



I recall my years in a Christian school leadership role with great appreciation. What can match being a spectator (an enthusiastic one, for sure) to so many amazing and transformative things God did in the lives of students and teachers and, yes, even me? As Christian school educators, we truly do have front row seats to the handiwork of God (Ephesians 2:10).

I have many fond memories of the school board with whom I worked during my tenure as a high school principal. As in many Christian schools, these board members were volunteers serving in a largely thankless role: that of “holding the school in trust.” Ultimately, they were responsible for seeing that the mission of the school was carried out faithfully.

But not all of those memories are positive. Too often, boards are not chosen well, trained well, or even evaluated well. And for that matter, some who serve on school boards do so with a personal agenda unrelated to the mission of the school.

In light of these realities, I am confident that this issue of *CSE* will speak both philosophically and practically to you. We strive to do that with each issue, and this one is no exception.

We are moving very quickly into uncertain days. As our culture moves further away from Judeo-Christian values, excellent Christian schools will become more necessary than ever.

Steve Dill introduces the subject of board governance with these challenging words: “Effective board governance can significantly strengthen a school’s ability to deliver strong student outcomes; failed board governance goes in the opposite direction, usually resulting in weaker student outcomes.” The notion that an organization can be no stronger than its weakest element rings true for Christian schools: excellent schools have excellent boards.

Jay Ferguson, headmaster at Grace Community School in Tyler, Texas, calls for boards to adopt a disposition of incarnational leadership: a posture made manifest in a heart that is submitted to Christ and motivated by love. Incarnational leaders are characterized by sacrifice, suffering, and service.

Christ-centered board leadership is essential to staying mission-centric for any Christian school, according to Rick Kempton, head of school at Annapolis Area Christian School in Maryland. That focus emanates from board members who are relational, humble, and discerning—“champions of the mission.”

Leonard Stob, author of *Mission Directed: Governing Your Christian School with Purpose* (Purposeful Design Publications) provides clear and practical counsel for distinguishing between board and administrative policies: the boundaries which define responsibilities and therefore work assignments. Understanding this difference is vital for the health of the board / school head relationship and for the strength and integrity of the school’s mission.

Tim Euler, head of school at Cambridge Christian School in Tampa, Florida, begins and ends his discussion of the relationship between the head of school and the board chair with one word: together. We are created to be in relationship, and we can do more together than alone. A healthy relationship between a head of school and a board chair depends on cooperation, collaboration, and harmony; it is rooted in the kind of trust described in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12.

We are moving very quickly into uncertain days. As our culture moves further away from Judeo-Christian values, excellent Christian schools will become more necessary than ever. But excellence does not happen by accident. Schools will need to be intentional, and that intentionality must begin with school boards—those entrusted with the mission.

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