

LEADERSHIP THROUGH PARTNERSHIP: STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING IN A CRISIS ENVIRONMENT

ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

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JACK CREEDEN

The Partnership

Trustees and
Heads of School
Developing
Strategic
Initiatives for
The Future



THE IMPORTANCE OF MISSION-DRIVEN

- Exceptional boards shape and uphold the mission, articulate a compelling vision, and ensure congruence between decisions and core values (BoardSource, 2005).



Mission



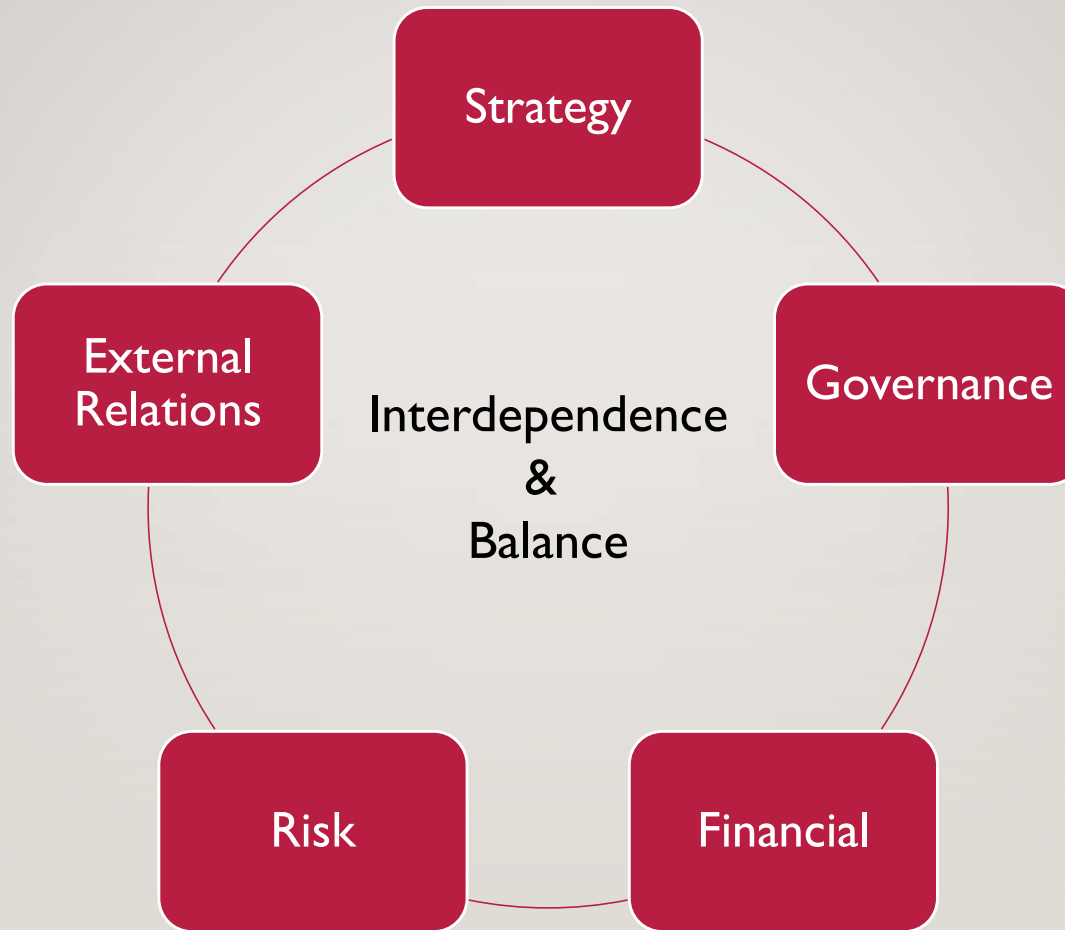
ACIS accredits, supports, and advances the interests of Colorado independent schools.



Mission

Whitby inspires a passion for learning and empowers each child to take responsibility as an open-minded, principled citizen in a global community.

Core Board Functions: *Shaping University Boards*, 11/20, McKinsey



The Partnership Evolves in Times of Crisis



Risk
Management

Risk
Leadership

NAIS TRUSTEE HANDBOOK (2015)

- Board Member Job Description:
 - Understand fully the **roles** and **responsibilities** of nonprofit governance, including respecting appropriate **boundaries** (p.109).

TRUSTEE AT INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS **MESSY** BUSINESS (NAIS HANDBOOK, 2015)

- Respond to tricky, maybe impossible decisions thrust on you
- Balance immediate and long-term concerns
- Decide in the spotlight.
- Balance competing interests
- Act as a group
- Deal with challenges of accountability (To whom?)
- (Trower & Eckel, 3.4.16)

ONBOARDING

Most trustees come to the board table with no formal training about board service, no clue about what to expect and little understanding of what's expected of them. (Trower & Eckel, IHE, 3/23/17)





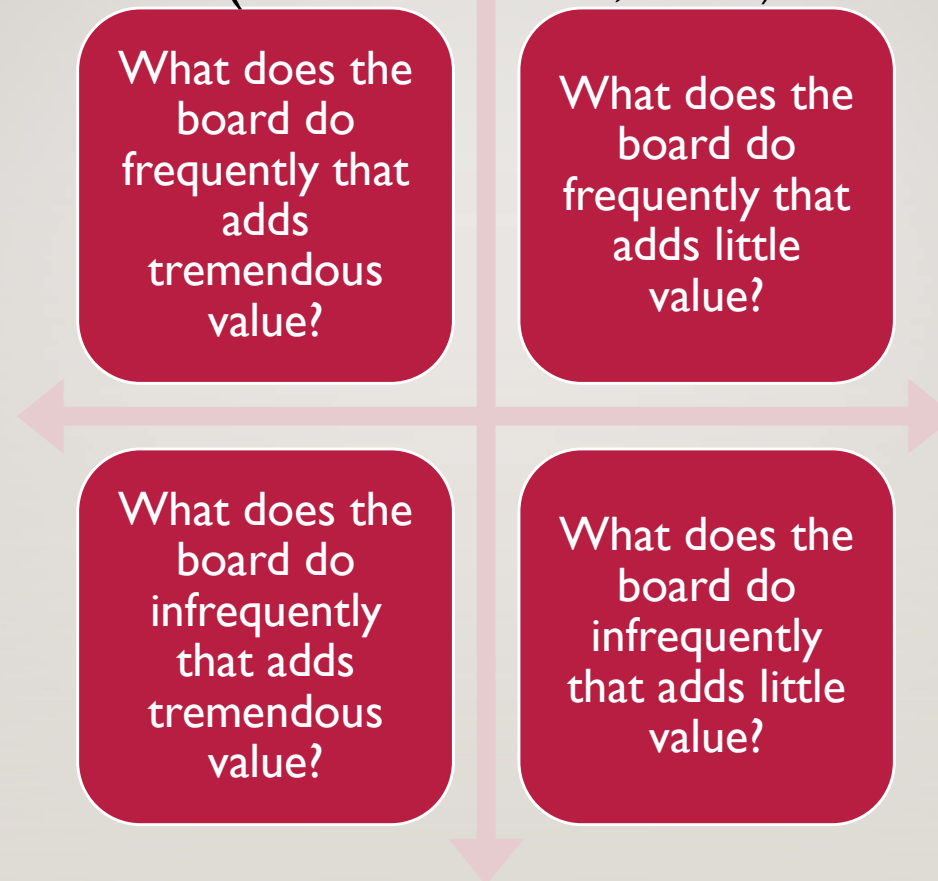
WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

- Highlights of An Effective Partnership
- Positive Board Culture
- Partnership in Times of Crisis and Uncertainty
- The Board, The Head: Lean In, Hands Off? What To Do?

QUESTIONS WITH EASY (?) ANSWERS

- What responsibilities does your Board perform well?
- What tasks or roles as a Board would you like to do less of?
- What tasks or roles as a Board would you like to do more of?

Evaluation matrix. Frequency and value-added (Eckel & Trower, 2019)



WHY IT MATTERS

(*LEADING WITH INTENT*, BOARDSOURCE, 2017)

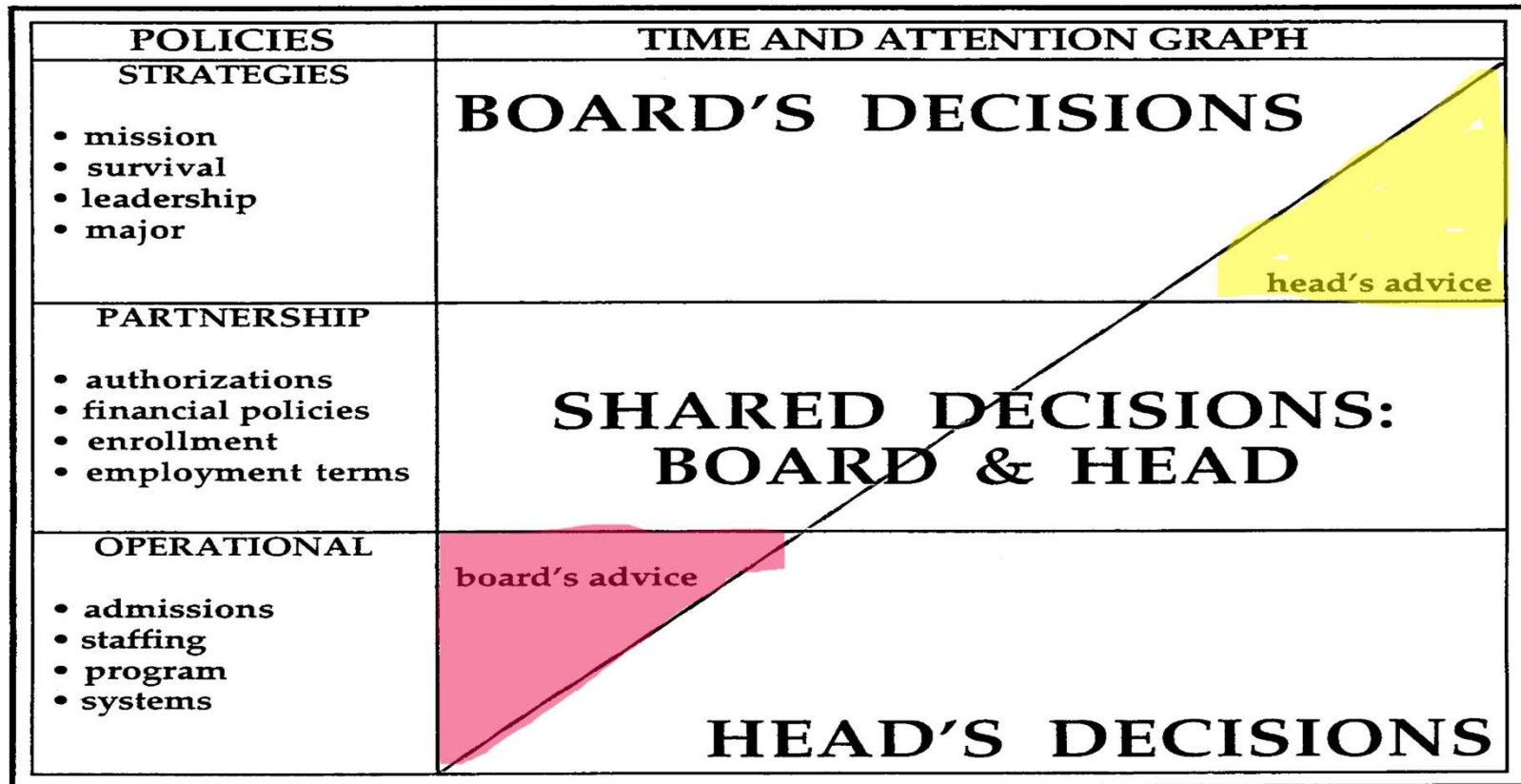
- If Board and Executive Are Not Working Well Together, the Organization Suffers
- Lack of Strategic Alignment
- Toxic or Contentious Culture
- Inability to Leverage Potential of Board, Executive or Both

UNIVERSITY BOARDS COME UNDER PRESSURE (WSJ, 11.12.18)

- “When trustees misgovern, it’s not just that they’ve disappointed shareholders. It’s a public good. I think there should be a higher standard.” Richard Chait, Harvard GSE

WHAT DOES PARTNERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

DESIGN OF THE PARTNERSHIP



Above the diagonal line = allocation of board's time



BOT CHAIR AND HEAD OF SCHOOL INTERDEPENDENT?

- Exceptional Boards Govern in Constructive Partnership with the Chief Executive, Recognizing That the Effectiveness of The Board and Chief Executive Are Interdependent. (BoardSource Blog, 4.17.20)

President-Board Chair Roles (Eckel & Trower, *Practical Wisdom*, 2019)

Is There
A
Balance?

Accountability

Overseer

Boss

Evaluator

Strategic Partner

Colleague

Strategist

Collaborator

Corroborator

Personal

Coach

Confidant

Sounding
Board

BOARD CHAIR AND HOS PARTNERSHIP (BOARD CHAIR HANDBOOK, 2019)

- A Relationship Built on Trust
- Guided by Mutually Acceptable HOS Goal Statement and Measurements
- Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities
- What Happens When Boundaries Blur? Let's Plan for It Now!
- Commitment to “No Surprises!”
- Honor: “I Want to Tell You Something, But I Do Not Need You to Do Anything?”

COLLEGE PRESIDENTS (HOS) NEED HELP LATELY, TOO (CHE, 2/5/21)

- Support from Board
 - Know roles and Serve as partners
- Safe place to vent
 - Board Chair, Executive Committee
- Strong, diverse administrative team
- Social media strategy
- Expert advice

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & CULTURE

- **We think that educating boards on *what they should do* -- their roles and responsibilities -- while important, is insufficient.** In actuality, underperforming boards may know their roles but have cultures that limit their effectiveness.
- **Board culture**, those patterns of behavior and ways of understanding that are deeply ingrained, reinforced and taught to new trustees, is what demands attention.
- Trower & Eckel, *The Power of What Cannot Be Seen*, IHE, 2016.

**Organizational culture eats strategy
for breakfast, lunch and dinner**



Culture



Strategy

WHAT IS BOARD CULTURE?

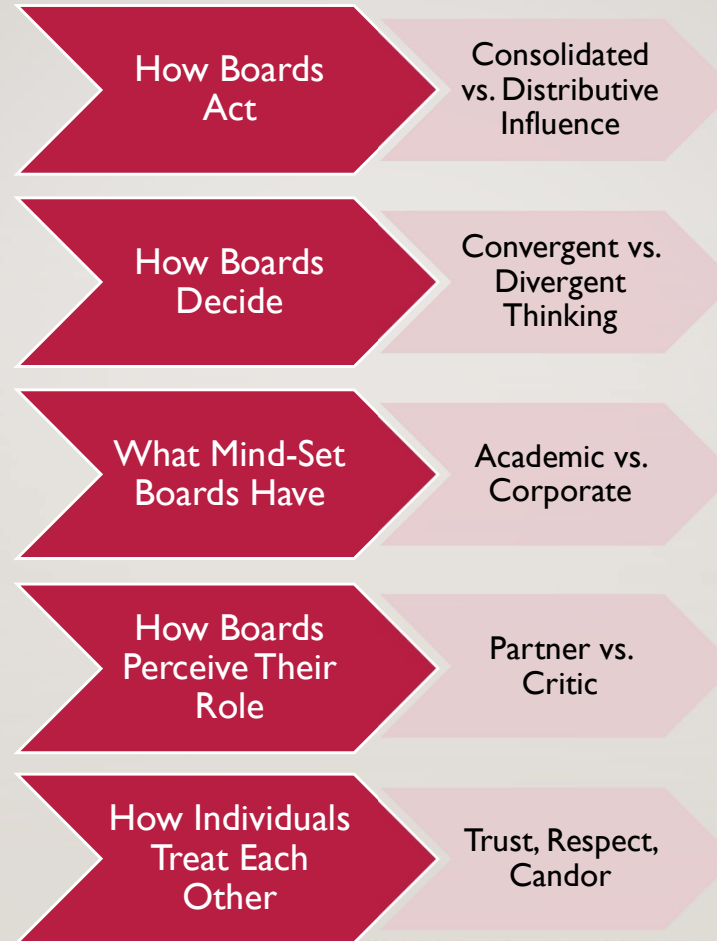
- "You can't figure that out in an orientation. You have to get immersed in that room and watch the dynamics. That might mean figuring out who has power and influence and why, or if certain topics prompt a defensiveness in administrators or are considered taboo." (C. Trower, *CHE*, 3.18.18)

HOS & BOARD CHAIR SHAPE BOARD CULTURE

(BOARDSOURCE BLOG, 3.30.20)

- Trust
 - How To Connect When Virtually Distanced?
- Information Sharing
 - Covid Requires Increased Flow of Information & Data
- Teamwork
 - Diverse Perspectives, Safe To Share Divergent Views, Candor Not Congeniality
- Dialogue: Ask Generative Questions

Dimensions of Board Culture (*Practical Wisdom*, Eckel & Trower, 2019)



INDICATORS OF POSITIVE BOARD CULTURE

(*LEADING WITH INTENT*, BOARD SOURCE, 2017)

- Healthy and Respectful Partnership Between Board and Executive (Head of School)
- Trust and Candor Among Board Members
- Thoughtful and Productive Resolution of Issues and Disagreements
- Willingness to Address Poor Board Behavior Negatively Affecting Board

IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY ON BOARDS

- Exceptional **nonprofit boards** recognize that **diversity** is essential to an organization's success. They see the correlation between mission, strategy, and **board** composition and understand that establishing an inclusive organization starts with establishing a **diverse** and inclusive **board**.
- Source: Board Source, 2017, *Leading With Intent*

SIGNS OF A TROUBLED BOARD CULTURE

- Cliques Within the Board
- Failure to Include All Board Members in Critical Discussions
- Lack of Participation – Representatives of Constituencies
- Overuse of Executive Committee
- Dismissive Behavior Among Board Members and With Key Staff and Faculty
- Parking Lot Conversations (the meeting after the meeting)
- Source: *Consequential Boards: Adding Value Where it Matters Most*, 2014

TRUSTEE BEHAVIOR IMPACTING POSITIVE BOARD CULTURE?

(CHAIT, 2005)

- Power broker or decision-maker
- Journalists – sources within the school
- Surrogate managers – analyze the data
- Lobbyists – advocate for a particular policy
- Renegades
- Are there guidelines and enforced norms? How to contact a faculty member? How does the committee structure work to deal with issues?

TRUSTEES ACTING INDEPENDENTLY

- “Difficulties ensue not because trustees think independently, a quality of effective boards, but because trustees proceed independently, based on a self-declared role and self-determined scope of authority.” (Chait, CHE, 2.17.06)

BOARD CULTURE ASSESSMENT

1 = NEEDS IMPROVEMENT; 3 = ADEQUATE;
5 = HIGHLY PROFICIENT

- Resolves Conflict and Builds Consensus?
- Operates in a Trusting Environment?
- Cultivates a Constructive Partnership with HOS
- Establishes Clear Expectations of Service
- Makes Sense of Questions and Discusses Strategically

ROLE OF BOARD

- The responsibility of the Board is to protect the future from the present. (David Riesman)
- VS
- But we may not have a future if we do not attend to the present.

Traditional Board Involvement



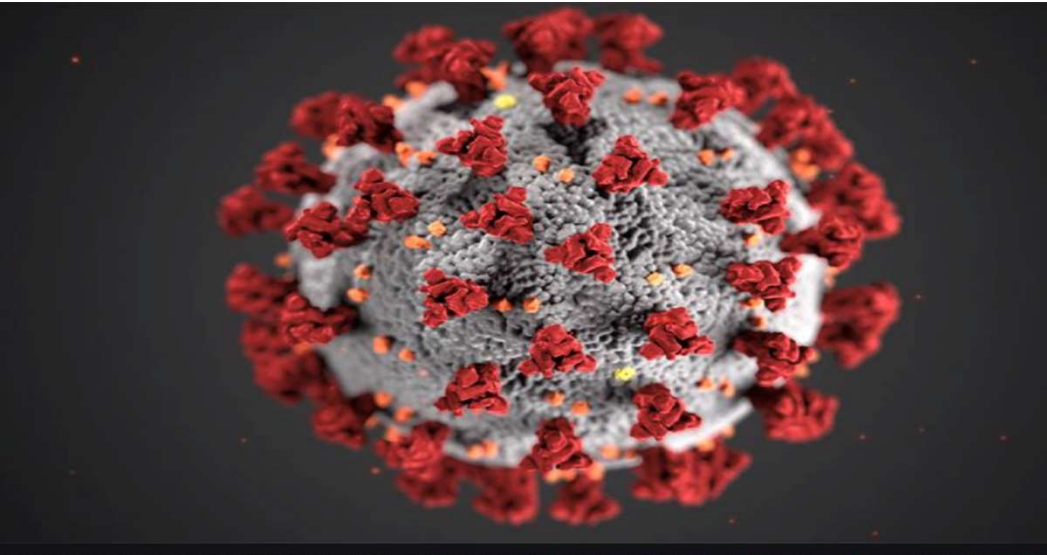
DEFINING BOARD ROLE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

- “In the case of COVID-19, it is safe to say that no board member could have predicted or planned for the changes that nonprofits are facing. Thus, boards need to be remarkably agile, flexible, and responsive to the ever-changing environment to ensure survival.” (McMullin & Raggio, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 12.1.20)

VUCA & VUCA 2.0 (ARMY WAR COLLEGE, BILL GEORGE)

- **V**olatility
- **U**ncertainty
- **C**omplexity
- **A**mbiguity
- **V**ision – can you see through
- **U**nderstanding – strengths, blind spots, listening
- **C**ourage – take risk, act
- **A**daptability – flexibility, adapt

Environmental Factors Affecting Decision-Making



WANTED: IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS

- Pandemic. "You don't make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline." (A. Fauci, 3/25/20)
- Pedagogy
 - In-person, online, hybrid, distance learning. Who decides? Who is trained?
 - Age and resource differences
- Politics
 - Racial injustice and systemic discrimination
 - Health regulations are a political issue
 - 2020 Presidential race lingers

WHAT'S THE DEFINITION OF A SCHOOL?



Parents' Annual Calculation

$$\frac{\text{Perceived Outcomes}}{\text{Perceived Price}} = \text{Value}$$

In Covid 19 Times?

For parents, as perceived price/cost goes up value goes down unless perceived outcomes increase proportionally.

ROI
Distance
Learning?

Source: NAIS

MILLENNIAL PARENTS ARE DIFFERENT – HOW DOES THIS IMPACT MY CHILD?

- Less brand loyalty
- Balance traditional values with innovation
- “Trust” means we both will listen to one another
- 92% agree, “It is important that my children know they are special/unique.”
- 60% prefer their child stand out rather than fit in
- Source: Hoerle, *Independent School*, Summer 2017

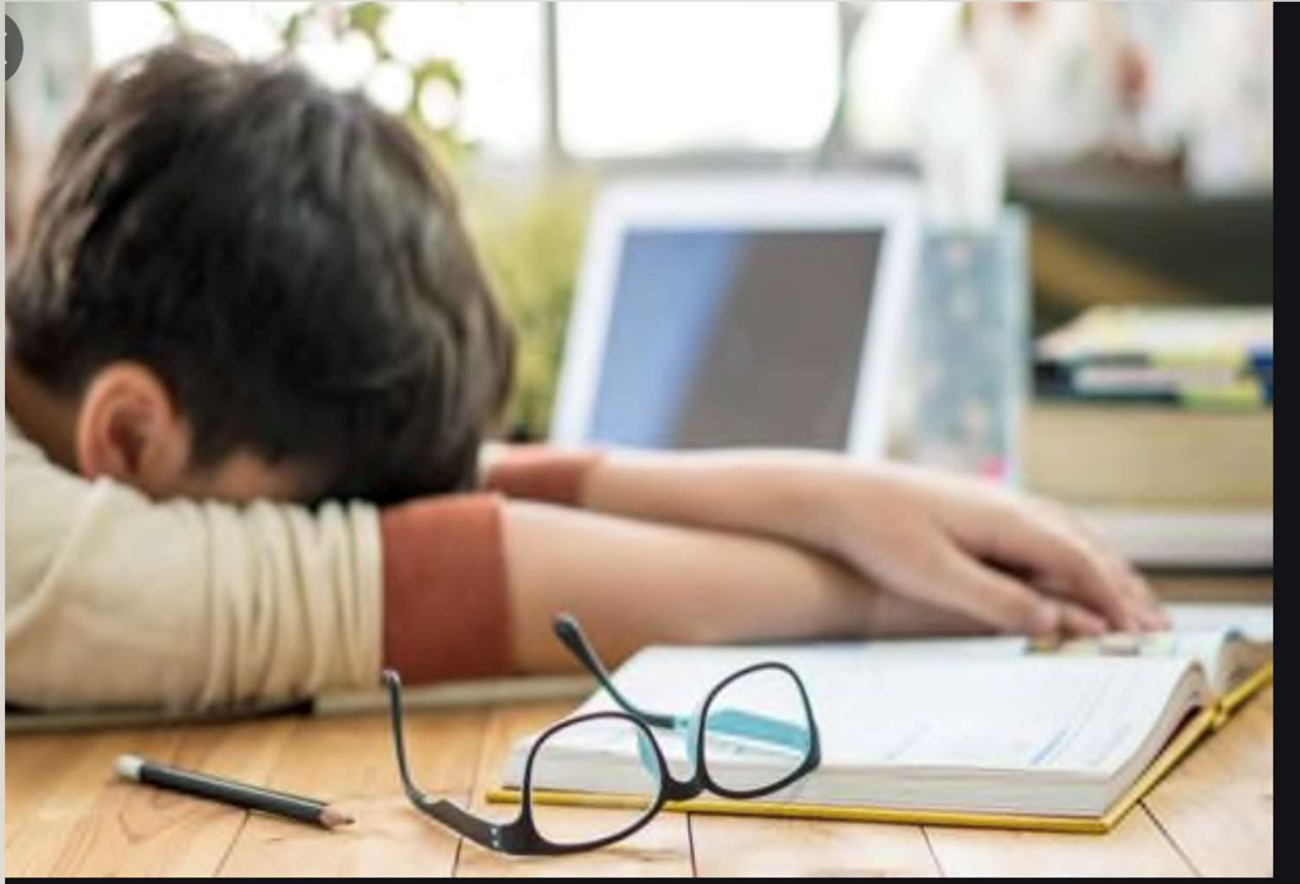
COVID PARENTS IN THE LIVING ROOM CLASSROOM

- Pre-Covid Teacher: Let's be partners. Help us out when we call
- Pre-Covid Parent: Parent-Teacher Conferences. We have some questions
- Covid Teacher: Please be a Teaching Assistant. Help me do my teaching
- Covid Parent: How do I teach this stuff?
- Covid Parent: Why are you teaching it this way? I have an alternative plan
- Covid Parent: Can you help me motivate my child at home?
- Covid Parent: OPEN SCHOOL NOW, PLEASE! I NEED TO WORK AND NOT TEACH

Do you mind if I strap your phone to my forehead so I can pretend you're looking at me when I talk?



Distance Learning:
Are We Having Fun Yet?



Students:
Too
Much Screen
Time!
Enough!

GOVERNANCE/LEADERSHIP THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- An Issue That is Big, Tough & Fuzzy
- How to “Make Sense” of the Issue
- Boards and Heads Honor Each Other’s Roles
- Boundaries Are Blurred
- Some Decisions Are Shared
- Doubles Tennis

PROBLEM SOLVING VIA TRIMODAL
GOVERNANCE (CHAIT, 2005)

Needed: Three Levels of Trusteeship

- **Level I: *Fiduciary*** (boards are concerned primarily with the stewardship of assets)
- **Level II: *Strategic*** (leadership function: “less management/more governance”)
- **Level III: *Generative*** (visionary function of shared leadership, R&D orientation for imagining and experimenting).
- When trustees work well in all three modes, the board achieves governance as leadership

TRADITIONAL TYPE I BOARD - FIDUCIARY

- Ensure organization's assets are conserved and optimized. Oversight of budgets, audits, finances.
- Ensure resources are used effectively in service of the mission. Ask not just whether but also how effectively used – performance measurement.
- Promote lawful and ethical behavior. Ensure compliance with standards of safety, legality.
- Usually someone can fix the problem.

FIDUCIARY OVERSIGHT TO FIDUCIARY INQUIRY. EXTRACT LEADERSHIP VALUE (CHAIT, 2005)

- How much does the Covid Plan cost?
- Should we use uncommitted funds to pay for Covid?
- Can we raise funds to increase distance learning technology?
- Does the Covid Plan align with our Mission and Values?
- What's the acceptable use of uncommitted funds?
- Who is disadvantaged by the Covid technology plan?

WHEN BOARDS ACT IN STRATEGIC MODE: LEVEL II

- Establish School's Mission
- Create Strategic Planning Process:
 - **Review** The Mission
 - **Assess** Current Goals/Status of Programs
 - **Plan** Appropriate Changes in Programs
 - **Create** Targets/Instruments to Measure Changes
 - **Implement** The Plan
 - **PLAN, IMPLEMENT, ASSESS, ADJUST, PLAN AGAIN!**

STRATEGIC THINKING – LEVEL II

EXTRACTING LEADERSHIP VALUE

- With pandemic restrictions on classroom occupancy, how can we use other physical plant spaces to implement our kind of teaching?
- We have a Covid-Reopening Plan with all necessary safeguards in place. What's our plan for protecting social-emotional health?
- What did we learn from last year's online learning (March – June) to help improve in-person instruction and plans for future curricular initiatives?

So What Is This Generative Thinking?

CHANGING MODES OF GOVERNANCE

Governance As Partnership

- Instead of asking, “What do you think of management’s plan,” the board is asked, “What is your thinking about the organization’s future?”

CASE STUDY I

WHAT'S OUR TEACHING MODE NEXT FALL?

Eagle Brook School offered in-person learning and distance learning in 2020-2021. Parents loved the flexibility for children to stay home if they did not feel safe.

Next fall, the school wants to go back to in-person learning only, especially if the State lifts most restrictions related to Covid.

Parents are concerned. They want multiple modes of teaching so they can live/work from the second home in Palm Beach or Hawaii if they don't feel safe in Colorado, and have come to appreciate the flexibility, especially before and after vacation periods.

EAGLE BROOK SCHOOL – FALL 2021 FIDUCIARY QUESTIONS

- Are additional faculty needed to maintain both forms of learning?
- What increased costs for technology are anticipated?
- Will faculty expect additional salaries to teach both modes?
- Are there associated costs for mailing classroom materials to families out of state?
- Would this plan be in place for the fall and spring terms?
- Would parents pay additional tuition for this service?
- Could we generate new revenue by starting a separate online program?

EAGLE BROOK SCHOOL – FALL 2021 STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

- Is distance learning aligned with the School's Mission?
- Does offering both modes of teaching enhance or detract from the School's reputation?
- Do we have enough faculty expertise in distance learning?
- Should the School consider creating a separate online academy?
- Will there be a reduction in enrollment if the School does not offer both modes?
- Could income from a separate online academy support increased professional development or curriculum expansion?

EAGLE BROOK SCHOOL – FALL 2021 GENERATIVE QUESTIONS

What will we do (or not do) if the price is right?

- Should we expand our Mission to include an online academy?
- How traditional or innovative a school do we wish to be?
- Will we attract a different kind of student for distance learning? Is that positive or negative?
- What's our best version of student: faculty relationships? In-person and/or online?

EVIDENCE OF GENERATIVE BEHAVIOR (TROWER, 2013)

- Collegiality, Not Congeniality
 - How Might Others See This?
- Dissent is Encouraged & Expected
 - Ensure Better Outcome, Prevent Groupthink
 - Robust Discourse Driven by Questions, Not Answers
 - What Are We Missing. Who is Most Affected?
- Renegades are Sanctioned
 - Elevate Governance Committee Value

CHALLENGES TO GENERATIVE MODEL

- It Takes More Time
 - Use Time Differently. Consent Agenda
- Can The Group Engage in Critical Thinking?
 - Readings and Critical Questions Before Meet
- Be Comfortable with Dialogue
 - “I’d like to follow-up on Kathy’s comments...”

What is the best use of the Board's time together?

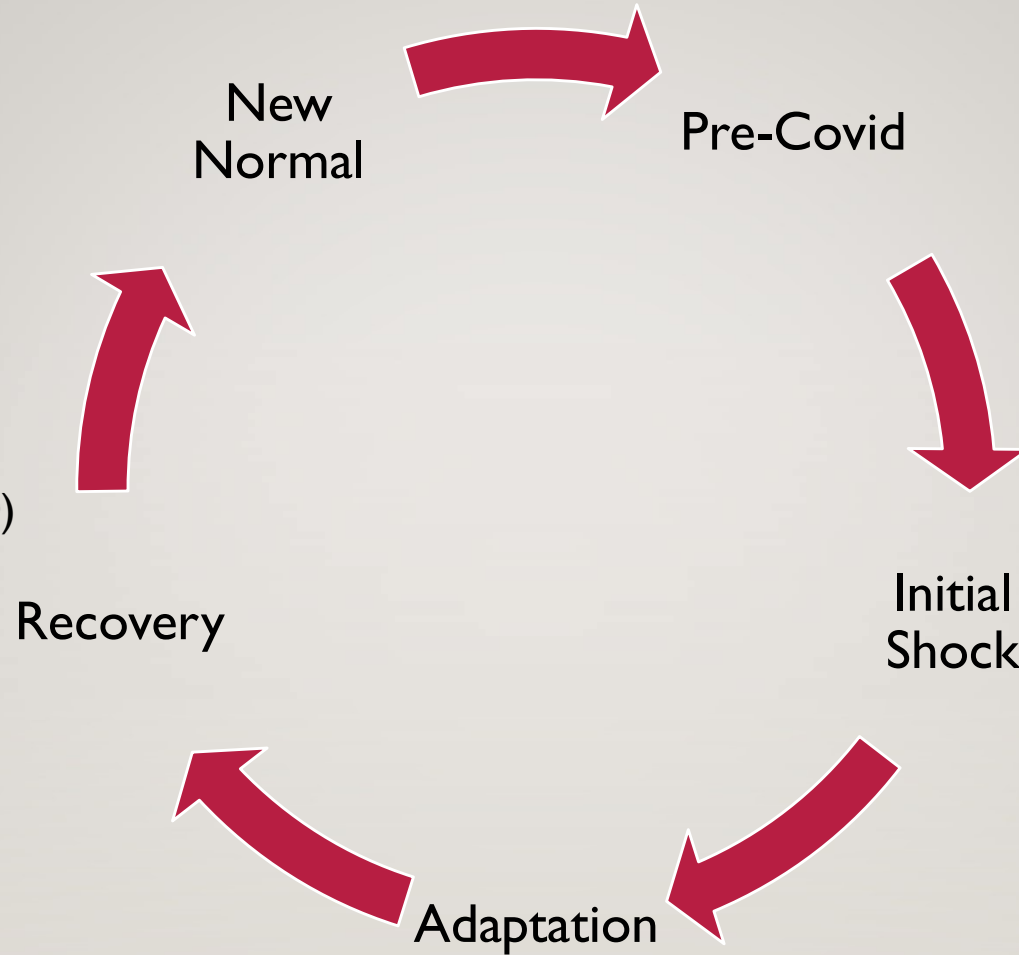


IN CRISIS, DIFFERENT ROLE FOR THE BOARD?

- Effective Oversight and Governance
 - VS
- In a crisis, the board has to step in and lean into heightened security. I normally say boards should be “noses in, fingers out,” but in a crisis they have to be “fingers in.” They have to be more intrusive.” (Trower, *Independent School*, Summer 2020)

5 Stages of Responding to A Crisis

(McMillin & Raggio, 12.1.20)

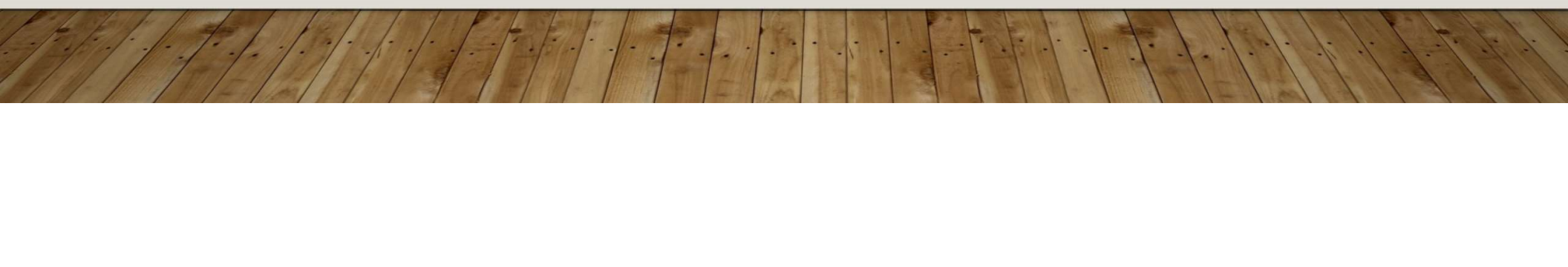


PARTNERSHIP ROLES IN A CRISIS

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

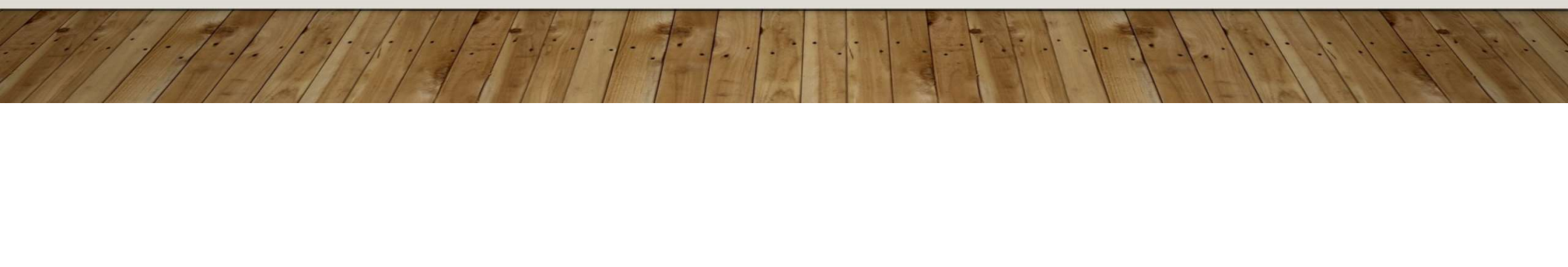
- Shock – gather data. Bring faculty/staff together. Plan with Board
- Adaption – organize human and program resources. Implement new plan
- Recovery –review mission, financial, program and personnel impacts. Adjust.
- New normal stable – implement new plan. HOS stabilizer
- New normal turbulent – gather data. Plan with Board

BOARD LEADERSHIP

- Shock – emergency strategic planning. Shift from risk management to risk leadership
 - Adaption – oversee new plan and lead strategy/vision; manage new risk
 - Recovery – review mission, financial, legal impact of crisis. mobilize support; make long-term (?) adjustments
 - New normal stable – return to oversight
 - New normal turbulent – prepare for next disruption
- 

GOVERNING IN AND THROUGH A PANDEMIC

(TROWER & ECKEL, BOARDSOURCE BLOG, NOV 2020)

- Appreciate Complexity
 - Focus on Core Values vs. Operational Solutions
 - Form Should Follow Function: Issue-driven vs. Calendar-driven schedule
 - Use Technology to Meet
 - Listen Carefully to Chief Executive's Learning
 - Adopt a Learner's Mindset
- 

FOUR QUESTIONS BOARDS SHOULD ASK

(TROWER & ECKEL, BOARDSOURCE BLOG, NOV 2020)

- How well is the board performing? What evidence supports that?
- What might the future hold and how can we best position the organization?
- What do we want to be out in front of? What should we wait and see?
- What is within our control and how can we leverage those things?

ADVICE TO HEADS OF SCHOOL

ENGAGE YOUR BOARD (BOARDSOURCE BLOG, 4.7.20)

- Stay Connected to Your Chair
- Do Not Go It Alone – Consult The Board or Create a Task Force
- Maintain Important Committee Functions
- Document Board Actions & Decisions
- Follow The By-Laws
- Embrace All Three Governance Modes: Fiduciary, Strategic & Generative
- Employ Board Members' Connections in Advocacy and Philanthropy

DEVELOPING THE BOARD
(BOARD MEMBER, MAY 2004, CHAIT ET AL.)

The SAT Analogy:

**Our board is to our school
as _____ is to _____.**

GOVERNANCE DYSFUNCTION

“OUR BOARD IS TO OUR SCHOOL AS ...”

- Loose steering wheel is to auto
- Fingernail is to blackboard
- Hamster is to wheel

- Source – Bill Ryan, AISNE Governance Workshop, 2007

THREE LEVELS OF BOARD GOVERNANCE
 (ADAPTED FROM *BOARD MEMBER*, MAY 2004, CHAIT ET AL.)

Board as Control Mechanism (Fiduciary, Oversight: “Doing things right”)	Board as Direction Setter (Strategic, Leadership: “Doing the right things”)	Board as Meaning Maker (Generative, Visionary: “Leaving a legacy”)
Dam : River Curbstone: Road Border Collie : Herd Traffic Tower: Pilot Governor: Engine Landlord: Tenant Anchor: Ship	Compass : Navigation Headlights : Auto Guidance System : Satellite Periscope : Submarine Flight Planner : Pilot Rudder : Ship	Inspiration : Poet Values : Choices Designer : Work of Art Spirit : Higher Purpose Lighthouse: Ship

GOVERNANCE AS LEADERSHIP

- “The ultimate antidote to micromanagement is macroengagement. If trustees join conversations that concern governance, trustees will govern; when exposed to matters of management, board members will manage.”

(R. Chait, “How To Keep Trustees From Being Micromanagers,” CHE, 5.06.05)

HERE'S TO PARTNERSHIP IN CREATING STRATEGIES FOR
THE FUTURE

THANK YOU

THE END