



Board Governance and the Complementarity of Roles

The CSM Cord Principle outlines the role of the Board of Trustees:

1. The Board establishes the mission, hires the Principal/Head of School, holds the Principal accountable for full classrooms, plans exercising foresight through strategic planning and strategic financial management, and provides the resources (people, money and facilities) needed for that plan to succeed.

The Board's client is the grandchild – the future children of the school – the children yet unborn. This means that the Board's orientation is strategic i.e. utilizing foresight to anticipate and plan for the future needs of the school.

In the same way, the Cord Principle outlines the role of the Principal:

2. The administration, led by the Principal, enrolls the school responsibly, carries out the Board's Plan, and supports the teachers to success.

The Principal's client is the current child as a member of the family that is drawn and called to the school's mission (admission). The Principal's orientation is tactical i.e. present day and concerned with what is needed to deliver the school's mission into the lives of the current students.

The third Cord is the teacher:

3. The teachers serve the children, deliver the mission, witness to the action of God in the lives of children, and act through their individual Professional Learning Journeys as a Christian Professional Learning Community. The staff support both administration and teachers by engaging with resources and planning for their effective deployment.

The teacher (and staff member) are the ones tasked with mission delivery. Curriculum, program, scope and sequence, course of study along with assessment methods and success measures are all part of the school's mission. But the teacher and staff member sees all this through the mission prism i.e. their task is not curriculum delivery but mission delivery.

These three Cords operate according to the CSM paradigm, the Complementarity of Roles.

The Board and Its Committees: the Complementarity of Roles



This is crucial in understanding the relationship between the Board, their only employee the Principal, and the Principal's employees – teachers and staff.

On the one hand, it is a power relationship. The Board hires (and fires) the Principal. The firing happens enough for CSM to fully appreciate the power paradigm. Many Boards have had no problem knowing and utilizing the absolute power given to them by their by-laws. Christian schools routinely have leadership upended because of a poor relationship between the Board and the Principal. One new Board President specifically sought the position because she wanted to fire the Principal. Another Board listened to rumors and decided they were true and fired the Principal. Yet another decided mid-year they wanted to go in another direction and fired the Principal. We wish these were uncommon stories, but they are not. The power paradigm is alive and well.

CSM recognizes the value of power and endorses its reality. There are times when the Board and the Principal must have the ability to let go those who are not performing well. Sometimes, indeed, in sad circumstances, the school has to let a teacher go or even a family.

But power is a heady brew. Our understanding of Scripture leads us to counsel Boards, Principals, and teachers to be wary of its use. The most amazing story in the world concerns a baby who had the power to call down legions of angels (Matthew 26:53) and, instead, chose to act as a servant (John 13:15). Power soon forgets that it is there to serve and becomes overbearing (Mark 10:45).

The Board and Its Committees: the Complementarity of Roles

We therefore commend to you the Complementarity of Roles. This is the norm in the relationship between the Board, Principal, and teachers/staff. It doesn't take away the power paradigm. It says that acting through power is not the norm but very much the exception. Instead, each function of the school must play its part. This is the teaching of Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. In Romans, Paul says: "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." In Corinthians he writes: "But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body." So, in a school, there is strategic governance, mission leadership, and mission delivery. When the body is in harmony, when the school is in harmony, each part knows and plays its part with wisdom, love, and courage.

CSM Mission: For Jesus; Through Mission; With Students

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Membership: \$8.67 month

CSM is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to healthy, hopeful Christian schools. It works with Christian schools that have an average tuition K-12 under \$17,248. 10% of its revenues is tithed into the CSM Foundation in order to assist Christian leaders and schools with advice/counsel and to fund Christian school research. We charge for consulting based on the tuition level of the individual school to make it affordable for all.

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