

How do we decide?

The process of governing and
managing a quality school

What you'll learn

- **How boards can govern the decision-making process**
- **How to get buy-in from school stakeholders**
- **How to communicate processes and decisions both upward and downward**
- **How to make all stakeholders (including yourself) accountable**

Governing the process

- You remember that boards are responsible for setting big goals, deciding on governance-level policy, and establishing broad parameters
- Boards are not responsible for and should largely remain out of how those goals are accomplished
- So, then, how does the board *govern* the decisions and process of administration?

Delegated authority

- **The administration has exactly as much freedom to make decisions as the board grants**
- **Board can and should set the “limitations” by which the director makes decisions, but should not make administrative decisions or change reasonable ones**

Process limitations

- There are aspects of any process that are integral to the implementation of the charter
 - Parental involvement
 - Teacher involvement
 - Consistency with the charter
- and that are part of any reasonable decision-making process
 - Analysis of relevant data
 - Consideration of several options
 - Review of successful practices and schools

Suggested Policy

- **The Director shall not implement any non-trivial or non-urgent decision, process, or activity that is based on insufficient data, lacks input and involvement from affected stakeholders, is unsupported by previous success or research basis, and that is not communicated sufficiently in advance of implementation. This policy shall not be construed to require board, board-member, committee, or stakeholder approval of any administrative decision, process, or activity.**

Getting everyone on board

- Good way to make people mad: make decisions that fundamentally effect them without their input
- In order for changes or decisions to be implemented by or upon others effectively, you need their buy-in
- Those include:
 - Parents and students
 - Teachers and staff
 - Board members



Administration's role

- Getting others to support your decisions is a key aspect of leadership—school leaders need the support of their stakeholders
- It is appropriate for the board to hold the director accountable for getting that support
- Can measure by
 - Family and staff surveys
 - Direct inspection
 - Issues or grievances that are reported or observed
 - Not by rumor or informal complaints

Patience, Grasshopper

*This is true for
boards and for
principals!*

- Improvement and change always require patience
- Getting buy-in and commitment from others requires:
 - Laying the groundwork
 - Getting feedback
 - Communicating goals and ideas
 - Getting more feedback
 - Holding meetings
 - Implementing and observing results

The key to success

- **Set Expectations, and then Meet Expectations**
- **Communication is the art of setting expectations**
- **Accountability is the art of meeting expectations**

Getting help with the wagon

- **Communication (that is, the setting of expectations) needs to happen at every step of the decision-making process**
 - When you recognize a problem
 - When you start looking at solutions
 - When you find solution(s) you like (explain why)
 - When you are ready to implement
 - After you implement
 - When you measure results

Accountability

- In any decision, accountability must be part of the overall plan and implementation
- Put in ways to hold yourself accountable to your stakeholders
- Ensure measurable standards for those that Implement or follow your decision
- Then meet expectations—prove your own accountability, and hold others accountable
- Proving success requires evidence



This should match what you said in your communication plan.

Holding others accountable

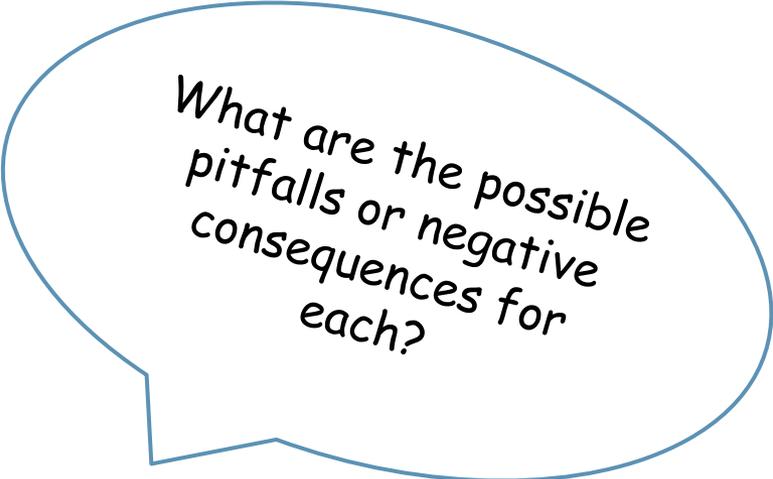
- **Accountability for administration is built-in to the communication and reporting process**
- **One reason for open communication with the board is for admin to demonstrate its success and accountability for results**
 - **Step 1—Board, this is a problem we see**
 - **Step 2—Board, this is what we'll do, and these are the results we expect**
 - **Step 3—Board, these are the results we got, and here's the evidence**

Case Study

- **Problem:** The lunchroom is really crowded. Every day some students can't find a place to sit, and they either don't eat or make messes eating on the floor or standing up. Lines for the microwaves are long, and lunch is over before all students have gotten to heat up their Cup o' Noodles. Injuries are high on the playground as kids run into each other. Parents, students, and lunch staff are complaining.

Crowded Lunchroom

- Who is responsible to make this decision?
- What are some possible solutions?
- How would you gather data?
- How would you get buy-in from parents, students, and staff? Board?
- How would you communicate your decision and any changes, as well as the process?



What are the possible pitfalls or negative consequences for each?

Case Study #2

- A parent who works for the National Guard is in town for a few weeks and wants to go on a field trip with his child. The school policy requires a background check, which will only be valid for the school if the school runs it, which takes four weeks, by which time the field trip would be gone and the parent redeployed. The parent has top secret clearance with the government, and his military commander has provided copies of his military clearance to the school.

Background check

- Who gets to decide this?
- What are some possible solutions?
- Is this a policy or performance problem?
- How does the immediacy of the concern affect how you gather data and build buy-in?
- How do you communicate this?

Suggested Policy

- **Board policies are designed to address general issues and comply with applicable laws and rules. The board recognizes that in some unforeseen circumstances, adopted policies may interfere with their intent. The board grants the school director the ability to make reasonable exceptions to policy in such circumstances that comply with the clear spirit and intent of the policy and applicable laws and rules.**