shall always be supervised by a regular, paid staff member. Playground activity may not be supervised solely by volunteers." The administrator specifies how this will be accomplished. The rule might be formulated thus: "All teachers are required to take their turn on playground duty during the noon hour. A rotating schedule will be posted monthly in the faculty room."

Policy implementation demands a close working relationship with the board. First, the administrator makes certain that board policies are practical and capable of being implemented and accomplished. Secondly, the administrator is cautious of the development of policy statements which are too restrictive--actually the development of administrative rules rather than policy statements. The board may recommend an admissions policy, but the administrator determines the schedule for taking admissions and the steps needed in the admissions process.

### **Information Sharing**

The third responsibility of the administrator to the board is that of reporting information. The following is a list of the different types of information which the administrator should provide the board.

- the manner in which policies are being implemented,
- the specific objectives of the instructional program and the types of activities in each,
- the current status of income receipts and expenditures under the budget,
- the results of program evaluation and of student testing scores,
- the major events scheduled for students, parents, and faculty,
- the availability of special assistance from government programs,
- the special achievements or awards of students and faculty,
- the major student and personnel problems (not problems with individuals),
- the trends and findings of educational research and development,
- the policies and administrative directives of the Archdiocese.

Reports on student test scores, special achievements, major events, and major administrative, student and personnel problems are provided as purely informational items. There is no action that normally results from such reports other than board resolutions commending achievement or recommending attendance at events. However, because the board is a representative of the community, board members are often questioned about such matters. It is better that board members know what is occurring in the school before questions arise, rather than afterwards.

### **Role Relationships**

The preceding descriptions of the roles of pastor, administrator, and board have implied that these individuals work together in an effective and efficient manner. As a community of faith the pastor, administrator, and board share a vision. All see themselves as part of the educational mission of the Church. Drawn together by their commonness of purpose, all are concerned, not with seeking the total authority, but with developing the proper balance between all elements so that the best results can be achieved. Those elements include the rights and responsibilities of the parent, the community, and the Church in determining the goals for the educational programs and the expertise of professionals in the implementation of programs.

The faith community seeks to engender a spirit of trust and mutual cooperation among its members. To become a faith community all involved in the educational ministry must jointly strive to live out the virtues of faith, hope and love. Communal experiences, including prayer and liturgical celebrations, are essential. The parish board of education is based on the attempt to live out the Gospel message in a community oriented toward service.

# OPERATIONS

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## Officers

The officers of the parish board of education and their duties are specified in the board's constitution. (See **Appendix 2: Model Board of Education Constitution**)

### President

The members of the board elect the president of the board. The duties of the office include:

- preparation (along with the administrator) of the agenda for the board meetings,
- facilitating board meetings,
- appointing members to serve on committees,
- serving as representative of the board to the public.

### Vice-President

The board also elects its vice-president. The duty of the vice-president is to assume the duties of the president when necessary.

### Secretary

The board should elect a secretary for the board. The responsibilities of this office are:

- recording the minutes of the board meetings,
- maintaining the official records of the board proceedings,
- preparing the correspondence for the board.

## Committees

The types of committees are usually referred to the board constitution and bylaws. The usual distinction is between a standing committee and an ad hoc committee.

The committee structure of the board is intended to contribute to the board's efficient operation. Committees also provide needed information to the whole board and organize information for action.

Committee members need not be board members. However, the chair of each committee should be a board member. Frequently committee membership is a good way to recruit prospective board members. Committee members should be knowledgeable about or interested in the area of committee activity. They should know the committee's responsibilities, the responsibility of the staff to the committee, and the history of the committee's work. It is also essential that the committee members know the policies, practices and procedures of the educational programs.

### Standing Committee

A standing committee provides a continuing function for ongoing operation of the board. Some examples of standing committees are membership, finance, marketing and development.

### Ad Hoc Committees

On the other hand an ad hoc committee is established to meet a specific objective at a given time. Examples of ad hoc committees are a search committee for a new administrator and a nominating committee for board members and offices.

These committees would serve at the pleasure of the entire board when there was a need for more intensive study of some issue. If a board were to undertake a special goal for a year, an ad hoc committee could do much of the study and preparation of the issue. The committee's recommendation to the entire board will make the deliberations more efficient.

## Meetings

Meetings are critical to the success of any parish board of education. Scheduled meetings are at the heart of the effectiveness of the board. Unlike other groups that meet so that members can report their plans and activities, the board conducts its work at the board meeting. While there is advance preparation and outside study that will make members more effective, the meeting is the activity of the board. Board meetings should be conducted with a degree of formality. The use of parliamentary procedure adds to the formality of the meeting.

### Agenda Preparation

The agenda is the joint responsibility of the administrator and the board president. The following are steps that are to be taken in developing an effective agenda.

**Step 1:** Indicate items that might be included in a school board agenda are:

- Items from the previous meeting
- Committee reports
- Future events or deadlines
- Long range needs or plans
- New programs or special events

**Step 2:** Identify the items on the list that require neither discussion nor action by the board, but are merely intended to inform. Since these can be taken care of by written reports, delete them from the agenda, and ask the appropriate person to prepare a written report.

**Step 3:** Make a judgment: Can the rest of the items reasonably be handled in one meeting of a decent length? If there are too many, delete some. Put them off until another meeting or take care of them in another way.

**Step 4:** Arrange the remaining items in logical order. Here are a few norms:

- Schedule the most difficult item late enough so the group has developed some momentum but early enough so that people are not too tired to give their best to it.
- Avoid putting two difficult items back to back.
- Put postponable items at or near the end so they can be dropped if the meeting is going too long.

**Step 5:** Assign responsibility and time allotment for each item.

**Step 6:** Provide the background information on each item that would be helpful for board members to have ahead of time.<sup>7\*</sup>

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<sup>7\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

## **Agenda Models**

The order of business for the meeting is something that each board determines for itself. The order of business is the standard way of bringing matters before the board and is followed at every regular board meeting. Three suggested formats are given here. It is not necessary to adopt one of these formats as they stand. Many modifications are acceptable. However, the board should adopt a standard order for conducting its business and include it in its constitution or by-laws.

The first is the standard format used by many organizations and suggested by Robert's Rules of Order. It has been revised to apply to boards

***MODEL A: Under this order of business, the board first handles routine matters and collects information. Items of business which require board action are handled second.***

1. Call to order
2. Opening prayer
3. Minutes
4. Reports: Pastor, Principal, DRE, Committees
5. Correspondence and Delegations
6. Old Business
7. New Business
8. Closing Prayer
9. Adjournment

***MODEL B: This second model reverses the standard order of business: action items are placed first and the informational items later.***

1. Call to order
2. Prayer
3. Recommended Actions
  - A. Routine Matters: Approval of minutes and reports
  - B. Old Business
  - C. New Business
4. Information and proposals
  - A. From delegations
  - B. From Pastor, Principal, DRE
  - C. From questions asked of, and by board members
5. Future business
  - A. Meeting dates
  - B. Preview of topics for future agenda
6. Closing Prayer
7. Adjournment

**MODEL C:** *This third model is a further modification that includes the names of those responsible for particular agenda items. It also seeks to reduce the meeting time by not requiring a reading of the minutes or routine reports.*

1. Prayer
2. Report on Religion Testing of Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> by 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (Ms. Jackson)
3. Open session (20 minute limit)
4. Approval of January minutes
5. Review of Preliminary budget; (See Finance committee recommendations from December (Mr. Smith)
6. Finalization/Adoption of New Calendar Policy (Mr. Wilson)
7. Discussion: Do we want a prepayment tuition program? (Mr. Smith)
8. Administrators Report (Sr. Mary)
9. DRE report (Mrs. Nelson)
10. Pastor's Comments (Fr. Jones)
11. Closing prayer

### **Conducting the Meeting**

Certain principles of conducting the meeting have been developed through the experience of many organizations.

- First, the meeting should be conducted with a degree of formality. Following the agenda and the use of parliamentary procedures are ways to have formality in the meeting.
- 90 minutes is an appropriate length for an effective board meeting.
- The board needs a record of its proceedings, both as a reference for future guidance and as a public document displaying its recommendations. The major mistake in taking minutes is the inclusion of too much material. The following items are ones appropriate to the minutes:
  - the date and place of the meeting,
  - the names of the members present,
  - the disposition of matters presented for action,
  - the exact wording of motions adopted,
  - the topic of all reports with the presenter's name,
  - the subject of non-member presentations with presenter's name,
  - a list of proposals accepted by the board.

Most of these items are self-explanatory. However, the disposition of matters presented for action is not a summary of the discussion, rather it is a noting of whether the board approved or disapproved a motion, referred the matter to a committee, requested more information, or carried the item to a future meeting. Reports and public presentations are listed by topic and name of presenter; a summary of them is not needed. The board's secretary draws up the final copy of the minutes and after approval at the next meeting, it is filed along with the agenda and all written reports presented to the board. This file constitutes the official proceedings of the board. Remember that minutes are a record of what is done not what is said. **(See Appendix 3: Minute Taking Reminders)**

### **Open Session**

Boards are delegated authority. They meet as representatives of the parish community. As a representative body, the board considers all of its business open to the public. This means that the parishioners know the time and place of the regular meeting and feel welcome to



attend the board meeting. An open meeting does not mean that non-members have an opportunity to enter the discussions and deliberative actions of the board. Non-members are welcomed as observers.

Though the meetings are open for observation, there should be some way that interested parents and parishioners can present information to the board. The board may reserve a place on its regular agenda for non-members to address the board. A delegation is one or more individuals who wish to address the board on a given topic. Arrangements are made prior to the setting of the agenda between the delegation leader and the board president. When arrangements are made, the number of speakers, the length of time, and the topic are specified.

When the board receives information from a non-member, it is receiving data for future consideration. It is inappropriate for the board to act immediately on matters that are raised in this fashion for two reasons. First, the manner of presenting the issues does not allow time for collecting appropriate data and for the administrator's thoughtful consideration and recommendation. Second, matters presented in this fashion are often emotionally tinged. Though a recommendation with merit may be suggested and the board may need to act in the area, it should do so with calm, rational consideration. The board president and the administrator consider items raised by non-members at the next session for planning the agenda.

The board president has a special responsibility in receiving information from non-members. The president ensures that all such presentations are treated courteously and as important to the board. The president does not engage, or allow members to engage, in discussions or debates with the presenters. Although questions for clarification may be in order. Finally, the president indicates in general how the matter will be handled. If the issue is purely an administrative one, the president can indicate that the matter is outside the scope of the board and that individuals should seek a private discussion with the pastor or administrator. If the matter is of legitimate concern for the board, the president can indicate that it will be discussed at future agenda meetings and possibly will be presented to the board for its consideration.

### **Executive/Closed Session**

There may be occasions when the board needs to meet without non-members present. On these occasions the board goes into an "executive" or "closed" session. The purpose of the executive session is to allow the board members to hear and discuss information which, at the time, may be inappropriate to discuss "with an audience". When the board meets in an executive session, formal action is not taken. Therefore, no minutes are kept and no vote may be taken. After consideration in private, the board opens its meeting to formally vote on proposed motions.

### **President's Function**

The board president has special responsibilities in conducting the meeting.

#### **Facilitating the Discussion**

This does not mean that the president does the talking, rather the opposite. The president is prepared for the meeting, by knowing the issues. Giving a personal opinion and personal observations is inappropriate. The president encourages other members to give theirs. In addition to asking questions, the president summarizes the different points of view and

clarifies the issues and positions. Attentive to the participation of members, the president endeavors to give everyone an opportunity to speak. Being a good listener, the president follows the discussion closely to secure the highest quality involvement of the members in it.

### **Guiding the Procedure**

This involves the use of parliamentary practice, such as recognizing motions and speakers and taking votes in proper order. The president keeps discussion on agenda items and rules out of order discussions on irrelevant topics. Because the goal of deliberation is usually some board action, the president guides the discussion to an appropriate conclusion. If a motion is required, yet not proposed, it is asked. Additionally, the president is conscious of time and the number of items for consideration. The president has the duty of ending discussions that are not leading to action or which are taking too much time.

If the matter is not being resolved expeditiously, the president considers whether issues are being repeated or whether more information and a study are needed. If the former is true, he can simply bring the discussion to a vote or close. If the latter is the case, he can suggest requesting more information from the administrator or referring the matter to a committee for further study and recommendation.

### **Managing the Tasks**

The president is responsible to the board for preparing the agenda with the administrator. He takes care of the arrangements with delegations and the handling of guests. Further he appoints committee membership. Finally, he is often the arbitrator on the appropriateness of the board's jurisdiction.

### **Members' Function**

The board members are also responsible for the quality of the meeting and board actions. Members should be conscious of their role as representatives of the parents and parish community:

- strive for a breath of vision and understanding of differing points of view
- prepared for the meetings. This is best achieved by reviewing the materials and agenda prior to the meeting.
- punctual for meetings and attentive during them. They anticipate in the discussion; they are not to be afraid to share their ideas. Members can assist the president in leading the discussion and guiding the procedure if the president is not doing an adequate job. Members need to feel responsible for accomplishing the purpose of the meetings. If this means doing some clarifying and summarizing during the discussions or moving the board to a closure on the question, they should do so.
- responsible for loyalty to the board and its decision. While every issue is not resolved by a unanimous vote, every member must support the board's adopted recommendation.
- mindful that they are not authorized to act apart from board meetings. Some may be tempted to assist in administrative functions or to act as a mediator in disagreements between the administrator and others. This is clearly outside the scope of the board. In spite of the best intentions, board members can do great damage to the integrity and purpose of the board by becoming involved in administrative matters.

**(See Appendix 4: Code of Ethics for Catholic School Board Members and Appendix 5: A Board Member's Prayer)**

# EVALUATION

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## Evaluating the Board

A Catholic board of education has responsibilities to evaluate its own internal and external performance on a regular basis. The internal functions of a board relate to how the board operates as a group: leadership, membership, level of participation, agenda, preparation for meetings and board committee reports. Its external functions are concerned with how the board fulfills its areas of responsibilities: strategic planning, development, marketing, finance, and policy formulation. Its external functions also concern how well it maintains good relationships with others: pastor, pastoral council, finance council, parishioners, parents, civic community, faculty and alumnae, diocesan education office and others.<sup>8\*</sup> (See Appendix 6: Board Evaluation and Appendix 7: Evaluating Board Meetings)

## Evaluating the Executive Secretary

Since the majority of existing Catholic education boards are constituted as consultative by diocesan policy, they are not the employers of administrators, and therefore, do not have the responsibility for a total evaluation of performance. The administrator is considered an employee of the parish and is directly supervised by the Pastor.

A consultative board speaks to the administrator's service to the board and the implementation of policy. To evaluate the administrator, the board first decides on the basis for evaluation. The board, pastor and administrator should agree upon the basis at the beginning of the year. The administrator should have a great deal to say about the evaluation because the evaluation is done primarily for the administrator's improvement. The board is concerned with the administrator's role as Executive Secretary of the board. The following is a list of responsibilities of the administrator as Executive Secretary of the board:

- provide policy leadership to the board,
- implement the board's policies,
- provide information to the board,
- prepare the board agenda in collaboration with the president and pastor;
- develop goals for the school, and
- take leadership in preparing a budget.

The consultative board has the right and responsibility to participate in the evaluation of the administrator's leadership and service to the board. Information shared and received in the board's evaluation of the administrator must be handled in a confidential manner. Only the summary of the board's evaluative responses should be presented to the full board in closed executive session. (See Appendix 8: Evaluation of Executive Secretary)

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<sup>8\*</sup> *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

## **Starting a New Board**

Because the board operation should be governed by a constitution and a certain number of its members elected, the initiation of a new board presents peculiar problems. It is recommended, therefore, that an interim board be appointed by the pastor to prepare a constitution and establish election procedures. This interim board may function as a regular board; if so, the interim board must operate under a model constitution available from the Office of Catholic Education and Formation. The interim board should complete the constitution and election procedures within one year. At the end of that time, the interim board must dissolve. No members of the interim board may continue on the regular board unless appointed or elected under the terms of the new constitution.



## **APPENDIX**

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1. Proposed Timetable for Budget Development and Approval
2. Model Board of Education Constitution
3. Minute-Taking Reminders
4. Code of Ethics for Catholic School Board Members
5. A Board Member's Prayer
6. Board Evaluation
7. Evaluating Board Meetings
8. Evaluation of Executive Secretary

**Appendix 1**

**PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR BUDGET DEVELOPMENT**  
**AND APPROVAL\***

September	School Board reviews marketing plan, parent survey and mission statement.
October	Principal and School Board prepares an initial draft of next fiscal year's school budget.
November	School Board presents school budget, including staffing and tuition levels, to the Parish Finance Council.
December	Parish Finance Council presents school budget to pastor with Council's recommendation for approval or modification.  Parish Finance Council notifies parish administration of budget guidelines, constraints, and due dates for submission of all administration and program budgets.
January	Parish administration mails information packets to school families. Packets include information regarding registration, tuition levels, and tuition assistance.
February	Pastor or his designee decide and notify school families of tuition assistance awards. School families register  Parish administration reviews all budgets for accuracy, completion and compliance with budget guidelines and constraints.  Parish administration presents all budgets and consolidated budget to Parish Finance Council.
March	Parish administration and Parish Finance Council presents budget to pastor with recommendation for approval or modification.
April	Parish administration and Parish Finance Council present budget to Parish Council.  Parish Council reviews budget and recommends approval or modification to pastor.  Pastor approves or modifies budget and parish administration notifies program coordinators of budge approval.

\* **Financial Management and Control Manual**, Archdiocesan Finance Office, revised, March 2017.

**MODEL BOARD OF EDUCATION CONSTITUTION**

***Article I***

***Title***

The name of this body shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ Board of Education/School Board.

***Article II***

***Nature and Function***

Section 1 The purpose of the board is to advise the pastor of\_\_in making policy for the school, parish school of religion (and\_\_\_\_\_).

Section 2 The following are functions of the board:

- a. establishing the philosophy and goals for the educational programs;
- b. interpreting and applying the policies of the Archdiocese;
- c. formulating additional policies which may be necessary;
- d. evaluating the implementation of policies;
- e. approving the budget to be recommended to the finance council and/or the pastor of the parish;
- f. recommending to the pastor the employment of the principal;
- g. long-range planning and community relations.

***Article III***

***Membership***

Section 1 a. There shall be \_\_\_\_\_ members of the Board of whom \_\_\_\_\_ shall be appointed by the pastor, and \_\_\_\_\_ shall be elected.

b. This Parish Board shall have a single executive officer, the principal, responsible to the board for carrying out its policies and responsible administratively to the pastor. This officer shall be considered an ex-officio, non-voting member of the board.

Section 2 Each lay member shall serve a three-year term.



## ***Article IV***

### ***Officers***

Section 1 The officers of the board shall consist of President, Vice-President and Secretary, all of whom shall be elected annually by the board membership at the first regular meeting.

Section 2 All members of the board are eligible for any office. the duties of the officers shall be as follows

Section 3 the duties of the officers shall be as follows:

- a. The president shall preside at all regular and special meetings of the board.
- b. The Vice-President shall perform all the duties of the President when the president is absent or unable to act.
- c. The Secretary shall maintain a written record of all acts of the board; conduct, receive and dispose of all correspondence as directed; preserve all necessary reports and documents

## ***Article V***

### ***Meetings***

Section 1 The board shall meet monthly at a publicly designated room. Special meetings may be called by the President as needed or by a majority of the members.

Section 2 Quorum. For the purpose of transacting official business, it shall be necessary that a majority of the total members be present and voting.

Section 3 A redundant majority of those present and voting shall carry the motion unless otherwise specified in the constitution. A board may desire a two-thirds vote in some instances.

Section 4 All meetings of the board are to be open meetings unless designated as being closed (*Closed Session*). Generally decisions are not made in *closed sessions* but must be presented and voted on at open sessions before becoming effective. (The right of non-members to address the board shall be determined by the board.)

Section 5 A written record of all acts of the board, maintained by the Secretary, shall be preserved in the archives.

## ***Article VI***

### ***Conduct of Meetings***

Section 1      The rule of parliamentary procedure as contained in *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern meetings of the board. However, seeking consensus at board meetings shall be sought.

Section 2      The ordinary order of meetings shall be:

- A. Call to order and prayer
- B. Recommended actions
  - 1. Routine matters
  - 2. Approval of minutes
  - 3. Approval of treasurer's report
  - 4. Old Business
  - 5. New Business
- C. Information and proposals
  - 1. From delegations/individuals
  - 2. From the administrators
  - 3. From the pastors
  - 4. From questions asked of and by board members
- D. Future Business
  - 1. Meeting dates
  - 2. Preview of topics for future agendas
  - 3. General discussion to guide future recommendations
- E. Adjournment

## ***Article VII***

### ***Amendments***

Section 1      This constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the total membership with approval by the pastor subject only to regulations of the Archdiocesan Board of Education and approval by the pastor.

Section 2      Amendments must be presented to the board at least two weeks prior to voting on such.

Section 3      Bylaws may be amended by a vote of one more than a simple majority of the members present at any regular meeting, providing there is a quorum and providing the amendment has been presented at the previous meeting of the board.

## ***Article VII***

### ***Amendments***

- Section 1 This constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the total membership with approval by the pastor subject only to regulations of the Archdiocesan Board of Education and approval by the pastor.
- Section 2 Amendments must be presented to the board at least two weeks prior to voting on such.
- Section 3 Bylaws may be amended by a vote of one more than a simple majority of the members present at any regular meeting, providing there is a quorum and providing the amendment has been presented at the previous meeting of the board.

### ***By-Laws***

(examples of some by-laws)

## **Article II**

### **Functions of the Board**

- A. Philosophy & Goals
1. The board shall review and endorse the school philosophy annually prior to the beginning of classes.
  2. Proposed policies cannot be presented and voted upon at the same meeting.
  3. The board will review all policies annually.
  4. The budget will be developed by the principal and presented at the January meeting; the board will approve the budget at its February meeting.
  5. The board will evaluate the principal, as executive secretary, annually at its March meeting

## **Article V**

### **Meetings**

1. The board will meet on the first Tuesday of each month; no regular meetings are held in June and July.
2. All policies require a simple majority of those present for approval.
3. The approval of budget requires a 2/3 majority of those present and voting.

**MINUTE-TAKING REMINDERS\***

The person assigned to take minutes should be willing to assume this all-important task and be clear as to the reporting format at the outset.

It should be clear to all that the approved minutes are:

- the official record of all motions adopted or disapproved ;
- the official record of member attendance ;
- not the school's policy manual. Policies that affect the school should be extracted and properly bound for appropriate referral.

Minutes should be:

- signed by pastor or appropriate person.
- distributed with agenda for the next meeting.
- available for appropriate constituents.

Minutes should:

- emphasize motion or action items, isolating them from the major text of the minutes for easy reference
- be clear and concise, not lengthy transcripts of discussion that took place.

**Examples of poor minutes:**

(Partial) Finance Report: Father John presented a list of repairs that may be need to the school and what needs to be done on the roof, to meet fire regulations, etc. A restructure of the budget was briefly discussed to provide for capital improvements.

**Example of good minutes:**

(Partial) Finance Report: The chair of the Finance Committee made a motion that the \$40,000 in the capital improvement fund be directed toward the following:

1. \$29,000 to repair the roof on the Learning Center (detail discussed in 4/20 meeting).
2. \$5,000 to renovate per fire marshal directive (see March and April meeting).
3. \$6,000 to remain in capital improvement fund (proposal made at last month's meeting).

Motion seconded. No discussion . Motion passed unanimously.

Or

The Board reached consensus and approved the acceptance of the Finance Committee's recommendations.

\* *Building Better Boards, A Handbook/or Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

**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 the necessary tasks for committee work and reports;
- support the principal in authorized function and avoid intruding in 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 materials benefits; and
- pray often for the other members of the board, this Catholic school, and the community it serves.

\* *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 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, and 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, and to negotiate.

Help me to enjoy doing your work and to remember your promise: Whenever two of us are fathering in your name, you are with us. Sit with me now.

Amen.

\* *Building Better Boards, A Handbook for Board Members in Catholic Education*, by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D., National Catholic Educational Association, 1990.

**BOARD EVALUATION\***

**Internal Functions of the Board**

There are two major sections to be considered in the internal functions of a board: decision making and operations. Please rate each section by circling the appropriate letter according to the following scale:

- A Very satisfied
- B Satisfied
- C Somewhat satisfied
- D Not satisfied

**Decision Making**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How satisfied are you with the board's decision making?                                    | A | B | C | D |
| 2. How satisfied are you with the board's willingness to delay action for further discussion? | A | B | C | D |
| 3. How satisfied are you with the time allowed to prepare for and discuss major decisions?    | A | B | C | D |

Please make suggestions which will improve board level decision making.

**Operations**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. How satisfied are you with the board's leadership?   | A | B | C | D |
| 5. How satisfied are you with the composition of board?   | A | B | C | D |
| 6. How satisfied are you with the quality of board materials and information ?                        | A | B | C | D |
| 7. How satisfied are you that participation and comments of board members are encouraged and welcome? | A | B | C | D |
| 8. How satisfied are you with the level of board member participation?                                | A | B | C | D |
| 9. How satisfied are you with board members' preparation for meetings?                                | A | B | C | D |
| 10. How satisfied are you with the structure of board committees?                                     | A | B | C | D |
| 11. How satisfied are you with the frequency and length of board meetings?                            | A | B | C | D |
| 12. How satisfied are you with the board's participation in the evaluation of the principal?          | A | B | C | D |

Please suggest how board operations can be improved.

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### **External Functions of the Board**

The external functions of a board include areas of responsibility and relationships. Please rate each external function by placing a check in the appropriate column.

#### **Areas of Responsibility:**

##### **Strategic Planning**

**Outstanding   Good   Fair   Poor**

1. The board sets goals for the school and works toward the achievement of those goals
2. The board involves other appropriate individuals and groups in its planning process.
3. The board accomplishes the activities for which it assumes responsibility in the goal setting.
4. The board has an active development committee.
5. The long-range plan for the school includes development efforts.
6. The mandate for the development committee includes its relationship to the finance committee
7. The long-range plan for the school includes marketing efforts.
8. There are active public relations efforts on behalf of the school.

How can the board's role in strategic planning be improved?

##### **Finances**

**Outstanding   Good   Fair   Poor**

9. The board has an active finance committee.
10. The board reviews, approves, and monitors the school budget.
11. The finance committee's relationship with the parish finance council is clearly stated.
12. The board has developed policies for the financial

How can the board's role in finances be improved?



**Buildings and Grounds**

**Outstanding Good Fair Poor**

- 13. The board has an active buildings and grounds committee.
- 14. The board has developed in its long-range plan priorities for capitol repairs and improvements.
- 15. The relationship between this competent and other parish groups is clearly stated.

How can the board's role in buildings and grounds be improved?

**Policy Formulation**

**Outstanding Good Fair Poor**

- 16. The board formulates policies in accord with diocesan policies and procedures.
- 17. The board uses opportunities for input into the policy formulating process of the diocesan board
- 18. The board evaluates its policies regularly.
- 19. The board policies are systematically indexed, codified, and published in a board policy manual.
- 20. Board policies are communicated to those people who are affected by the decisions.
- 21. The board has a process for ensuring that the policies formulated are formally enacted prior to being implemented by the principal.

How can the board's role in policy formulation be improved?

**Relationships**

Please rate the board's relationship with the individual or groups by placing a check in the appropriate space:

I think that the board's relationship with the following people is . . .

**Needs Improvement Good Outstanding**

- 1. Principal
- 2. Pastor
- 3. DRE/CRE
- 4. Superintendent of Schools
- 5. Parish Pastoral Council
- 6. Parish Finance Council
- 7. Parishioners
- 8. Parents
- 9. Civic Community
- 10. Alumni
- 11. Faculty
- 12. Students
- 13. Others (please name): \_\_\_\_\_

How can the board's relationships with others be improved?

**EVALUATING BOARD MEETINGS**

How often does the board meet during the year? \_\_\_\_\_  
What is the length of a typical meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

Please consider what usually or typically happens at a board meeting. Score each of the items listed below using the following code:

1. This is typical of the meeting; it happens repeatedly.
  2. This is more typical than not of the meeting, but it does not happen a lot.
  3. This is not typical at all of the meeting; it never happens.
- 
1. When problems come up in the meeting, they are thoroughly explored until everyone understands what the problem is.
  2. The first solution proposed is often accepted by the group.
  3. Members come to the meeting not knowing what is to be presented or discussed.
  4. Members ask why the problem exists, what the causes are.
  5. There are many problems which members are concerned about which never get on the agenda.
  6. There is a tendency to propose answers without really having thought out the problem and its causes carefully.
  7. The board discusses the pros and cons of several different alternate solutions to a problem.
  8. Members bring up extraneous or irrelevant matters.
  9. The average member in the meeting feels that his/her ideas have gotten into the discussion.
  10. Someone on the board summarizes progress from time to time.
  11. Decisions are often left vague as to what they are, and who will carry them out.
  12. Members are afraid to be openly critical or make good objections.
  13. The board discusses and evaluates how decisions from previous meetings are worked out.
  14. Members do not take the time to really study or define the problem they are working on.
  15. The same few members seem to do most of the talking during the meeting.
  16. Members hesitate to give their true feelings about problems discussed.
  17. When a decision is made, it is clear who should carry it out, and when.
  18. There is a good deal of jumping from topic to topic. It is often unclear where the board is in regard to the agenda.
  19. From time to time in the meeting, members openly discuss the feelings and working relationships in the group.
  20. The same problems seem to keep coming up over and over again from meeting to meeting.
  21. Members do not seem to care about the meeting or want to get involved in it.

22. When the board is thinking about a problem, at least two or three solutions are suggested.
23. When there is disagreement, it tends to be smoothed over or avoided.
24. Some very creative solutions come out of the board.
25. Many members remain silent.
26. When conflicts over decisions come up, the board does not avoid them, but really stays with the conflict and works through it.
27. The results of the board's work are not worth the time it takes.
28. Members give their real feelings about what is happening during the meeting itself.
29. Members feel very committed to carrying out the solutions arrived at by the group.
30. When the board is supposedly working on a problem, it is really working on some other "under the table" issue.
31. Members feel antagonistic or negative during the meeting.
32. There is no follow-up of how decisions reached at earlier meetings worked out in practice.
33. Solutions and decisions are in accord with the leader's point of view, but not necessarily with the members'.
34. There are deadlocks between factions of the board.
35. The discussions of the board go on and on without any decision being reached.
36. Members feel satisfied or positive during the meeting.
37. The meetings last too long (over two hours).

**Evaluation of the Executive Secretary\***

	Almost Always (1)	Often (2)	Seldom (3)	Almost Never (4)
<b>The Principal gives direction to the school board.</b>				
1. Together, principal and board chair build on the board's agenda.				
2. Principal identifies school needs for the board's attention.				
3. Principal offers ideas for the board's in-service opportunities.				
4. Principal prepares an initial school budget draft.				
5. Principal makes policy recommendations for board formulation.				
COMMENTS: (Optional, except for ratings of 3 or 4				

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	Almost Always (1)	Often (2)	Seldom (3)	Almost Never (4)
<b>The Principal provides the board with timely, thorough, and clear information about the school.</b>				
1. Principal prepares a written or oral report for each board meeting.				
2. Principal informs the board about evaluation of curriculum.				
3. Principal keeps the board informed regarding results of national and/or diocesan testing programs.				
4. Principal informs the board about school-wide problems and concerns.				
5. Principal invites the board to special activities and events.				
COMMENTS: (Optional, except for ratings of 3 or 4				

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**Cooperation, mutual respect, and trust should characterize the relationship between principal and school board.**

Almost Always (1)	Often (2)	Seldom (3)	Almost Never (4)
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1. Principal gives to the board and its individual members public loyalty and respect
2. Principal sees that the board has adequate clerical assistance and help with arrangements for its activities.
3. Principal assists in recruiting new board members.
4. Principal sees that committees of the board have adequate assistance (data, personnel, materials) to carry out their tasks.

COMMENTS: (Optional, except for ratings of 3 or 4)

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**The principal demonstrates accountability for the job that has been asked.**

Almost Always (1)	Often (2)	Seldom (3)	Almost Never (4)
-------------------------	--------------	---------------	------------------------

1. Principal is responsible for fulfilling the job description in a satisfactory manner.
2. Principal is responsible for implementing local and diocesan policies.
3. Principal is responsible for completing the tasks assigned as an outgrowth of the board's formal goal-setting session
4. Principal is responsible for compliance with diocesan guidelines.

COMMENTS: (Optional, except for ratings of 3 or 4)

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