
Governance Workshop

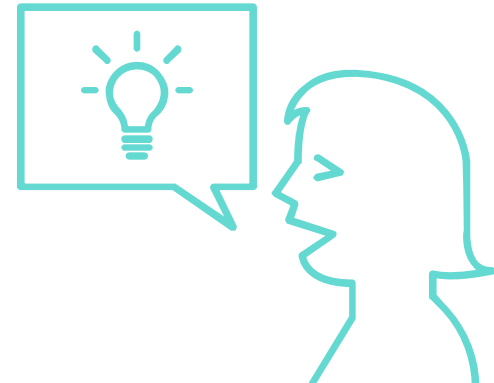
Anne-Marie Balzano, EdD, Mission & Data
Jerry Larson, EdD, Educational Directions



WELCOME!

***In the chat, please type
where you are and one
adjective to describe how
you're feeling this
morning!***

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A decorative background on the left side of the slide features a portion of a silver laptop at the top and several grey sticky notes below it. The sticky notes have handwritten text in various colors: 'PROCESS', 'PLANNING', 'STUDIO', 'IT', 'MNO', 'KL', 'GH', 'U', 'EF', and '7L'.

Agenda

1

Good Governance in the Partnership Model

2

Common Red Flag Warnings and What To Do About Them

3

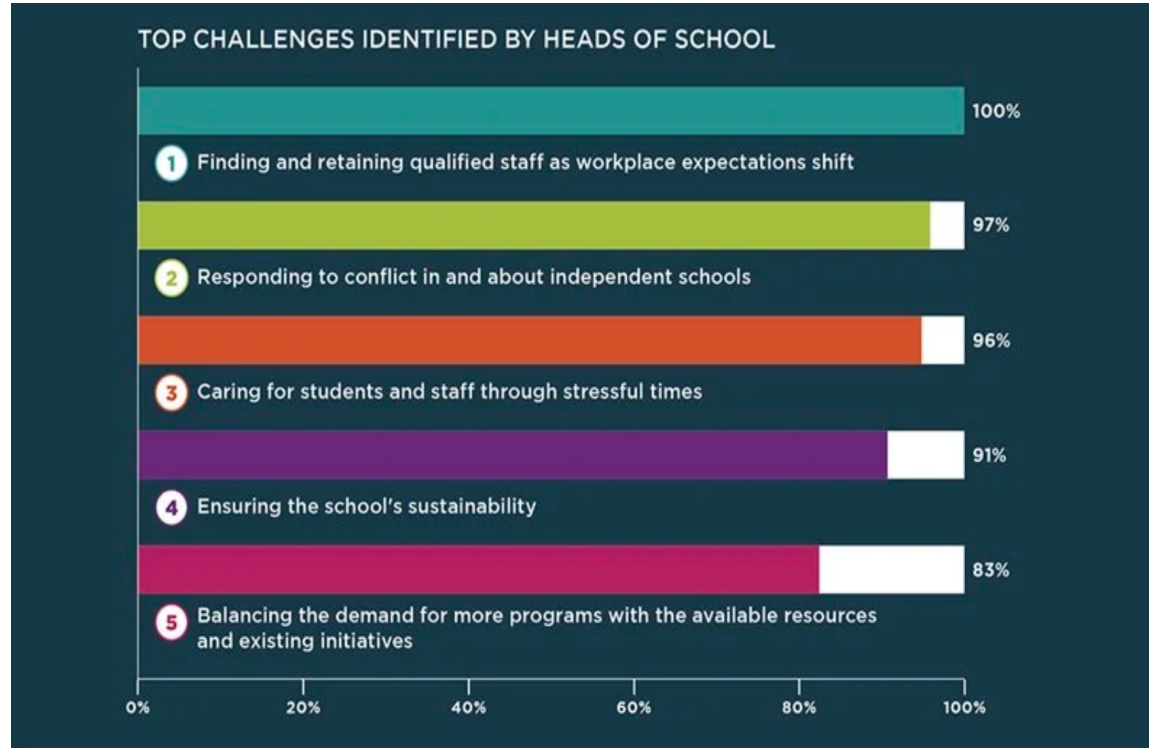
Head Support and Assessment

4

Board Self-Assessment and Head Searches


The National Perspective View

From the NAIS *Hot Issues Survey Report 2023*:
Challenges and Opportunities for Independent Schools



Top Challenges Facing Independent Schools

- Employee recruitment and retention
- Shifting demographics
- Measuring and communicating impact/value add
- Community polarization
- Economic uncertainty
- Enrollment and retention
- Financial sustainability
- Affordability
- Student and employee health and well-being
- Parent expectations
- Security and safety
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging



What should the board's role in risk management be?

How do I get my board to have strategic conversations?

Get more dog food!!!

Hey - can u chat?
My board chair wants to run the school.
Thanks!

What's Coming Across Our Desks

Board of Trustees

Succession planning
Role (in general - confusion, overstep) + in risk management, philanthropy
Committee function/operation challenges

Head of School

Employment agreements
Head evaluations (in general, 360, self-assessment)

Head + Board

Strategic planning, goal-setting for board/head/school, implementation

Risk Management

Setting up & maturing processes

Polarizing Topics + Discourse

Election season
Civil, political discourse

Investigations (internal, external)

Employee Challenges

Increased litigiousness
Staffing & agreements/documents

Accommodations

Employee + student
Leaves, academic, etc.

Mental Health

Employee + Student (+ Head!)

Parent Challenges

Partnership or pushback?
DEI backlash
Family court
Head evaluations (in general, 360, self-assessment)
Enrollment **contract** denial
Increased litigiousness

Good Governance Makes Navigating Complex Challenges Easier

Effective governance is a dynamic, collective activity in which well-informed trustees engage actively, and ask meaningful questions, on consequential issues with important outcomes for which they hold themselves (and not just the Head) accountable.

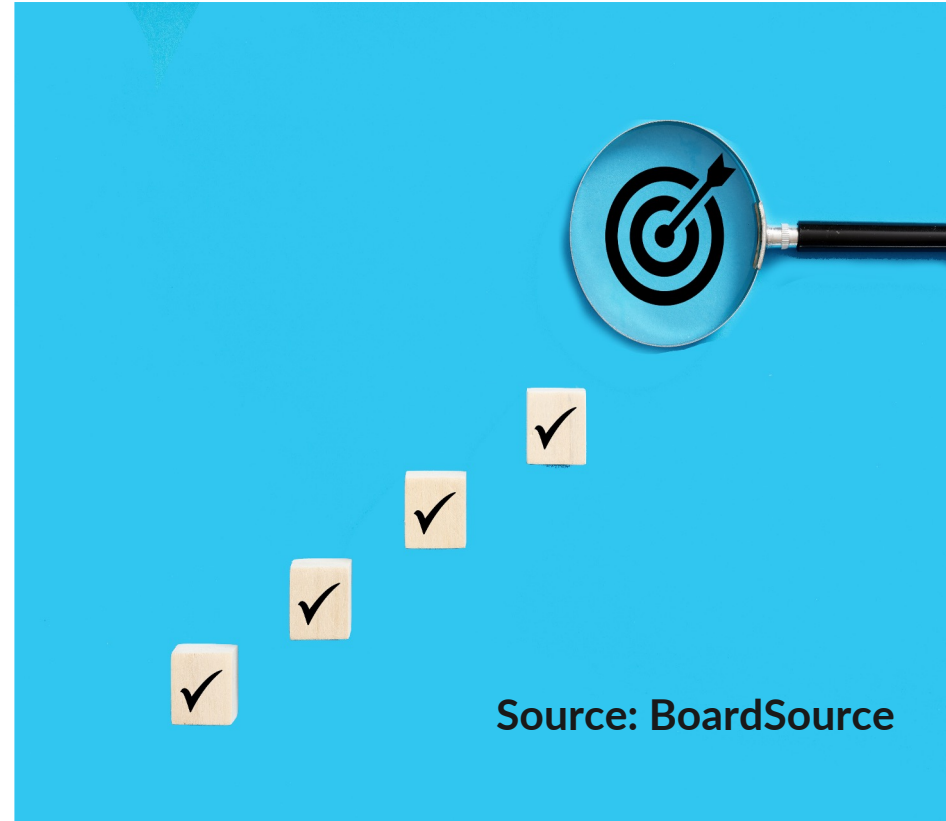
Source - Cathy A. Trower

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Leadership and Governance

Top Characteristics of High Performing Boards

- Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Strong strategic orientation—focusing on what’s most important in alignment to school mission
- A culture of self-assessment, accountability, and open and honest communication
- Healthy attention to board member recruitment, onboarding, and development
- Structuring for efficiency, development, and innovation (consent agenda/task forces)



***Governance as Leadership* ushered in a pivotal change in thinking, identifying three simultaneous, mutually reinforcing modes of governance.**

Fiduciary Mode	Strategic Mode	Generative Mode
<p>Boards are concerned with the stewardship of tangible assets.</p> <p>They ask, “What do we have and how do we use it?”</p>	<p>Boards create a strategic partnership with management.</p> <p>They ask about market positioning, strategic drivers/priorities, competition, and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Boards provide a less recognized but critical source of leadership.</p> <p>They ask, “Have we framed this issue correctly? How else might we look at this? What else should we consider?”</p>

Based on Richard P. Chait, William P. Ryan, and Barbara E. Taylor, *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*

The Governance Lenses Illustrated

The Field House

Fiduciary: Do we have the money and space for a new field house?

Strategic: Do we need a new field house to attract the students we want?

Generative: Are we unwittingly joining an “amenities race” in our industry if we build a field house?

Putting the Board/Head Partnership in Context



- NAIS research shows that a strong head/board chair partnership **supports leadership sustainability** and a weak partnership is a significant factor for **head turnover**
- A key component is both parties **understanding and fulfilling** their roles and responsibilities

How to Build Trust in the Strategic Partnership

- Authenticity
- Communication
- Competence
- Consistency
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Transparency



Understanding Roles and Responsibilities



The Board

- Articulates the guiding values of the school through policies that put the school's mission into action
- Creates and nurtures the mission, vision, and values of the school and refines as necessary
- Guides long-term strategy in collaboration with the HOS
- Hires, supports, evaluates, and empowers the HOS
- Ensures long-term financial sustainability
- Selects, recruits, and onboards new trustees

The Head

- Leads the school
- Collaborates with the chair and board
- Brings the mission, vision, and values to life through experience, programs, and school policies
- Implements an operational plan to achieve long-term strategy
- Hires, supervises, evaluates, and motivates staff
- Develops and oversees annual operational budget
- Manages the day-to-day operations of the school

Who's Job is it Anyway?

Kate Thompson has served as head of the Greenbriar School for the last two years. One of her goals was to bring more transparency and data to her board. Working closely with her admin team and board chair, she was excited to unveil a data dashboard for the trustees, including a section on the “Admission Pipeline.” As she previewed the new dashboard, one trustee, Bob Collins, highlighted the decrease in applications from 2022 to 2023.

“We can't be losing students at a time like this. Clearly, we need to do more marketing...and the sooner the better!” Bob declared.

“I heard Wentworth Academy just created a digital Viewbook. Maybe we could do something similar?” one trustee said. Other trustees began to offer examples of marketing strategies employed by other schools. The board requested the admission director join the next board meeting to provide an enrollment update and the opportunity for trustees to share their ideas.

The Governance Dichotomy: Govern and Support

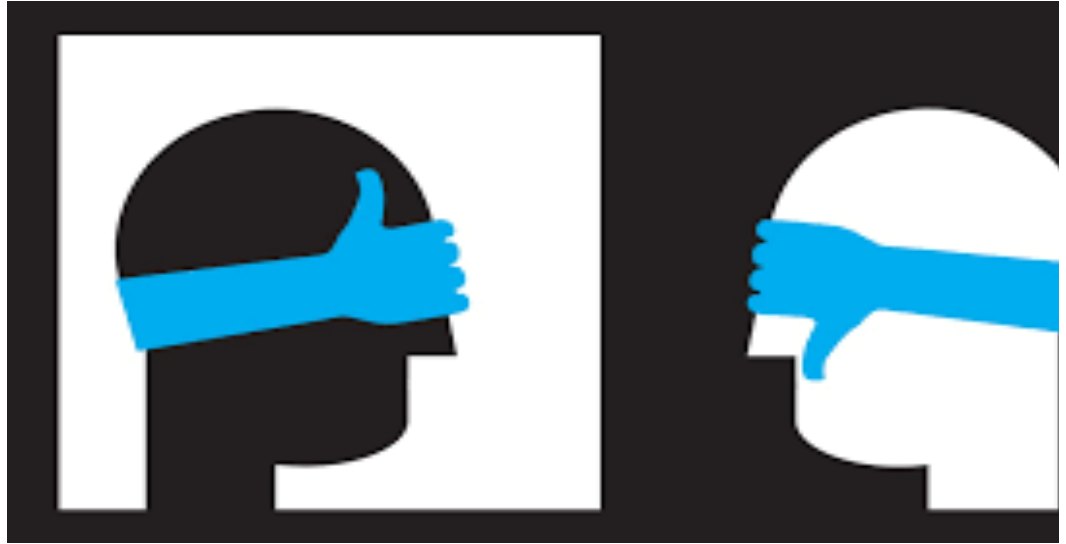
The Board as a Whole - GOVERNS

- Determine mission and purpose
- Hire, evaluate, and support the Head of School
- Strategic planning
- Ensure adequate financial resources
- Protect assets and provide proper financial oversight
- Build a competent board, orientation, self evaluation
- Ensure legal and ethical integrity

Individual Trustees - SUPPORT

- Fully participate in board and committee meetings
- Financial support
- Fiduciary responsibility
- Separate interests of the school from the needs of your child
- Accept and support board decisions
- Support the school and the HOS in the community
- Confidentiality
- Law of no surprises

When You're a Parent and a Trustee



- Remember your role in the boardroom
- Maintain confidentiality out of the boardroom
- Know when to refer to the Head of School
- Acknowledge power imbalance



- Which of these roles and responsibilities are the easiest for me to fulfill?
- Which ones are harder or more ambiguous? Why?

The Head of School's Role in the Govern & Support Framework

- Commit to the *Best Possible Relationship with the Board*
- Partner with the Board Chair, Executive Committee, and the entire Board of Trustees
- Be the *Architect, Leader, Coach, and Mentor* of the school's leadership team, along with faculty, students, and families
- Be the *Chief Influencer and Steward* of the climate and culture
- Lead and *manage* effectively
- Remember that "*The Main Thing Is to Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing*" (Mission, values, philosophy, vision) *and the student experience*
- Be goal-oriented with a *bias toward action*
- Be an *effective communicator*
- Be confident in being *accountable*, grounded in being a curious life-long learner, and *committed to continuous improvement*

Good Governance 101 Questions– How Many of These Are a YES?

- Do trustees come to board and committee meetings prepared and ready to engage/ ask questions?
- Do trustees freely share their opinions, even when they are contrary to the group?
- Do we maintain confidentiality?
- Do we have a clearly defined leadership succession process?
- Do we have a robust recruiting and onboarding program?
- Do we base our decisions on data/ information gathering?
- Do we support a healthy relationship with our Head of School?
- Do we understand our roles and responsibilities?
- Do we provide financial support to the school?
- Are we ambassadors and “good ancestors”?
- Do we speak with one voice after decisions are made?

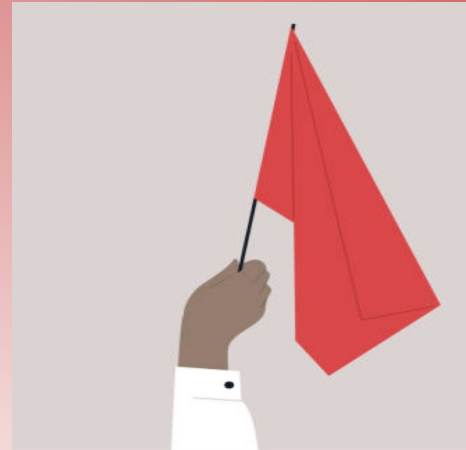
RED FLAG WARNINGS

What warning signs have you seen (or heard about) that indicates the partnership between the Head and Board is in trouble?



COMMON RED FLAG WARNINGS

- *Lack of communication*
- *Lack of trust*
- *Lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities*
- *Meetings after the meeting*
- *Little to no board engagement*
- *Unable to hear the signal through the noise*
- *Lack of clear assessment processes*



Fuzzy Math - Fuzzy Boundaries?

Bayside School - a pre-K through 12th grade school, has a solid reputation for its academic excellence. Bayside competes with several schools in the area, and annually loses both applicants and previously-enrolled students to Rydell and Hogwarts, among others.

Over the past 2-3 years in particular, a small but growing number of parents have been complaining about the “fuzzy math” being taught at the school and a few families have even cited this as one of the reasons for moving to Rydell/Hogwarts before finishing the lower or middle school programs at Bayside. At two separate board meetings, several Bayside trustees have raised the issue of math curriculum, claiming it was causing reputational risk to the school.

The entire “fuzzy math” issue comes to a head at the latest Board meeting. Kelly and Zach, two trustees who are also current parents, ask that the Board review the math curriculum - demanding an audit of the program, citing its direct tie to the mission of the school and their fiduciary responsibility in light of lost families. They want the entire Board to vote, that evening, on whether to approve a Board-overseen audit of the Math Department/Curriculum.

Small Group Discussion

- What is the primary problem? Secondary? How are you naming the problem(s)?
- How would you respond when math was first raised in the board meeting? In this latest meeting?
- Should anyone else be involved in this issue or its solution?
- What are some steps that could have been taken earlier in this scenario?
- What is the impact on the head-board partnership model?

LET'S TAKE 5!



Effective HOS Assessment

*Supporting leadership sustainability and
professional growth*



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Getting Started

In the chat, share **ONE** adjective that describes your current HOS review process.



Why HOS Assessment Matters

- Ensures the **HOS** has **support** and **board fulfills key responsibility**
- Measures **progress against goals** mutually agreed upon between HOS and Board
- Recognizes the importance of **affirmation** and **growth/professional development** for the HOS
- Provides a critical **feedback loop** between the head of school and the Board
- Likely **increases length of head's tenure**, creating greater stability for the school



For Assessment to Be Effective

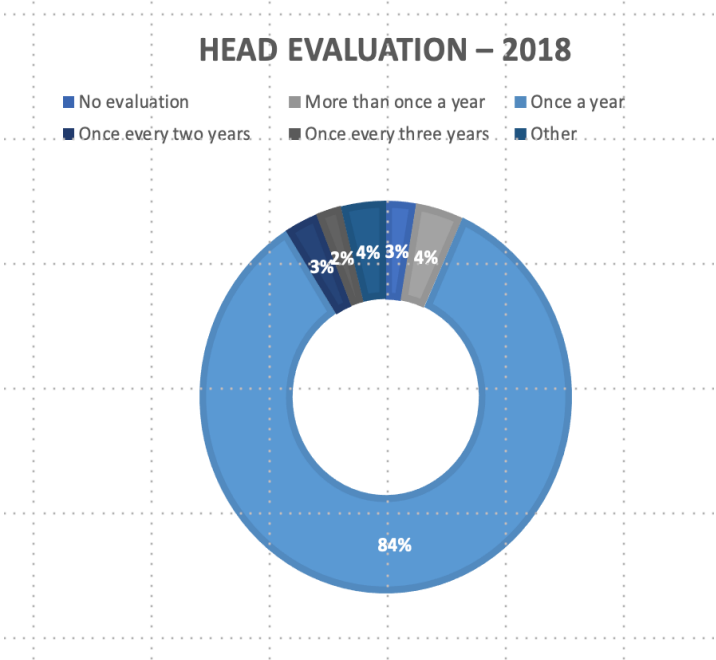


- Feedback – positive and constructive – must rest upon a foundation of **trust and open communication** between the HOS, the Board Chair and the Board.
- There must be a **shared understanding** of:
 - goals
 - how and when goals will be measured
 - what evaluation tool will be used
 - success signals
 - frequent updates on progress or lack thereof
 - agreement on when to pivot

Data from the 2018 NAIS Governance Study

Only **73%** of heads reported that their boards set **annual goals** with them.

Only **84%** of heads reported being evaluated annually.



Why Goals and Assessment Matter: 2020 NAIS Head Turnover Report

	Head of School	Board Chair	Board Member
Board sets achievable goals for head of school.	77%	95%	90%
Head of school and board collaborate on prioritization of annual goals.	77%	95%	88%
Board provides periodic feedback to head of school on progress in meeting annual goals.	68%	94%	85%
Board gives head of school adequate time to achieve goals.	77%	94%	92%

The Assessment Cycle



Best Practices for Head of School Assessment

Source: Center for Creative Leadership



Board Chair and HOS should establish clear parameters for their working relationship.



Goal-setting should be collaborative and aligned to the vision, mission, and strategic plan



Clear metrics for assessment should be outlined.



Both formative and summative feedback are provided throughout the year.



Open, transparent, and regular communication is key!

Shared Understanding of Goals and Outcomes

- Process for assessment is determined and documented and communicated to the Head of School and the Board **before the evaluation period begins**
- Goals are often multi-year and should be assessed on progress versus completion
- Outcomes (the **HOW** progress will be assessed) should be identified in collaboration with the Head of School and be **measurable**.

Types of Assessment:

Formative vs Summative

Formative assessment is ongoing throughout the year and helps the HOS and board members better understand where the school is regarding progress towards stated goals and objectives, as well as ways the head can continue to improve.

Summative assessment occurs at the end of the year as the head's yearly evaluation and is an evaluation of progress towards the goals that the head and board mutually agreed upon in the fall.

Frequent, Formative Feedback Is Key!

Board Chair and HOS

- Clarity about roles
- Head leads the school
- Chair offers counsel and coach

- Focus of weekly meetings
- Progress towards goals and overall health of the school
- Celebrate successes
- Identify challenges
- Determine when to revisit
- Agree to pivot

Board and HOS

- Clarity about roles
 - Head leads the school
 - Board must understand why the school is making the choices its making

- Focus of Board meetings
 - Set agendas for a full year
 - HOS updates board on goals so the board understands why and how progress has been made and what challenges exist
 - Board raises questions and offers feedback and guidance

Board Assessment of HOS: Governance level questions

- How would you describe the head's **understanding and stewarding of the school's mission?**
- How successful has the head been in achieving **his/her/their annual goals?**
- How does the head engage in **strategic planning for the school / implementation of the strategic plan?**
- How would you describe the **head's relationship and communication with the full board?**
- How would you describe the head's **relationship and communication with Parents? Alumni?**
- How effective has the head been in partnering with the CFO and board to **supervise and manage the school's financial resources?**
- How does the head partner with Director of Advancement and board to **support annual and major fundraising for the school?**



Effective Board Self- Assessment

*Supporting effective governance practices
and trustee development*



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Board Self-Assessment and Accountability

Properly conducted board evaluations help establish the individual and collective responsibilities of directors and identify where the board and indeed individual directors need to **enhance their performance.**

From BoardSource



Areas Typically Assessed

- Board's work in support of the school's mission and strategic plan
- Board's understanding of fiscal and legal responsibilities
- Board's relationship with HOS and admin team
- Composition and structure of the board
- Engagement of board members and committees
- Professional development and education of the Board
- Progress towards goals

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Formative Assessment Examples

Board Meeting Evaluation as Target Statements

I have a strong, positive relationship with everyone on the Board.

During meetings, trustees have many opportunities to give input, make choices and ask questions.

The Board has meaningful rituals that builds community and clarity among trustees.

The meeting agenda was timely, clear and informative.

Board meeting structure offers regular opportunities for trustees to think, reflect and collaborate.

Today's meeting objectives were met and norms were respected.

There is enough time devoted to each agenda item and for productive disagreement.

Board decisions are backed by evidence that has been vetted and discussed sufficiently.

The mission and vision of the school is considered in every discussion.

All trustees are equally listened to and heard from.

Participation in the Board provides opportunities for my personal and professional growth.

I understand my roles and responsibilities as a trustee on this Board.

agree disagree

Blake School (MN): Assessment Tool for Trustee Participation

Board Member Function	Threshold Participation	Full Participation (Meets Threshold Participation Criteria)	Exceptional Participation
Board and Committee Meetings	Attends and actively participates in at least 70% of meetings. Reads all meeting materials. Participates on a Board committee. Understands school priorities drive Board work and meetings are not a platform for personal initiatives.	Attends 85% of meetings. Participates on two Board committees. Reads all materials and prepares for meetings.	Attends all Board and committee meetings. Prepares for every meeting. Serves as a committee chair, on a task force, or as an officer of the Board.
Stewardship and Organizational Health	Makes annual giving a personal priority. Helps engage others actively in the life of the school and promotes the work of the Board through introductions, networking, contacts with professional peers, or in-kind contributions	Contributes to and attends at least one friend-raising or fundraising event. Helps engage others constructively in the school and supports admissions and advancement efforts.	Contributes to and attends at least two friend-raising or fundraising events. Plays an active role in promoting the mission through admissions or advancement efforts
Board Development	Attends Board orientation. Reads orientation materials. Understands and can articulate school mission and strategic priorities. Keeps all Board and committee meeting discussions confidential. Supports all Board decisions when out in the community.	Actively supports the school mission and its leadership in interactions with community members. Understands the boundary between governance and management and encourages community members to follow the school's chain of communication.	Serves as a mentor to a new Board member. Actively reinforces the boundary between governance and management in Board work and guides community members in following the school's chain of communication.
School Public Image	Becomes familiar with school programs and offerings. Clearly articulates the mission, programs, services, accomplishments, and goals of the school.	Speaks with others outside the community about the school's mission, strategic goals and accomplishments. Works to heighten the positive reputation of the school.	Actively garners support for the school beyond the school community. Attends community events on behalf of the Board and promotes the school to potential applicants and current families.

Board Summative Self- Assessment Options

- NAIS Board Self-Assessment
- BoardSource
Independent School
Board Assessment
- Design your own!



Assessment *and* Continuous Learning

What Assessment Can Do:

- Indicate how the board *thinks* it's doing
- Frame conversations about your board's strengths and areas of growth
- Provide a format for discussing ongoing issues and concerns
- Provide a baseline from which to create goals for the following year
- Allow trustees to express their concerns

What Assessment Cannot Do:

- Miraculously transform the Board overnight
- Solve problems with a difficult board member

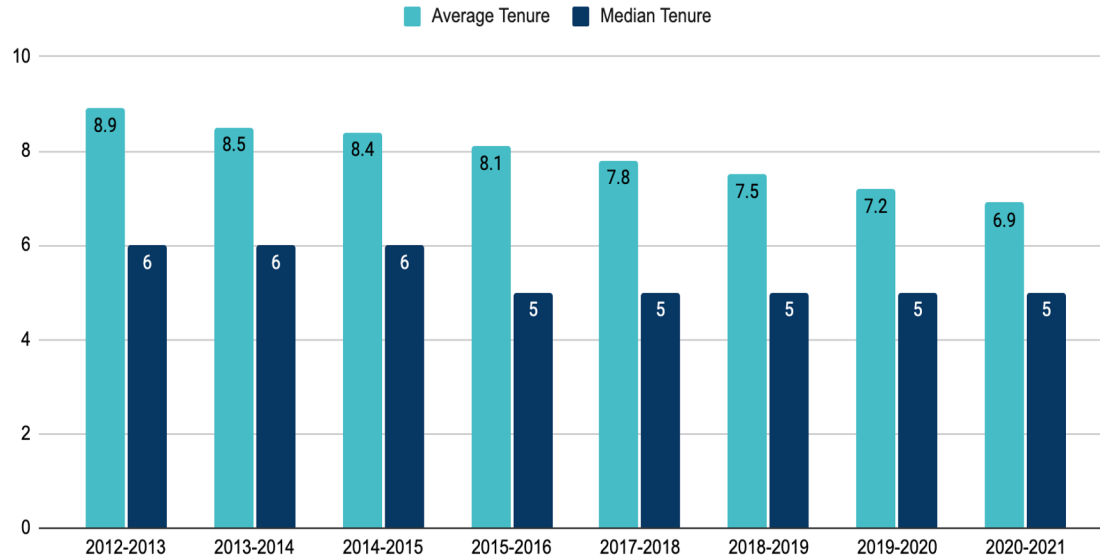
HOS Search Considerations



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How Long Are Heads Staying?

Average and Median Tenure for All Sitting Heads



Source: DASL

Why Boards Hire New Leaders



JTBD 1

When our school has a specific issue that needs to be addressed (enrollment, fundraising, etc.) and the current HOS is unequipped to handle the issue (or doesn't believe there is an issue), help us find a suitable replacement with a proven record of success so we can turn our school around.



JTBD 2

When we are confident in the strategy we have set for our school, but our current HOS has chosen to leave, help us find a suitable replacement who will reinforce the values of our school and execute our existing strategic vision so we can continue along our existing path.



JTBD 3

When we believe our school is succeeding, but we acknowledge that staying relevant requires (some) change, help us find a HOS who will bring a fresh perspective and suggest changes so we can maintain our relevance while still executing our school's existing vision.

Conduct a Needs Assessment Prior to Engaging a Search Firm

1. **Start with your school mission.** Does your mission statement describe the school's highest goals? Does your board support the current mission statement?
2. **Develop key questions.** For example, what are your school's strengths and weaknesses now? Where does your school see itself in the future?
3. **Collect data and feedback from key constituents.** Be as inclusive as possible.
4. **Be familiar with national research and discussion about key education issues.** What are the best practices?
5. **Make sense of the data you gather before taking action.** What do the data tell you about your school, your culture, and what constituents think?
6. **Formulate a new leader profile base on accurate assessments of collected data.** Be true to your school and honest with the candidate.

Creating the Search Committee

Usually 6-8 people
comprised of:

- Board chair
- Trustees
- Admin/faculty/staff



Develop an Intentional Transition Support Plan



- Remember the importance of celebrating the outgoing HOS – this is vital to a smooth transition
- Consider 1-2 transition visits to help pass the baton between the two HOS.
- Plan for and budget for the new HOS professional development
- Consider the new HOS' personal life – Partner? Children?
 - How will the board help the head and their family (if applicable) integrate into the broader community?
- Utilize a Transition Team (4-5 folks): BC and HOS, other member of Exec committee, a leadership team member. Some boards also include a student, alum, etc.



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Anne-Marie Balzano, Ed.D
ambalzano@missionanddata.com

