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FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Approved: May 27, 2014
Revised October 24, 2017

Vision

Achieving Excellence in Catholic Education
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Peterborough Victoria
Northumberland and Clarington
Catholic District School Board

Introduction

Policy is "a set of organizational statements, values and perspectives adopted by a board, to direct a course of action." In our Catholic Board, clarity of integration with our faith tradition and gospel values is critical.

Thoughtful, carefully developed policy provides a framework for ethical decision-making and guides the operations of the board. By giving final approval to all policies, trustees ensure that decisions reflect board values. At its highest level, policy helps to translate the vision and the intention of the school board into actions for its students. This is how school boards establish direction and give structure to their boards.

Boards across the province are recognizing the importance of staying "on message" about a few key priorities that create a student-centred learning climate, and recognizing that this focus requires meaningful adjustments to their policy-making role.

The Education Act, in describing the authority of school boards, sets out their specific authority to exercise power through policy. This authority rests with the Board of Trustees as a whole and represents the "voice" of the board. Individual board members demonstrate effectiveness through an ability to influence and help the board come to decisions as a group.

Policies fulfill the following purposes:
- explain why things need to change;
- communicate the board's priorities and expectations in clear and easily understood language;
- inform judgment and ensure long-term planning throughout the system;
- help the board to focus on what is important – student learning;
- improve decision-making by addressing issues central to authentic governance, such as the need to be accountable, or to address issues related to equity or safety;
- rely on evidence, analysis and evaluation;
- help the board to manage risk by considering the impact of direction to people and organizations;
- are compliant with government mandates and requirements; and
- strengthen relationships by actively engaging the board with its staff, parents and larger community, both to provide information and to communicate.

Differentiated Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees and the Director

The Board of Trustees must comply with provincial government directives related to balancing the budget, codes of conduct, municipal freedom of information and protection of privacy, EQAO testing, etc. There are mandated aspects of their own policies which boards cannot change. On the other hand, there are aspects of governance, such as board goals, strategic planning, and student accommodation, which provide the opportunity to deeply engage stakeholders in setting directions for the board. Knowing the difference is at the heart of inspiring public confidence.

The Board of Trustees also needs to be clear about its role in developing policy which expresses overall direction and purpose. The Director of Education then develops, implements, and monitors administrative procedures which provide detailed direction to the staff and which must be consistent with board policies.

Policy - Trustees

Policies provide direction and signal the major intentions and priorities of the elected board. They are few in number and broad in scope. Directional policy is expressed in the board goals and strategic directions and is clearly aligned with government priorities. Directional policies signal long-term institutional commitments to student achievement and well-being, to values, and to fairness.

Administrative Procedures – Staff

Administrative Procedures, which are a mechanism to implement the policies of the elected board, are specific, detailed and focused. They enable all areas of the organization to fulfill their day-to-day responsibilities to students, employees and the public. The procedures are collected in manuals, handbooks and other resources. They can include guidelines for decision-makers and protocols that set out a prescribed course of action for specific circumstances. Administrative procedures are the responsibility of the director and his/her staff and are made available to the Board of Trustees.

Policy Categories for Student Achievement

The policies developed by elected school boards will address their significant governance roles and will include the following themes:

Vision, Values, and Goals

Boards develop a guiding vision about the centrality of student learning in their governance work, and create a set of fundamental principles, beliefs, or values. The vision and values keep boards focused on their student-centred strategic directions and should drive all decision-making by the board. In the policy about the board's vision and

goals, the board creates the conditions and sets the context for student learning and well-being. This policy includes a description of the board's values related to the teaching and learning environment and system capacity-building.

Governance and Planning

Boards describe their governance role in strategic planning, policy development, budget-setting as well as their understanding of the role of the elected board and the role of the Director of Education.

Program and Achievement Standards

This sets the direction and provides a framework for all of the district school board's programs which have been designed to comply with provincial mandates as well as to reflect local community needs. In this area, the elected board articulates what it wants students to achieve and their philosophy regarding student achievement and well-being.

Learning Environment

The success, safety and well-being of every student are of paramount importance to boards. It is here that the elected board describes its commitment to safe schools, its respect for the role of students, and its commitment to equity and inclusion.

Personnel and Employee Relations

Every staff member of the district school board contributes to the board's ability to achieve its goals. Through this policy area, the elected board articulates direction and expresses its beliefs and expectations with regard to its human resources. It also clearly articulates its values regarding succession planning, leadership and capacity building.

Parent/Community Relations

The engagement of parents and the community is crucial to developing and maintaining public confidence in the local school board to meet the long-term needs of children and citizens. In this policy statement, the board outlines the role of decision-making within the context of the responsibility of the board to make decisions. The board also expresses beliefs about volunteers, parent involvement and community partnerships.

Policy Register

All boards should have a thorough and well-constructed Policy Register posted on-line that highlights and supports the important governance function of the board. In addition to clearly defining the role of the board, the role of the Director of Education and the delegation of authority from the board to the director, it should include:

> foundational statements which provide guidance and direction for all activities within the board;

- directions for how the board itself is to function, how individual trustees are to conduct themselves, and directions for the functioning of board committees and representatives;

- statements as to how appeals and hearings will be conducted; and

- non-delegable matters, such as policy-making and selection of the Director of Education

The Policy Register of the board must be supplemented by an **Administrative Procedures Manual**, the primary written document by which the Director of Education directs staff. The Procedures Manual must be entirely consistent with the board's Policy Handbook. The development of two separate and distinct documents is meant to reinforce the distinction between the board's responsibility to govern and the director's executive or administrative duties.

Directional Policies

- Governance, Vision, Strategic Priorities
- Catholic Education
- Student Achievement and Well-being
- Recruitment, Talent Development, Leadership and Succession Planning
- Employee Relations
- Stewardship of Resources
- Equity and Inclusive Education
- Safe and Accepting Schools
- Parent and Community Relations
- Communications
- Records and Information
- Student Transportation

Process for Effective Policymaking – What makes a "good" policy?

Good policy aligns with the mission, vision and values, and strategic directions of the board.

Good policy is beneficial. It creates public value. Policy change should benefit individuals, organizations and services. Analysis of intended and unintended consequences is a crucial aspect of policy work.

The direction to be set, or the problem to be addressed, by policy change must be clear from the outset. Good policy making considers both the short and longer term systems' impact. It uses evidence and information as the basis for analysis which should, in turn, be rational, comprehensive, thorough and balanced. Quantitative and qualitative information should be applied.

Good policy is ethical. Board Codes of Conduct espouse principles of integrity, respect and accountability that everyone in the board should apply to their work. The

processes used to develop policy need to be clearly communicated and widely understood. The processes should engage from the outset those individuals and organizations who will be affected by policy change.

Good policy is intelligible. Clarity and economy are essential features of good policy. A good policy should be no more than two or three pages in length and in plain English. Policy should be described in as few words as possible with clear messages which are readily understood. All policy documents are constructed, published and written in a particular time and place. They should be reviewed, refreshed, abandoned and/or replaced as the board moves forward. Effective policy development and implementation aligns with board milestones and targets, and responds rapidly to emerging challenges and changes of direction. It foresees the challenges of implementation and adapts to the shifting realities of operational environments.

Good policy is reviewed and evaluated. As part of its process, the Board of Trustees should establish an annual policy agenda with a schedule for regular review and monitoring of progress throughout the board meeting agendas. Here again, this should be done with a view to aligning board priorities and maximizing time for discussion and reflection.

PROCESS

Identification of Policy Issues

The identification of the need for a board policy or the need for review or revision of an existing board policy may be initiated by board members, constituent groups, a board's policy committee, students, or staff members. The need for change could also be identified as a result of policy directives from the Ministry of Education, or as a result of regulations or legislation at the federal, provincial, or municipal level.

Development of Draft Policy

When the Board of Trustees makes a decision to develop a policy or revise an existing policy, a first step involves consultation with constituent groups who may have an interest in the policy. This could include students, parents, staff, employee unions and the broader community.

The school board's senior staff prepares a draft policy that incorporates the input received. The draft is considered by the Board of Trustees or a committee of the board to allow for more input. A final draft reflecting this input is submitted to the board for approval. Once approved, the document becomes board policy and goes into effect.

Implementation

The elected board is responsible for implementing its own policies and is responsible for the formal delegation of authority to the Director of Education to implement its broad goals and expectations. The implementation plan for a board policy will include

information about administrative procedures that support the policy and a communication plan to ensure that all stakeholders are notified about the new or revised policy.

Policy Review

It is necessary to review policies on a regular basis to ensure their relevance to the current school board environment and their compliance with applicable legislation and Ministry policy directives. At the time of adopting a policy, the elected board usually specifies the date it will be due for review.

Identification of Policy Issue
↓
Development of Draft Policy, Input, and Final Approval
↓
Implementation
↓
Review of Policy

A POLICY CHECKLIST

Policy documents should be brief, written in plain English and include the following core elements:

Purpose/intention: a brief, clear and direct explanation of what the policy is intended to achieve and to whom it is intended to apply.

Legislative base: a reference to the legislation that provides the authority for the policy statement.

Scope: to whom and to what the policy applies, where the policy will have effect and the public value it will add.

Context: a brief description of the context within which the policy will operate, including connections with government directions.

Principles: a description of the principles that have shaped the development of the policy and their effect on the way in which it should be applied.

Responsibility: identification of whether the board is solely responsible for the implementation of the policy (e.g., Governance By-Laws and Standing Rules, Board Operations, Board Members' Code of Conduct, Selection of the Director) or whether the board has delegated responsibility to the director to implement the board's expectations across the district (Board Vision and Goals, Board Expectations for Student Achievement and Well-Being).

Policy statement: the policy itself.

Evaluation process: a description of the way in which the impact of the policy will be assessed and a timeline for this.

Review date: a date for review of the policy.

Document and version control: the date of original approval of the policy and any subsequent review dates.

Contacts, supporting tools and resource people: as a minimum, a contact person who can assist with inquiries about the policy and any other tools or supporting materials that will help the policy to be understood and successfully implemented.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

▹ Defining, articulating and directing the PVNC Catholic District School Board's mandate to support student achievement and well-being in a Catholic learning community supported by the Multi-Year Strategic Plan

▹ Setting direction and policy that governs the PVNC Catholic District School Board

▹ Reviewing and considering for approval all new and revised policies recommended for consideration by the Policy Committee

▹ Understanding and communicating with members of the community the content of all Board policies

▹ Assigning responsibility to the Director of Education for operationalizing and managing ongoing policy of the Board.

▹ Monitoring and holding the Director of Education accountable respecting the implementation and operation details of all Board Policies.

Policy Committee is responsible for:

▹ Reviewing and amending Board policies

▹ Recommending new or existing revised policies to the Board of Trustees for final approval

The Director of Education is responsible for:

▹ Implementation and operational details of all Board policies

▹ Ensuring that senior administration and designated staff are responsible for the content and implementation of Board procedure

Lead Superintendent is responsible for:

▹ Researching and authoring new or revised Board policies with a representative and integrated team for consideration by the Administrative Council and the Policy Committee

Superintendents are responsible for:

> Providing input to ensure the policy captures the specific and relevant concerns that may arise from their family of schools and their particular portfolios eg, Human Resources, Special Education, Equity, etc.

Advisory Committees (SEAC, CPEC), School Councils, Unions and Federations and staff are responsible for:

> Providing input on relevant Board policies

> Adhering to the instructions contained in Board policy

> Identifying and communicating Board policies which require review to the Director of Education or Superintendent for consideration

Principals are responsible for:

> Leading their school communities in communicating, understanding,

> Implementing and adhering to board policies

Teachers and support staff are responsible for:

> Being familiar with, understanding and adhering to board policies

Communications Staff is responsible for:

> Ensuring the language used in the policy is accessible to all of our stakeholders

> Supporting the consultation process through effective and wide spread communication

> Supporting a variety of communication strategies to ensure implementation

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Differentiating Between Policy and Administrative Procedure

The elected board governs and the director manages the board on a daily basis. The board exercises its role through the adoption of policy, establishing goals, monitoring progress and engaging with its communities. The job of the Director of Education is to provide leadership in turning the broad directives of the board into reality throughout all the operations of the district school board. It is up to the director, through his/her staff, to develop appropriate procedures and processes to ensure effective implementation of policy and strategic plans.

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The Policy Template

Board Logo	Policy Number
Title of Policy	
Date Approved	
Projected Review Date	
Policy Statement	
Purpose	
Alignment with Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)	
Responsibilities	
Progress Indicators	
Definitions	
References	

Administrative Procedures

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other resources. They can include guidelines for decision-makers and protocols that set out a prescribed course of action for specific circumstances. Administrative procedures are the responsibility of the director and his/her staff and are made available to the Board of Trustees.

Administrative Procedures Template

Board Logo
Title of Administrative Procedures
Date Approved
Projected Review Date
Directional Policy Alignment
Alignment with MYSP
Action Required
Responsibilities
Progress Indicators
Definitions
References

Resource:

http://modules.ontarioschooltrustees.org/en/read/authentic-governance-through-ethical-leadership

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