

Policy Governance® Principles for School Boards

- 1. The Board Should Trust in Trusteeship**
- 2. The Board Should Listen to Many Voices Then Speak with One Voice or Not at All**
- 3. The Board Should Define, Delegate and Verify (i.e., Govern), Rather Than React, Ratify and Report¹**
- 4. The Board Should Allow and Require Any Reasonable Interpretation**
- 5. Board Decisions Should Predominately Be Policy² Decisions**
- 6. Board Policy Should Be About Results³, Not Activities, As Simple As Possible, and As Complex As Necessary**
- 7. The Board Should Formulate Policy by Determining the Broadest⁴ Values Before Progressing to More Narrow Ones**
- 8. The Board's Pivotal Duty/Job Should Be To Determine Ends⁵ Policy**
- 9. The Board Should Forge a Relationship with its Staff⁶ that is Both Empowering and Safe in Policy and Performance**
- 10. The Board Should Control Staff Means Best Through Policy by Limiting, Not Prescribing**
- 11. The Board Should First Explicitly Design Its Own Products⁷ and Process In Policy and Performance**
- 12. The Board Should Rigorously Monitor/ Evaluate Staff⁸ and Board Performance, but Only Against Policy Criteria**

¹ Instead of reacting, ratifying (rubber-stamping) or reporting: initiate, control and expect by defining rather than reacting, delegating rather than ratifying, verifying (or considering alternatives rather than recommendations) rather than receiving unguided reports.

² A "policy" is a written statement of a value or perspective that underlies, guides, influences or controls the action, conduct, or behavior of the organization. A value is something important to people; a perspective is a way of thinking about something.

³ Also considered "results" are changes, differences, benefits, products or outcomes.

⁴ Where "broadest" could mean "most big picture."

⁵ "Ends" are anything that deal with (1) the results, benefits, outcomes, differences or changes (2) for different groups of students (or other specific groups of people other than staff) and (3) the priorities, costs or worth of those results for those students or others that (4) define the purpose of the school district or the reasons for its existence.

⁶ If the board (as most do) decides to employ a CEO titled Superintendent, then generally the word "Superintendent" replaces the word "Staff." "Staff" means all of those who work for the organization, whether employed, contracted or volunteer, individuals or other entities.

⁷ The overarching, most general product of a board is its purpose. As an example: the purpose of a school board, on behalf of the citizens of the district, is to see to it that the district accomplishes worthwhile results for students and citizens while avoiding intolerable circumstances.

⁸ Most particularly for the purpose of this principle, those staff who receive their accountability or derive their authority directly from the board. In the case of a CEO/Superintendent, the board is evaluating organizational performance and pinning that on the Superintendent; there is no additional, personal evaluation.