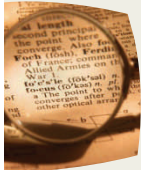




► PRESERVING THE HERITAGE



► APPRAISING THE PRESENT



► PLANNING THE FUTURE

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Trustee *focus*

ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TRUSTEES AND PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A SECURE FUTURE.

Christian school boards have long wrestled with the questions, “What does the board do? and “How should it do it?” What trustees need is clear direction and instruction on their role. This series of the *Trustee Focus* offers an introduction to one answer to these questions.

Policy Governance®: Is it Right for Your Board? *Part 2*

By John Schimmer, Ed.D.

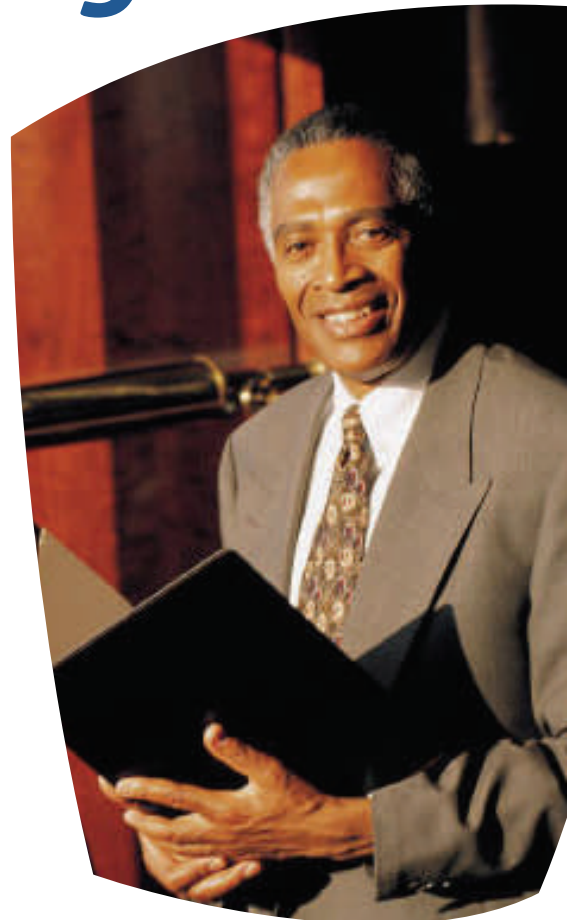


In the last issue, I endeavored to introduce you to Policy Governance. The adoption of this model by Christian school boards is a growing trend across the U.S. and around the world. In this issue, I will begin to focus on those attributes which, in my opinion, contribute to the genius and potency of the model. These distinguishing characteristics include John Carver’s unconventional approach to policy development, the freeing aspect of Executive Limitation Policies, and the process of monitoring executive performance. Because monitoring seems to be the more difficult aspect of the model, I have chosen to address this first. It will probably take one more issue of the *Focus* to adequately address all

three characteristics and wrap up this introduction. For this I beg your indulgence.

Monitoring Reports

Inherent to the success of Policy Governance is the process of annually evaluating board policies. Carver refers to this as the board’s “annual agenda,” meaning policy requires that every year the board monitor the efficacy – validity, accuracy, and compliance – of each Ends and Executive Limitations policy. This review requires a monitoring report in which the CEO presents his/her understanding (interpretation) of what the board meant by the policy and presents evidence to verify compliance. If not in compliance, the CEO must explain why this policy is not being met at this time, and what it will take (cost, personnel, and time)



to bring it into compliance. In the first year, these monitoring reports may be somewhat arduous, but will be easier in subsequent years. During the monitoring process, board members must avoid adding other unstated/unwritten expectations (personal preferences) to the monitoring process. “... [Added] extraneous standards of performance seriously weak-

Continued on side two >



ens the power of the synonymy between board policies and CEO accountability.” (Carver, p. 115) In other words, the board must not attempt to monitor criteria it meant to establish, but failed to do so.

Carver advocates that a good board is willing to accept “any reasonable interpretation” of its policies—an attitude which is highly commendable but somewhat rare among leaders, especially those who have the propensity for “my way is better than your way.”

John Carver presents three ways the board can be involved in monitoring policy compliance and CEO performance: (1) Executive reports, (2) External audits, e.g., financial and legal audits, and the school’s accreditation process, and (3) Direct board inspection, generally used with considerable caution and only in extreme circumstances. It should also be noted that “upon the choice of the board any policy can be monitored by any method at any time.” (Carver, p. 114)

I recommend that for the further study of monitoring, read *Reinventing Your Board*, pages 127-134.

Testimonials from those well versed in writing monitoring reports

“Monitoring reports accomplish two important purposes. First, through the process of writing the required compliance report, the administrator is reminded of each of these policies. Secondly, the written report gives the governing body meaningful assurance that policies are indeed being followed. Without compliance reports, everyone assumes policies are being followed, but a written report moves policy compliance from “no news is good news” to greater confidence in the administrator because the governing body knows that policies are being followed.”

– Dr. Stephen P. Dill, Delaware County Christian School, Newtown Square, PA

“Monitoring reports created a greater level of accountability of me and the organization’s performance.... I didn’t have to second guess what information the board members wanted in my reports... Good monitoring enables the board to have confidence in the present and get on with the future of the school, and the board could focus its time on leadership issues rather than operational matters.”

– Terrine Berg, Park Christian School, Minneapolis, MN

“The idea that something which is highly valued should be consistently measured is the key to good consistent monitoring reports. Monitoring provides the CEO an opportunity to communicate the justification and accountability of adherence to the board’s executive limitations. [It enables] the board and CEO to work in tandem [toward] the ultimate goal, the accomplishment of the mission.”

– Dr. Roland DeRenzo, Colorado Springs Christian School, CO

“Monitoring provides accountability for the administrator, enabling him to carry out his responsibilities in an environment of transparency and trust.”

“Monitoring provides accountability and empowerment for the administrator, enabling him to carry out his responsibilities in an environment of transparency and trust. It provides vital information to the board and feedback for the administrator, assuring both parties that board policies are correctly understood and followed. The constant check for understanding between the board and the administrator builds congeniality that is healthy, enjoyable, and ultimately beneficial to the mission of the school.”

– Dr. Glenn Holzman, Cypress Community Christian School, Houston, TX

“With so many issues competing for the hearts and minds of those responsible for the ministry of our school the monitoring process has kept us unified and focused on what we have already established as our most important and critical policies. To work through a calendar of review and reporting has freed us from the “tyranny of the urgent” and its accompanying stressful effect on relationships. Our expectations are in sync, known, clearly communicated, and points of unity.”

– Steve Blankenship, Arcadia Christian School, Arcadia, CA

This discussion of Policy Governance® will be continued in the next issue—March 2008—and will include the topics of Carver’s approach to policy

development, the benefits of writing executive limitations, prerequisites for success in the model, and actions to be avoided. For a bibliography of John Carver’s books and resources, [click here](#).

References:

John Carver, *Boards that Make a Difference*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

John Carver and Miriam Mayhew, *Reinventing Your Board*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

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Dr. Schimmer has been trained by John Carver to be a consultant/trainer for Policy Governance®. He served 26 years as the South-Central Regional Director and 48 years in the field of education, both private and public. Through his service he has influenced more than 300 Christian school boards.

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