



# Collaborative Governance

Using research as our guide, we will explore effective governance practices, common challenges, and practical strategies to support strong System Education Leader and Board relationships within a school authority.

Information is from our perspective and not Alberta School Boards Association or any other organization.

Reflections and advice from “experienced Superintendents/System Education Leaders”

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# AGENDA

Part 1: Board/Superintendent Relationship

Part 2: Effective Governance Practices

Your Turn #1

Part 3: Common Challenges

Your Turn #2

Part 4: Practical Solutions

Your Turn #3



# Part 1: Board/Superintendent Relationship

# Why is the relationship so important?

It is the cornerstone of a functional school district with a direct impact on:

- student achievement
- financial stability
- operational efficiency

A strong, trusting partnership ensures:

- aligned strategic goals
- clear communication
- collaborative leadership

An effective relationship:

- prevents governance dysfunction
- reduces turnover
- fosters a positive educational environment

# So how do you create an effective relationship?

- Keep focused on student outcomes
- Create role clarity
- Collaborate
- Be the connection
- Build board capacity
- Clearly communicate
- Proactively succession plan
- Lead

# Things to be aware of..

- Know your trustees and why they ran
  - Extrinsic vs intrinsic motivations
- Few trustees truly know or understand what governance is
- Boards really only have 3 roles:
  - Political advocacy
  - Fiduciary duties
  - Financial literacy



## Part 2: Effective Governance Practices

# The Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard

## Building Effective Relationships

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**A superintendent establishes a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment by building positive and productive relationships with members of the school community and the local community.**

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as:

- a. collaborating with community and provincial agencies to address the needs of students and their families;
- b. employing team-building strategies and using solution-focused processes to resolve challenges;
- c. building and sustaining relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders, local leaders and community members;
- d. modeling ethical leadership practices, based on integrity and objectivity;
- e. establishing constructive relationships with students, staff, school councils, parents/guardians, employee organizations, the education ministry and other stakeholder organizations; and
- f. facilitating the meaningful participation of members of the school community and local community in decision-making.

## Supporting Effective Governance

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**A superintendent of schools as referred to in the *Education Act*, as chief executive officer of the board and chief education officer of the school authority, provides the board with information, advice and support required for the fulfillment of its governance role, and reports to the Minister on all matters required of the superintendent as identified in the *Education Act* and other provincial legislation.**

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as:

- a. establishing and sustaining a productive working relationship with the board, based on mutual trust, respect and integrity;
- b. ensuring that all students and staff are provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging;
- c. ensuring that all students in the school authority have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister of Education;
- d. ensuring that the board's plans, resource allocations, strategies and procedures lead to the achievement of its goals and priorities;

- e. ensuring that the board's fiscal and resource management is in accordance with all statutory, regulatory and board requirements;
- f. supporting the board in the fulfilment of its governance functions in the fiduciary, strategic and generative realms;
- g. implementing board policies and supporting the regular review and evaluation of their impact;
- h. ensuring the support, ongoing supervision and evaluation of all staff members in relation to their respective professional responsibilities;
- i. facilitating collaboration among the board, staff and First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders, organizations and communities to establish strategic policy directions in support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement and development;
- j. building the capacity of the board and staff to predict, communicate and respond to emergent circumstances, including emergency readiness and crisis management, and to political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts and trends;
- k. supporting the board in its engagement with the school community to develop a vision of a preferred future for student success;
- l. facilitating ongoing public communication about the board's operations and the achievement of its goals and priorities; and
- m. promoting constructive relations between the board and staff, as well as provincial authorities, post-secondary institutions and education stakeholder organizations.

# Policy 2: The Role of the Board

## G-TEC Policy: Governing through Engagement & Collaboration

### Policy 2 - sample

#### ROLE OF THE BOARD

As a corporate entity with natural person powers established by provincial legislation and given authority by the Education Act and attendant Regulations, and the corporate body elected by the electors that support XYZ Division, the Board shall provide overall direction and leadership to the Division. It is accountable for the provision of appropriate educational programs and services to resident students of the Division to enable their success, in keeping with the requirements of government legislation, regulations and orders, and the values of the electorate.

The Board accepts the responsibility of providing an education system that is organized and operated in the best interests of the students it serves. It exercises this responsibility through setting of clear strategic direction, the wise use of resources, fiduciary accountability and the generative engagements of constituents.

#### Specific Areas of Responsibility

1. Accountability for Student Learning and Wellness
  - 1.1 Provide overall direction for the Division by establishing vision, mission and values.
  - 1.2 Support the establishment of a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.
  - 1.3 Annually approve the process and timelines for the refinement of the multi-year Education Plan.
  - 1.4 Identify Board priorities at the outset of the annual Education Plan engagement process.
  - 1.5 Enable the infusion of cultural perspectives within student learning, as defined by each community.
  - 1.6 Enable and support the development of pathways beyond the residential school legacy.
  - 1.7 Enable processes to support quality teaching.
  - 1.8 Provide for school and program reviews as necessary to monitor the achievement of outcomes.

### Policy 2 – sample (Catholic)

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The Board must fulfill its key role of ensuring that education in our Division is Christ-centered and models Catholic values.

#### Specific Areas of Responsibility

1. Faith Leadership
  - 1.1 Be accountable to the Division's Catholic ratepayers by being an advocate for the preservation of Catholic Education constitutional rights in Alberta.
  - 1.2 Participate in and make decisions regarding Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA) matters.
  - 1.3 Ensure regular communication with the Bishop regarding Catholic Education issues in the Division.
  - 1.4 Act in accordance with Canon Law in regards to Catholic Education.
  - 1.5 Participate in Faith Development opportunities and ensure that a strong Faith Development component is provided for all students and staff.
2. Accountability for Student Learning and Wellness
  - 2.1 Provide overall direction for the Division by establishing vision, mission and values.
  - 2.2 Support the establishment of a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.
  - 2.3 Annually approve the process and timelines for the refinement of the multi-year Education Plan.

# Policy 2 (Board) & Policy 12 (Superintendent)

## **POLICY 2: ROLE OF THE BOARD**

"ASBA"

### Specific Areas of Responsibility

1. Accountability for Student Learning and Wellness
2. Community Assurance
3. Accountability to Provincial Government
4. Fiscal Accountability
5. Board/ Superintendent Relations
6. Board Development
7. Policy
8. Political Advocacy
9. Selected Responsibilities

## **Policy 12: Superintendent**

"ASBA"

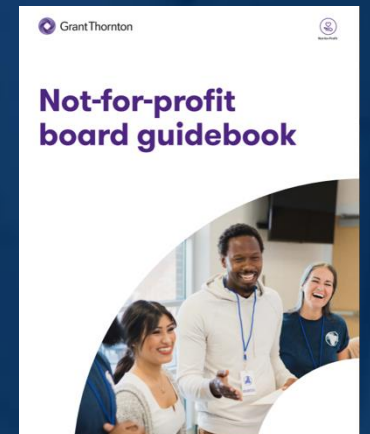
### Specific Areas of Responsibility

1. Student Learning
2. Student Wellness
3. Fiscal Responsibility
4. Personnel Management
5. Policy/ Administrative Procedure
6. Superintendent/ Board Relations
7. Strategic Planning & Reporting
8. Organizational Management
9. Communications & Community Relations
10. Leadership Practices
11. Selected Responsibilities

# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

1. Preserving, reshaping when necessary, and monitoring the achievement of the school authority's vision, mission, core values & priorities (ASBA 1. Student Learning & Wellness)

*Board members need to make certain that a Strategic Plan is in place describing how the organization will fulfill its mission going forward. In addition, Board members should measure each proposed action against both the organization's mission and its approved Strategic Plan.*





# BLACK GOLD SCHOOL DIVISION

## Our Vision

To inspire success.

## Our Mission

We provide the highest possible standard of educational opportunities for students within the Division through the use of available resources.

## Our Core Values

- Student-Centred Learning**  
 At Black Gold, learning starts and focuses on the student. Though it doesn't end there. Every member of the school division engages in active learning, with the purpose of creating the best experience for our students and staff and the healthiest school communities possible. We celebrate the light bulb moments with students and staff alike. We work hard and we have fun too.
- Relationships**  
 At Black Gold, we foster positive relationships based on mutual respect and trust. We make meaningful connections with each other that strengthen over time. We don't give up on students or each other. We are proud of the relationships that we build in our schools and in the communities that we call home.
- Safe, Supportive Environment**  
 At Black Gold, we strive to create an inclusive environment that embraces diversity and is supportive and safe for all. We value the health and wellness of every member of our school community and commit ourselves to sustaining this welcoming and positive culture every day.
- Passion**  
 We love what we do. We inspire wonder and curiosity in our students to become engaged learners. We seek to light a spark in our students and in our colleagues to achieve their goals and dreams. We dedicate our time and creativity to help each other succeed along our journey through life. And we go the extra mile to create memorable moments.
- Responsible Resource Management**  
 At Black Gold, we honour and acknowledge that we are active and welcome members of a larger community. We do our best to ensure that students and staff have the tools they need to succeed. We manage our financial resources responsibly. We have developed a reputation for being innovative and for applying technology wisely to the process of learning. We value each person who chooses to work with us and commit to helping them to develop their skills and talents. We understand that time is a precious resource and we use it wisely.



# Our Strategic Direction

## Priority: Success

Promote growth that leads to success for every student from Pre-kindergarten through to post-secondary, providing multiple pathways and a focus for all learners.

### GOAL 1

A higher number of children begin Grade 1 with key milestones in emotional, social, intellectual and physical developmental met

### GOAL 2

High learning expectations and achievement for the foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are promoted, with particular attention to students in need of additional support.

### GOAL 3

A greater number of students achieve learning outcomes and have the knowledge and skills they need to make informed education and career/life choices.

### GOAL 4

All staff and students will model the character and people skills\* necessary to establish positive relationships, effective work practices and good citizenship.

*\*Communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, creativity, work ethic, interpersonal skills, time management, leadership, attention to detail.*

## Priority: Wellness

Build safe, positive, healthy environments for learning and working to nurture student and staff well-being. (supportive).

### GOAL 1

Students, staff and parents contribute to a safe, welcoming, healthy and inclusive learning and working environment that welcomes diversity and promotes personal and professional growth and wellness

### GOAL 2

Students and staff learn and work in environments that are clean, safe, sustainable and well maintained.

### GOAL 3

Data is used to inform decisions that optimize the distribution of resources.

## Priority: Engagement & Partnerships

Engage our educational partners to enhance public education and respect the diversity of our communities.

### GOAL 1

Families and school communities are engaged in their children's education.

### GOAL 2

Partnerships with community organizations are cultivated to support the growth, development, well-being and success of students of all abilities.

### GOAL 3

The school experience is enhanced by providing high quality curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students within the Division through the use of available resources.



# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

## 2. Selecting & evaluating the Superintendent/ CEO (ASBA 5. Board/ Superintendent Relations)

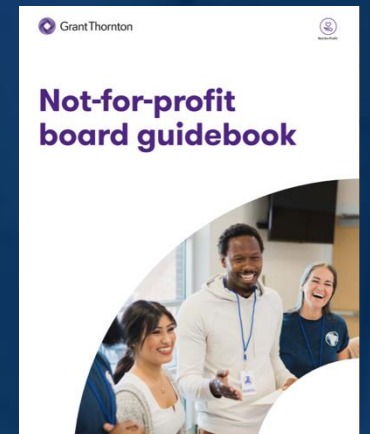
*Section 33 (1) (j) “recruit the superintendent and trust the day-to-day management of the School Authority to the staff through the Superintendent”*

**Key:** the Role of the Superintendent (policy) and your contract need to indicate how often and how you will be evaluated.

*Year 1, significant. Years 2 & 3, light. Year 4, significant.*

*Focus on evidence and structured questions.*

*Focus on strengths-based.*



# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

## 3. Ensure the school authority is well-managed (ASBA 1. Student Learning & Wellness, 2. Community Assurance, 3. Accountability to Provincial GOA, 4. Fiscal)

*While the board does not manage the organization, it should be satisfied that the organization is managed effectively. The board needs to ask enough questions to satisfy itself that:*

- *A sufficient number of qualified staff are assigned to key task*
- *Resources are allocated through a realistic budget, consistent with the mission*
- *Internal controls are placed to prevent fraud or noncompliance comp*
- *Proper ethical and governance standards are followed,*
- *The programs of the organization have included defined purposes, and the purposes are being achieved.*

## 4. Set the tone at the top (ASBA 2. Community Assurance, 6. Board Development)

*The board needs to be clear and unequivocal of its commitment to hold itself in management to the highest fiduciary and ethical standards.*

*It must communicate this commitment to the entire organization. In virtually all cases of organizational fraud or wrongdoing, as strong contributing factor as a lot of such clarity from leadership.*

# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us. (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

## 5. Represent the School Authority to the external community and the community to School Authority ( ASBA 2. Community Assurance, 8. Political Advocacy)

*The board must serve a bridge to the community. Board members advocate on behalf of the organization, helping to raise awareness of its mission, often by being involved in formal consultations and advocating to key constituents.*

## 6. Protect the school authority from external threats (all areas ASBA #1-8 & d. Select Responsibilities)

*Issues arise that threaten the autonomy, services, or good name of an organization such as scandals involving the organization or similar organizations or political attacks for the purposes or programs of the organization. Board members need to step forward to explain and defend the organization.*

# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us. (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

## 7. Exercising financial stewardship (ASBA 4. Fiscal Accountability)

*The board he is responsible for approving the budget template and challenging a substances in the template as well as major financial transactions.*

*Key documents include the Education Plan, the Annual Results Report, GOA Budget template, the Audited Financial Statement, and management prepared Quarterly Fiscal Updates.*

## 8. Approve key policies and bylaws (ASAB 7. Policy)

*Management writes key governance related procedures:*

*100 General Administration*

*400 Personnel & Employees*

*200 Instructional Programs & Materials*

*500 Business procedures*

*300 Students*

*600 Transportation procedures*

# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us. (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

## 9. Ensure appropriate succession plans are in place for management

(ASBA 5. Board/ Superintendent Relationships)

*The board should ensure that management has developed succession plans for all key members of senior leadership. Often done through a Senior Leadership Academy that includes targeted professional development.*

## 10. Review results achieved by management

(ASBA 1. Accountability for Student Learning & Wellness)

*Look forward, is responsible for assessing Senior leadership's efforts and progress towards efficiency and effectiveness, improve improvements that support the achievement of operational, strategic, and mission goals.*

*Assurance reports (Inclusive, FNMI, Student Achievement/ Satisfaction/ HR & Occupational Health & Safety, Faith Permeation, Quarterly Financial, Operational/ Capital Reserves, Transportation)*

# Effective Governance Practices: what the research tells us. (comparing research to ASBA's Policy 2)

## 11. Complete a Board Skills Matrix (ASBA Policy 2 reference 5. Board Development)

*Clifton Strengths, 4Di, other*

# Covenant

### COMPETENCY LEGEND:

- 0: No Experience**
- 1: Basic Familiarity**  
(Limited use of skill or basic understanding of the principles)
- 2: Applied Experience**  
(Working understanding of the principles)
- 3: Deep Expertise**  
(Intuitive grasp of the underlying)

## Board of Directors Skills Matrix

First Name	Last Name	Age	Gender	Community of Residence	Cultural & Social Diversity	Financial Expertise	Legal, Regulatory & Risk	Human Resources	Theology & Catholic Mission	Board of Director Experience	Industry Knowledge & Quality	Managing & Leading Growth	Transformative Organizational Change	Experience at Large & Complex Organizations	Business Acumen & Entrepreneurship	Innovation, Technology & AI	Community Development & Stakeholder Engagement	Government Relations & Public Sector
Example: Jane	Smith	50	Female	Edmonton	Indigenous	3	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2
<b>Updated</b> 2025-11-17		<b>Diversity</b>				<b>Stewardship</b>					<b>Strategic</b>				<b>Generative / Advocacy</b>			

# Covenant

## Skills Matrix Glossary

### STEWARDSHIP / FIDUCIARY

#### Financial Expertise

Skill	Definition	0 - No Experience	1 - Basic Familiarity	2 - Applied Experience	3 - Deep Expertise
Financial Expertise	Experience as a CPA, CFO or CEO in financial accounting and reporting or corporate finance. Experience selecting appropriate investments and asset allocations to match organizational strategic objectives and risk tolerance.	No experience with financial statements, budgeting, investment decisions, or financial oversight.	Has reviewed budgets or financial reports but never responsible for financial decision-making or oversight. Basic understanding only.	Has managed budgets, financial plans, or financial processes. Can interpret financial statements and contribute meaningfully to financial oversight discussions.	Senior financial leader (CFO/CPA/CEO). Extensive experience in financial reporting, audit, investment strategy, and advising governance bodies.

#### Legal, Regulatory & Risk

Skill	Definition	0 - No Experience	1 - Basic Familiarity	2 - Applied Experience	3 - Deep Expertise
Legal, Regulatory & Risk	Experience and knowledge of not-for-profit legislation, by-laws, general law and legal processes. Understanding of risk mitigation and risk oversight mindset.	No experience with legal, regulatory, or risk matters.	Understands basic legal/compliance concepts but no applied experience.	Worked in regulated environments; contributed to policy, legal reviews, compliance processes, or risk mitigation.	Legal counsel, regulator, compliance executive, or leader with enterprise risk accountability.

#### Human Resources

Skill	Definition	0 - No Experience	1 - Basic Familiarity	2 - Applied Experience	3 - Deep Expertise
Human Resources	Experience in the oversight of major succession planning, talent development, retention programs, compensation, and labour relations.	No HR or people-management exposure.	Limited exposure (e.g., supervising staff) with basic HR understanding.	Led HR initiatives, workforce planning, organizational development, or worked with unions/collective bargaining.	Senior HR executive (CHRO/VP HR) or recognized expert in HR strategy and labour relations.

#### Industry Knowledge / Quality

Skill	Definition	0 - No Experience	1 - Basic Familiarity	2 - Applied Experience	3 - Deep Expertise
Industry Knowledge / Quality	Knowledge, leadership, and direct professional medical experience within the health care industry, especially factors influencing the health care system.	No health-care exposure.	General awareness of health care from outside the sector.	Worked in health care; understands quality, safety, clinical operations.	Senior clinical leader, health care executive, or quality/safety governance expert.

# Effective Governance Practices: Your turn #1

Turn to the person next to you and discuss,

1. Which of the governance practices is the most difficult for you right now?
2. What question do you have for the facilitators?





## Part 3: Common Challenges

# Common challenges

- Effective Boards are both **Smart & Healthy**
  - Healthy = high level of trust, candor, Board/ Management relationship, Board member dynamics
- Trustees who run for office based on a **single issue**
- Trustees who were or want to be an **administrator**
- Trustees (Chair & Vice) who **disregard policy** or **frequently amend policy**
- Trustees wanting to be a **media spokesperson**, even to school councils or staff/ community
- Trustees not provided with **Choice**

# Common Challenges: Your turn #2

1. What are some challenges you (or your previous System Education Leader (Superintendent or other) experienced with respect to the Board?

2. What question do you have for the facilitator?





## Part 4: Practical Solutions

# Practical solutions

Where the Board spends their time, and your time, matters ...

1. Set the overall direction of the school system through the development of a Board Strategic Plan that will inform the school authority's Education Plan.  
Revisit vision, mission, core values and Board "strategic priorities". Strategic actions and methods left up to the Superintendent.
2. Set the Annual Budget, which determines how resources are allocated to schools and programs. Demonstrates accountability to the community, government, students and staff
3. Demonstrate Accountability for Student Learning through
  - a. Monthly Monitoring Reports (HR/OH&S, Inclusive Education, Literacy/Numeracy, First Nation, Metis & Inuit, Transportation, etc.)
  - b. Annual Education Results Report (AERR). Auditor General's Report March 2025 (non-compliance with assurance reporting)
4. Demonstrate Fiscal Accountability through Audited Financial Statements, the Audit Committee, and Quarterly Fiscal updates.
5. Foster healthy Board/ Superintendent relationships.  
Foster healthy interpersonal relationships & stakeholder relationships, help the Board with their strategic plan, operate Board committees & have select Board representation in the community, embrace Board development, and review/ learn & update Board policies (G-TEC), advocate for public education & local governance, and advocate for more funding & facilities.

# Practical solutions

## Keep your Board focused (where they spend your time, and their time, matters)

- Draft the Agenda for review by the Chair and Vice.
  - Pay attention to the “order”
- Embrace an Annual Work Plan and Advocacy Plan (speaking notes!)
  - Ensure a select group of policies are reviewed (not edited) monthly— great Vice Chair role
- Formulate Assurance Reports for the Annual Work Plan
  - Sept (Health & Safety, HR
  - Nov #1 (Student Achievement & Supplementary Measures)
  - Dec (receive IMR Expenditure plan,)
  - Feb (Indigenous Education)
  - April (Inclusive Education)
  - June (Board & Superintendent annual evaluation)
  - Board members attend Back-to-School events and Holiday season events
  - Oct (Transportation, Early Learning)
  - Nov #2 (Audit Committee and AFS)
  - Jan (Literacy & Numeracy)
  - March (draft GOA Budget Template)
  - May (final Budget Template, Education Plan)
  - Fiscal Quarterly December, March, June, Sept (?)
- Support & sit by your Chair (support Effective Governance)

## Never meet without the Superintendent, unless contract or evaluation summary

- note ICD.D training – Executive Board Training- can be an issue

# Strategy Continuum: Governance to Execution

- Set the vision and strategic directions.
- Validates the strategy through the lens of the strategic directions and vision.
- Monitors performance and outcomes.

**Board of Trustees  
Strategic Oversight**

- Responsible for the strategic planning process.
- Develops strategies to achieve the board's direction and vision.
- Executes on the strategy.
- Reports regularly to the Board

**Superintendent  
Strategic Leadership**

- Supports the Superintendent on the implementation of strategy.
- Executes on strategy in detail via Plans & Initiatives
- Reports regularly to the System Leaders

**System Educational Leaders & School Leadership  
Implementation & Continuous Improvement**

# Practical Solutions: Your turn #3

1. What should you do when a Board member or the Chair permits a Board member to cross the “thin red line”?



Thank you!!

Questions?