

Working Together For the Benefit of the Head, the Board, and the Entire School



Mike Davis

(Head of School at Colorado Academy since 2007)

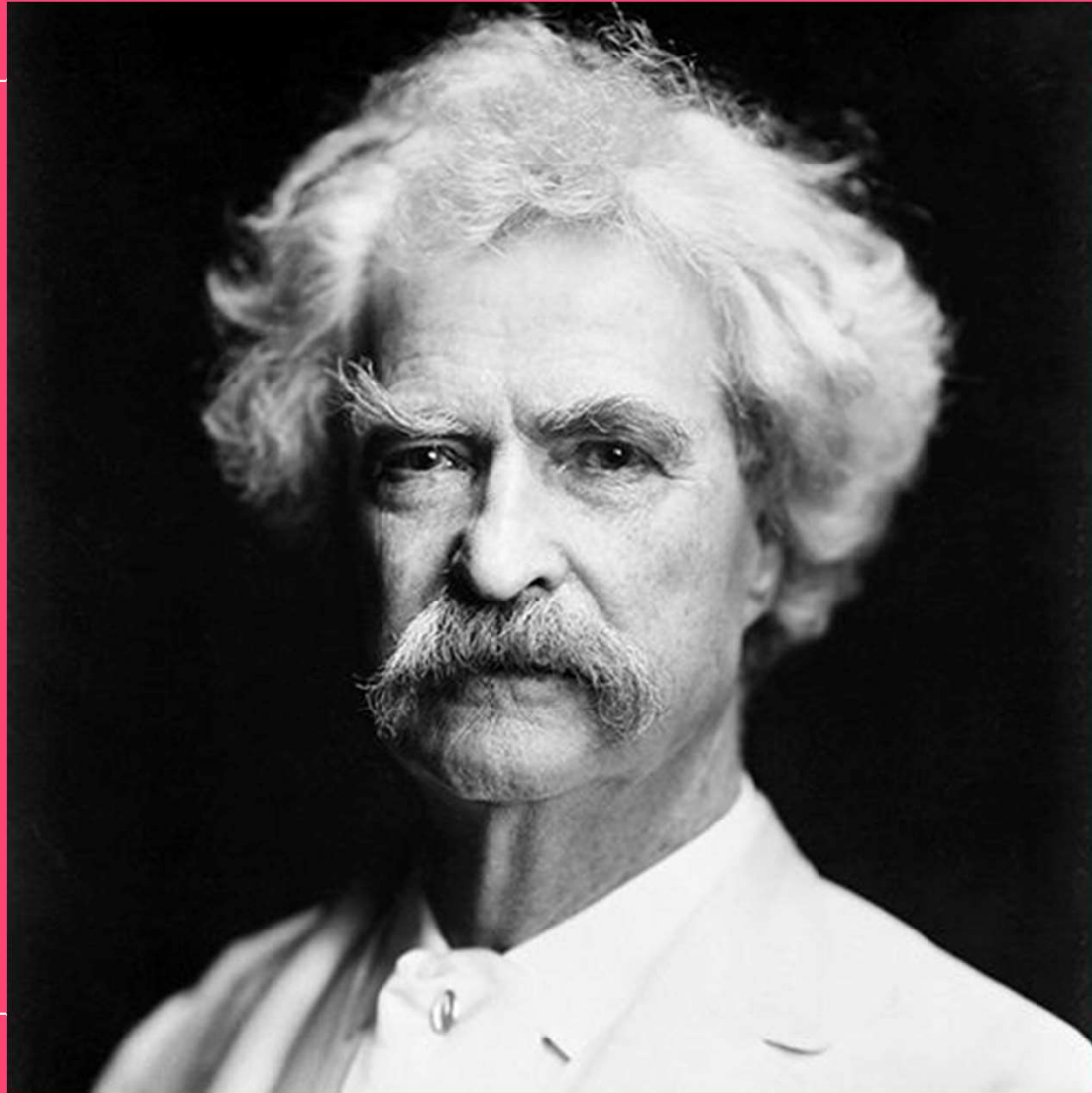
Erika Hollis

(Board Chair at Colorado Academy
and Chief of Staff for Integrate)



The image features a solid red background with a white grid pattern. The grid consists of two vertical lines and two horizontal lines, creating a central rectangular area. Five white, four-pointed stars are scattered across the red field: one in the top-left corner, one in the top-right corner, one in the center, one in the middle-left area, and one in the bottom-right corner. The text 'ABOUT US' is centered in the middle of the grid.

ABOUT US





**Tips for developing and maintaining
a successful Head/Board Chair relationship**

Head/Board Chair Relationship

- Begins with Board Chair Selection Process
 - Does the Head play a role in input?
 - What are the past leadership roles of the prospective chair?
 - History of interactions with the school and staff?
 - Why does that person want to serve?
 - Do they have an agenda?
- Communication Styles
- Understanding the goal of conversations
- Respective roles and responsibilities

Head/Board Chair Relationship

- Honest Feedback That Goes Both Ways
- Confidentiality
- Ongoing Communication and Planning:
 - Board meetings
 - Communications with community - planned and unplanned
 - Goal setting
- Head's Responsibility to Keep Board Chair Informed of Critical Issues
- Accessibility of Chair to Support the Head



Keys to Board Success and Effectiveness

Having a Shared
Sense of the
School's Mission

Keys to Board Effectiveness

- Focus on Strategy and Fiduciary Issues (Board) and Implementation (Head)
- Ongoing education/ check-ins for Board Members:
 - New trustee orientation
 - Understanding broader issues facing independent schools
 - Formal feedback on board operations
- Intentionally Adding Variety of Perspectives and Talent onto the Board
- Making Efficient Use of Board Members' Time
- Advising the Full Board of Critical Issues
- Goal Setting for School by Board and Head
- Creating Space for Generative Conversation

Generative Thinking

- Do we have the \$ and space for a new field House? (fiduciary)
- Do we need a field house to attract the students we want? (strategic)
- Are we unwittingly joining an “amenities” race in our industry if we build one? (generative)

Strategic Plan

PLANNING

Design of the Board/Head Partnership

POLICIES	Time and Attention
<u>Strategies</u> Mission Survival Leadership	<u>Board's Decision</u> <u>Head's Advice</u>
<u>Partnership</u> Authorizations Finance Policies Enrollment Employment terms	<u>Shared Decision Process</u> <u>Board and the Head</u>
<u>Operational</u> Admissions Staffing Program	<u>Board's Advice</u> <u>Head's Decision</u>

OKR Example

I. Enhance the Student Experience

Objective: Deliver a future-focused student experience that sets CA apart and prepares our students for the world beyond.

Key Results

1. Finalize a plan for calendar and schedule improvement, after consulting with peer schools about different options.
2. Retire four AP courses in English and Social Studies, and launch Advanced Studies and Research (ASR) program in these departments.
3. Begin an annual formal dialog between pundits on the left and right to educate Middle School and Upper School students about protected speech and polemics.
4. Open the REDI Lab Coleman Center at Mariposa, hold classes there as well as SPEAK events. Due date: November 2022 and ongoing.
5. Restore International and Experiential Programs to pre-pandemic levels.

A photograph of a campus scene featuring a concrete sidewalk in the foreground, a green lawn, and several large trees. In the background, there is a modern building with a grid of windows. The scene is captured in bright daylight, with long shadows cast by the trees. The image is framed by a thin red border with four red starburst graphics at the corners.

Crisis Management



OPERATIONAL ISSUES THAT CAN "IGNITE" A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- Discipline
- Teacher Quality
- Accident or Tragedy
- Scandal or Misconduct
- Litigation

Should issues happen in these areas, the Head will typically consult with Board Chair and/or the Executive Committee and then brief the board at an appropriate point

Headline-Grabbing Events a Wake-Up Call



Independent Schools Forced to Confront Realities of a Changing World

Four School Crises Capture Attention of Independent Schools Nationwide



Mass Shooting

Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida in February 2018 kills 17, leads to wave of student activism for gun reform



Tick Bite Case

Federal appeals court upholds \$41.7 million verdict against Hotchkiss School in Connecticut for rare infection contracted during school trip to China



Sexual Abuse Cases

2018 lawsuit alleges sexual misconduct by faculty member at St. Paul's School in New Hampshire dating back to 1960s, results in renewed fears about resurgence of old cases



Wrongful Termination Settlement

Football coach at St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School in California awarded nearly \$5 million in wrongful termination lawsuit after reporting player sexual hazing



Crises Dictate Investment of Time, Money

Poor Prioritization Leads Schools to Misallocate Resources

Safety Initiatives Represent Major School Spending

\$800K

Estimated annual school safety budget at Mid-Atlantic co-ed JK-12 school

\$1M

Estimated security costs over past 4-5 years at Southern co-ed JK-12 school



"Even though I'd like to spend money on additional teachers, we find increasingly that we're having to spend money on personnel who have nothing to do with the educational process, but who keep us safe and who advise us on how to reduce risk."

*Head of School, Midwest,
PreK-12, Co-ed*

Yet Independent School Trends Show Large Losses from Other Risks¹



Employment Discrimination

Employee discrimination claims for this period resulted in over **\$10 million in losses**



Slip and Falls

Slip and falls are most frequent general liability claim, with most expensive claim costing a school **\$1.3 million**



Disability Discrimination

Boarding school student awarded **\$2.2 million** in claim that school did not accommodate hypersensitivity to electronic stimuli

1) Represents large losses from claims between 2012-2016.

Board Role in Risk Management

- Train Board members about communication during a crisis
- Run table top exercises; bring in outsiders to facilitate discussions about different crisis scenarios
- Pay Attention to Day to Day Risks and Trends
 - DEI Backlash
 - Cybersecurity
 - School Shootings
 - Unionization
 - Mental Health Issues
 - Sexual Misconduct (Past and Present)
 - Slips and Falls
- Risk Management Committee meets regularly to identify key risks and develop risk treatment plans - transfer, reduce or decide to accept the risk

Breakout

- A group of parents have written a public letter to the board accusing the school of “indoctrinating” students through the school’s human development curriculum which has a unit on LGBTQ issues.
- As you consider this issue in your group, identify:
 1. What is at stake for the school?
 2. Potential ways to respond.

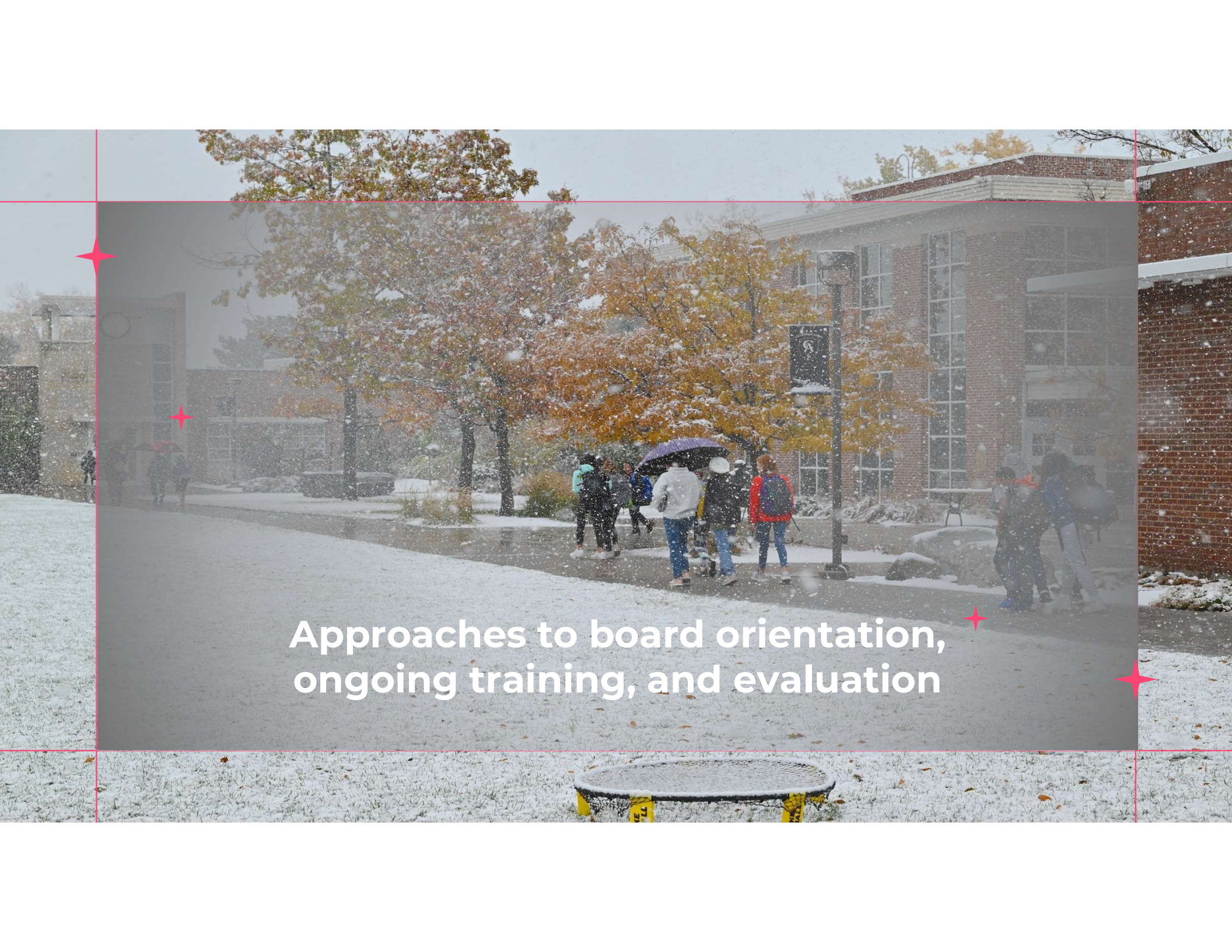


**Strategies for identifying and
vetting future trustees**

Trustee Recruitment



- What will board need (1-3 years out)
- Nominate: admissions, trustees, administrators, development office
- Trustee Sources: Parents, sponsoring organization, alumni, community members, partners
- Create a bench of potential board members that meet several criteria
- Candidly share requirements and responsibilities
- Interviews with multiple trustees
- CONFIDENTIALITY

A photograph of a snowy campus scene. In the foreground, a paved walkway is covered in a thin layer of snow. A group of people, some with umbrellas, are walking across the path. In the background, there are brick buildings and trees with autumn-colored leaves. The sky is overcast and it appears to be snowing. The image is framed by a red border with star-shaped markers at the corners.

**Approaches to board orientation,
ongoing training, and evaluation**

Board Orientation

- Before first Board Meeting
- Standardize Orientation presented by staff and board leadership:
 - History of the school and mission
 - Logistics - how many meetings and where; dashboards/portals to find information
 - Education about what great governance looks like
 - Multiple hats worn by trustees and expectations
 - Policies
 - Conflict of interest
 - Bylaws
 - Financial Aid
 - Admissions
- Mentors

Ongoing Education

- **From Megan Mann, NAIS Counsel**

- “We talk a lot about strategic thinking but we do not think strategically about board-head education. And, I specifically mention board-head, because the head 99% of the time runs point on education. And, while in some ways this makes sense and benefits the head, the head is steeped in daily operations and does not have time to consider what the impact of declining birth rates in the US will have on the school’s admissions/enrollment. In a way, it should be obvious that this is the board’s responsibility to educate the head (strategic thinking!) but it’s NOT obvious and rarely do boards do it.
- Identify someone to run point on board education. This person (may be the chair of the Committee on Trustees/ Governance but doesn’t have to be) can partner with the head and Board Chair to create an education roadmap.”

Ongoing Education

- Create moments at every meeting for education. These can be a 5 min update from a trustee on an article or trend that aligns with the strategic vision.
- 3rd party voices:
 - This can happen in different ways - it can be a parent with a specialization in epidemiology or health to talk about the future of viruses; and/or it can be someone to run a session on good governance .
 - Education from a 3rd party voice about what great governance looks like & the reminders about wearing different hats (parent/trustee), operations v strategic leadership, etc.
 - Where possible, it's important to find a delicate way to remind trustees (especially board chairs) that they are volunteers who are usually uneducated in the ways of independent school leadership.

It's Not Your School Era



Board Evaluation

1. Board Responsibility
2. Elements to Consider:
 - Participation in Board Meetings
 - Participation in Committee Work
 - Recognizing conflicts (real and perceived)
 - Personal impact on school operations and board functioning
 - Donations
 - Leadership on the board or with other school initiatives

Chat Conversation
How does your board
evaluate their board
service?



Models for head evaluation

CA's Approach

- Annual Board and Head Goals in alignment with 5 year Strategic Plan
- Real Time Feedback Through Regular Conversation Between Chair and Head of School
- Annual Board Survey
- 360 Evaluation of the Head
- Head Evaluation Committee Composed of Board Chair, COT Chair, and Board Member Selected By the Head
- Importance of a multi-year contract for good governance



**Tips for creating and running effective,
engaging board meetings**

Meeting Agenda

- Save time:
 - Committee reports via minutes
 - Consent Agenda
 - Distribute trustee materials 1 week in advance
- Creates time for deeper discussion on key issues:
 - Strategic Planning
 - Capital Projects
 - Tuition
 - Education
- Head of School Report
- Standing Executive Session

Common Dynamics

- Quiet Board Members
- Loud Board Members
- Hybrid Meetings
- Rubber stamping the head's proposal
- Split Votes
- Meetings after the meeting

Chat Question

What does your board do to create more effective and impactful meetings?



HOME

Identifying and managing difficult trustee situations

What To Do With Rouge Board Members?

Break Out

Following a long meeting, the board votes on a 7% tuition increase. The resolution passes 20-6. A dissenting board member, whose two children are receiving modest financial aid, tells parents at social events that the administration is not containing costs and that she disagreed with the decision.

Consider in breakouts:

- Why is this rogue behavior?
- What should be the response?
- Whom should respond?



**Possible board committee structures
and thoughts on committee chair training**

Typical Board Committees

- Buildings and Grounds
- Committee on Trustees/ Governance
- Development/ Fund-raising
- Executive Committee
- Executive Compensation Committee
- Finance
- Risk Management
- Task Forces for Various Initiatives

Committee Charters

A photograph of a school campus. In the center, a tall black signpost holds a black banner with the Colorado Academy logo and name. A vibrant rainbow is visible in the sky behind the trees. In the foreground, there is a red picnic table on a paved area. The scene is framed by a semi-transparent grey overlay with four pink starburst graphics at the corners.

The board's and sitting head's roles and responsibilities in a new head search process

Questions?

Break Out

Michael, a generous board member and father of 3 children at the school, advocates at a board meeting that a portion of the school's endowment should be invested in cryptocurrency. The board subsequently votes to not allow cryptocurrency in the investment policy. Michael keeps raising the issue in multiple subsequent committee meetings and asks the school's investment advisor to bring materials on the value of the cryptocurrency investment to the next endowment committee meeting.

Consider in breakouts:

- Why is this rogue behavior?
- What should be the response?
- Whom should respond?

Break Out

Molly, a generous board member and mother of three children at the school, introduces herself to faculty as a board member during parent teacher conferences. When one of her children is accused of an infraction of the student code of conduct, she tells the middle school principal that she will handle the matter with the head of school.

Consider in breakouts:

- Why is this rogue behavior?
- What should be the response?
- Whom should respond?