



Archdiocese of Galveston – Houston

Secretariat for Catholic Schools

Catholic Schools Office

School Board

Handbook

2015-2016

PURPOSE OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Catholic school boards are advisory to the Principal and Pastor in Parish schools or the Principal and Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools. Boards assist the Principal and Pastor in Parish schools or the Principal and Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools to recommend policy, identify and articulate the educational needs and aspirations of the school and school community and engage in long-range strategic planning. These goals become the basis for program objectives, policies, and action plans for the educational program.

MEMBERSHIP

Serving on a Catholic school board is a ministry. Members provide a service for the Catholic school community. Boards will seek members committed to Catholic education with specific areas of experience and only a few positions ought to be filled by current parents. Members should never be motivated to serve on a board for the purpose of accomplishing personal agenda items. A member who offers to serve needs to be open-minded, and use data to make informed decisions. The member must keep in mind the overall good of the school as the basis upon which to make decisions. A board member has no authority as an individual. Only when the Board meets as a group, does the person function as a board member. Board members do not serve as conduits to the administration for parents/guardians who have questions, complaints and/or concerns. Board members must always refer such calls to the appropriate person. An explicit chain-of-command must be followed or parents/guardians will not be communicating with the appropriate school representative.

Persons in the following categories may NOT be considered as candidates for the Board:

- Employees of the Parish and school, whether teaching or non-teaching personnel;
- Spouses, children or siblings of employees of the Parish/school;
- More than one member of an immediate family at a time;
- Board members or professional educators of another school or school system;

Membership of the Board should be at least five members and no more than eleven. Ordinarily the process of discernment should be used when choosing board members. The Board should reflect the cultural diversity of the school served in as much as possible. The Pastor in Parish schools will serve as an ex officio member of the Board, and he possesses the right of approval or the right of veto in administrative decisions. In Archdiocesan Regional schools, the Designated Pastor will serve as ex officio member with the right of approval or veto in administrative decisions. The Principal serves as an ex officio member and school administrator for the Board.

Discernment is a process associated with the virtue of prudence, by which we try to decide what God wills us to do in particular circumstances. Discernment should be used as an operating principle for boards. Discernment is the preferred method for making decisions such as major policy and new board members. Discernment is a formal process

for filling board seats whereby those with knowledge of the work of the Board and its long-term goals select the new members based on the school's needs.

TERM OF OFFICE

Each selected member may not serve more than two terms of three years. The terms of the members should overlap so that a maximum of no more than one third are leaving the board at any one time. This allows for stability and continuity of the Board. A resigning member's uncompleted term should be filled through discernment. First consideration to fulfill an uncompleted term should be given to prospective members previously discerned and favorably received, but not selected to serve. Board members who serve are subject to removal by the Pastor in Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools.

OFFICERS

The officers of the Board should include a President, Vice-President and Secretary. Any member of the Board is eligible to hold office. The process of discernment is recommended for the selection of officers. A platform statement given by those interested in serving as officers may be beneficial to the discernment process. Officers are subject to removal by the Pastor in Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools.

The Board President presides at all regular and special meetings, works with the Principal to prepare the agenda prior to all meetings and the appointment of all committees unless otherwise specified by the Board or the Pastor in Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools, and performs all duties incident to the office of a Board President and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him/her by the Pastor in Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools.

The Board Vice-President, in the absence of or at the request of the Board President, performs the duties and exercises the responsibilities of the Board President.

The Board Secretary is responsible for recording and distributing accurate minutes of meetings, posting the agenda, handling correspondence, preserving reports and documents and submitting to the Superintendent a current roster of local board members. Existing or revised by-laws and/or school board constitutions should be submitted to the Archdiocesan School Superintendent for review.

COMMITTEES

The school board may recommend the establishment of committees, as it deems advisable, to the Principal and Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools or to the Principal and Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools. Approval and establishment of school committees are based on the authority and approval of the Pastor and Principal in Archdiocesan Parish schools or the Designated Pastor and Principal in Archdiocesan Regional schools. Members of the committees may be drawn from board membership and from the community at large. The school board with the approval of the Pastor and Principal in Archdiocesan Parish schools and the Designated Pastor and the Principal in Archdiocesan Regional schools may provide for such committees, as it deems advisable and may discontinue committees at its discretion. The board may need only two or three “standing committees” e.g. facilities, finance, and public relations. The board may appoint “ad hoc” (temporary) committees when the need arises.

The Principal in consultation with the board finance committee will prepare a balanced school budget in terms of expenditures and revenues with a rationale that justifies any major or capital expense requested. A copy of the budget will be sent to the Superintendent for review. School accounting requires a separate school bank account from the Parish account. The Principal and Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools and the Principal and Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools are the only authorized school check signatories.

MEETINGS

Meetings should be held at a regular time and place each month except for July, in which there is no meeting. Meetings should last no longer than one or two hours. Special meetings may be called only by the Pastor and Principal or Board President with the approval of the Principal and Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools and by the Designated Pastor and Principal or Board President with their approval in Archdiocesan Regional schools.

The agenda should be prepared jointly by the Principal and the Board President. Board members should contact the Principal ten working days prior to the scheduled meeting to include agenda items. The secretary of the Board should send the Agenda and all related information to the board members seven to ten working days prior to the scheduled meeting. It is suggested that board meeting agendas follow a structure such as Opening Prayer, Approval of Minutes, Old Business, New Business, and Adjournment.

A person may address the Board provided a written request is given to the Principal and Board President ten (10) working days prior to a scheduled meeting and is accepted for inclusion on the agenda.

Presentations to the Board should:

- Have a time limit; and
- Nothing of a confidential nature should be addressed, such as discipline problems or personnel issues. The Pastor or Board President in Parish schools or Designated Pastor and Board President in Archdiocesan Regional schools may at any time stop the presentation if it is of a sensitive nature.
- No discussion with the presenter will follow the presentation.
- A written response from the School Board President will be sent to the presenter within five (5) working days of the presentation.

Executive / Closed Session:

Items requiring strict confidentiality may require that the Pastor and the Board President in Parish schools or Designated Pastor and the Board President in Archdiocesan Regional schools call an executive / closed session. The school Principal or a school board member may also request this type of session. Should the Pastor and the Board President in Parish schools or the Designated Pastor and the Board President in Archdiocesan Regional schools accept the request for an executive / closed session, then the item will be scheduled on the agenda.

When an executive / closed session is called, the regular meeting is adjourned, all guests are asked to leave temporarily and the executive / closed session begins. Any conversation or written submissions that are part of an executive / closed session are confidential and are not subject to disclosure unless required by law. Any breach of confidentiality may result in removal from the Board by the Pastor in Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools. When the executive / closed session is adjourned, the open school board meeting is begun anew. The minutes, as recorded by the Board's secretary, simply reflect that a discussion was held in executive / closed session and no specifics are recorded.

AGENDAS / MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETINGS

Agendas and previous meeting minutes should be readily available at the school's office or on the school web site.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of a School Board shall show their acceptance of responsibility as members by regular attendance and participation at meetings and activities sponsored by the Board. Members shall furthermore participate in at least one training session a year that is specifically designed by the Galveston-Houston Archdiocesan School Council for local boards. The Board President must provide an orientation detailing the work of the board for all new members.

It is extremely important to understand that Catholic school boards are NOT like public school boards. Public school boards hire and fire, approve expenditures and mandate the implementation of procedures and programs. Catholic school boards assist the Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools and the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools in hiring of a Principal. It is important for board members to understand that a board member's role is to give advice and not to become involved in the day-to-day operation of the school.

Boards must strive to reach consensus on all issues, and voting should not ordinarily occur. However, healthy discussion on issues can and should take place. Consensus does not imply one hundred percent agreement, instead consensus means that all members will support the decision reached by the Board as a whole. When consensus is attained, everyone agrees to the decision and is willing to take ownership of that decision. Consensus is achieved when there is general agreement or accord among the members of the group. This is an approach to group decision-making. It presents an opportunity for all to be heard and avoids a "win/lose" posture that voting promotes. Consensus results in growth and is instrumental in building community within a group.

FINANCES

A major task for the Board is to provide advice and guidance in the area of finances. Approving tuition rates and salary increases for the staff is the Pastor's decision in Parish schools and the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools, but the Pastor and Designated Pastor will rely upon the solid information provided to them by the Principal and the Board's Finance Committee to make the most prudent decision. The Board finance committee will work closely with the Principal to create budget drafts for the Pastor and Designated Pastor and their school boards. All questions from the committee members should have been addressed at the meeting where the budget was finalized.

Note: All proposed school budgets must be balanced.

Following certain guidelines will make the budget process much easier for all. Income (tuition and fees) from parents/guardians should at least cover the cost of employees' salaries and benefits. Following this guideline, an overestimated fundraising year will not result in payroll not being met.

Board members need to understand the importance of per pupil cost. Per pupil cost (PPC) is the amount of money needed to educate one child. The per pupil cost is derived by dividing the total annual expenses (excluding costs of cafeteria, sports programs, before-after school programs and other costs not directly related to the education of students and capital spending) by the average enrollment during the school year. Once the PPC is determined, other funds are considered to balance the budget.

Tuition should be raised a minimum of three percent per year. Raising the tuition any less than three percent will risk not having sufficient revenue to cover expenses.

While care must be taken to understand the financial plight of parents/guardians, the needs of the school and school staff must also be considered and discussed. Staff members should be given at least cost of living raises each year. The Archdiocese provides a salary scale based on a goal of reaching 80% of public school salaries over a five year period. With Archdiocesan benefits this then is very comparable compensation to public schools.

Boards should also assist the Principal in providing communication to parents/guardians about the financial status of the school, as well as emphasize to parents that tuition and fees paid do not cover the entire per pupil cost (PPC). The difference between actual tuition and PPC will demonstrate the amount of financial aid that each family is receiving. Each school should provide tuition assistance for families that demonstrate a need.

When building a budget, begin by reviewing the vision of the school and then start with expenses. Project all possible increases for salaries and benefits, utilities, operational costs and instructional materials. Project different raises for staff members, including health costs and other benefits. Prepare two or three different expense statements based on different percentage increases in staff salaries. Next, provide a conservative number of potential students. Experiment with different tuition increases to assess the income needed to meet the various expense drafts of the budget. If the tuition gets too high to balance the budget drafts, then the salary increases will need to be less generous in order to provide for an anticipated fund balance.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTING

Financial Responsibilities of the Principal include ensuring that:

- The school is required to have a separate school bank account;
- School accounting is kept separate from Parish accounting;
- The Principal and Pastor in Parish schools or the Principal and Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools are the only authorized school check signatories. For emergency situations a third party, parochial vicar, deacon or finance council chair should be designated as a signatory;
- The Principal opens and reviews all school bank statements including the reconciliation statement;
- Use pre-numbered purchase orders;
- Principal initials and dates all purchase orders, indicating approval;
- Bookkeeper matches packing slips to purchase orders;
- Bookkeeper compares invoice to purchase order/packing slip for accurate price and quantity;
- Bookkeeper prepares checks including supporting documentation for Principal's signature;
- Principal verifies accuracy of payroll including time cards for hourly employees;

- Principal ensures accurate and timely deposits of payroll withholding tax;
- Principal ensures compliance with accounting procedures of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. The Archdiocese through its Internal Audit Department, will periodically conduct an audit at the school. An Internal Control Manual is available from the Principal.
- Principal is responsible for reviewing and ensuring an up-to-date Quarterly Financial Report to the Catholic Schools Office by keeping LOGOS up-to-date.
- September is a good month to look at an adjusted budget based on the actual enrollment, etc.
- Principal is responsible for the budget preparation, which should begin by late fall each year with assistance from the school board finance committee.
- Principal is responsible for submitting the next fiscal year's preliminary Annual School Operational Budget to the Catholic School Office by February 15th of current school year and the final Approved School Operational Budget for the next fiscal year by June 15th of current school year.
- Approval for the final budget and parish investment in the school is granted by the Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools and the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools after review by the School Board Finance Committee.

LONG-TERM SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING

The various committees and the board as a whole should be actively involved in assisting the Principal in the role of short and long-term planning. The Texas Catholic Conference Education Department requires each school, under the direction of the local governing body and leadership, to have a written site-based long-range strategic plan. An outline of this plan follows:

Strategic Plan Process

- Is a process to develop both long-term vision and goals for the school with specific interim steps to reach these goals;
- Flows from the school's mission statement;
- Encompasses a period of 3-5 years;
- Outlines realistic operational and strategic goals;
- Addresses areas such as Catholic identity, enrollment, personnel, curriculum, facilities, development (including marketing and public relations), ownership,

governance, administration, finances, and any other needs specific to the school community;

- The Board plays an important role in many aspects of the long-range strategic planning while school administration develops other aspects of the plan;
- Involves an annual review of the school's mission statement, philosophy, goals and objectives as well as a review of the plan's goals and action steps, with any necessary adjustments being made including goals. These plans will provide a road map for all involved in the Parish/school community.
- Refer to Guidelines for Strategic Planning. See Catholic Schools Strategic Planning Process under School Boards on www.archgh.org/cso for guidelines for long range planning.

PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PROCESS

The Pastor in Archdiocesan parish schools and the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan regional schools evaluates the Principal. Board members give input in that process.

The Principal will provide the Board with the Archdiocesan Professional Growth Process and review the document with them. The timeline should be followed carefully. The Professional Growth Process has been designed to assist Principals in growing professionally, spiritually and personally.

The Professional Growth Process should affirm and validate what the Principal is doing well, and the process should pinpoint areas where improvement could and should be made. When completing the Professional Growth Process Form, a board member should not base his/her opinions on single or isolated incidents.

Rather, the board member should look at patterns and attempt to accurately gauge the Principal's effectiveness during a given period.

Board members should always provide very specific examples when highlighting a Principal's strengths or when listing areas where improvement is necessary. Generalities do not provide someone with a basis for continuing positive behavior or for correcting areas where improvement is necessary. Only when specifics are shared, can a Principal truly gain by the Professional Growth Process.

The Principal Professional Growth Process affirms and validates the Principal's areas of strength and assists him/her in identifying areas of growth. The process aids the Principal in establishing goals for the school year and fosters ongoing dialogue between the Principal and Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools or the Principal and Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools. The Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools, as the employer, is solely responsible for contract decisions. In an Archdiocesan Regional

schools, the Designated Pastor is responsible for contract decisions involving the Principal.

Each board member completes the Principal Professional Growth Form and submits the form to the Principal. The Principal and Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools meet to review these forms, as well as faculty and staff forms. In Archdiocesan Regional schools, the Principal and Designated Pastor meet to review these forms as well as faculty and staff forms.

SAMPLE: SCHOOL BOARD PLANNING CALENDAR

<u>July</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>
Meeting optional	Review Strategic Plan	Budget committee	Budget Report with possible budget adjustments based on actual enrollment	Budget Report	Budget Report	Catholic Schools Week	Principal Professional Growth Process	Policy Review	Board Self-Evaluation	New Board Members attend	Goal setting and review of Long-range Strategic Plan results
		Development Marketing committee	Enrollment Management Committee	Plan for Catholic Schools Week	Social	Finalize preliminary budget and set tuition for next school year	Registration	ITBS Testing	Selection New Board Members using the Discernment process	ITBS Testing Results	Select committees and Chairperson for next school term
		Principal shares annual school goals				Development Marketing Committee Report	Nomination of New Board members			Principal review assessment of school goals	

Monthly

1. Reports from Principal, Pastor, finance, development, and marketing committees.
2. Review the school’s Strategic Plan.
3. Assign different members to provide monthly opening prayer.

GENERAL POLICY AREAS

- A. Finance and financial reports.
- B. Use of the school or Parish facilities.
- C. Maintenance of facilities.
- D. Uniforms.

GUIDELINES FOR POLICY WRITING

- A. A policy is a guide for discretionary action.
 - 1. The issue should be clearly identified.
 - 2. Brainstorm solutions so that choices are not limited.
 - 3. Clear guidance and room for action should be evident.
- B. Policy development rests with the Board.
 - 1. Although the Principal usually recommends development of policies, anyone may recommend that a policy be considered.
 - 2. All persons affected by the policy will be consulted.
 - 3. All policies should include clear and concise language.
 - 4. All factors for evaluation will be identified.
- C. Local school board policies cannot conflict with Archdiocesan policies or regulations.
- D. The Principal is accountable to the Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools for the implementation of policy.
 - 1. While the board does not tell the Principal how to implement policy, it is the responsibility of the Principal to keep the Board informed on how the policy is being implemented.
 - 2. The Board may review policy and make suggestions for adjustments.

POLICY VS. REGULATION

- A. A regulation is a specification of a required action (rules) to implement the established policy.
1. A regulation is the responsibility of the Principal and relates exactly what procedure will be used to implement the policy.

Example of Policy: School uniforms will be required for all students attending Houston Catholic Elementary School.

*Example of Regulations: School uniforms will consist of...color, style, etc...
School uniforms will be purchased at ...
School uniforms will be worn each school day beginning ...*

- B. In contrast to regulations, policies are broad, general, and direction-setting statements. Regulations are specific written rules for implementation. Ideally, regulations contain few loopholes. To determine whether or not the statement is a policy or a regulation, ask: "Does this statement leave room for discretionary action on the part of the administrator (Principal)?" If the answer is "yes," the statement is a policy. If it is "no," the statement is a regulation.
- C. Some policies require regulations, and other policies exist primarily to set a tone or to establish the school's position (for example, a personnel policy calling for nondiscrimination in hiring practices). By this analogy, not every administrative regulation has to flow from policy. Some arise out of practical concerns of the need to implement applicable state or federal law; others are an outgrowth of the school or Parish philosophy or tradition.

Examples of what a policy can do:

- *Provide general direction to the administration.*
- *Anticipate and avoid crises.*
- *Clarify expectations for students, parents/guardians, teachers, and others.*
- *Reduce subjectivity, inconsistency, and arbitrariness.*

Examples of what a policy cannot do:

- *Control or supervise administration.*
- *Resolve specific problems after the fact.*
- *Address isolated cases or petty item.*
- *Substitute for programs.*

Attributes of good policies are:

- *Responsive to or anticipate needs of the staff, parents/guardians or students;*
- *Brief and to the point;*
- *Available and promulgated;*
- *Stable for long periods of time;*
- *Understandable;*
- *Systematically indexed and placed in a notebook;*
- *Evaluated regularly; and*
- *Communicated effectively and disseminated.*

PROCEDURES FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- A. The initiator of the policy, in consultation with the Principal, presents the recommendation in writing. The recommendation includes:
 - A statement of the expressed need in clear and concise terms;
 - A recommended solution in the form of a simple policy statement; and
 - The rationale, which includes the relationship of the need, the implications and some timeline for implementation.
- B. The recommended policy with the above rationale is sent to all board members before the meeting so that it can be reviewed.
- C. During the meeting.
 - The initiator of the policy introduces the issue;
 - The chairperson assumes the members have studied the material;
 - Time is given for questions and discussion; and
 - The Principal makes plans to survey the audiences who will be affected by the policy;
- D. At the next meeting, the board has a more in depth discussion of the policy proposal, including:
 - The feasibility of the policy, pros and cons are considered;
 - Alternate solutions are presented and discussed;
 - The Board considers who will be affected by the proposal; and
 - Gathers feedback from stakeholders.

- E. The policy statement is now written and submitted to the Board and analyzed:
- Does the statement make sense?
 - Is it clear, simple, brief and to the point?
 - Does it state what is to be done?
 - Is there any conflict with Archdiocesan policy? All Archdiocesan policies are automatically policies of every school and religious education programs.
 - What adjustments are appropriate? and
 - Can the Board reach consensus?
- F. The policy statement is then given to the Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools or the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools for approval and signature. The signature makes the statement a policy.
- G. The policy is recorded and given to the Principal to implement through regulations:
- The Principal will distribute the policy and regulations to all persons affected by implementation; and
 - Evaluate the policy and its implementation. Present results to the Board.

ARCHDIOCESAN GRIEVANCE ISSUES

The material below is provided for Board members information only. Board members should be clear that these issues are handled by the school administration not by school or education boards.

A. Student/Parent Complaint Process

Although the Archdiocese endeavors to establish a harmonious Christian atmosphere within the schools, the Archdiocese recognizes that misunderstandings or differences of opinions sometimes occur. Ideally, such matters can be resolved informally by a parent or guardian meeting with the immediate authoritative person. If, however, the matter is not then settled to the parent or guardian's satisfaction, the parent or guardian may make a formal complaint. A formal complaint form will be obtained from the Principal.

B. The Archdiocesan Appeal Process.

Employees may grieve any dispute pertaining to the application or interpretation of policies relating to employment, including any dispute pertaining to the application or interpretation of a formal employment contract, if one exists (excluding not being offered a new contract)..

Nothing contained herein shall be construed to vary the terms of any such employment contract or the employment-at-will relationship.

The intent of this policy is to resolve employment disputes at the lowest possible administrative level and in a cooperative Christian atmosphere. The process is not intended to be adversarial in nature. To that end, prior to using the steps set forth, the employee shall meet with his/her immediate supervisor to discuss the dispute and attempt conciliation, if at all possible. Additionally, neither the employee nor the employer shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the conciliation or grievance process. An Archdiocesan Uniform Appeal Process Form may be obtained from the Principal.

- C. Private Catholic schools in the Archdiocese shall adopt a grievance or appeal process which addresses the problem situations in an equitable and expeditious manner in keeping with the Archdiocesan Appeal Process. A copy of this process shall be sent to the Superintendent of Catholic schools.