



LEADERSHIP MANUAL

for Catholic School Boards



*Diocese of Venice in Florida
Department of Education*





A LETTER FROM REV. JOHN BELMONTE, S.J., Ph.D.

SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Department of Education, Diocese of Venice in Florida

Dear Friends in Catholic Education:

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” (Mk 16:15) If someone had not taken this command from Our Lord to heart, you would not be reading this letter. Yet, someone did take Jesus’ command to heart. Our forebears in the faith passed on what they received. We represent the next generation of Catholics to bring the Good News to the whole world. Catholic education is one privileged way the Church has to evangelize young people. As school board members, your service to your school in the Diocese of Venice is a response to Christ’s call to evangelize. Committed to Catholic education, we join the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in the new evangelization, as the Church proposes anew the perennial truth of Christ’s Gospel.

Our bishop of the Diocese of Venice entrusts all Catholic schools in the Diocese to the Department of Education. As part of our commitment to Catholic education each year the Department of Education supports school improvement through accreditation and planning efforts. The results are that our stakeholders better understand the value and advantages of Catholic schools. School improvement planning fosters a professional school culture that emphasizes continuous improvement, and increased collaboration among schools within the diocese promoting and actively enhance Catholic education. More highly developed lay leadership will give local school boards a heightened sense of responsibility and ownership of vibrant schools. The robust Catholic school culture of high schools and elementary schools will be improved through expanded and renewed religion curriculum, Catholic curricular standards, and the common commitment to form students in the gospel message. Your work as a school board member is invaluable as you support these efforts with your talents, time, and treasure.

The basic principles and insights outlined in this manual offer a clear direction concerning Catholic school boards within the Diocese of Venice for parish schools and diocesan high schools. Our hope is that this manual will be useful to board members, pastors, and principals as a means of exercising their rights and responsibilities in the service of others for the advancement of Catholic school education. This manual is a working document that can be updated by the Department of Education as needed.

Those who serve on school boards provide an environment for the teaching of Catholic doctrine, the building of community, the service of others, and the education and formation of future generations of holy men and women. I am most grateful to you for your generous service.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. John Belmonte, S.J., Ph.D.

Superintendent of Catholic Education

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INTRODUCTION

The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Venice, under the direction, guidance, and service of the Department of Education, are dedicated to providing faith formation, academic excellence, and appropriate personal growth opportunities for all Catholic school students.

The Church's understanding and appreciation for the role of the laity is expressed as a "witness and living instrument of mission of the Church itself." (Lumen Gentium, 33). Service on a local school board is an example of how the laity can effectively assist the Church's educational mission, "doing their full share continually in the work of the Lord." (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 33)

The "invitation and obligation to holiness" (Lumen Gentium, 42) finds expression in every group of volunteers who so generously give of their time, talent, and treasure to work as a Catholic School Board. The consultative, committee-driven Board efficiently assists the Pastor and Principal in the operations of the school. By their dedication and effort, Catholic school board safeguards and promotes the viability and vitality of their Catholic school.

The *Leadership Manual for Catholic School Boards* provides guidance for board members. It will be a valuable resource for the initial in-service of members, for guidance and reference, and for evaluation of the Board's effectiveness.

As the consultative Boards in each school assume the general responsibilities of school board membership as well as those that arise from the individual committees, use of this manual reflects an adherence to the policies of the Diocese of Venice. Under the diocesan bishop, the Catholic School Board has the unique opportunity to protect and advance the teaching mission of the church. The dialogue created among board members stimulates the unity of purpose and the success of the school.

The School Board agrees to follow the policies and administrative procedures of the Diocese of Venice and the Department of Education. School Board members agree that they will use their expertise and insights to promote the mission and goals of Catholic education and the common good of the school community. In order to discern with other school board members the issues, concerns, and challenges their schools face in meeting the educational needs of the students, any personal agenda of a board member must be deferred. The parish school is under the governance of the parish corporation. Secondary schools are under the governance of the high school corporation.

SCHOOL BOARD MISSION STATEMENT

In conjunction with the Catholic Schools Office, the mission of the Catholic School Board in the Diocese of Venice is to advance quality Catholic education for students by providing leadership, direction, and support to Pastors, Principals, and members of the school community. The school board adopts the school's mission statement and the periodic review of its operational vitality and Catholic school culture.

Philosophy: what we are called to be.

Mission Statement: what we are called to do.

What we are called to do and who the school serves often changes over the years. Review is necessary to determine who the school is currently serving and how; and if the mission statement accurately reflects the school of today.



CODE OF ETHICS

The Code of Ethics for School Board Members delineates the expectations inherent in the purpose of the Board. Members, by accepting the position to serve on the Board, ascribe to this code. Periodic review of the code reminds members that they are working together for the common goal: to promote the mission and purpose of Catholic school education. The Code of Ethics addresses the following: conflict of interest, confidentiality, objectivity, justice, fairness, and maintenance of unity.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

School Board members shall avoid situations that present actual, perceived, or potential conflict between their interest and the interest of the school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Members of the school board are responsible to keep matters discussed in executive sessions in confidence. Official information/business discussed in such sessions cannot be shared with non-board members, even with one's spouse (See *Confidentiality Form* in appendix)

OBJECTIVITY

As total objectivity is impossible for anyone to achieve, members must identify and manage their own personal biases. It is important that members see situations from multiple points of view rather than solely from their own perceptions, assumptions and feelings. The welfare of the school children comes first in all deliberations.

JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

Recommendations made by the School Board and approved on the parish school level by the pastor and on the secondary level by the principal and superintendent, should be the result of honest and open discussion by all members: pastor, principal, parent, parishioner, and general membership. Consideration of the good of the total parish/school community should be integral to the decision-making process. Every member shall abide by and uphold decisions. When decisions will affect various constituencies, those constituencies should be informed at the same time through an agreed upon vehicle of communication.

MAINTENANCE OF UNITY

In the pursuit of its objectives, within the parish and school, the school board is to do all it can to avoid creating factions, sides or other divisive groupings. Members should function within the framework of the total leadership of the parish and school and strive to cooperate with other leadership groups. The Board meets only with the pastor and/or the principal in attendance. If approached with a problem that is administrative in nature, board members must refer the person to the proper administrative officer, pastor, principal, or superintendent.



All Catholic schools are required to follow Diocese of Venice policies in all matters related to the operation of the schools. Each school shall have an advisory school board.

A Consultative Board is a body that participates in the policy-making process by formulating, adopting, and recommending policy to the person with authority to enact it. The person with authority is required to consult the board before making decisions in designated areas, but is not bound by the board's advice. The people in authority, in parish schools, are the pastor and principal, and in Diocesan High Schools, the Bishop, superintendent, and school principal.

The Constitution is the founding document of an organization that establishes and defines mission, structure and process. The Bylaws are rules adopted by an organization to govern its operation. Use the following materials as a point of reference when developing or revising the constitutions and bylaws. See Appendix for Model Constitution and *By-laws for School Boards of Education*.

CONSTITUTION

Topics included in the constitution are as follows:

- The official title of the Board
- The purpose and function of the Board
- The responsibilities of the Board Membership
- Officers of the Board
- Quorum
- Role of Pastor/Chief Administrator
- Role of Committees
- Amendments

BY-LAWS

By-laws will include the following topics:

Formulating and Recommending Policy for the School	• Process for recommending policy • Enactment of policy by pastor or principal • Process for review of school policies • Procedures for publication of new policies
Selection of the Principal	• See Principal Search Committee Guidelines established by the Department of Education.
Performance Appraisal for Principal	• See Policy and Procedure established by the Department of Education.
Developing the School Budget	• See Policy and Procedure established by the Department of Education.
School Improvement Process	• See School Improvement Process established by the Department of Education.
Membership of the Board	• Number of members • Composition of membership • Procedures for nomination of members • Membership eligibility • Resignation of a member • Removal of a member • Filling vacancies • Attendance at meetings



BY-LAWS (CONTINUED)

By-laws will include the following topics:

Officers of the Board

- Procedures for selection/election of officers
- Responsibilities of officers
 - President
 - Presides at all meetings
 - Develops agenda with the Principal
 - Appoints committee chairs and members
 - Assigns additional duties to members
 - Vice-President
 - Performs duties in absence of the President
 - Serves on committees
 - Secretary
 - Maintains written record of minutes
 - Takes care of correspondence
 - Distributes agenda one week before the meeting
 - Prepares other reports as requested
 - An individual without voting power could be appointed to serve as “secretary of the Board.” The “appointed secretary of the board” does not participate in the meetings. This would allow all board members to fully participate in the meeting’s agenda.

Meetings

- Place
- Duration and schedule
- Procedures for calling special meetings
- Procedures for visitors
- Procedures for an open forum
- Robert's Rules of Order
- Order of business
- Executive session

Committees

- Responsibilities
- Standing or ad hoc
- Accountability

Amendments to the By-Laws

See Appendix H

Review the By-Laws

- Check the content least once every five years to ensure that it:
- Reflects the parish and or diocesan vision and mission
 - Is consistent with the Diocese of Venice Policies and Procedures of the Department of Education
 - Is clear and readable.
 - Articulates the roles and responsibilities of the members.
 - Describes the School Board as consultative to the Pastor and Principal
 - Indicates how the Board operates.

Before final approval of the board’s constitution and by-laws, a copy should be given to the Superintendent at the Department of Education for review. A final copy and any revisions of the board’s constitution and by-laws should be sent to the Department of Education.



BY-LAWS (CONTINUED)

By-laws will usually include the following topics:

Executive Session

The board meets in executive session in order to deal with sensitive issues that may not necessarily be shared with the public. The agenda may reflect that the board will meet in executive session. Decisions made in an “executive session” are recorded in the minutes. The decision, topic, issue or concern discussed in executive session is not published.

The minutes of the executive session are confidential. These minutes are not made public. Some of the topics which may be covered in “executive session” include but are not limited to: the final selection of a principal hired to fill a vacancy; the resignation or removal of a board member; discussion of the performance of the principal. Other topics that are part of the board’s responsibilities can also be included in the executive sessions of the Board as part of the decision-making process. The pastor and principal is always present for an executive session of the board.



SIZE AND COMPOSITION

The Board should be composed of 7-9 members (excluding Pastor, Superintendent, Principal). They should include:

PASTOR

Ex-officio, all parish School Board votes are subject to Pastor's approval.

SUPERINTENDENT

Ex-officio non-voting members of Diocesan High School Board.

PRINCIPAL

Ex-officio non-voting Executive Officer of the Board

PARENTS

Parents of students currently enrolled in the school. This group should not comprise more than 1/3 of the board.

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER

One parish council member from the school's parish should sit on the parish school board. This will help develop a relationship and improve communication with the parish.

OTHER

Other parishioners, alumni, parents of alumni, and community members, who are supportive of Catholic education and who have talents or skills that contribute to the board's goals.

TERM OF MEMBERSHIP & ELIGIBILITY

Each member shall serve a term of 3 years, renewable for a second term. After the second term, there must be a one-year interval before the individual is again eligible for Board membership. Staggered term lengths are recommended.

- 21 years of age or older
- Genuine interest in Catholic school education
- A credible witness in good standing with the Catholic church; a member of a parish; or if non-Catholic, supportive of the tenets of the Catholic faith.
- Ability to work with others to achieve consensus
- Ability to make time commitment for meetings, committee work, and in-services.
- Willing to maintain confidentiality and high level of integrity
- Willing to support school philosophy and mission
- Have a professional and personal life that is reflective of the teachings of the Catholic Church

Other parishioners, alumni, parents of alumni, and community members who are supportive of Catholic education and have skills or talents may contribute to the Board's goals.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

The School Board is by its nature consultative to the Pastor and Principal in parish schools; and to the Bishop, Superintendent, and Chief Administrator in the Diocesan High School.

In parish schools the consultative Board shall relate to the parish finance council as directed by the Pastor. In the diocesan high school, the board relates to the corporation officers through the Superintendent. The School Board is a leadership group within the ministry of Catholic education. As such, the responsibilities include:

1. *Mission Statement*: adoption of the school's mission statement and periodic review of its operational validity.
2. *Policy*: the formulation and recommendation of policy for the school, as needed, within the framework of Diocesan policy. Monitor the implementation of school policy and procedure.
3. *Planning*: the development and regular updating of a 3-5 year strategic plan for the school; annual goal-setting for the school and for the board. The strategic range plan should follow guidelines established by the Diocese of Venice Department of Education.

4. *Advancement*: the formulation and implementation of an Advancement program for the school, following Diocesan guidelines, and in cooperation with the Department of Education.

5. *Budget*: adopting the school's operational budget, according to the format specified by the Diocesan Finance Office and the Department of Education; receiving periodic reports from the Principal on the implementation of the budget.

6. *Evaluation*: systematically evaluating:

- *The school's mission statement, goals and policies*
- *The board itself*
- *The Principal within the process of the Diocese*

7. *Recommendation for the appointment of the Principal*: when a vacancy occurs, some board members will be asked to participate in the search process.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD MEMBERS

PASTOR

- Canonical administrator of parish; spiritual and administrative leader
- Hires, supervises, and with the Department of Education, evaluates the principal of parish school
- Brings his overall knowledge of the parish to the board
- Approves budget prepared by the principal and recommended by the school board
- Cooperates in the initiation and implementation of the school's advancement plans, student recruitment efforts, and strategic plan.
- School Board is consultative to the pastor, so all votes are subject to his approval– the pastor has ultimate responsibility.
- While he may make a decision contrary to majority vote, this is usually infrequent since the presumption is that the board is worthy of the trust he's placed in them.
- If he does not approve a board decision, he should provide a written statement of his reasons to the board.

SUPERINTENDENT

- Chief spokesperson of the bishop for the school's mission
- Ex-officio non-voting members of Diocesan High School Boards
- Superintendent is responsible for the general administration and supervision of Catholic parish and secondary schools; for the direction of the Department of Education
- Superintendent and staff of the Department of Education establish programs and procedures to implement the policies promulgated by the Diocesan Bishop.
- The Superintendent of Catholic Education interprets Diocesan school related policies; provides in-service programs; consults; receives recommendations for additions/changes to Diocesan Catholic School procedures.





RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL BOARD



RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

PRINCIPAL

- Educational leader and administrator of school – responsible for operation of the school program
- Parish school principal responsible for employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff; the establishment of educational programming; evaluation and management of student behavior; and implementation of school policy, all in accordance with diocesan policy
- Diocesan high school principal is responsible to carry out diocesan policies and procedures, and any policies the high school board has developed
- Develops programs and procedures to implement policies
- Main source of recommendations regarding need for school policies
- Develops agendas for board meeting with the president; is the main resource person for board in-services
- Develops the budget (in conjunction with pastor and finance committee for parish schools); implements budget; periodically reports to board and the Department of Education on budget
- Participates in the school's advancement plans, student recruitment efforts, and strategic plan.



CHAIR/OFFICERS

Officers are elected annually by the Board membership and need to have served on the Board for at least one year.

- *President* presides at all meetings; determines the agenda with the principal (in collaboration with the Pastor as needed); assigns additional duties to individual members; appoints members to committees; oversees committee activities; plans orientation for new members with nominating committee and principal; coordinates and reviews board's self-assessment and guides board to consensus on future plans
- *Vice-President* in the absence of the President performs all duties of the President
- *Secretary* maintains written record of all acts of the School Board; handles all correspondence for the Board; preserves reports and documents; notifies members of date and time of meetings; distributes meeting agendas and committee reports at least seven (7) days in advance; distributes minutes following each meeting, e-mails materials when possible; collects School Board Self Assessment forms and files report of data to President

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Officers are elected annually by the Board membership and need to have served on the Board for at least one year.

- Accept appointments as committee Chairs
- Use their expertise to assist with committee work
- Provide written committee reports to Board
- Assist in setting goals
- Accept other duties as needed

"The principle of subsidiarity allows school leaders to be responsive to specific needs in the unique environment of their school."

Breathing New Life into Catholic Schools: An Exploration of Government Models
(FADICA, 2022)



COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The committee structure contributes to the efficient operation of the Board

It is impossible to address all of the work of the Board without using the committee structure. The committee structure is also a way to recruit new members to the Board and provide opportunities for members of the School community to become involved in the work of the board. Committees research, organize, and present needed information so that the board can take action on a particular issue. Committee members may include both non-board members and Board members. The Chair of each committee must be a Board member.

There are two types of committees, standing and ad hoc. The standing committee provides continuity for the ongoing operation of the Board. The ad hoc committee is established to meet a specific objective at a given time. Non-Board members of the ad hoc committee do not actively participate in the Board's agenda after presenting their report.

When the work of this committee is complete, the committee disbands.

The Board may also invite representatives of various constituent groups to report on activities, educate the Board, or communicate essential information pertinent To the Board's purpose. The responsibility of these representatives is to advance the mission of Catholic schools. Representatives may be invited to report from the school faculty, school legislative liaison, business office, advancement office, parish religious education, parish council, parish finance council, parish trustees, or facilities department. These invited representatives have no vote and are not full members of the Board.

The president of the *Home and School Association* or parent teacher association may be an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board, and this must be stated in the by-laws.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Below are the recommended standing committees and brief descriptions of their responsibilities

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The School Board contributes to the development and regular updating of a 3-5 year long-range strategic plan for the school; annual goal setting and action steps for the school and for the board. The long-range strategic plan should follow the guidelines of the Department of Education.

ADVANCEMENT

The School Board contributes to the development and regular updating of a 3-5 year long-range strategic plan for the school; annual goal setting and action steps for the school and for the board. The long-range plan should follow the guidelines of the Department of Education.

FINANCE

The School Board participates in the formulation and implementation of an advancement program for the school which includes; public relations and marketing, fund development (annual fund, capital projects, capital campaigns, planned giving, and endowments), alumni and constituency relations, and enrollment management, and is in cooperation with the Department of Education guidelines.

NOMINATING

The School Board creates a nominating committee to seek new board members to replace those whose terms have expired. The pastor must approve the nominations for Parish School Boards. The Diocesan Bishop with the superintendent's recommendation must approve appointments to the Diocesan High School Board. All candidates for high school and elementary school advisory boards require prior approval through the superintendent.



COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The committee is responsible for:

STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. Developing and regular (annual) updating of a long-range strategic plans to assess where the school is currently and where it hopes to be in 3-5 years.
2. Including an environmental scan and a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).
3. Making the plan strategic – explaining how the school will achieve its goals and not just projecting current trends over 3-5 years.
4. Integrating the *Diocesan Strategic Planning Framework* into the school's strategic plan (See Appendix).
5. Including consultation from constituents: parents, teachers, parishioners, principal, pastor.
6. Preparing seven areas of the plan:
 - Vision and Purpose – Our Catholic Identity;
 - Governance – Leadership for Schools;
 - Teaching and Learning – Academic Excellence;
 - Curriculum and Assessment: Student Performance and School Effectiveness;
 - Facilities, Resources, and Finances – Stewardship;
 - Stakeholder Communication and Relationships – Our Message;
 - Commitment to Continuous Improvement -- Strategic Leadership
 - For each area: stating dream/vision; setting goals; prioritizing goals; establishing objectives and action steps (including cost, staffing, and timing).
7. Creating a case statement including data gathered and a narrative.
8. Using the plan as the school's yearly road map which drives all advancement activities.
9. Planning annually for the third/fifth year out so School always has a 3-5 year plan.

ADVANCEMENT

1. Formulating and implementing advancement program, including public relations and marketing, annual fund and endowment development, alumni and constituency relations, and enrollment management.
2. Friend-raising, not fundraising (Raise funds, friends, and freshmen)
3. Supporting the advancement team.

4. Identifying, cultivating, and soliciting major donors; serving as school ambassadors in the community; participating in fund development; recruitment; marketing; and alumni relations.

FINANCE

1. Adopting the budget (income and expenditure) according to the Diocesan format; monitoring the budget via periodic reports from the principal and pastor with recommendations from the parish finance council for parish schools. For the Diocesan high schools, financial reports are developed by the principal, business manager, and finance committee and sent directly to the Department of Education and the Diocese of Venice finance office.
2. Developing the plans and means to finance on-going educational program (i.e. setting the tuition, negotiating the parish subsidy with the pastor and parish finance council, developing the annual operating budget).
3. Participating in development of financial plan section of the strategic plan. Catholic schools are funded from a combination of tuition, subsidy (parish, Diocesan, religious congregation, donated services), fundraising, and advancement.
4. Integrating tuition assistance line item into budget.



COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES (CONTINUED)

NOMINATING

1. Ensuring that the School Board membership is representative of the school community and is comprised of members whose talents speak to the priority needs of the school as stated in the long-range strategic plan.
2. Gathering biographical information on candidates including their statement of interest/candidacy which presents their vision for the school, their willingness to share their time, talent, and treasure with the school, and their interests and expertise that can be matched with the school's needs and goals. For the Diocesan High School Board, candidates must be in good standing with the Catholic church, and must complete the *Statement of Candidacy*, the *Diocesan High School Board form* and a *Pastor's Approval Form* (see appendix).
3. Developing a slate of eligible candidates for board membership, to be given to the board president for discussion and consensus by the board and Diocesan Bishop with the recommendation of the superintendent to the Diocesan high school.

4. Providing *Confidentiality Statement* to be signed by new board members (See Appendix).
5. Participating in a board orientation annually conducted by the Department of Education
6. Suggesting topics for board in-services.
7. Preparing slate of nominees to be elected as officers of the board.
8. The nominating committee chair conducts the election of officers for appointment to the board. (See Appendix for *School Board Nominating Committee Guidelines*).

"Ongoing Board training builds faith community among the members while instilling in them a strong sense of ownership and responsibility."

Stephanie Welling
NCEA Chair of the Department of Boards and Councils



COMMITTEES

ANNUAL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION STEPS

*A **goal** is a statement of broad direction or purpose. A goal, by definition, will identify some outcome that will be achieved. An **objective** is the specific time-oriented and realistic statement of what is going to be done to achieve a goal. The action steps further specify the how, when, who, where, and cost for each objective.*

Annual goals, objectives, and action steps are developed to accomplish the ongoing work of the board. They must be specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, and timely. The principal informs the board about the annual school goals and gives a report of the progress being made to implement the school goals and objectives. The board's goals support school goals as reflected in the long-range strategic plan.



POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The parish elementary school board and the Diocesan High School Board formulate and recommends policies, the pastor and or superintendent enacts or promulgates them, and the principal implements them.

The Catholic parish elementary and secondary schools of the Diocese of Venice follow the policies developed by the Department of Education. There are various procedures provided by the Diocesan Department of Education that support the written policies. One of the school board's responsibilities is to consider new or proposed changes in policies for the operation of the school.

A policy is a deliberate plan of action for the operation of the school used to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. It is a guide for

discretionary action stating what *should* be done, but not *how* it should be done. A policy must be written.

The policy is determined by a response to a need expressed by the Principal, Pastor or the Board representing its constituents. Parent input may indicate that consideration should be given to developing a policy. This information may come from data received through an open forum, parent surveys or the results of input from focus groups.

Effective policy development requires appropriate input from those affected by the policy. Policies are never made in isolation nor are they made to "solve one problem." The nature of policy development requires time to analyze the need, gather data, allow for thoughtful deliberation and ultimately approve a policy statement. This process cannot be covered at one meeting.

A procedure is the process for carrying out the policy. The Board does not make recommendations regarding procedure, as that is the role and responsibility of the school administration.



PROPOSING A NEW POLICY

An issue or topic may be brought to the board by one or more members for discussion. If the board determines there is a need, the individual or group who proposed the policy may be asked to develop a rationale for the new or changed policy. This formalizes the process, but it does not imply that it will receive approval.

The need for a potential new policy or change to existing policy should be submitted to the administration and to the board using the *Proposed New Policy or Change in Policy Form* (see appendix) that includes: a statement indicating the need for the policy and the perceived consequences of implementing the change. No policy should supersede or contradict other policies of the school.

Once the topic is placed on the agenda, the following occurs:

- Discussion about the topic, issue, concern,
- Study of the issue is conducted by the principal, and possibly by an ad hoc committee,
- Questions, concerns are clarified by the individual or group who initiated the policy,
- A statement is formulated that is brief, clear, and simple.
- The statement is written to describe what will be accomplished.

The proposed policy is considered at the advisory board meeting (this may occur at an executive session). If the policy will be considered, the initiator or a committee assigned by the board president “writes” the policy with the suggestions made by the board. The final revision, or draft, of the proposed policy allows the board to either accept or reject the proposed policy, or ask for another draft. An approved policy is dated, submitted to the pastor in parish schools or the superintendent in Diocesan high school. Final approval is given by the superintendent for enactment, and will then be included with the other policies.

“Everyone recognizes that if we were satisfied with our accomplishments we would cease to grow, so there is a continuous process of development and improvement.”

**Dr. Kevin Baxter, Former Principal of
American Martyrs School, NCEA
Outstanding Board 2009**



Publication of the policy occurs when the board adopts the policy and it is promulgated by the pastor/superintendent. Appropriate constituents are informed about the new policy. This may occur through the school newsletter, the parish bulletin and/or the school’s handbooks.

Reviewing and rescinding policies is also the responsibility of the board. Policies are tested every time they are used, and they should be changed as soon as they become obsolete in order to achieve a balance of justice and care.

When the policy has been approved, and enacted, the Principal determines how the policy will be implemented and informs the board about the progress being made.



THE AGENDA

Planning the Agenda for Board Meetings



The principal and president of the board plan the meeting agenda and have it distributed to the members along with an agenda packet at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting. Include the name of the school, date, time, and place of the meeting on the agenda. Topics for future agendas can be raised at meetings. The format for the meetings is the same for all meetings. Meetings are usually scheduled for no more than two hours. Refer to appendix for samples of a *Template for School Board Agenda* and *A Prayer for School Boards*.

Set times for each of the following:

GATHERING

Usually occurs 10-15 minutes before the meeting. The purpose is to socialize. Rotate task of bringing refreshments.

CALL TO ORDER

- Welcome and opening prayer
- Recognition of visitors
- Roll call

CONSENT AGENDA

A group of items that may include previous meeting minutes for approval, general reports, committee reports, routine correspondence, and/or informational materials that:

- Do not require discussion
- Are self-explanatory
- Are non-controversial
- Were submitted in writing and distributed to the board prior to the meeting.

Consent agenda items can be removed from the group and placed on the meeting agenda. The consent agenda is voted on as a whole and acceptance is stated in the meeting minutes. The purpose of a consent agenda is to free up time for discussion of critical issues and ongoing planning.

The president handles this part of the agenda.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations to the School Board could be offered early in the meeting.

GENERAL REPORTS

- *Pastor*: updates and shares general information that has not been included in the consent agenda.
- *Principal*: gives information not already included in the consent agenda about the school's program; gives a progress report about the school's goals and objectives; informs about the coming school activities; clarifies questions raised in report; provides data regarding enrollment trends.
- *Board President*: gives information regarding board events and activities; provides updates on strategic plan implementation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Indicate who will present the report on behalf of the committee and the purpose of the report, e.g., seek input from the board or make a final recommendation. Not all committees give reports at each meeting. Written updates can be given to the board as part of the consent agenda.



COMMITTEES

THE AGENDA (CONTINUED)

Set times for the following:

STANDING COMMITTEE

List each committee that will apprise the Board about its progress, only if they need input from the Board or have some final recommendations for the board to consider. Otherwise, a written report may be included in the consent agenda.

AD HOC COMMITTEES

List each committee that will apprise the board about its progress, only if input is needed from the board or there is some final recommendation for the board to consider. Otherwise, a written report may be included in the consent agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

Consider items addressed at a previous meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Indicate the topic or issue to be addressed.

VISITORS COMMENTS

Non-members who wish to speak at a board meeting shall submit their request in writing to the president two weeks in advance of the meeting. Their requests will be honored if their business is appropriate for the board's responsibilities and agenda. Such persons shall be given a specific time limit for speaking. Guests should be informed that someone would respond to them later. Do not make promises about resolving the issues raised.

PLANNING FOR NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA

Consider items addressed in the previous meetings.

CLOSING COMMENTS

CLOSING PRAYER

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Sessions are held as needed either before the regularly scheduled meeting or after the meeting. Executive sessions need not be part of every board meeting.



SUGGESTED PROCEDURES FOR VISTORS

“Board members are attentive and respectful, listening and responding in ways that model Catholic values.”

Karen Barreras, Principal, The Little Flower School, Outstanding Board Award 2009

Visitors should be aware of the protocol observed by those who attend the board meetings. It is important that a friendly atmosphere prevails, but it is also important the visitors know the parameters for speaking to the board. A brochure welcoming visitors could be distributed before the meeting begins. The brochure would include a statement of welcome and the protocol to be followed by visitors during the meeting (See Appendix for example).



SUGGESTED PROCEDURES FOR VISITORS (CONTINUED)

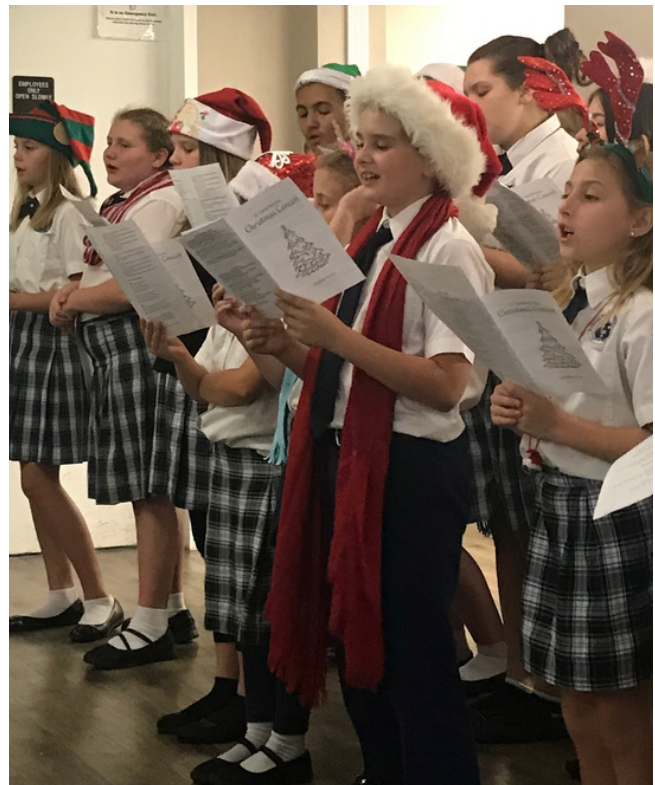


Visitors observe the board while it is in session. They do not engage in the discussion nor do they actively participate in the agenda either through comments or by offering their opinions on the topic being discussed. No electronic devices of any kind should be accessed unless prior approval is received from the president.

- Once the visitor is recognized, the visitor has one opportunity to express an opinion on the item approved for the agenda. Each individual may speak for a specified amount of time (2-3 minutes).
- There is no discussion or debate between the visitors and the members.
- All members listen to the visitors. If necessary, either the president or someone designated by the president can assist in clarifying the question or topic.
- The president thanks the visitors for their comments and informs them that someone will get back to them later.

The President and the members are cordial to the visitors. It is understood that the issues raised will not be handled at the meeting. If appropriate to the parameters of the board's responsibilities, the issue may be addressed at a future time. Ordinarily, the visitor's comments are related to the matters considered on the agenda. Personnel issues and individual family or student's needs are not discussed. Questions of a general nature, however, could be referred to the appropriate person, e.g., Pastor or Principal.

The President assures the visitors that the matter will be taken under consideration by the board, the pastor or the principal. It is important that the president not "promise" that the issue will be dealt with at the next meeting because it may not be possible to do so. The President does not necessarily address some of the issues that may be raised. It may be appropriate, for the Pastor or Principal to respond to the individual's question, issue or concern later.



SERVICES

OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Diocese of Venice Department of Education will provide orientation, training, guidance, and direction so that our School Boards will be sustainable and viable.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Diocese of Venice
Department of Education
1000 Pinebrook Road
Venice, Florida 34285
Phone: (941) 441-1113
FAX: (941) 484-4775

RESOURCES

Diocese of Venice
Department of Education
Official Website:
www.dioceseofvenice.org/offices/offices-departments/education/
Board Portal:
www.dovdoe.org

NCEA Website and Literature
Department of Boards & Councils
www.ncea.org

LIAISON

Superintendent
School Board Consultation
School Board Orientation and Training
Local Strategic Planning

ADVANCEMENT

Director of Development and Stewardship
Advancement Consultation and Training

PLANNING

Director of Curriculum
Accreditation and Planning

FINANCES

Superintendent/Diocesan School Board

- *Catholic School Support Program: Analysis and Administration*
- *School Budget Review, Analysis, and Projection*
- *Fiscal Training*



ANNUAL PLANNING AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

For a Catholic school board to be effective, it must provide time for goal setting and periodic evaluation

It is important that at least one day be set aside each year for an annual planning meeting for board members to meet with the school's administrators in order to set the board's goals for the year, as well as to review the administration's goals. The board will plan annually for the election of officers for appointment. It is also important that the board evaluates its performance. Refer to the Appendix for the *School Board Self-Assessment* tool to be

used for this purpose. *The School Board Self Assessment* should be completed by each board member and submitted at least seven (7) days prior to the annual meeting to the secretary of the board and to the Department of Education. The secretary will file a report of the data to the board president for discussion at the annual planning meeting and for consensus on planned changes.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Diocese of Venice Department of Education appreciates the following organizations for sharing their resources:

Diocese of Joliet Catholic Schools Office

The Archdiocese of Hartford

The National Catholic Educational Association



APPENDIX

- [A] Model Constitution for School Boards of Education
- [B] Model By-laws for School Boards of Education
- [C] School Board Committee Report Form
- [D] Statement of Candidacy - Diocesan High School Board
- [E] Pastor's Approval Form
- [F] Confidentiality Statement for School Boards
- [G] School Board Nominating Committee Guidelines
- [H] Proposed New Policy or Change in Policy Form
- [I] Template for School Board Agenda
- [J] Prayers for School Board Meetings
- [K] School Board Self-Assessment
- [L] Glossary of Terms

