

LEADERSHIP MANUAL

for

SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARDS

Office of Catholic Schools
Archdiocese of Chicago
2005 Edition

OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Archdiocese of Chicago

This edition of the **Leadership Manual** reflects the respect that the Office of Catholic Schools holds for the role of the local advisory boards in the Archdiocese of Chicago. We recognize the generous commitment that advisory board members have for their schools and the parish community and value them as an integral part of the ministry of Catholic education. In developing this manual, consideration is given to how these advisory boards can, in their advisory capacity, effectively and efficiently assist the pastor and principal in the operation of the school's programs.

It is hoped that this **Leadership Manual** will serve as a resource for advisory boards as they inservice themselves on their roles and responsibilities and as they implement the policies and procedures of the Archdiocese, the local school and the Church.

Nicholas M. Wolsonovich, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Archdiocese of Chicago

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SHARED LEADERSHIP IN THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The education of youth is a ministry of the Catholic Church. In the Declaration on Christian Education, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, the distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic school is described in this way: “The Catholic school pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school. *What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love.*”¹ Thus, the Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in society which is strongly characterized by technical and scientific skill. But at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impact a solid Christian formation.²

An important element in developing this community climate is the collaborative leadership of parents with the pastor and principal in the operation of the local school advisory board. Each has a specific role and commensurate responsibilities in the development of the school’s programs, policies and procedures.

The purpose of this manual is to delineate the ways that the advisory board participates in the educational mission of the Catholic school. The school is strengthened through the working partnership between the leadership of the school, the parish and its constituents.

By its nature, the board is advisory. It is accountable to the pastor and to the principal in its operation. It agrees to follow the policies and administrative procedures of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Office of Catholic Schools. Members agree that they will use their talents, gifts and insights for the common good of the community to promote the mission and goals of Catholic education. They will defer their personal agendas in order to discern with other members the issues, concerns and challenges they face in meeting the educational needs of the students.

Not only will they take seriously their role as advisors to the pastor and principal, but also they will accept the conditions of membership on the advisory board, namely, the **Code of Ethics**, which describes the parameters of their collaboration and responsibility.

The members model the faith community to its constituents. They promote respect between and among each other, acknowledge the various views of each member, discern with each other in an open and collaborative manner and support the decisions approved by the board. The advisory board functions only when it is in session. This relieves them of “being on duty” at social or school events, or when they meet other members in the community.

The members understand that they are part of the parish community and that the school is a vital part of the parish community as well. Each member is a public relations agent of the school. It is a privilege to serve as a member of the advisory board. The members are valued because of their expertise, the support that they give to Catholic education and their generosity in sharing their talents with other members.

¹ The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, Rome 1988

² The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Rome 1997

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

This organizational structure of the Archdiocese of Chicago describes the relationship between its various entities. The Cardinal Archbishop delegates the administration of the six vicariates (geographic regions) to the vicars. In each vicariate are the local parishes. The pastors serve as the local juridic of the parishes. The pastors delegate the operation of the school to the principal. The local school advisory boards, representing the families, serve as advisors to the pastor and to the principal. Each entity has specific responsibilities for carrying out the mission of Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Cardinal Archbishop

Catholic Church of Cook and Lake Counties

VICARIATE

Six Geographic Regions of the Archdiocese

Vicar

Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago

PARISH

Pastor

Parish, regional or consolidated school

Principal

Advisory Board

Advisory to pastor and principal

OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Vicariate Assistant Superintendents

Serve as advisors to pastors, advisory boards, parents and faculty members on school-related matters

ADVISORY BOARDS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Every elementary school shall have an Advisory Board or Education Committee. Local school boards are, by their very nature, **advisory** to the pastor and the principal. Ordinarily, the pastor and principal participate in all regular, special and executive session meetings of the board. The pastor and principal participate in all deliberations of the advisory board and the pastor has final approval of all board decisions. The principal is the executive officer of the board, in addition to other duties, and provides inservice and guidance to the advisory board in educational matters. The **Archdiocesan and Elementary School Policies** shall be the policies of the local board. Additional advisory board policies may be developed as necessary to assist the principal in the operation of the school. Advisory board policies may not be contrary to Archdiocesan policies. The advisory board has a unique relationship within the parish and school community.

The advisory board relates in a formal way, through a liaison, to the Parish Council and/or the Parish Council Education Commission.

The board relates to the parish finance committee as directed by Archdiocesan policy and procedure.
The board relates to the school faculty and staff through the principal.
The board represents its constituents: parents, guardians and parishioners.
The board members act as members of the board only at official board meetings or when otherwise directed.

The term “board” is used to describe most parish situations. In parishes where the advisory group is called “committee” or another synonymous term, these procedures apply.

CONSTITUTION

Each school advisory board shall define its authority and membership through a written constitution adopted by the board and approved by the pastor. Local constitutions and bylaws shall be in accord with Archdiocesan procedures. A current copy of these documents shall be on file at the Office of Catholic Schools.

Questions related to advisory board documents and/or proceedings shall be referred to the appropriate consultant at the Office of Catholic Schools.

MEMBERSHIP

The **pastor** shall be an ex-officio member of the local school advisory board, ordinarily participating in all meetings, sharing his vision, wisdom and expertise. In light of his ministry to the total parish, the pastor has the right to veto those board decisions that are inconsistent with the integral proclamation of the Word of God, with Archdiocesan school policies, with duly established parish policies or those decisions that are not financially appropriate.

The **principal** shall be the executive officer of the advisory board and have voice but no vote in its deliberations.

The advisory board shall be broadly representative of the Catholic community served by the school. This includes **parents of children enrolled in the school and parishioners with no children in school**. Broad representation is encouraged since, in most cases, the entire parish or several parishes support the school.

In the event that a school has a large non-Catholic or non-parishioner enrollment, the manner in which this constituency will be represented shall be addressed in the local constitution.

Members of the board ascribe to the *Code of Ethics for Board Members*. (See page 9)

ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

Members shall be at least 21 years of age. No employee of the local school or parish and no member of the immediate family of an employee shall be eligible for membership. The term *immediate family* shall be defined as spouse, child, parent, brother, sister or in-law. In addition, membership is limited to one person per household. It is also suggested that a person on a school advisory board not serve in other parish/school leadership positions.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY: ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

The advisory board is a leadership group within the ministry of Catholic schooling. As such, the responsibilities include:

- Modeling faith community in a spirit of cooperation and interdependence with the pastor and principal.
- Adhering to Archdiocesan policy and developing policies that enable the school to fulfill its mission.
- Assisting the pastor in the search and selection of the principal when a vacancy occurs.
- Participating in the Archdiocesan Principal Self-Assessment and Evaluation process.
- Reviewing and advising on the school budget, tuition rates and other sources of financing.
- Developing and periodically reviewing the board constitution and bylaws.
- Participating in the school's development, student recruitment efforts and long-range plans.
- Acting as the public relations and marketing arm of the school and its programs.
- Participating in ongoing board inservice both at the Archdiocesan and local level.
- Evaluating annually the board's effectiveness, productivity and internal operations.
- Directing individuals and/or groups to appropriate resources for conflict resolution.
- Participating, upon request, in the School Improvement Process.
- Monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the School Improvement Plan.
- Supporting the efforts of local legislative action.

Advisory Boards *are not* responsible for:

Acting as a grievance committee or conciliators for any group or party.
Hiring, evaluating or terminating faculty and staff; nor do they advise principals in personnel matters.
Administering the school or telling the principal how to administer the school.
Implementing policies and procedures.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY: PASTOR

The **pastor** is the primary spiritual leader of the parish. He is responsible for the educational ministry in the parish. The pastor serves as an *ex-officio* member of the advisory board. As such, his responsibilities include:

Participating in all board meetings and sharing his wisdom and expertise.
Approving all decisions and policies, particularly those that relate to religious education in the school.
Hiring the principal after consultation with the advisory board and according to Archdiocesan procedures.
Approving the budget prepared by the principal and reviewed by the advisory board.
Initiating the contract renewal process outlined by the Office of Catholic Schools.
Cooperating in the initiation and implementation of the school's development plans, student recruitment efforts and long-range plans.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY: PRINCIPAL

The **principal** is the educational leader and executive officer of the advisory board. As such, the responsibilities include:

Developing the monthly agenda with the chairperson.
Preparing and submitting policy recommendations to the advisory board.
Implementing policies and procedures.
Informing the board of local policy implementation.
Keeping the advisory board informed of Archdiocesan processes and procedures.
Providing educational direction to the board.
Preparing the annual school budget for the board's review and reporting periodically on year-to-date finances.
Initiating the Archdiocesan Principal Self-assessment and Evaluation process outlined by the Office of Catholic Schools.
Participating in the school's development plans, student recruitment efforts, and long-range plans.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY: CHAIRPERSON

The chair of the advisory board works with the principal in developing the agenda for meetings. In addition, the chairperson:

- Believes in the purpose of the board and is loyal to those purposes.
- Accepts duties required by the office to which elected.
- Attends required meetings.
- Inspires enthusiasm for the board's purpose.
- Recognizes and cultivates leadership qualities in others.
- Is punctual and is prepared for meetings.
- Shares appropriate leadership responsibilities with the pastor and the principal.
- Shares responsibility with the pastor and the principal in the School Improvement Process.

In addition, the **chairperson** must:

- Be impartial, tactful, firm and competent.
- Have a thorough knowledge of and accept the requirements of the bylaws.
- Appoint all committees, except when the bylaws require otherwise.
- Preside at all meetings, or secure a suitable substitute.
- Operate within the policies and procedures of the Archdiocese and the Office of Catholic Schools.

RESIGNATION OR REMOVAL OF AN ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

When an advisory board member is unable to promote the purpose of the board, abide by established roles and responsibilities as a member, or accept the board's agenda, it may be necessary for the member to resign from the advisory board. In addition, for the common good of the advisory board, its members and the school community, it may be necessary to remove a member from the advisory board. The reasons for removing a member from the board should be included in the advisory board's constitution. The following are some reasons a member may be removed from the advisory board:

- Violating the confidentiality of executive sessions.
- Acting contrary to parish/school mission and goals.
- Impeding the board's defined responsibilities.
- Being excessively absent from meetings.

ADVISORY BOARD RESOURCES

Following are some of the resources available from the Office of Catholic Schools to assist boards in their work:

- Leadership Manual School Advisory Board
- Financial Planning for Catholic Schools
- Archdiocesan and Elementary School Policies and Procedures
- Marketing and Development *Tools for Success*
- Advancement Services and Marketing Services: Workshops, Newsletters
- Principal Selection Process Manual
- Principal Self-assessment and Evaluation process
- Annual inservice conference for boards

CODE OF ETHICS FOR ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

The **Code of Ethics for Advisory Board Members** delineates the expectations inherent in the purpose of the board. Members, by accepting the position to serve on the advisory 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 education. The Code of Ethics addresses the following: *conflict of interest, confidentiality, objectivity, justice, fairness, and maintenance of unity.*

Conflict of Interest:

Advisory 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 advisory board are responsible to keep matters discussed in executive/closed sessions in confidence. Official information/business discussed in such sessions cannot be shared with non-board members, even with one's spouse.

Objectivity:

Since total objectivity is impossible for anyone to achieve, members are asked to 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.

Justice and Fairness:

Decisions made by the advisory board and approved by the pastor should be the result of honest and open discussion by all members: pastor, principal and parent/parishioner membership. Consideration of the good of the total parish/school community should be integral to the decision-making process. Every member shall 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 achieving its objectives within the faith community of the parish/school, the advisory board is to do all it can to avoid creating factions, sides or other divisive groupings in the parish and school community. Members should function within the framework of the total leadership of the parish and strive to cooperate with other leadership groups in the local faith community.

COMMITTEES OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

The committee structure contributes to the efficient operation of the advisory 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 provide and organize 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 should be a board member.

The board's bylaws should list the standing committees of the board. The chair assigns advisory board members to lead various committees to do the "*work of the board*." The committee is accountable to the board for their work and gives progress reports to the board at regular board meetings.. Copies of the written report become part of the board's minutes. Ordinarily, the reports are sent to board members with the monthly agenda and minutes.

The board's agenda is designed to allow time for the members to discuss topics, receive information, give input on issues, and make decisions. Since the optimal time allocated for board meetings is two hours, committee work is prepared outside of the meeting. As part of the board's agenda, each committee chair gives a brief report to the board on the progress of the committee's work. The committee chair may also use this time to seek the board's approval or input on some aspect of the committee's work. The committee chair may also invite a committee member (or two) to assist in presenting the report to the board. (Some committees may not find it necessary to give a report at each board meeting.)

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.

Some examples of the board's **standing committees** and a brief description of their responsibilities are

Executive Committee

Consists of the principal and the chair of the advisory board that meet regularly to plan the agenda for the regular meeting. They see that the members receive a copy of the agenda with the minutes of the previous meeting and any other information to be distributed to the members in preparation for the upcoming meeting.

Public Relations and Marketing Committee

Implements the plan for marketing the school to the parish community and to the local community, assists in recruitment of students to the school.

School Improvement Committee

Monitors, annually, the implementation of the school's improvement plans.

Development Committee

Coordinates fundraising activities for the financial support and operation of the school.

Legislative Action Committee

Represents the school community and informs the board of pending legislation and legislative initiatives for the benefit of the Catholic schools of the archdiocese.

Ad Hoc Committee members are selected because they are knowledgeable, interested in serving and possess an expertise needed by the board. Committee members should receive inservice about the function of the board, the roles and responsibilities of the members as well as those of the committee. In addition, they should be familiar with the policies, procedures and practices of the local Catholic school.

Ad hoc committees may be formed for a particular purpose. Examples of ad hoc committees may be the *Principal Search Committee, Constitution and Bylaws Committee, Policy Development Committee, Election Committee.*

Principal Search Committee

When there is a principal vacancy, the pastor establishes a **Search Committee** to interview prospective principal candidates. The Office of Catholic Schools provides the procedures and inservice for the members of the search committee according to the **Principal Selection Process** of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Constitution and Bylaws Committee

When it is necessary to **write, revise or update** the **Constitution and Bylaws**, an ad hoc committee may be formed to do this task.

Policy Development Committee

When a new policy is being developed, a committee may be appointed as the "writing committee." This committee submits draft copies to the board and makes appropriate corrections, per the request of the board.

Election Committee

This committee develops and implements the election procedures to fill vacancies on the advisory board. They announce the timeline for elections, seek nominees to fill vacancies and conduct the election of new members.

It may be necessary to form other committees, as needs arise to assist in the overall operation of the board.

DEVELOPING ANNUAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Annual goals and objectives are developed to accomplish the **ongoing work of the advisory board**. The principal informs the board about the annual school goals developed by faculty members and gives a monthly report of the progress being made to implement the school goals and objectives. The advisory board's goals support school goals.

GOALS

Definition

A goal is a statement of broad direction or purpose. A goal, by definition, will identify some outcome that will be achieved.

Characteristics

- ... stated in a general way
- ... point toward some future outcome
- ... identifies *what will be accomplished*

OBJECTIVES

Definition

An objective or action plan is the specific method or procedure that will be used to achieve a goal. It outlines the steps that will be taken to achieve the goal. There should be several stated objectives delineated in order to implement the goal.

Characteristics

- ...are specific
- ...describe what will be completed
- ...can be evaluated for its implementation

The members of the school advisory board affirm or approve its annual goals and objectives. Periodic evaluation of the implementation of these goals should be part of the board's agenda. Corresponding examples are cited below, goals and objectives (*in italics*).

- evaluation of the board meetings
Members will participate in an annual evaluation of their effectiveness.
- awareness of the importance of new trends in Catholic education
Members will read and discuss an article about curriculum integration.
- greater participation in legislative initiatives
Members will attend a meeting of the legislative action representatives in the area.
- implications of technology as a learning tool for the students
Members will examine how technology impacts learning.
- support of the school's annual goals and objectives
Members will attend the annual science fair.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Catholic elementary schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago follow the policies developed by the Archdiocese and the Office of Catholic Schools. There are various processes provided by the Office of Catholic Schools that support the written policies and procedures. One of the advisory board's responsibilities is to develop policies for the operation of the school. The policy is determined by *a response to a need* expressed by the principal, pastor or the advisory board representing its constituents. In some instances, 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.

For policy development to be effective, it is essential that appropriate input be sought from those who will be 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.

There is a difference between **developing policy** and **implementing policy**. The **advisory board develops** and approves policies, the **principal implements** policies.

The following **benchmarks may indicate** that the board needs to change, update or develop a policy

- The current school policy is obsolete.
- The school's policy contradicts Archdiocese of Chicago or Office of Catholic Schools Policies or procedures.
- A particular situation arises that is not presently covered by policy.

The issue or topic may be brought to the advisory board by one or more members for discussion and, if approved, 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 does not imply that it will receive approval.

The individual or group submits a request to the advisory board for a new policy or change in policy and will use a form devised by the school board that includes

- a statement indicating the need for the policy,
- a rationale for the policy,
- suggestions with preferred solution,
- suggestions for an alternate solution,
- implications of implementing the change.

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

- discussion about the topic, issue, concern,
- study of the issue is initiated,
- questions, concerns are clarified by the individual or group who initiated the policy,
- a statement is formulated that is **brief, simple, clear,**
- the statement is written in "goal language" (what will be accomplished).

The members engage in a discussion about the topic, clarify implications and request that the individual or group who initiated the policy prepare a *draft* of the proposed policy for the next meeting.

The **first reading of the proposed policy** is considered at the board meeting. (This may occur at an executive session.) During this time, the members analyze the statement for clarity, engage in dialogue about the pros and cons of the policy as well as its implications. They further discern as to whether or not the policy should be implemented. If there is general consensus that the policy should be considered, the initiator or a committee assigned by the chair “writes” the policy with the suggestions and changes made by the advisory board. The **second draft** is prepared for the next meeting of the board.

The **second reading of the proposed policy** allows the advisory board to either accept or reject the proposed policy. If accepted, the members vote; if rejected, the board either asks that the proposed policy be changed to include the advisory board’s input or they vote to reject the proposed policy. The approved policy is dated and included with the other *advisory board policies*. New policies cannot be **retroactive**.

Publication of the policy occurs when the advisory board accepts the policy. Appropriate constituents are informed about the new policy. This may be 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 or dysfunctional.

When the policy has been approved, **the principal determines how the policy will be implemented** and informs the advisory board about the progress being made. The board may share its preferences with the principal. However, it is clearly the principal’s role to create the rules, guidelines or procedures to implement the policy. It is usual practice for the principal to seek input from appropriate publics, e.g., parents, faculty, advisory board members, pastor. Even with consultation, it is still the principal’s role to create the strategies to be used to implement the policy.

The **characteristics of a good rule, guideline or procedure** are clear language, date of implementation, and consequences (if necessary) for not following the regulation. Newly created regulations cannot be **retroactive**.

The appropriate publics are informed in a timely manner. The principal periodically updates the members on how the implementation process is progressing. Some changes take time for implementation, and the board and principal should not expect immediate results.

The board is advised that not all issues are policy matter and ordinarily can be handled through a change in procedures. The principal apprises the advisory board of ordinary changes in procedures so that they are well informed.

DEVELOPING AND REVISING A CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Elementary Schools are required to follow Archdiocese of Chicago and Elementary School Policy in all matters related to the operation of the schools.

Each school shall have a local school advisory board. (**Elementary School Policy 102.1**)

Procedure:

- a. The written constitution and bylaws shall be in accordance with Archdiocesan policies and procedures.
- b. Operational procedures provided by the Office of Catholic Schools shall be followed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING OR REVISING THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The **Constitution** describes how the advisory board operates. The **Bylaws** serve as guidelines for the ways that the board functions as a group. Use the materials included in pages 5 through 8 as a point of reference when developing or revising the constitutions and bylaws.

Topics included in the **CONSTITUTION** are as follows:

- **The official title of the advisory board**
- **A statement articulating the purpose of the advisory board**
- **The responsibilities of the board members**
- **Officers of advisory board**

titles of members
eligibility for office
term of office
responsibilities

BYLAWS will usually include the following topics:

- **Writing Policy for the school**
process for adopting policy
approval of policy by pastor
process for review of local policies
procedures for publication of new policies

- **Selection of the Principal**

Refer to *Principal Selection Process Manual* in order to follow current policies established by the Office for Catholic Schools.

Principal Self-assessment and Evaluation process

Refer to the Principal Self-assessment and Evaluation process in order to follow current policies established by the Office of Catholic Schools.

- **Developing the School Budget**

Follow current policies established by the Office of Catholic Schools and the Office of Finance of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

- **School Improvement Process**

Participate in and monitor the School Improvement Process.

- **Membership on the Advisory Board**

number of members
composition of membership
procedures for nomination and election of members
membership eligibility
resignation of a member
removal of a member
filling vacancies
attendance at meetings

- **Officers of the Advisory Board**

procedures for selection/election
responsibilities of members

chair or president

presides at all meetings
develops monthly agenda with the principal
appoints committees
assigns additional duties to members

vice-chair or vice-president

performs duties in absence of chair or president
serves on committees

secretary

maintains written record of minutes
takes care of correspondence
distributes agenda before the day of 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 constituency to address the board
 - Robert's "Rules of Order"
 - order of business
 - executive session

- **Committees** (see *Committees of the Advisory Board* pages 11-12)

- functions
 - standing or ad hoc
 - accountability

- **Amendments**

- process to be followed

Procedures should be established for the advisory board to meet in **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 monthly agenda may reflect that the board will meet in executive session. Decisions made in an "executive session" are recorded. 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; the review of the performance of the principal and the renewal or non-renewal of the principal's contract. 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 is always present for an executive session of the advisory board. The principal may or may not always be present.

As the document is either written or reviewed, it is advised that the content should be checked to ensure that it

- models the faith community.
- is consistent with Archdiocese of Chicago Policies and Procedures of the Office of Catholic Schools.
- is clear and readable.
- articulates the roles and responsibilities of the members.
- describes the school board as advisory to the pastor and principal.
- indicates how the advisory board operates.

Before final approval of the advisory board's constitution and bylaws, a copy should be given to the appropriate assistant superintendent for elementary schools at the Office of Catholic Schools for review. A final copy is sent to the Office of Catholic Schools. Revisions of the advisory board's constitution and bylaws should also be sent to the Office of Catholic Schools.

ELECTION OF SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

The advisory board constitution and bylaws stipulate how members are elected. The Office of Catholic Schools *guidelines for boards* specify who is eligible to fill a vacancy on the board.

Those seeking membership on an advisory board realize that they are genuinely concerned about contributing to the ministry of Catholic education. Their agenda is the advisory board's agenda; their goals are the same as the advisory board's goals; their open manner allows them to listen to the needs of the school; they set aside their own opinions in order to listen to the membership. They are not hesitant; they speak up in respectful and sincere ways.

The procedures and processes for election of members to the board should be included in the constitution and bylaws. Specific **duties of the election committee** are delineated.

- Membership is clearly defined.
- Duties are outlined in the bylaws.
- Timeline for nomination and election is promulgated to the school and parish community.

The pastor approves the list of nominees before they are placed on the ballot.

There is ongoing communication to the public about the impending vacancies on the advisory board. **Recruitment of nominees** is an important aspect of the nominating process. Prospective members should be informed about the purpose of the board, the roles and responsibilities and the kind of committee work that the members do. They should know the **eligibility requirements**.

Nominees willing to commit themselves to serving on the advisory board may be interviewed about their desire to include their name on the nomination slate. The interview session could include the following questions as well as others appropriate to the particular school's needs.

- *Why do you want to be part of this advisory board?*
- *How will you listen to others without bias or without forming a "final opinion" about the matter?*
- *Are you able to keep matters in confidence until particular decisions are made public?*
- *What expertise and talents will you bring to the advisory board for the benefit of the school community?*
- *How will you support the advisory board's decisions if you were unable to agree with them?*

The parish and school communities are informed about the nominees. This "**information packet**," distributed to the community, identifies who the nominees are, their area of expertise, and some information about their background in Catholic education and a statement about why the individual has accepted the nomination.

The **election committee** ensures that the ballots are prepared, announcements made about the times, place and requirements for voting. Procedures for counting ballots and announcing the results of the elections specified. All nominees should be personally informed before the results of the election are shared with the community. Nominees should be thanked for offering to serve.

The Office of Catholic Schools provides inservice about the function of the board. The topics are specifically geared toward an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the board members. The principal also provides ongoing inservice for the members to keep them informed about procedures for board members. New members are required to attend the inservice sessions; other members are encouraged to attend at least every other year.

PLANNING THE AGENDA FOR MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

School, Date, Time and Place

The principal and chair of the advisory board plan the monthly agenda and have it distributed to the members along with an agenda packet at least a week prior to the meeting. Topics for future agendas can be raised at the monthly meeting. The format for the meetings is the same for all meetings. The agenda includes the desired “outcome.” A sample format follows:

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

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes

Allocated time for all of the above is about 10 minutes. The chair handles this part of the agenda.

General Reports

Pastor: updates and shares general information.

Principal: gives information 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. Allocated time for all of the above is no more than 30 minutes.

Committee Reports

Indicate who will present the report on behalf of the committee and the purpose of the report, e.g., input from board, final recommendation. Not all committees give reports at each meeting.

Standing Committees

List each committee that will apprise the board about its progress, only if they have information, need input from the board or have some final recommendations for the board to consider.

Ad hoc committees

List each committee that will apprise the board about its progress, only if there is information, input is needed from the board or there is some final recommendation for the board to consider.

Ordinarily, the reporting time should be about 10 minutes for each of the reports. If additional time is needed, appropriate adjustments are indicated in the agenda and announced at the beginning of the meeting.

Other business

Allocate about 10 minute for other business matters. Indicate the topic or issue to be addressed.

Visitors Comments

Guests should be informed that someone would respond to them later. Do not make promises about resolving the issues raised.

Closing Comments

Closing Prayer

NB: Meetings are usually scheduled for **two hours**. **Executive Sessions** are either held before the regularly scheduled meeting or after the meeting. Executive sessions need not be part of every board meeting.

SOME HINTS for the chair

.....tracking the meetings agenda

Discussion of issues and decision-making processes include input before a final decision is determined. The chair should keep the agenda moving and assure that all members are active participants.

- Indicate the purpose of the discussion; e.g., listing pros and cons about an issue, planning, solving a problem, making a recommendation or finalizing a decision.
- **Make summary comments** during the discussion and periodically during the meeting. The chair keeps the topic moving, and at the same time, ensures that the progress of the discussion is noted.
- **Relate the comments of individual board members to the purpose** of the discussion. Interjecting comments about “staying on task,” clarification of the points being discussed and inviting further development of an idea about the issue will keep the members engaged in the topic. These strategies will also indicate that the opinions of an individual board member are valued.
- **Set time limits** for each item on the agenda. The topic should have a specified amount of time allotted for information, input and response. If the discussion exceeds the time limits, the time can be renegotiated. It may be necessary to move the topic to a future meeting or assign a committee to research the issue further before placing it on an agenda.
- **Table comments about topics not on the agenda.** Such topics can be dealt with at another time or they may become a future “agenda item.”
- **Interrupt the discussion** if it goes off the track. Remind members that “side-bar” conversations and comments are unacceptable.
- **Begin and end meetings** on time.

It will be helpful if **progress notes are recorded to reflect** the “brainstorming,” indicating pros and cons about the issue during the decision-making session. These notes serve as a “point of reference” in further discussions or for review about the topic.

The chair may encourage a “closing statement” from each member before moving to the next topic. This is one sentence about what has occurred. Members may “pass” if they wish. This tactic gives members confidence to speak to the issue and engenders respect for the opinions of others. It is *not* an opportunity to “open the discussion” again.

VISITORS ATTENDING ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Advisory Board meetings, other than those held in executive session, are open to the public. The dates and times are announced in the school's monthly calendar and/or the church bulletin. A particular time may be stipulated on the agenda to allow visitors to address the board.

Visitors should be aware of the protocol observed by those who attend the advisory 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 flyer welcoming visitors could be distributed before the meeting begins. The flyer would include a statement of welcome and the protocol to be followed by visitors during the meeting.

Suggested Procedures for Visitors

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

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

OPEN FORUM

Advisory Board members believe in and support the mission of Catholic education. As a part of the mission of Catholic education, the board endeavors to “know” what will improve the school’s program and its operation. Since the board represents the parents and guardians, they will periodically, want to assess “how they are meeting the needs of the school.” They will also want to know if the school is meeting the expectations of its constituents. The **Open Forum** is an opportunity for the board to communicate with the school families. It will also help the school’s administration continue to provide a learning environment that is Catholic and excellent. This will also assist the board in developing annual goals to meet the needs of the school community, the students and the school’s program.

The **Open Forum** allows the advisory board, pastor and school administrator to *hear* from the parents and guardians of the students. The parents and guardians are given the opportunity to express what they are thinking about the school and its mission of Catholic education for their children.

A letter and registration form is sent to each family indicating that

- Parents and guardians are invited to attend an open forum with the advisory board.
- The date and time is announced well in advance.
- The purpose of the open forum is clearly stated.
- The protocol for participation is announced. This is not a time to resolve specific problems or express grave displeasure with an aspect of the school’s program, operation or personnel.
- Parents and guardians will be given the opportunity to express themselves in groups and have their input become part of the information collated by the school board.
- Parents and guardians will be asked
 - What do you **like** about the school?
 - If you could **change** one thing in the school, what would that be?
 - If you could **add one thing** to the school’s program, what would that be?

After registrations have been returned, the parents and guardians will be randomly arranged in small discussion groups; nametags will identify the discussion groups. A board member will be assigned to facilitate the group discussion following the format listed above. The facilitators listen and record comments but do not respond to questions or make comments.

The meeting will **begin on time**. The **purpose** of the meeting is **stated**. Serious **consideration** will be given to all that is shared with the school board since the input will serve as a means of continuous improvement in the school’s program and its operation. The **purpose of the small groups** is to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to express their opinions.

After a given time, the **responses are shared** with the group at large. The issues raised are specified in each of the categories. No final judgments or decisions are made at this time. The chair of the advisory board assures the parents and guardians that an **ad hoc committee** will collate the responses from the notes from each of the discussion groups. The summary report will be sent to each family. The items of concern will be given to the appropriate person for follow-up, namely the pastor, the principal and/or the appropriate board members.

The results of the Open Forum become an agenda item at a future board meeting. The board determines a way to communicate the results to the school families. Families are informed that the issues raised will be addressed in one of the following ways, e.g., item for discussion of the board agenda, policy recommendation to the principal and to the board, goals and objectives for action plans for school board or the school faculty and staff. Some items may be deferred for action at a later date. Others may be discerned as impossible or inconsistent with the mission, means and philosophy of the Catholic school.

Periodic reports are given to the school families. These updates are a response to the families that board members have heard them and that they will, when possible, deal with the issues raised.

EVALUATING ADVISORY BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

It is worthwhile for the advisory board members to evaluate their **effectiveness as a group** and how they meet their responsibilities as board members. They will also want to review how they interact with each other and to assess the implementation of the board's annual goals. One part of their evaluation will be centered upon the *internal effectiveness of the board*; the other will be the community's perception of their effectiveness, *the external effectiveness of the board to its constituents*. Board members could first reflect on their own about the topics and then have a discussion, in executive session, with the other board members.

Internal effectiveness of the advisory board

Topic for Evaluation	Yes	No	Comments
✓ Were the annual goals and objectives accomplished?			
✓ Are there areas that need to be addressed in the future?			
✓ Is there anything that could have been done differently?			
✓ Did all the members actively participate in discussions?			
✓ Were reports made in a timely manner?			
✓ Were board members adequately prepared for meetings?			
✓ Was meeting time used efficiently?			
✓ Did members stay on task during meetings?			
✓ Were members comfortable in offering suggestions and in critiquing the work of the board?			
✓ Were constituents apprised of decisions in a timely manner and through appropriate channels?			
✓ Did the committees accomplish their tasks in a timely and complete manner?			
✓ Did the committees reflect the expertise and skills of the membership?			
✓ Were committees an effective means of attending to the work of the board?			

Evaluating School Board Effectiveness - continued

The board represents the school families and works in an advisory capacity with the pastor and the principal. Constituents are aware of their function. They realize that, according to Archdiocese of Chicago policy, the boards are advisory. They are not involved in the administration of the school; they do not evaluate, hire or fire staff. They are not involved in resolving conflicts.

It is suggested that the school community be familiar with the purpose of the board before they are asked to evaluate its effectiveness. Frequent communication “about the work of the board” through the church bulletin and the school newsletter will serve as a vehicle of communication. The board can use this evaluation form as a means to determine their readiness to ask their constituents to evaluate their performance.

External effectiveness of the board to its constituents

Topic for Evaluation	Yes	No	Comments
✓Constituents are aware that the board works with the principal and pastor in an advisory capacity.			
✓Constituents know what the board has accomplished this past school year.			
✓Constituents feel that their views and concerns are represented.			
✓The board communicates with its constituents periodically during the school year.			
✓Constituents are invited to attend the open board meetings.			
✓The board participates in school and parish activities.			
✓The board understands the purpose of Catholic education.			
✓The board is a positive influence for continuing school improvement.			
✓The board has informed its constituents of decisions in a timely manner and through appropriate channels.			