

**UNLOCK
YOUR SCHOOL'S
FUTURE**



INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Roles, responsibilities and operations of an
effective school board**

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What does it mean to be an Independent Public School?

- We can make changes and decisions that impact our children's education, e.g. curriculum, student support, staff recruitment, financial management, governance and accountability. However, we must still;
 1. comply with all legislation, industrial agreements and financial audits
 2. sign a Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) with the Director General, Principal and Chair of the school board
 3. be part of an independent review in the final year of the DPA
 4. produce an Annual Report and Business Plan and Strategic Plan, which are co-signed by the school board.

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Why are school boards so important?

- We are part of the State Government's key election commitment to hand more responsibility to schools (IPS)
- Providing greater autonomy enables schools to employ the people, resources and strategies that will make the greatest differences for their students.
- We are a legally formed body (not a legal entity) that, in partnership with the principal, shape and monitor the school's key objectives, priorities and general policy documents.

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Guiding legislation and operational requirements

School board decision making takes place within a framework of legislation, industrial agreements and policies:

- *School Education Act 1999* (mainly section 124)
- *School Education Regulations 2000*
- industrial agreements
- the board's *Terms of Reference*.
- relevant legislation (*Equal Opportunity Act, The Occupational Safety and Health Act*)

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Code of conduct

- Boards determine a specific code of conduct that all members follow.
- These reinforce:
 - confidentiality
 - respect
 - transparency
 - democratic processes
- Members “speak as one voice” in the public arena once any decision has been made.

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Board members

- Board members occupy a fiduciary position (to act in the best interests of others)
- They have an obligation to demonstrate and to exercise their powers in good faith.
- on an unincorporated school boards cannot be held liable for a decision made (or omitted) in good faith.
- are covered for Personal Liability under the general liability and professional liability insurance coverage with the Department's *Risk Cover*
- may be provided with legal advice by the Department, or the State Solicitor's Office.

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Who sits on a school board:

- Boards can have as few as **5**, but not more than **15 members**
- Members are elected for a maximum of 3 years; can be reappointed more than once
- Parents are **elected** by parents
- Staff are **elected** by staff
- Community members are **appointed** by the board (but cannot vote)
- Parents and community members must form the majority of the board membership (there must be at least one parent on the board).
- The P&C can nominate a rep for the board (no guarantee)
- The majority of P&Cs are incorporated associations. (Incorporated associations are legal entities in their own right.)

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Decision-making

- All decisions must be agreed to by an **absolute majority of all** members eligible to vote, even if not present.
- For example: If we have 7 members on our board, 4 people must vote 'yes' in order for the motion to be passed. If only 4 people are at the meeting, then everyone must vote 'yes' before the motion can be accepted.
- A proxy vote is not a lawful vote under the *School Education Act 1999* or the *School Education Regulations 2000*.

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The main functions of an IPS school board?

- Endorse the school's *Delivery and Performance Agreement* (DPA) which is signed by the Principal, school board Chair and Director General
- Endorse the schools Business Plan (and receive updates on our progress of the business plan)
- Endorse the annual school report, school budget and student performance targets.
- May be surveyed by the principal as part of their Professional Review process).
- Are involved in the 3 year independent review of the school's performance, and are privy to both the draft and final report of that review.

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We also may:

- survey to determine the satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students
- endorse the financial arrangements funding school objectives, priorities and directions
- formulate codes of conduct for students, including dress code
- approve charges, contributions and personal use items (booklists)
- promote the school in the community
- Approve advertising/sponsorship arrangements (under DOE Policy)
- take part in the selection of, but not the appointment of, a new principal, when a vacancy arises.

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- provide advice on religious education
- write nominations for awards or grants
- coordinate staff recognition awards
- Contribute school board information to the school's website
- represent the school at community meetings or functions

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Board members do not:

- manage the day to day running of the school
- employ staff
- make curriculum decisions
- performance manage the principal or staff
- represent sectional interests (e.g. the P&C)
- fund raise
- manage facilities (e.g. the canteen, unless incorporated)
- discuss issues between teachers and students and/or parents

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The Principal:

- is the senior DOE rep, educational leader and manager of the school
- provides advice to the board re: school policy
- submits the school's annual budget to the board for endorsement
- conducts all elections

The Board Chair:

- works with the principal to represent best interests of the school
- gives notice of, chairs and convenes board meetings
- manages the business of the board, declares results of decisions

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The Chair also:

- ensures that the board stays focused on supporting the school's efforts
- prepares and presents an annual report to members and the school community
- facilitates mediation meetings and resolves disputes, as required
- represents the school in the community and at formal functions
- supports the school in times of crisis (not that we're planning any).

The minutes secretary:

- can be co-opted onto the board
- Takes and distributes minutes of meetings.

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Effective school boards:

- Have a great chair
- maintain high ethical standards, mutual trust and respect
- build and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders
- communicate their activities to their school community and lead conversations about key issues and challenges in education.
- focus on improving the learning outcomes for ALL students
- monitor progress towards the achievement of goals
- are actively involved in endorsing the school's DPA, budget, business plan and annual report.

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Effective school boards:

- have outstanding **relationships** with school personnel such as the principal and other groups within the school (the P&C, Aboriginal parent group); and
- develop **partnerships and networks** with other schools and community support organisations, as well as local employers and businesses.

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In addition:

- understand and revisit the DPA business plan, school budget and annual report on a regular basis
- interrogate student performance data on a regular basis
- review school policies as necessary

Important:

- Be realistic about what we can achieve
- Very few schools achieve a 100% perfect school board immediately.