

We do have some situations in which there isn't a truly separate school board. In those situations, the board/group that functions as the school board has to show how it is providing the governance needed by the school. Though there are other indicators to look at in Standard 2, here are the main areas to consider.

## The standard itself:

*Standard 2 - The school has Christ-centered governance and executive leadership that promotes effectiveness of the school and growth of the student through an established structure that contributes to an operationally and financially sound Christian educational institution. The executive leadership and governing body work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the institution through the establishment of written policies and procedures. The head of school is responsible for the supervision of all operations of the school and implementation of board policies.*

Then there are a number of indicators to consider as well as the rubrics that are attached.

## The first indicator:

*Indicator 2.1 - A governing body has been established, and its primary responsibilities include: developing general school governance policy; hiring the head of school; providing direction and strategic planning; ensuring the financial stability, effectiveness, and consistency between all campuses of the institution; defining the role of the governing body; defining the role of the head of school; and conducting systematic board self-evaluation and training.*

The most difficult phrase for a church board that is also acting as a school board might be "its primary responsibilities include." In order to fulfill that, members of that combined board would need to be chosen both for their interest in the church governance and the school governance. They should not be primarily interested in the church and then only pulled into the school business when something demands their attention. If the combined board truly commits itself to being the board of the school then there should be clear portions of the meeting (or even better, separate meetings) dedicated to school business, they should educate themselves on what it means to be a school board, they should select members based on their contribution for the school board side of things, and so on. In other words, it should be clear to the visiting team that **one of the primary responsibilities** of this combined board really is the business of the school.

## And the other indicator that is so important to consider is:

*Indicator 2.4 - Constituents and stakeholders are given opportunities to provide feedback to leadership regarding decisions of the school, a practice that promotes a culture of participation and transparency. One of the rubrics state: The school has*

*written policies that ensure integrity in decision making and limit conflict of interest for all involved in the school.*

When school board members are chosen, there should be clear policies about who can be selected, what relationships they can have with staff at the school, who can gain financial contracts at the school, and so on. This is more complicated when there is only one board. You just have to be sure that no undue power exists for any decisions because of who is on that board. In a church school setting, sometimes the pastor or another member of the board feel that they have the right to get involved in hiring/firing decisions or other administrative level decisions because they are on the board. They want to bypass due process at the school level. That is too often the case. Policies and frequent training must be put into place to remind the board of their roles and responsibilities and the limits of those. The administrator of the school has his/her responsibilities and authority. It should not be usurped by board members who overstep their bounds. I caution you here from having heard of and having to have been involved in too many negative experiences. Set it up right to prevent this.

You might have noticed the beginning of that indicator that says that feedback is to be allowed as well as transparency. Many church boards are not in the habit of allowing feedback or providing transparency. School boards need to provide both. So this is a question that the board will need to figure out. Will they allow surveys, parent advisory groups, focus groups, parent coffees, and share how decisions are made? This doesn't say that the input necessarily has decision-making level power but the board needs to listen to the input of the constituents (parents, teachers, students, alumni) and share with them what is happening. These groups are deeply affected by the schooling they receive and in most cases are paying dearly for it.

In summary, if you will look through Standard 2 and the indicators, and see how a school board is to function, I think you will see that one board can be both if they take care to separate portions of their meetings, and take care with their process, training, conflict of interest and so on. However, that will require changes from "business as usual" for most church boards. Look through not just the standard and indicators but read through the rubrics. That will give you the specifics to help understand this better.