

Lynden Christian's Governance Model

It is vital for a healthy organization, and in this case Lynden Christian School, to identify a governance model that will serve well the Board, Administration, Staff and the supporting Society. There are several models from which to choose, including Faculty Governance, Policy Governance, System-wide Governance, Community Governance and several others. We believe the model called **Community Governance** will best serve Lynden Christian School now and into the future.

What follows are tools and characteristics of an effective and healthy governance model, in large part taken from a publication called *Community Governance* by Bartlett and Campey.

1. The Board's first and primary responsibility is to hold in trust, protect and direct the mission of the school. The Board adopts a clear mission, and mission-focused goals regarding Christian education. The Board should review the Lynden Christian Mission statement, and its Amplification, routinely and set yearly goals that may reach down into the organization.
2. The Board's role is clear and distinct from the staff. It is critical for the Board to work through key issues such as its role, what power and authority will be delegated to the Superintendent, and how it will hold the Staff, through the Superintendent, accountable for their responsibilities.
3. The Board has a governance focus. The Board must be careful not to micro-manage the organization. The Board must focus on setting clear policies, maintaining financial stability, directing strategic planning, and reviewing operations. The Board gives organizational oversight rather than working in the trenches.
4. Board members understand their roles. The Board speaks as one voice outside the Boardroom. Further, Board members need to know which hat they are wearing at which time:
 - Governor—when at a Board meeting fulfilling the task as a trustee and acting on the powers given them by the Constitution.
 - Volunteer—when a Board member is providing volunteer service. He/she has no authority over other volunteers unless assigned by the Board.
 - Implementer—when a Board member is given a specific task from the Board to carry out.
 - Parent/Guardian—when a Board member is fulfilling their role as parent, responsibility is limited to serving the interests of their child(ren)
5. The Board links with the parents and Lynden Christian Society*. The Board develops creative strategies for community linkage through newsletters, formal and informal meetings, and special events. The parents and Society become moral owners** and must know where the Board and leadership are directing "their" school. Board members welcome contact points with parents and Society members. The Board also seeks to sustain the vision of Christian education for future generations.

6. The Superintendent is the lone agent of the Board. Having one person provides organizational clarity. He/she gives leadership toward achieving the mission-focused goals, in collaboration with other administrators and staff. The Superintendent is expected to live within the Superintendent job description and the Board Policy Handbook.
7. Policies are organized into a Board Policy Handbook. It is vital for smooth governance that the policy handbook is kept up to date with each change being recorded promptly. Likewise, it should be reviewed regularly. Organizations may use hard copy handbooks or online versions that may make it easier for updating and accessibility.
8. The Board chair “manages” the Board. While the Superintendent can be helpful in crafting the agenda and providing resources, the chairman ensures the meetings are well planned. He/she works with committee chairs, follows up with reports, and stays tuned to the needs and desires of fellow board members.
9. A strong committee structure is vital to board effectiveness. There will be standing committees and ad hoc committees, all of which need a clear written mandate. Committees, including the Executive, do not have final decision-making ability unless it has been delegated. The Executive Committee must be careful not to claim authority for itself, thus excluding the full board. Board members chair standing committees. Committees may include non-board members who have particular skills and knowledge useful to the Board.
10. Both board and committee meetings must be well planned so as to conduct business efficiently. The Superintendent prepares a forthright written report for the Board. The Administrative staff will likewise prepare forthright written reports for standing committees with information regarding their area of responsibility. A committee secretary will be appointed to record minutes for Board review.
11. Board members are elected and well oriented. In particular, they need to understand and commit to the mission of Lynden Christian. A standing Board Development Committee will be appointed, whose task will be to submit to the Nomination Committee names of candidates who will have the commitments needed to serve well the needs of the Society. The Committee will also propose plans for Board evaluation and professional development.
12. The Board accepts responsibility for self-improvement. The Superintendent may help in the process, but the Board takes the lead. Often it will take new board members awhile to understand their new role. A mentoring process teaming new board members with veteran members may be used. Board members should engage in discussion, reading and retreating that would build a solid cooperative and collaborative team, passionate about Lynden Christian School and their leadership role.

*The Society consists of all parents and community members who continue to support the school as stated in the Constitution.

The moral owners are those Society members who are deeply committed to the essence of the school, its mission and both its current and long-term sustainability (see Bartlett and Campey’s **Community Governance)