The Institute for Education Leadership
L'Institut de leadership en éducation
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PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes

Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne

Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario

Council of Senior Business Officials

Council of Ontario Directors of Education

Ministry of Education

Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association

Ontario Principals' Council

Ontario Public Supervisory Officials Association

Module Seven: Strong Districts and Their Leadership Characteristic

A Policy Oriented Board of Trustees

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A Policy Oriented Board of Trustees

Agenda

1. Objectives

- To identify those characteristics of elected boards of education that the best available evidence links with improvements in student achievement and well-being;
- To learn more about how other senior leaders are working to develop those characteristics with their trustees;
- To increase awareness of the challenges and opportunities arising in working with a policy-oriented board of trustees.

2. Overview of relevant research

- PowerPoint presentation, including reference to Appendix A

3. Case Study: Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est

What can be learned from this case study about how to develop and work with a policy oriented board of trustees?

- Overview of case study by senior leaders
- Discussion of written case study
- Debriefing of what was learned from the case study

4. Case Study: Nipissing Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

What can be learned from this case study about how to develop and work with a policy oriented board of trustees?

- Overview of case study by district team
- Discussion of written case study
- Debriefing of what was learned from the case study

5. Compare and contrast the policy oriented board of trustees described in the case studies - full group discussion

- Consider relationship to the relevant research and to the approaches to developing a policy oriented board of trustees taken by the case studies listed in this module
- Identify key lessons - what to do for sure, what not to do at any cost
- Concluding synthesis about how to establish a policy oriented board of trustees

Self-assessment

In order to assist you with your learning, use a rating scale in response to the following:
(1 = not at all, 2 = a modest amount, 3 = significantly, 4 = a great deal)
Please indicate the extent to which you feel that participation in this module has extended your ability, or increased your awareness of the need, to address the following challenges associated with your district's overall approach to establishing a policy oriented board of trustees:

1. Identify those characteristics of elected boards of education that the best available evidence associates with improvements in student achievement and well-being?

2. Learn more about how other senior leaders are working to develop those characteristics with their trustees?

3. Increased your awareness of the challenges and opportunities arising in working with a policy-oriented board of trustees?

Samples of Relevant Research

Carver, J. (1997). Boards that make a difference: A new design for leadership in non-profit and public organizations (2nd edition).San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Johnson, P. (2013). Effective board leadership: Factors associated with student achievement, *Journal of School Leadership*, 23, 456-489.

Land, D. (2002). Local school boards under review: Their role and effectiveness in relation to students' academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 72: 229-278.

Leithwood, K. (2011). *Characteristics of high performing school districts in Ontario.* Toronto: Final report of research for the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership

Saatcioglu, A., Moore, S., Sargut, G., Bajaj, A. (2011). The role of school board social capital in district governance: Effects on financial and academic outcomes, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 10, 1-42.

Appendix A: Characteristics of Effective School Districts

[From the *District Effectiveness Framework*]

An elected board of education has significant indirect effects on student achievement and well-being when it:

1. Participates with its senior staff in assessing community values and interests and incorporates them into the school system's mission and vision for students;
2. Helps create a climate which engages teachers, administrators, parents and the wider community in developing and supporting the vision;
3. Helps create a climate of excellence that makes achieving the vision possible;
4. Uses the district's beliefs and vision for student learning and well-being as the foundation for strategic planning and ongoing system evaluation;
5. Focuses most policy making on the improvement of student learning and well-being consistent with the system's mission and vision;
6. Develop policies and support staff decisions aimed at providing rich curricula and engaging forms of instruction for all students and eliminating those that do not.
7. Contributes to the development of productive relationships with and among senior staff, school staffs, community stakeholders and provincial education officials;
8. Provides systematic orientation opportunities for new members and ongoing professional development for existing members;
9. Develops and sustain productive working relationships among members of the elected board;
10. Respects the role of director and senior staff in their responsibilities for school system administration;
11. Holds the director accountable for improving teaching and learning in the school system;
12. Holds its individual members accountable for supporting decisions of the board, as a whole, once those decisions have been made.

Appendix B: Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est

Guiding Questions

The Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est is the only Ontario school board that implemented a model of governance entirely based on policies over 15 years ago. In 1995, the board triggered a "policy" crisis by adopting 16 recommendations focused on having senior leaders implement changes to improve governance and management of the school board.

A provisional management team was then appointed, and the team took the necessary steps to meet the school board's expectations, particularly by calling on additional expertise. The team also took on the task of informing the board of progress in implementing the 16 recommendations. A climate of trust was gradually established over the course of the board's term, which ended in December 1997.

In December of the same year, the Education Improvement Commission, created in 1997 to facilitate the reform of the Ontario education system, published a report on the role of trustees. The Commission clarified school boards' responsibilities and recommended that boards exercise these responsibilities through a policy-governance approach, based on a model created by John Carver.

1. *Compare your board's policy-governance model with the model adopted by the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est.*

2. *Identify the main challenges facing the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, and those that your school board has faced with its current governance model.*

The policy-governance model of the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est has undergone numerous revisions over the years to keep its approach up to date. The current Director of Education attributes much of his success to this model.

3. *What lessons can you draw from this case study? In your view, would adopting this model allow your school board to overcome certain obstacles to governance?*

CASE STUDY

Appendix C: The Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

Guiding Questions

Nipissing Parry Sound Catholic District School Board has an approach to governance based on the Carver model. This has important implications not only for the Board's relationship with the Director of Education, senior administration and staff, but also for ratepayers, parents, and other stakeholders

1. *Please compare and contrast your board's policy governance model to the policy governance approach that is adopted in Nipissing Parry Sound Catholic District School Board?*

2. *There are a limited number of boards fully using the Carver model in the province of Ontario. Using a SWOT approach (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) what do you think would be entailed in moving toward implementing such a model in your district?*

This approach used in Nipissing Parry Sound places an emphasis on **Ends** and **Means.**

Means refers to all aspects of the organization that are not "ends"; most specifically practices, methods, situations and conditions that are allowed to occur or exist.

For boards using traditional approaches to governance, justifiable concerns over the means being used by administration to achieve ends can lead to micro-management and even meddling. The Policy Governance model offers a way for boards to be accountable for staff practices and situations without interfering with the legitimate role of administration, or trivializing the role of the board.

3. *How does your district encourage trustees to remain focused on the high level strategic goals of the organization and not micro- manage or become involved in operational issues of the board? How successful are you?*

CASE STUDY

1. If your participation in this module has caused you to consider doing something different in your own system, please describe what that is.

2. Please identify any changes or refinements that could be made to this module that would improve participants' learning.

3. How can this work best be used with others in the future?

The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) invites you to share your responses to the above questions with the coordinator of the IEL at communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca.