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**BOARD GOVERNANCE
WORKSHOP
FOR
SGIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

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Principles of Good Practice for Member Schools¹

BOARD MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The board is the guardian of the school's mission. It is the board's responsibility to ensure that the mission is appropriate, relevant, and vital to the community it serves. The board monitors the success of the school in fulfilling its mission. The following principles of good practice are set forth to provide a common perspective on the responsibilities of independent school boards. The board and the head work in partnership in fulfilling these principles.

1. The board prepares a clear statement of the school's mission and objectives.
2. The board reviews and maintains bylaws, and establishes policies and plans consistent with the mission.
3. The board is accountable for the financial well-being of the school, including capital assets, operating budgets, fund-raising, and endowments.
4. The board selects, supports, and nurtures the head.
5. The board, or a committee of the board, conducts a written annual evaluation of the performance of the head and works with the head to establish goals for the following year.
6. The board evaluates itself annually and establishes goals for the following year.
7. The board keeps full and accurate records of its meetings, committees, and policies.
8. The board works to ensure all its members are actively involved in the work of the board and its committees.
9. The composition of the board reflects a balance of expertise and perspectives needed to achieve the mission of the school.
10. The board develops itself through new board member orientation, ongoing education, and leadership succession planning.

11. The board assures compliance with applicable laws and regulations and minimizes exposure to legal action.

Principles of Good Practice for Member Schools

BOARD MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The following principles of good practice are set forth to provide a common perspective on the responsibilities of individual members of independent school boards.

1. A board member actively supports and promotes the school's mission.
2. A board member is knowledgeable about the school's mission and goals as well as current operations and issues.
3. A board member attends meetings well prepared and participates fully in all matters.
4. The board sets policy; the administration implements policy. An individual board member does not become involved in specific management, personnel, or curricular issues.
5. A board member accepts and supports board decisions and respects board confidentiality.
6. A board member guards against conflict of interest, whether business-related or personal. The board member takes care to separate the interests of the school from the specific needs of a particular child or constituency.
7. A board member has the responsibility to support the school and its head and to demonstrate that support within the community.
8. Authority is vested in the board as a whole. A board member who learns of an issue has the obligation to bring it to the head of school, or to the board chair, and must not deal with the situation individually.
9. Each board member, as well as the treasurer and finance committee, has fiduciary responsibility to the school for sound financial management.

TRUSTY QUIZ

1. You are watching your school lose a field hockey game. Your daughter has often complained that the coach is “no good” and “mean.” Another parent makes a remark that indicates she doubts the abilities of the coach.
 - (a) You tell the parent that you’re concerned, too, and will mention it at the next Board meeting.
 - (b) You change the subject and do not report the conversation to the Head.
 - (c) You ask around to see if others share your doubts, then report your findings to the Chair of the Board.
 - (d) You find an opportunity to talk to the Head about your worries.
 - (e) You write a note to the Athletic Director to report parent concerns.

2. You are a member of the Executive Committee and President Elect of the Board. You receive an e mail signed by the faculty expressing their disapproval of the firing of the long-term school librarian and asking for a meeting with the Board members. Your Committee had discussed the impending firing with the Head before the action was taken and had all agreed that it was necessary and helped to work out the timing and terms of dismissal.
 - (a) You call the Head, report the e mail and say that you feel it is necessary to meet with the faculty, preferably without the Head, at least to show them that you are open to their concerns.
 - (b) You call the present Chair of the Board and ask that a response be made to the faculty from the Board.
 - (c) You ignore the e mail, assuming that the Board Chair and/or Head will handle it.
 - (d) You send a reply to the faculty saying that although you understand their concern, hiring and firing decisions are the domain of the Head, whose action you support.
 - (e) You call the Board Chair and ask for a special meeting of the Board and Head to deal with the crisis.

3. You have overheard several conversations in which your child and other students discuss the drinking habits of a teacher. They feel he is often absent and/or hung over on Monday mornings - and his reputation as a heavy evening and weekend drinker is well established, at least among the students.
 - (a) You report the accusations to the Head.
 - (b) You tell the students that if they have real proof of their accusations they should speak to the Head, and if not, they are spreading rumors that are unfair and dangerous.
 - (c) You bring the accusations up at the Board meeting.

- (d) You discuss the problem with the Chairman of the Board.
 - (e) You ask the students what proof they have, and then inform both the Head and the Chair of the conversation.
4. A computer program has been suggested for your school and at an Educational Policy Committee meeting you are listening to an influential faculty member (who has been invited as a guest) express his doubts about the program and his feeling that “older” faculty members feel threatened by it. The Head, who strongly supports the program and has discussed his plan for faculty education and program development, is not able to attend this meeting. You are to vote support for the program.
- (a) You ask to postpone the vote until the Head can be present.
 - (b) You give approval, but alert the Head to the teachers’ reservations and ask for her reactions and plans in relation to the doubts expressed.
 - (c) You postpone the decision until more faculty can express their opinions.
 - (d) You do not approve the program because of lack of faculty support.
 - (e) You reread the plan in the light of the teachers’ comments: if the plan takes them into account, you approve it. If it seems unaware of them, you postpone your decision until you hear how the concerns will be met.
5. You are at a fund raising cocktail party and an influential community member and parent tells you that the College Guidance Officer discourages students from applying to “competitive” colleges, frightens them about their chances of being accepted at a top university, and writes accurate but unsupportive recommendations. He claims he was able to get his son into a good college, but only through his own activities, not through the efforts of the school.
- (a) You ask him to take his complaints to the Head, and later phone the Head to alert him to the problem.
 - (b) You are a sympathetic listener but are as noncommittal as possible - then discuss the conversation with the Board Chair.
 - (c) You sympathize and tell him that one of the roles of the school is college placement - and later call the College Placement Officer to report the complaint.
 - (d) You ask him to discuss the problem with you later and assure him you will take the complaint to the Head and the Board.
 - (e) You support the school to the best of your ability and decide that if you hear similar complaints you will do something about it

6. You are concerned that the Board has too little contact with the students.
 - (a) You suggest that a student should be appointed to the Board.
 - (b) You ask that one or more students report to the Board at each meeting.
 - (c) You open one Board meeting a year to students.
 - (d) You write an article for the student newspaper asking for student views on key issues to be shared with Board members.
 - (e) You hold a yearly “jam session” for Board members and students.
 - (f) You write a regular article for a school publication (or plan a regular assembly) where Board member concerns are shared with students.
 - (g) You forget it.

Rate the following Board practices as: good, bad, or indifferent.

7. Regular (at least one/year) reports to the parents.
8. Faculty representation on the Board.
9. Student representation on the Board.
10. Parent representation on the Board.
11. Annual Board member/Faculty party.
12. Student representation on the Board Search Committee.
13. Board members visiting classes.
14. Board member/Faculty/Student Workshops every few years to talk about the School.