

Uncharted Territory:
Christian School Boards & Student Achievement

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Introduction

- Ephesians 3: 7-12
- Who am I?
- Who are you?



Ground Rules:

- What happens at Green Lake, stays at Green Lake?
- Freedom to interrupt with questions at any time
- Openness to challenge each other
- Identify themes throughout
- HANDOUT



Outcomes:

- Renew understanding of who CWC is and who it aspires to be
- Understand the role of the board
- Understand characteristics of effective boards, including correlations to student achievement
- Understand the dynamics of school reform/change
- Develop a “moving” action plan

Three key questions

- Who are we?
- Where do we want to be?
- How are we going to get there?

Themes (on Post-It)

- Good is the enemy of great
- Disruption
- Change (sentence activity)

Why are you on the Board?

- HANDOUT



Who is CWC?

- What is the mission of CWC?
- Who is the broader community?
- Why do parents send their cherubs to CWC?



Culture analysis

- What are our core values?
- Who are our heroes and heroines?
- Whom do we reward and recognize?
- What is the cultural network of CWC? What do people say about CWC?
- What are our rituals and ceremonies?
- What artifacts reflect our culture? Our mission? Our vision?



Imperatives of cultural change

- Define what will not change
- Organizational culture will change with leadership actions
- Use the right change tools for your system
- Relentless personal attention



Who is the CWC board?



Representative, independent, or trustee?

What does a trustee look like?

- Faithfulness and commitment to the organization and what it stands for
- Decide what to promise/contribute
- Establish strong covenantal relationships
- Institutional advocate
- Establishes ways to measure what matters
- Separates self from issue



Where is CWC going?

- What do/don't we like about who we are?
- What do we aspire to become? As a school? As a board?
- What factors drive us toward these aspirations?
- What fits/misfits to our mission and vision?
- What is the ideal? WHO is our focus?

Marks of an effective board

- Shared mission and vision
- Shared values
- Nurture strong personal relationships
- Stays in touch with its world

- Board-Superintendent relationship...with regular supt. evaluations
- Clearly understood roles
- Data-Driven

- Effective meetings
 - Agenda driven
 - Tolerant of diverse opinions
 - Dedicated to reaching agreement
 - Well-trained, equipped board chair
 - Reinforce shared vision
 - Connect the board to the school
 - Attendance required
 - No “reading to the board”
 - Ground rules

- Board Responsibilities
 - Spiritual leadership
 - Establishing policy
 - Hiring the administrator (and teachers?)
 - Maintaining financial solvency
 - Provide adequate building and equipment
 - Dream big...set the vision...look to the future
 - Public relations and communication
 - Recognize that the Board is the final authority

- Time commitment to do the work well
- Building leadership—selecting board members

Common mistakes

- Making political decisions
- Functioning without ground rules
- Responding to coercion
- Not connecting with the community
- Neglecting self-improvement
- Taking fragmented actions
- Lack of data to support decisions

A Model for Board Effectiveness

1. Making rational decisions
2. Functioning cohesively as a group
3. Exercising appropriate authority
4. Connecting to the community
5. Working toward board improvement
6. Acting strategically

Making rational decisions

- Access and use relevant information
- Discuss deliberately
- Consider alternative actions
- Work toward consensus

Functioning cohesively as a group

- Operate with norms
- Demonstrate leadership
- Articulate cohesiveness
- Act on values
- Show respect



Exercising appropriate authority

- Act with defined roles
- Take initiative
- Overrule the superintendent
- Resist pressure



Connecting to the community

- Structure community involvement
- Obtain input
- Explain actions
- Facilitate information flow
- Connect with the internal community



Working toward board improvement

- Cultivate leadership
- Assess competence
- Obtain assistance



Acting strategically

- Address critical issues
- Plan
- Organize
- Evaluate
- Consider context



What does an effective Christian School board look like?

- How effective was CWC's board three years ago?
- [Fall 2008 results](#)
- Where is the board at today?



Myths of leadership

1. Plan your way to greatness – excellent formatting is INVERSELY related to student achievement!!
2. Just a little bit better is good enough
3. We want you to change us...really – change is loss...recognize that!
4. People love to collaborate – congeniality or collegiality
5. Hierarchy changes systems
6. Volume equals VOLUME
7. The leader is the perfect composite of every trait

Who are the students?

- The 21st Century learner
- # of jobs that aren't created yet
- Digital immigrants or natives?
- Virtual or concrete?
- Who is the digital kingdom citizen?

More about students

- How are we preparing students for a 21st century kingdom?
- What scares you about today's generation?
- Are you more/less scared than your parents were of your generation?
- What do you want to see them become?



- What is learning?
- What is teaching?
- What does it mean to “know” something in the 21st century?
- What do we have to *unlearn* about traditional education before we can move forward?



“Leadership is about vision. But leadership is equally about creating a climate where the truth is heard and the brutal facts confronted.” – Jim Collins



What does an improving school look like?
An improving school board look like?

- What do we know about school improvement?
- Who is responsible for taking the lead toward a culture of school improvement?
- The board takes the lead and shares the responsibility for student learning?
- Whose fault is it if Johnny fails?

Student achievement

- What does it mean to be smart?
- What is achievement?
- How do you measure achievement



What is your comparison when working toward improving student achievement?

- Global Achievement Levels
- State/National Standards
- Are you catching up or leading the way?



How can anything I do as a board member improve student achievement

- Setting up conditions for achievement
- Accountability for achievement
- Understanding and talking about achievement
- KNOWING what achievement looks like in our school



Lagging and leading indicators

1. How did we do compared to the standard (the target)?
2. How did we do compare to ourselves (the trend)?
3. How did we do compared to others (such as comparable schools in the state)?

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All "moving" boards:

- Displayed "elevating" views of students
- Can connect improvement goals to specific efforts going on in classrooms
- Could mention specific initiatives being implemented in the school and ways that they had contributed to them
- They could describe specific goals related to learning and structures that were in place for improving teaching and learning
- Barriers were seen as factors to overcome rather than excuses for why some students were not achieving at similar levels
- Could make links between training and goals for student learning
- Collaborate with the superintendent on goals

"Stuck" boards:

- Did not know how goals or improvement plans were being implemented
- Did not believe it was their job to know about instruction
- Did not believe it was possible to "reach all kids"
- Unaware of how goals and initiatives were being carried out
- Negative view of staff...and that they need to be replaced in order for school to improve
- Low regard for staff development
- Rarely used data to make decisions

Six characteristics of “well-governed districts associated with higher student achievement”:

- Stability (members served at least six to eight years)
- Short regular meetings coupled with annual or biannual goal-setting retreats
- Effective management that resulted in referring complaints to the administration
- Communicative board chair who functioned as critical go-between
- Focus on student achievement as evidenced by policy, the budget, facilities, and support for the superintendent as the school's educational leader
- Ability to work collaboratively, resulting in a high degree of trust



Sometimes it's just as important what a board DOESN'T do!



“Change is not improvement”

Murphy pg. 95

Is this change an improvement?

Or this one?



“Rubs”

- What we know is most effective vs. what feels right
- How much change can CWC handle?
- How much is desired?



What barriers exist to school improvement?

- Unclear expectations
- Misunderstanding of board roles and responsibilities
- Ineffective meetings
- Governance structure issues
- FEAR cripples us from moving forward
- Unprepared for change



Ready—Fire—Aim

Fulan, Motion Leadership, ch. 3, pgs. 17-34

- Relationships first (too fast/too slow)
- Honor the implementation dip
- Beware of fat plans
- Behaviors before beliefs
- Communication during implementation is paramount
- Learn about implementation during implementation
- Excitement prior to implementation is fragile
- Take risks and learn
- It is okay to be assertive



Enemies of improvement:

- Isolation
"if we leave virtually every instructional choice up to individual teachers who work alone, then inferior practices will dominate most schools" – Kati Haycock
- Curriculum Map
- Lack of support and feedback
- Common goals
- In-services

Three overarching elements of effective change *Williams et al*

1. Focusing all goals on student learning and achievement
2. Promoting shared decision making among all stakeholders
3. Keep communication and interaction centered on visible achievements

Two types of change

- First order change
 - Incremental
 - Thought of as the next most logical step
- Second order change
 - Anything but incremental
 - Dramatic departures from the expected, both in defining the problem and in finding a solution

Leadership supporting an innovation must be consistent with the order/magnitude of the change



2nd order change negatively impacts:

- Culture—loss of team spirit, cooperation, and common language
- Communication
- Order (and routine)
- Input—no one listens to me anymore



Governance models

- Parochial – church-run
- Societal – parent or association-run
- Board-run – self-perpetuating
- Mission-run – Stob



Few school boards are capable of mounting a decisive change in school strategy.

--Clayton Christiansen in Disrupting Class (p. 193)



Steps forward

- Create short-term wins
- Recognize effective practices simply and clearly throughout the year
- Emphasize effectiveness, not popularity
- Make the case for change compelling, and associate it with moral imperatives rather than compliance with external authority



Stringfield's themes of boards influencing student achievement

1. School boards can help improve the academic experiences of students
2. Boards must have clear goals
3. Getting accurate data and information is key
4. Working across organizational levels is essential
5. The work—especially the homework—required to make a positive impact is substantial, and mostly tedious
6. Teamwork is key



- 7. The environment in which school boards (and school systems) work is inherently political, not in an "evil" sense, but in the sense of diverse, often legitimate power vectors that must be addressed.
- 8. Awareness of research can help. However, the research on school board effectiveness is strikingly thing and of mixed quality.
- 9. Prior experience in relatively high-end public or private management can help
- 10. The three largest levers board members hold are the superintendent's contract, the budget, and access to the media.
- 11. A school board member's largest assets are formal and informal communications. The latter is also their Achilles heel.
- 12. An appreciation of the long haul, humor, and humility help.

What do we LIKE about who we are?

- Moving Forward...one step at a time
- 1. Establishing a sense of urgency
 - 2. Creating the guiding coalition
 - 3. Identify the ideal vision
 - 4. Mission
 - 5. Set strategic goals and identify barriers
 - 6. Develop and action plan

Moving Forward...one step at a time

- 7. Write detailed tasks to be completed
- 8. Implement the plan
- 9. Continuous evaluation
- 10. Monitor implementation
- 11. Sustainability



CWC Action Steps



Ephesians 4: 11-13

Put your hands together in front of you and cup them like a bowl.

What is in your hands?



Seven conditions for school change:

- Shared leadership
- Continuous improvement
- Ability to create and sustain initiatives
- Supportive workplace for staff
- Staff development
- Support for school through data and information
- Community involvement
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