

# The Role of the Board

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## Using the Policy Governance Model

developed by John Carver



# What Defines our Roles/Authority?

Board members are state officials empowered by state law to **govern** public schools at a local level.

## From Trenton to Your Town

Here's how state governance of education works:



The New Jersey Constitution gives the Legislature the power to govern the schools.



The Legislature delegates its power and function to make rules and regulations (within the law) to the State Board of Education.



The State Board's staff, the New Jersey Department of Education, has the authority to carry out the mandates created by those higher bodies.



Within all these laws and regulations, local boards of education can develop their own policies covering a multitude of issues relevant to their local districts.



# What is Governance?

Governance derives from a Greek word that means to “steer a ship.”

Relative to our roles in the district:

- Governance is steering.

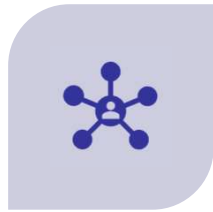


- Administration is rowing.



# Governance

The book *The Governance Core* describes governance as:



THE DIRECTION  
OF THE  
DISTRICT IS  
SET.



THE  
STRUCTURE  
(THROUGH  
POLICY) IS  
ESTABLISHED.



FISCAL AND  
PROGRAMMATIC  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
IS ASSURED.



THE COMMUNITY  
IS CONNECTED.

- Governance focuses on the  
—WHAT
- Administration focuses on the  
—HOW



# High-Level Overview of Roles

## Board's Role

- Policy-making
- Planning
- Appraisal
- Community Leadership

## Superintendent's Role

- Chief Advisor to the Board
- Chief Executive Officer
- Educational Leader of the Community

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# How Does the Board's Role Differ from the Superintendent's?

|          | Board   | Superintendent  |
|----------|---|---|
| Function | Governing body  | CEO   |
| Focus    | The Ends:<br>"What"   | The Means:<br>"How"                                     |
| Lens     | Telescope –<br><i>30,000 ft view</i>                                    | Microscope  |
| Policy   | Develop and approve   | Consult, implement, and assess.<br>Develop regulations. |
| Roles    | Ensures district is well run<br>through oversight and<br>accountability | Runs the district                                       |

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# The Balcony Perspective



Administration  
Perspective

Proper Board  
Perspective



# Balcony Perspective

| Balcony  | Dance Floor  |
|--|--|
| Board  | Administration                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See the big picture</li><li>• See the horizon (future)</li><li>• See/connect with the entire community</li></ul> | Place where day-to-day work of the district is done. |

The Board must discipline themselves to resist the allure of the dance floor and to stay focused on the work that the Board is empowered to do.



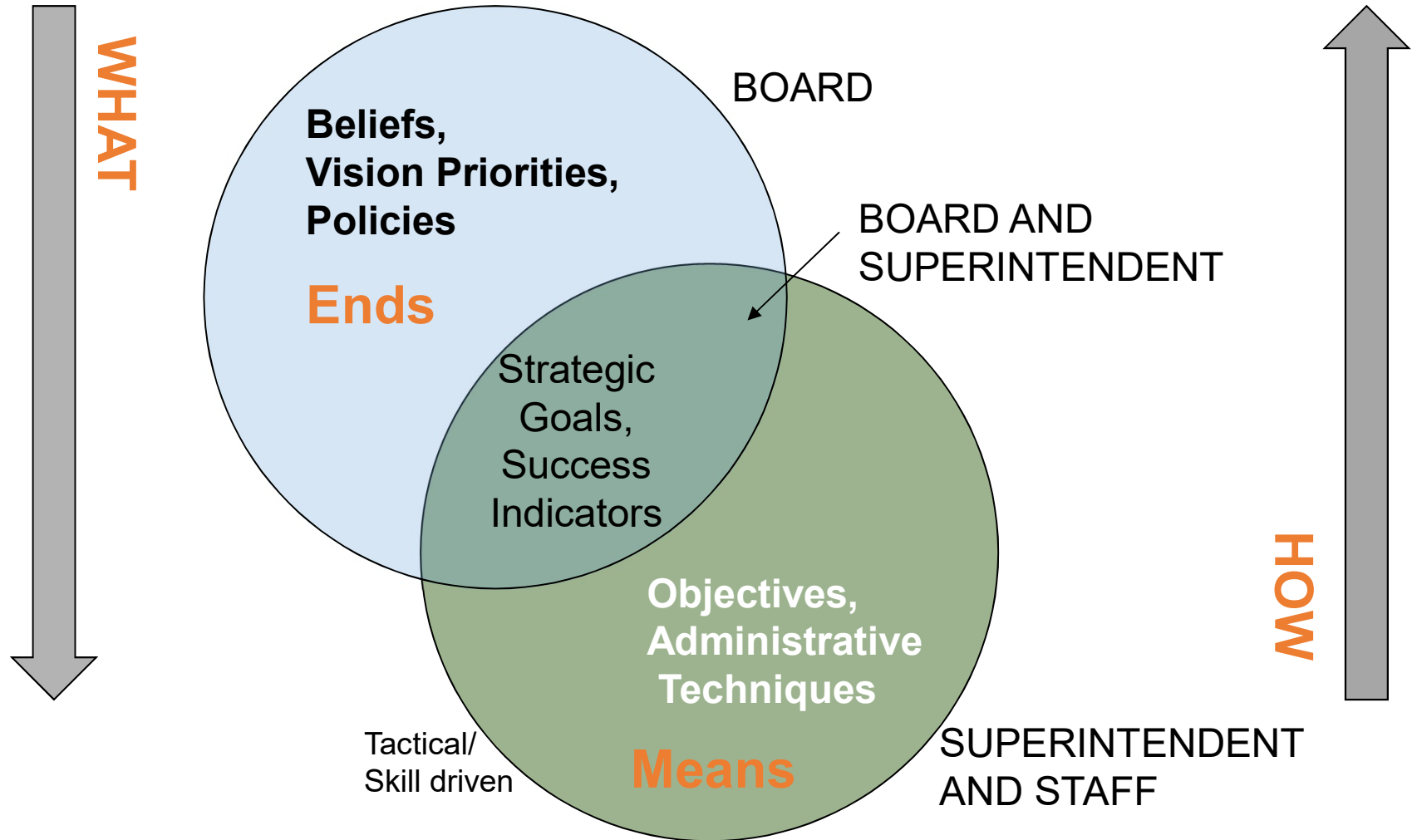


# Separation of Responsibilities

| BOARD  | SUPERINTENDENT  |
|--|---|
| Establishes the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vision</li><li>• Mission</li><li>• Goals</li><li>• Policies</li></ul> | Establishes the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Objectives</li><li>• Action Plans</li><li>• Regulations</li><li>• Procedures</li></ul> |
| which defines the ENDS   | which defines the MEANS   |



# Governance Framework



# Connection to the Policy Governance Model

“Governance exists ... to translate the wishes of the organization’s owners into organizational performance.”

John Carver, creator of Policy Governance



# Policy Governance Model

As an organizational function, governance is often misunderstood and underappreciated.

Questions posed by John Carver's Policy Governance Model –

## **Why do Boards:**

- Spend hours debating small issues while large ones sail by?
- Seem more concerned with activities of the district than outcomes?
- Focus on the past or present instead of the future?
- Evaluate the organizational performance in the absence of previously stated criteria?
- Have effective members but are ineffective as a group?

It is not the members, but rather not using a governance system that clarifies the importance of the job.



# What Excellence Looks Like

Policy Governance Board ideals – Boards should:

- Know who they work for.
- Require the district to be effective and efficient.
- Exercise control that empowers, not strangles.
- Be fair in judging but unafraid to judge.
- Rigorously hold delegates accountable.
- Be disciplined as to their role and behavior as a group and individual members.
- Be predictable and trustworthy.





# To Whom are Boards Accountable – Owners vs Customers



**Customers** (the students) are those who live the district exists to change.

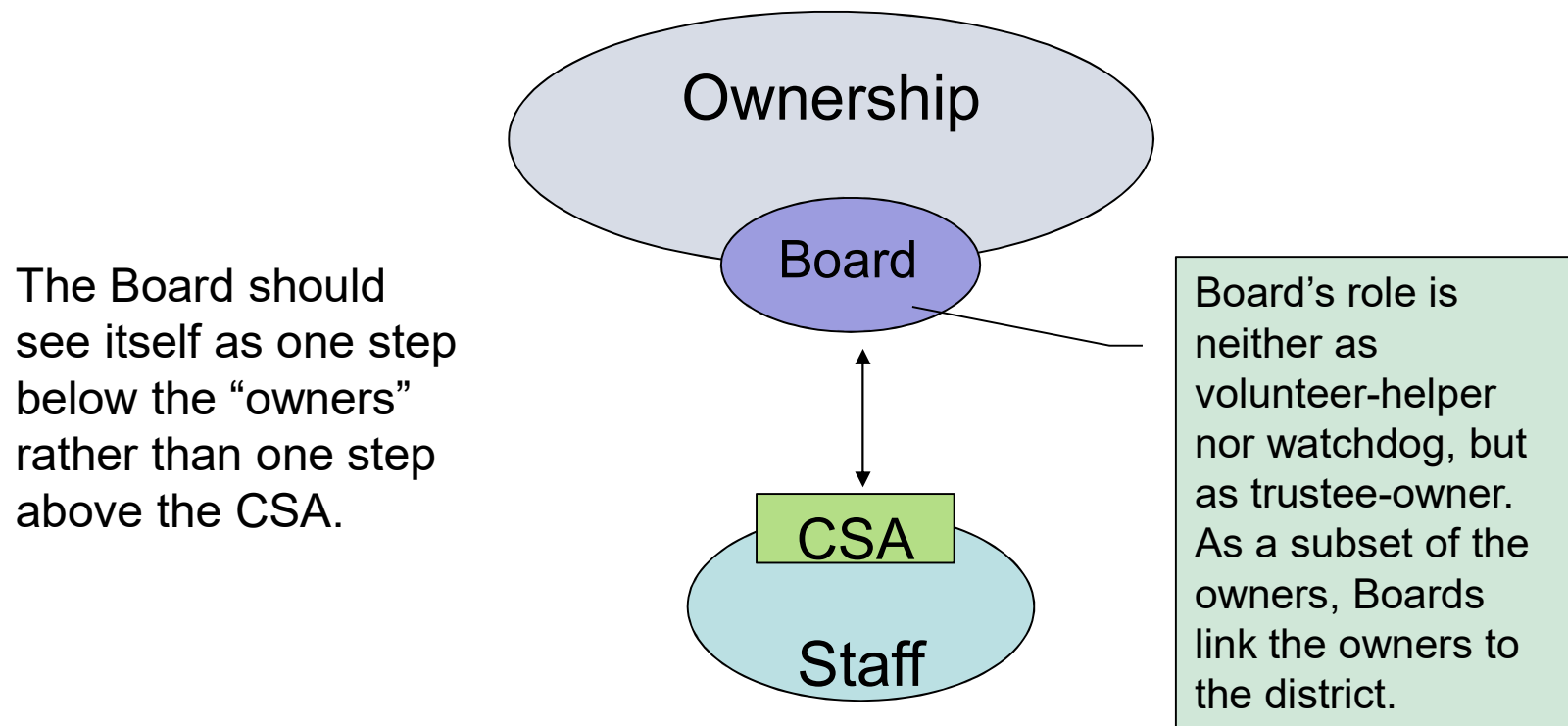
**Owners** (community) – are those on whose behalf the district has adopted that aim.

As agents to the owners, Boards are accountable that the district is successful in providing its students with skills and understandings.

Board should see itself as the public's purchasing agent with respect to education. A purchasing agent decides what is to be bought, identifies parameters, what it should cost, and then holds the vendor accountable (the superintendent).



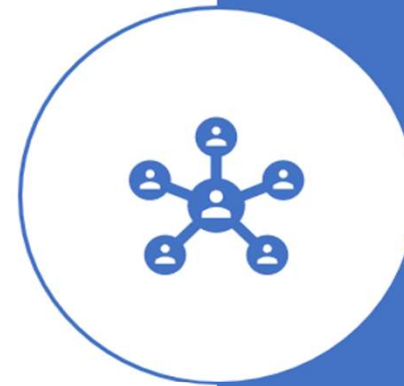
# Chain of Command



To the Board, officially the CSA is the entire operational organization.  
To the CSA, officially the Board is the ownership in microcosm.

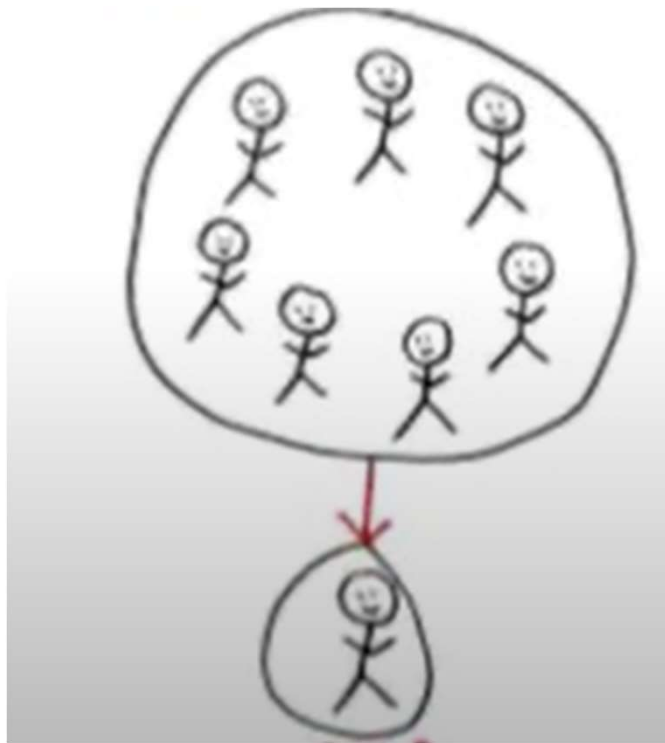
# Board's Work

- Ensure there is an effective link between the owners and the district's operations.
- As representatives of the owners, the Board has expressed “ends” expectations.
- Identify any limits on staff “means.”
- Ensure that the performance of the district matches the “ends” that were stipulated.



# The Board Governs Under the One Voice Principle

The Board speaks with one voice or not at all.



The authority of the Board resides in the Board as a body – not in members of the Board.

As one member you do not have 1/9<sup>th</sup> of the authority. You have none - the Board has all of it. No one in the district works for you.

Decisions reached after debate do not require members to refrain from dissent but does prevent their individual opinion from having the weight of authority.



# Common Pitfall – One Voice Principle

- Board members, often well-meaning, who give instructions to the superintendent or other staff are interrupting the chain of command, doing damage to the Board's one voice and jeopardizing accountability.
- The Board must make it clear that the superintendent is held accountable for meeting Board expectations and **not board member expectations.**





# Ends and Means

Policy Governance is based on two types of decisions:



**THE ENDS**  
(THE PRIZE)



**THE MEANS**  
(THE PATH)

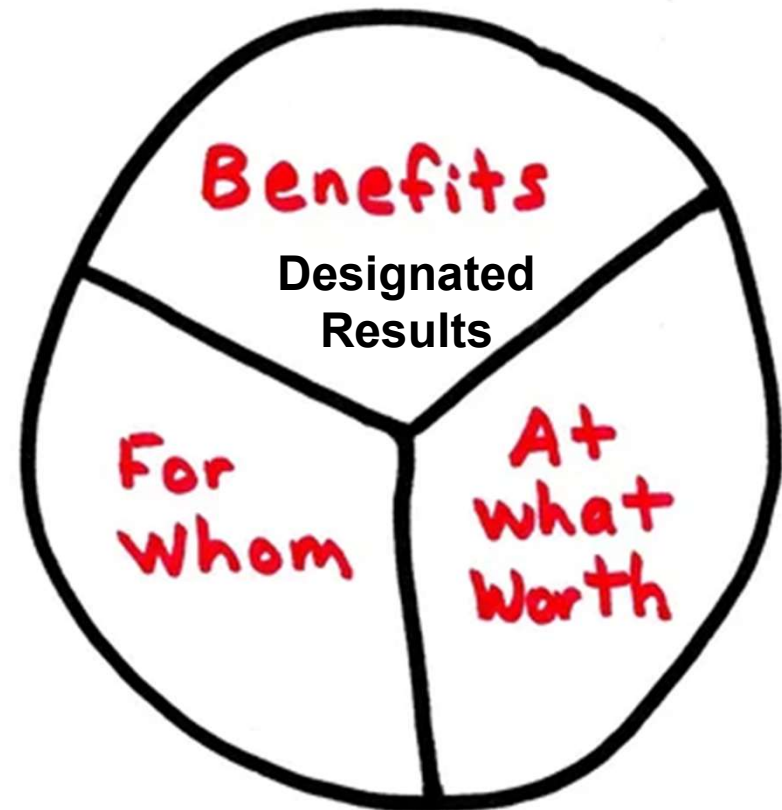


# Ends Decisions – the Prize

## ENDS Decisions – the prize

Ends decisions are only those that designate:

- Results for which the district exists.
- The beneficiaries of those results (the students).
- The value/worth of the results.



# Means Decisions

## Two types of Means Decisions

### MEANS Decisions – the Path

- Anything that is not an ends decision.
- Focused on activities – not results. Include programs, services, and curricula.

### Board

Policies that describe the Board's job and conduct.

### Operational/ Staff

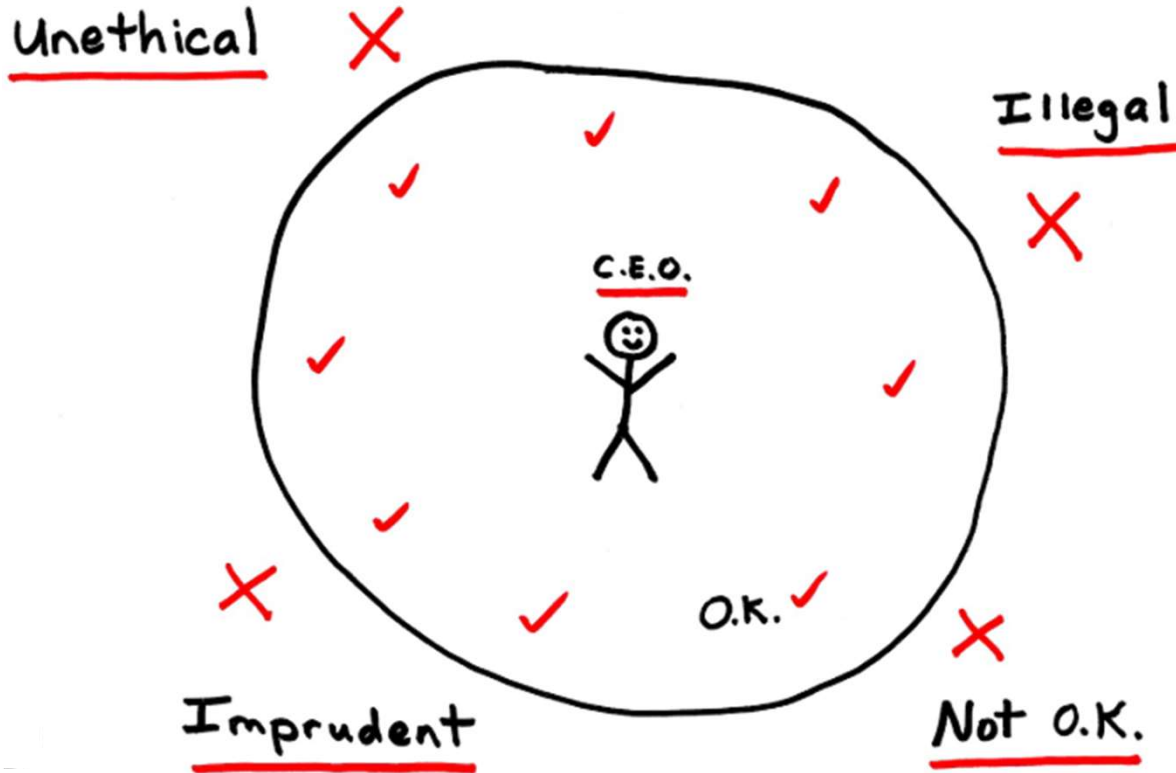
Developed by staff

Board sets **Executive Limitations** – what is unacceptable.



# Means – Executive Limitations

While the Board does not get involved in the “means,” through policy it may establish Executive Limitations under which the means must be carried out.



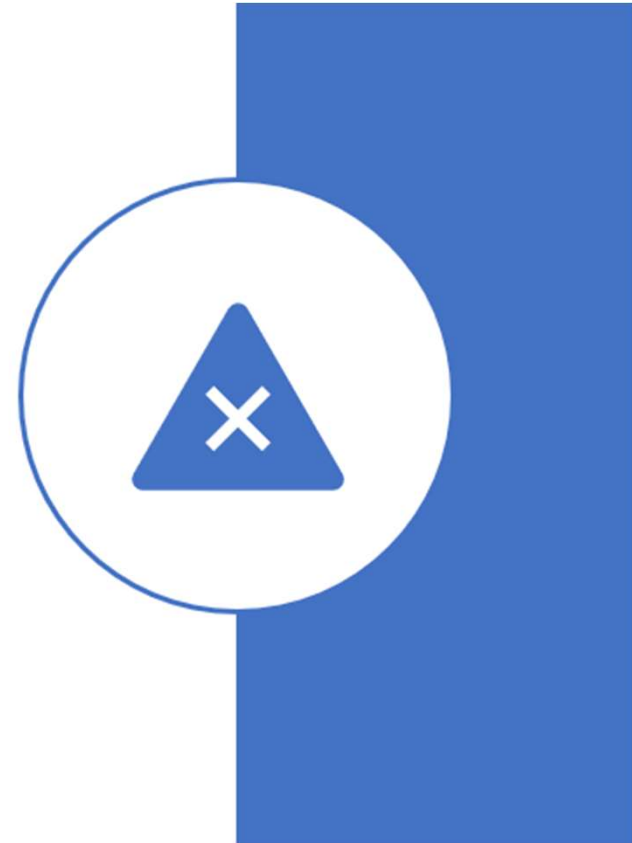
Example of Executive Limitations:

A Board challenged the superintendent about a report on unsafe bussing. The superintendent challenged the Board's involvement and said it was his territory. In the Board's policy on bussing, safe conditions was specified as a requirement (effectively placing an executive limitation that unsafe conditions were not acceptable).

# Means – Common Pitfall

If the Board prescribes the means (the HOW):

- It has the effect of relieving the superintendent of accountability.
- The Board would need to be as knowledgeable about running the district as the superintendent.
- It reduces the administration's ability to operate with agility, creativity, and responsiveness.

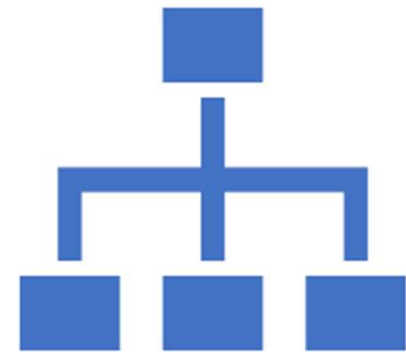


Set challenging expectations then get out of the way, except to check that they are accomplished.



## Reasons Why Getting Involved in the Means May Occur:

1. Convinced that reaching into the operations is exercising their oversight role.
2. Can't resist using professional or personal skills.
3. Used to fixing things/accomplishing tasks – not used to setting direction and establishing policy.
4. Board has not clearly established its role and boundaries for its members.
5. Exercising perceived individual authority.
6. Intervene to solve a problem for a stakeholder.



From book *Governance Core 2.0*



# Board “Means”

Board “means” are the policy category of the governance process where the Board states what is expects of itself:

1

How the  
Board will  
conduct itself

2

Perform its  
own job

3

Evaluate its  
own  
performance

Boards must hold themselves accountable to the principles guiding their operation and performance.



# Accountability

Boards rely on others to do the actual work/running of the district while remaining accountable for it.

3 Steps to Accountable Delegation:



Clearly set expectations of the job to be done.



Give the needed authority to the person who is seeing that the expectations are met.



Require evidence that the expectations were met.



# Monitoring

**Monitoring** refers to the Board checking the superintendent/district's performance through evaluation, reporting, and performance appraisal.



A comparison between what the board said it wanted or didn't want and what it actually got.



Evaluating objective criteria as identified in the Ends.



Rigorous but fair



# Policy Governance Roles Summary



**Ownership Linkage.** Understanding the owners desired ends and means that would be unacceptable.



**Policy Development.** Writing those values and expectations as guidance to the organization and Board.



**Performance Monitoring.** Does the actual performance of the organization match what the board stipulated?



**Fiduciary Responsibility:** Is what the organization produces of value?



# Summary

## Principles of Policy Governance



# Connecting Policy Governance to Student Outcomes

From AJ Crabill – Director of Governance, Great City Schools:

- School boards across the nation need to transition from focusing on adult inputs (things like staff, books, programs, and facilities) to focusing on student outcomes.
- Board work is the end result, not the means.
- Student outcomes don't change until adult behaviors change.

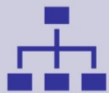




# Challenges to Policy Governance Model



Board meeting requirements leave limited time for Ends focus.



Agendas are linear and typically focused on administrative work.



Much of the work and approvals are required by law, contracts, or policy.



Committees are often structured around district work because of the required approvals.



# Reflection & Discussion

How is Board currently using the Policy Governance model?

Are there any principles the Board is not using that might be helpful?

