

Transition to Coherent Governance

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Agenda

- ▶ Governance
 - ▶ Traditional
 - ▶ Policy Governance
 - ▶ Coherent Governance
- ▶ Our Process
- ▶ Sample Formatted Policy
- ▶ Discussion

“Traditional” Board Governance

- ▶ Board approves policies, programs and curricula developed/recommended by staff
- ▶ Board serves on committees to oversee staff work
- ▶ Board engages in crisis management
- ▶ Administration controls Board agenda
- ▶ Decision-making and accountability are muddled

Policy Governance

- ▶ Developed by John and Miriam Carver in 1970s
- ▶ Focus on strategic leadership, with policies that reflect Board values
- ▶ Four categories of policies
 - ▶ Ends to be achieved (Ends)
 - ▶ Means to be avoided (Executive Limitations)
 - ▶ Interface of the board and management (Board/Superintendent Linkage)
 - ▶ The practice of government (Governance Process)
- ▶ Board delegates management authority to Superintendent, within the constraints of the Executive Limitations
- ▶ Board monitors reasonable progress against Ends and compliance with Executive Limitations

Issaquah School Board Governance

- ▶ Adopted Policy Governance in 2005 - 2006
- ▶ Transition was gradual and not without some “bumps”
 - ▶ Pure Policy Governance is very rigid
 - ▶ The concept that the Board did not involve itself in the “means” of the organization was difficult for an elected Board
- ▶ Board gradually developed a partnership with the Superintendent on policy interpretations and evidence

Coherent Governance

- ▶ Developed by the Aspen Group in the 2000s
- ▶ An offshoot of Policy Governance, targeting elected Boards
- ▶ Still delegates management authority to the Superintendent but allows the Board to have “Operational Expectations” instead of “Executive Limitations”
 - ▶ OEs are still based on Board values
 - ▶ Board familiarity with operations helps it to perform its advocacy role

Advantages of Coherent Governance

- ▶ Prohibitive language of ELs is off-putting and difficult for the public to understand
- ▶ Coherent Governance is more “user-friendly”
- ▶ The Board is already operating as if it were using a Coherent Governance model
- ▶ “Most boards want to remove themselves from preoccupation with the day-to-day operations of the organization. Yet they have concerns about those operational matters that they must express in order to represent and serve the interests of the board’s “owners,” those on whose behalf the board does its work. **The range of concerns addressed by OE policies is much broader than is acceptable in PG,** but our conviction is that the board cannot confidently delegate decision-making without first stating its concerns about every element of operational performance.”
 - ▶ From *The Art of Governing Coherently*, page 4 (emphasis added)

Our Process

- ▶ Thorough review of policies from other Coherent Governance Districts
 - ▶ Lake Washington
 - ▶ Evergreen
 - ▶ South Kitsap
 - ▶ Mercer Island
- ▶ Language change
 - ▶ Ends → Results
 - ▶ Governance Process (GP) → Governance Culture (GC)
 - ▶ Board/Superintendent Linkage (B/SL) → Board-Superintendent Relationship (BSR)
 - ▶ Executive Limitations (EL) → Operational Expectations (OE)
 - ▶ Linkages → Engagement

Our Process (continued)

- ▶ Transitioning Limitations to Expectations
 - ▶ “Shall not fail to” becomes “will” and “will not”
 - ▶ Policies were bundled as expectations and prohibitions
- ▶ Recommended language to be “borrowed” from other districts
 - ▶ These changes are highlighted in yellow
 - ▶ We are not otherwise recommending changes at this point in the process
- ▶ Grammar tweaks/general language “clean-up”
- ▶ Formatting consistency changes to be made once Board has accepted policies

Sample Formatted Policy



OE-2 Treatment of People

Policy Type: Operational Expectation

The Board values the engagement of its students and families and believes that students, parents and the general community should be treated with respect and courtesy whenever they are interacting with the District and its employees. Both students and parents should be kept informed of district policies that relate to their rights within the educational system.

The Superintendent shall maintain an organizational culture that treats parents, students and community members with respect, dignity and courtesy, and shall maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful and conducive to effective learning.

Sample Formatted Policy (continued)

The Superintendent will:

- 2.1 Assure a climate that is characterized by support and encouragement.
- 2.2 Provide an open and responsive environment that encourages parent involvement.
- 2.3 Maintain an organizational culture that is consistent with the following values:
 - a. respect for all opinions
 - b. reasonable inclusion of people in decisions that affect them
 - c. open and honest communication in all written and interpersonal interaction
 - d. focus on common achievement of the Board's **Results** policies.
- 2.4 Inform students and their parents or guardians of anticipated changes to the educational program that will significantly impact the educational pathways available to students.
- 2.5 Adequately monitor and control student access to and utilization of electronically distributed information.
- 2.6 Provide a process for the effective handling of complaints.
- 2.7 Inform students and parents of their appeal rights.
- 2.8 Protect students who have voiced grievances from retaliation within the school environment.

Sample Formatted Policy (continued)

The Superintendent will not:

- 2.9 Tolerate any behaviors, actions or attitudes by adults who have contact with students that hinder the academic performance or the well-being of students.
- 2.10 Permit any form of illegal discrimination.
- 2.11 Use methods of managing information, including student information, that fail to protect confidentiality or protect against improper access.
- 2.12 Collect and store information for which there is no educational purpose.
- 2.13 Permit the administration of corporal punishment.

December 14, 2005 – Adoption

December 12, 2019 – Revised

April 22, 2021 – Revised

Xxxxx xx, 2024 – Converted to Coherent Governance

Monitoring Method - Internal report

Monitoring Frequency - Annually