ACT
Government

School Boards Handbook

Essentials

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PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

School-based management and decision making is a longstanding and well-embedded philosophy in the ACT public education system, having been an underpinning principle of school management since 1976.

School boards work in partnership with the principal and school communities. They have specific responsibility for endorsing and overseeing the strategic direction and priorities of the school; monitoring and reviewing school performance; developing, maintaining and reviewing curriculum; approving budgets for the effective use of school resources; and management of financial risk.

School boards provide robust forward-thinking governance at the local level to ensure that schools meet the present and future needs of their school communities. School boards are supported by the Education Directorate (the Directorate) to ensure that their responsibilities are fulfilled effectively.

The governance of ACT public schools is the responsibility of school boards, working in conjunction with the school's principal. These responsibilities are undertaken within a specific operating context that includes legislated obligations; government policy, objectives and priorities; Directorate requirements; and stakeholder expectations. Critical to boards being able to effectively exercise their functions is an understanding of governance – what it is and what it is not. This sets the scene for boards to fully appreciate their duties, role and responsibilities, which leads to increased effectiveness and improved performance outcomes.

1.1   Description of this handbook

This handbook provides information about the school governance operating context, obligations of school boards, duties and responsibilities of school board members, and legislated requirements. It forms part of a suite of documents that describe school governance in ACT public schools. It is written to assist all board members to perform their roles.

PART 2 - FUNDAMENTALS

2. Introduction

The school board is a formal mechanism for parents, carers, staff, students and the community to participate in school decision-making. Each ACT public school is required by the *Education Act 2004* (the Act) to have a school board to perform legislated functions.

2.1   Overview

The boards of ACT public schools are based on two principles:

- school communities should have decision-making responsibilities and should be able to determine their own educational priorities within frameworks set by the Directorate, and
- decision-making at the school level should involve the school community, including students, staff, parents, carers and community members.

School boards include representatives from the school and wider community who play the vital role of bringing perspectives from stakeholder groups to board decision making.

The primary purpose of the school board is to perform its functions whilst acting in the best interests of the school and its students. The board's core focus is on the continued improvement of student progress and performance.

School boards are concerned with governance and strategic issues at the school. Day-to-day management of school operational matters is the responsibility of the principal.

2.2   Governance in schools

Governance is defined as the "action, manner or system of governing" (www.dictionary.com). It refers to the framework of policies, systems and strategies that are used to direct and monitor an organisation. The focus of governance is on determining what is to be achieved; as distinct from the focus of management which is on how it is achieved. In a school context, governance is the work of the board, whilst management of the school is the principal's domain. Governance is different from management. Management runs the school. The board ensures that it is being run well and in the right direction.

Good governance leads to higher performance with improved outcomes in:
- Representation – improved stakeholder engagement and communication
- Leadership - improved strategies and plans, increased effectiveness
- Accountability - more prudent financial and risk management; improved compliance

For board members to fulfil their responsibilities they should be cognisant of the following governance principles[1]:
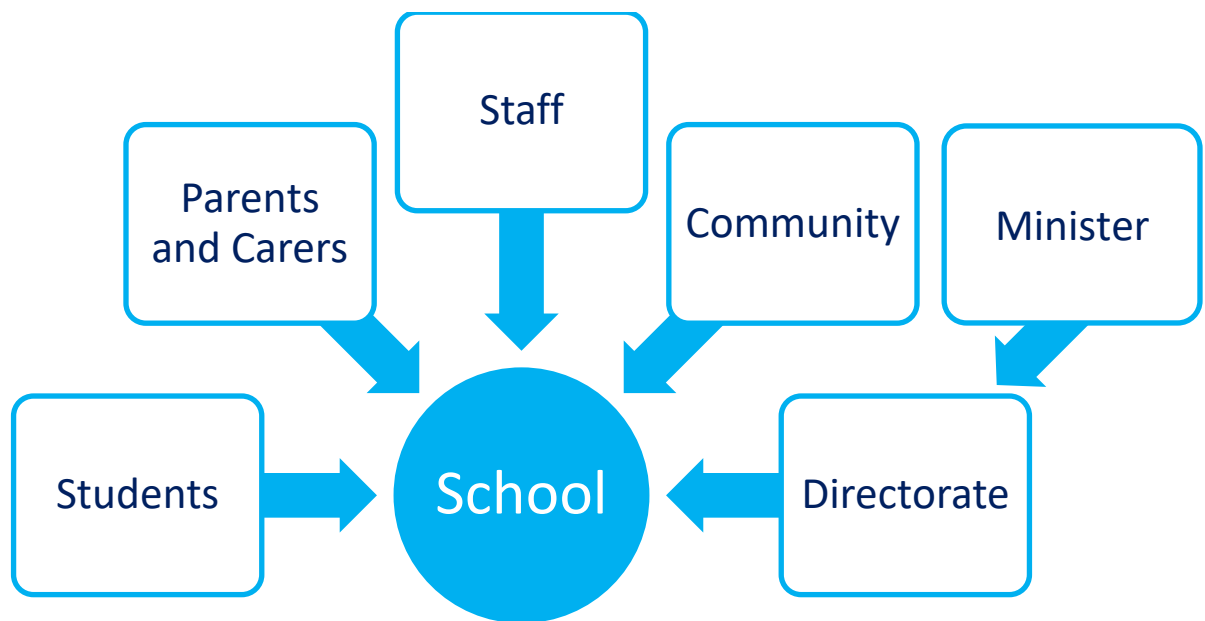
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[1] Adapted from New Zealand Ministry of Education, *Effective Governance: Working in Partnership*, Wellington, 2010 http://www.nzsta.org.nz/media/192048/workinginpartnership-1.pdf

Understand the needs of key stakeholders

Schools have numerous stakeholders as depicted in the diagram below

The primary stakeholders are students, parents, carers and staff of the school. These groups are represented on the school board to ensure that their perspectives are considered in decisions made about the school's future direction, policies and resources. Their representation is enshrined in the Act [2]:

As schools are a central focal point for the sense of community that exists within a neighbourhood, not just for current students and their families, the wider community is a stakeholder group that has an interest in schools. These affiliations may be due to the school being a significant landmark in the neighbourhood, an organiser of local community events, providing a space for community activities, providing government services, past or present connections with the school due to the attendance of their children or grandchildren, or local business owners who provide services to the school or are potential future employers of the school's students.

The ACT Minister for Education is also a key stakeholder and is the position within government with ultimate responsibility for schools. The Minister's portfolio includes education (including early childhood education), childcare services and regulation, and government and non-government schools. These interests are managed through the Directorate.

The Directorate is dedicated to facilitating high-quality education services across the ACT through:
- the provision of government learning institutions in the form of public preschools, primary, secondary, specialist schools and colleges;
- access to quality teaching, specialised learning programs and wellbeing supports for individual student needs;
- enrolment and support of international students; and

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[2] Student representative positions feature in high school and college (or equivalent) boards

- the registration and regulation of home education, early childhood learning centres and non-government schools.

The Directorate upholds the principles that every child has a right to receive a high-quality education and the life chances which flow from it, and that every school should be providing quality learning programs for every student, every day. The Future of Education Strategy outlines the ACT Government's 10-year plan for how it will strive towards achieving this for all children and young people in the ACT. The aim is to ensure all ACT schools are equitable, accessible, inclusive and give students a say in the decisions that affect them. The Directorate's Strategic Plan 2018-21: A Leading Learning Organisation, sets out the organisational capabilities needed to achieve the Government's reforms.

The Directorate also works with the Minister to administer the legislation, set system-wide policies and processes, and provide an operating framework for school boards. Within this framework the board has responsibilities to the Directorate that it must satisfy, such as ensuring the school's strategic direction and priorities align with broader Directorate and Government directions, reviewing and reporting on school performance, and approving the school's budget and allocation of resources.

Boards govern on behalf of all stakeholders

The composition of the board ensures that there is diversity and balance in the membership, with all key stakeholder groups represented. For practical reasons the size of the school board is restricted. However, all board members are required to act in the best interests of the school and its students, and therefore members perform their role in an independent capacity, not as advocates for their stakeholder group. Personal or stakeholder group interests must not get in the way of a board member's duty to the school and its students.

Members that are elected to bring a stakeholder perspective to the board (staff, students and parents and citizens) must ensure that they consult with their stakeholder group about significant issues and that their stakeholder group is kept informed about school board matters, whilst maintaining confidentiality and privacy considerations.

Boards are primarily focussed on the future

One of the main functions of the board is to oversee the strategic direction and priorities for the school within the framework set by the Directorate. As the board's focus is on improving the learning outcomes of students, and the continuous improvement of student progress and achievement, they are forward looking – they cannot change what has happened in the past.

Some stakeholders expect the board to deal with narrow or short-term issues. Such matters are typically operational and should be handled by the principal. They should not be referred to the board because they are not the board's work.

The board also has some cyclical responsibilities to consider, such as annual reports and the school's budget. In reviewing such matters, the board should ensure that they are aligned with the school's strategic direction.

<u>Boards review the implementation of Directorate policies</u>

The board is responsible for reviewing the implementation of Directorate policies (see https://www.education.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policies) at the school and for making decisions about the application of those policies, including the development and review of school-based arrangements and ensuring that they support the implementation of Directorate policies. For example, it is Directorate policy that each ACT public school has a school uniform. The school board will decide the parameters for implementation of this policy at the school i.e. colours, styles, fabrics. The principal will be responsible for the supporting procedures and managing the implementation at the school. The board will subsequently review the implementation of the policy to ensure that the Directorate's requirements are being met.

<u>Boards take responsibility for school performance</u>

Boards need access to information that will enable them to ascertain how the school is performing and to monitor progress against the priorities and targets set to improve student progress and achievement. This will inform the overseeing of strategic direction and resource prioritisation which are two key functions of the board.

<u>Boards make collective decisions and speak with one voice</u>

Board members are individuals who will bring diverse experiences, perspectives and independent thoughts to the board's deliberation of issues. All board members have equal say, an equal vote and equal responsibility. They should ask questions whenever they are uncertain or need more information. They need to understand an issue in order to make decisions about it. There is no one person or group within the board that has more influence than another. Whether as individuals they have participated actively in the discussion or not, board members are responsible collectively for the decision made. Decisions of the board should be objective and robust, fully supported by evidence and be defensible.

Board members are obliged to avoid potential conflicts of interest and to declare any private interest that may affect a school board decision. Members that have declared a conflict of interest should not participate in the board's decision-making process about such matters.

Most boards will try to reach a consensus when making decisions and school board members must listen and be tolerant of the views and opinions of others, even if those views and opinions differ from their own. In making decisions, members should not simply follow others, nor should they be unwilling to compromise. In circumstances where it is not possible to reach a consensus, a decision will be put to a vote of members. If the votes are tied, then the chairperson has the deciding vote.

Consequently, board decisions may not be the preferred outcome of all members and may be unpopular with some stakeholders. Regardless, once a decision has been made, all members must speak with one voice. Any opposing views still held by individual members no longer have any relevance and must be set aside.

The board and principal need to be equally effective in their roles and work together as partners. All are members of a team that is focussed on delivering high quality school governance and undertaking a range of functions in the best interests of the school and its students.

The board relies on the principal to provide information needed by the board to perform its functions. The principal needs the board to undertake its responsibilities so that the school can reap the benefits of the collective wisdom and experiences of board members. In doing so the board is encouraged to be interactive, dynamic and innovative in order to promote the activities of the school and ensure excellence in school performance.

The relationship between the board and the principal relies on all parties being treated fairly, sensitively, consistently and with respect. In addition, all parties must conduct themselves professionally and behave in an appropriate manner.

2.3   Duties and responsibilities[3]

School board members are obliged to act ethically and with integrity at all times in fulfilling their role. This extends to:

1. Acting honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the school and its students

    Board members should prepare for board meetings and contribute to discussions. Conduct in meetings should be courteous and respectful of the perspectives of others. Decisions must be cognisant of the impact on the school and its students.

    > Ask yourself: Have I contributed appropriately to discussions? Is this decision in the best interests of the school and its students? Will it result in improved student progress and achievement?

2. Exercising care and diligence in fulfilling the role of board member

    Board members should ask questions and seek to understand issues that have been put to them for decision. The school's finances should be managed responsibly, and the board should oversight the allocation of financial and other resources to ensure they are aligned with the school's priorities.

    > Ask yourself: Would someone who was observing me think that I was being prudent and conscientious in my duties as a board member?

3. Not using information acquired as a board member improperly

    At times board members may be privy to information that could be used for personal or other interests. Such information must not be used in this way.

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[3] Adapted from Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, *Governance for Good – the ACNC's guide for charity board members,* Melbourne, 2013 http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/Edu/Tools/GFG/GFG_Intro.aspx

> Ask yourself: Am I using information I have obtained as a board member for the benefit of the school and its students, or am I using it for my own interests or the interests of my family or others with whom I have a relationship?

4. Not taking improper advantage of the position of board member

The board's focus is on the strategic plans, priorities and future of the school. Whilst board members may be representative of key stakeholder groups in the school community, they perform their role independently and must not act as advocates for their stakeholder group. Their role is to act in the best interests of the school and its students.

> Ask yourself: Am I using my position on the board to try to pursue an issue that is personally important to me? Have I fulfilled my duty to the school and its students ahead of my personal interests?

5. Properly declaring and disclosing any conflict with the interests of the school or education system

A board member's private interests could affect or be seen to affect a school board decision. Such conflicts of interest (real or potential) must be carefully managed to ensure that board decision making is undertaken with integrity. Board members must disclose conflicts of interest, including potential conflicts, as early as possible to ensure that they are properly managed. Failure to declare a conflict of interest may result in the board member being removed from their position.

> Ask yourself: Would an independent person say that I had properly declared my interests? Could my actions be perceived as being for my benefit or the benefit of my family or others with whom have a relationship?

6. Not engaging in conduct likely to bring discredit upon the school, noting that it may be seen by the wider community as representative of the school.

Board members must uphold high standards of behaviour and conduct themselves professionally, particularly in or around the school.

> Ask yourself: Would my conduct be regarded as building confidence in the school and enhancing community perceptions about it?

7. Participating in activities to improve board performance.

Boards should undertake regular reviews to ensure that issues that may be impeding effectiveness are identified and addressed.

> Ask yourself: What is preventing the board from realising its potential or achieving a higher level of performance?

2.4 Legislation

School boards operate within a framework that includes legislated obligations from a number of Acts and Regulations. Board members are not expected to have extensive knowledge of the legislation but must be cognisant of the high-level requirements.

2.4.1 Education Act

The Act specifies school board obligations and functions, as well as the composition of school boards, board meeting requirements, and the responsibilities associated with financial and reporting requirements. These issues are addressed in more detail in the School Boards – Operations Handbook.

2.4.2 Privacy

The *Information Privacy Act 2014* sets out principles for the handling and management of personal information by ACT public sector agencies, such as the Directorate. These requirements also apply to school boards and affect what information should be presented to the board, how it should be presented, and the recording of information in board minutes.

2.4.3 Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (the FOI Act) gives individuals the legal right to:
- access government information unless access would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest; and
- request that a document be amended if it contains personal information that is incomplete, out of date, incorrect or misleading.

School board records are considered Directorate records, and therefore are regarded as government information for the purposes of the FOI Act.

2.4.4 Records Management

School board records, including minutes, correspondence and emails, must be managed in accordance with the *Territory Records Act 2002*. Guidance about board record keeping is provided in the School Boards - Operations Handbook.

2.4.5   Human Rights

The *Human Rights Act 2004* aims to ensure that human rights are respected, protected and promoted. School boards must ensure that they act in a manner consistent with human rights and that their decisions give proper consideration to relevant human rights.

2.4.6   Discrimination

The *Discrimination Act 1991* aims to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination in the areas of work; education; access to premises; the provision of goods, services, facilities and accommodation; activities of clubs; and sexual harassment. The Act provides for the promotion of recognition and acceptance within the community of equality and the principle of equity of opportunity for all people. School boards must ensure that their decisions are not discriminatory.

2.4.7   Public Sector Management Act

The *Public Sector Management Act 1994* provides the legislative framework for the employment of the majority of employees in the ACT Public Service. It sets out service-wide employment conditions and values.

2.4.8   Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011

The *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011* provides for the adoption of the *Education and Care Services National Law 2010*. The principal objective of this law is to provide a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education care and outside school hours care; establish common licensing and quality assurance processes for services; and establish a public rating system for education and care services. The law applies to long day care, government and non-government preschools, family day care, and school age care services in the ACT.

2.5   School Board Functions

2.5.1   Legislated functions

The Act specifies that a school board's functions are:
- to establish strategic direction and priorities for the school;
- to monitor and review school performance and to report on it to the Director-General, parents of students at the school and staff;
- to develop, maintain and review curriculum for the school;
- to develop and review education policies at the school;
- to establish budgetary policies for the school and approve the school budget;
- to establish policies for the efficient and effective use of school assets and the management of financial risk;
- to develop relationships between the school and the community and between the school and community organisations;
- to make recommendations to the Director-General on issues affecting the school;
- to encourage parent participation in their children's learning; and
- to exercise any other function given to the school board under the Act or any other Territory law.

The Act also states that the Director-General may give written directions to the school board about the exercise of its functions, either generally or in relation to a particular issue. The School Board must give effect to the Director-General's directions.

The school board chairperson has individual responsibilities and leads the school board in working in partnership with the principal, other board members and the school community.

The school board's function of developing and reviewing education policies at the school is exercised within the context of the Directorate's policies. Therefore, the board's role is to ensure that the Directorate's policies are implemented at the school via school-based arrangements.

2.5.2   Compliance and performance

A framework for analysing school board activities is provided by the Tricker model[4], which identifies the main governance roles for boards

	Compliance activities	Performance activities
External role	Provide accountability	Strategy formulation
	Work with and through the Principal	
Internal role	Monitoring and supervising	Policy making
	Past and present focused	Future focused
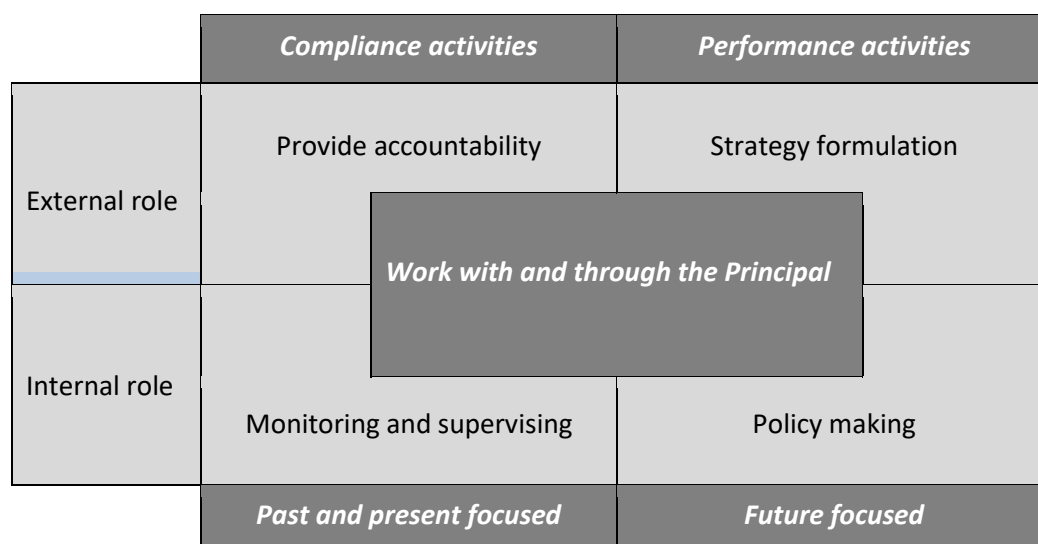
Compliance activities for school boards include approving the school budget, monitoring financial performance, and finalising and approving the board's annual report. It also includes reviewing achievements against the school's plans, reviewing school performance data, and reviewing the implementation of Directorate policies. These activities are to ensure that the school is staying on track. They focus on the past and present.

Performance activities are future focused and include overseeing the five-year School Improvement Plan and annual Action Plan, and developing school-based arrangements to implement the Directorate's policies. These activities position the school for the future.

Compliance and performance activities should be viewed as interrelated and not discrete activities. For example, strategy oversight should take into account the government's strategy for education, the Directorate's strategic plan, school performance data and the review of performance against the previous Action Plan. Similarly, strategy oversight should inform the types of monitoring activities that the board wants undertaken and reported.

An effective board undertakes compliance and performance activities and gives appropriate time to both.

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[4] Adapted from Robert I. Tricker, *International Corporate Governance: Text Readings and Cases*, New York, Prentice Hall, 1994, p149

2.5.3 Decision making

Decision making is about making choices from alternative courses of action. One of those alternatives may be inaction or to do nothing; and choosing to not make a decision is in itself a decision.

Decision making by the board should be regarded as a process, not an event. The board should be taken on the journey and involved in the decision to be made. This enables the board to ask questions, seek clarification and reset the course along the way. The board should not be delivered a final product and expected to simply accept what is put to them for approval.

When making a decision, board members should ask themselves:

1. Does the decision achieve the required outcome?
2. Is the decision in the best interests of the school and its students?
3. Is it the best decision that can be made in the circumstances?
4. Have all members had the opportunity to express their views?
5. Are all members clear about what the decision is?
6. Do I have the information needed to make the decision? Do I understand the information that has been provided?
7. Have my questions and concerns been addressed?

The school board, principal and Directorate have shared responsibility for school decision making. Examples of how this works are:

	School board	Principal	Directorate
Educational planning	Endorse and oversee the implementation of the five-year School Improvement Plan and annual Action Plan. Lead the consultation with the school community.	Develop and implement the five-year School Improvement Plan and annual Action Plan, in consultation with the school community.	Oversee and assist the educational planning process.
Financial management	Approve and monitor the annual budget and monitor monthly financial reports.	Develop and implement the annual budget and monitor monthly financial reports. Provide reports to the Board.	Oversee and assist the financial management process to ensure accountability.
School performance	Monitor student performance through school-based and broader testing activities (e.g. NAPLAN).	Develop strategies and programs to improve school performance for board consideration. Implement strategies and programs to improve school performance following board approval. Provide reports to the board.	Oversee and assist the improvement of school performance.
Curriculum	Develop, maintain,	Develop the school	Oversee and assist the

	review and monitor the implementation of the school curriculum.	curriculum, within the context of the Australian Curriculum, for board consideration. Implement the curriculum following board approval.	development and implementation of school curriculum within the context of the Australian Curriculum.
Policy	Develop, approve, monitor and review school-based arrangements in accordance with Directorate policies and requirements.	Implement Directorate policies. Develop school - based arrangements for board consideration. Implement the school's arrangements following board approval.	Establish Directorate policies and assist with school -based arrangements.

2.5.4 School performance and student achievement

An essential input to the board's critical function of strategic planning is information about school performance and student achievement. Information should be gathered from a range of sources and all areas of the curriculum should be addressed. Sources include:

School Review

As part of an integrated cycle of school improvement planning, implementation and monitoring, ACT public schools participate in a review at least once every five years. School Review entails a desktop audit of school-provided evidence followed by in-school immersion by the review team for, typically, three days.

Review teams consist of two or more principals and are led by an Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Lead Reviewer. Through the lens of the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT), and supported by school and system evidence, review teams gain deep insight into what happens every day, in every class for every student. This includes face-to-face interviews with staff, students, community members and members of the school board.

Review findings are made publicly available on the school's website in a document called the *Report of Review*. This document provides school communities with review findings against each domain of the NSIT along with commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Forward-facing recommendations are integrated into annual planning through the school's Action Plan.

Annual School Board Report

The Annual School Board Report is published on the school's website. It reports system level and national data (e.g. school enrolments and attendance, School Satisfaction Survey results, and NAPLAN results) as required by legislation and regulations.

School websites generally have reports from at least the past two years which can be used for comparison and to identify trends. Previous reports are available from the principal.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

NAPLAN applies to all students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 from all states and territories. Students participate in the tests in their own schools in May of each year. The results from these tests provide a measure of how schools and students are performing in the areas of reading, writing, language

conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy. The results from the assessment program are used for individual student reporting to parents, reporting to school communities, and aggregate reporting by states and territories against national standards.

Principals will provide overall school NAPLAN results to their school board for review. However, it is important that board members fully understand the program objectives and the need for confidentiality in the use of data. Any data presented to the board must not include individual student or class results. Reports made available for discussion at school board meetings should be accounted for at the conclusion of the meeting and given to the principal for destruction in accordance with [Territory Records Advice no. 36: Destruction of ACT Records](#).

Past NAPLAN results for the school are available on the MySchool website [myschool.edu.au](#)

2.5.5 Principal selection
When the position of principal becomes substantively vacant, a board member will be a member of a selection panel established by the Director-General to recommend the appointment of a principal to the school. This is usually undertaken by the school board chairperson.

The school board member serving on the selection panel will be invited to attend a selection panel training workshop covering selection principles, process elements, evidence-based approaches, and panel responsibilities.

2.6   Board effectiveness reviews

The school board should regularly review its effectiveness to ensure it focuses on continuous improvement of its own performance. An effectiveness review should be conducted in the spirit of the board being open to learning and performance improvement. It should focus on the performance of the board as a group, not on individuals, and seek to identify what's working, what's not working and what can be done to improve.

The board should determine how often a review is conducted (preferably annually but at least biannually) and the methodology to be used. Methodologies such as a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis or Keep-Stop-Start are simple but effective.

The board should ask itself questions such as:

Capability
- Do we have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience?

Dynamics
- Do all members have the opportunity to provide input to discussions?
- Do we demonstrate respect for each other's views?

Focus
- Are we focused on the board's work?
- Are our decisions based on what is best for the school and its students?
- Do we act independently from the stakeholder groups that we represent?
- Are we fulfilling our duties and responsibilities as board members?

<u>Efficiency</u>
- Are we adequately prepared for meetings? What else could we do to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our meetings
- What else do we need to perform our roles effectively?
- Are we adequately informed before being asked to make a decision?

<u>Stakeholder engagement</u>
- Are we engaging with stakeholders and keeping them informed?
- Are we open to feedback? Have we responded appropriately to feedback?

Following a board effectiveness review, a plan should be developed to address issues identified and its implementation should be monitored by the board. Subsequent effectiveness reviews should consider the issues previously identified and the effectiveness of actions undertaken.

A review is only going to be effective if it asks the right questions, goes to the heart of existing or potential problems, and action is taken to address issues.

2.7   Legal Protection for Board Members

The Act protects school board members from liability if they perform their functions honestly. School board members can seek advice from the principal of their school about this issue. The principal may then seek advice from the relevant area of the Directorate if needed.

PART 3 - PRACTICAL HINTS

3. Introduction

The effectiveness of a school board is contingent upon the effectiveness of its members. Some practical tips for board members to enhance their effectiveness are:

Have confidence	Ask questions whenever you are uncertain or need more information. You need to understand an issue in order to make decisions about it. There is no such thing as a silly question. Questions and diverse perspectives contribute to more useful discussion about issues.
Be professional	Treat board colleagues and the school's staff, students and community fairly, sensitively, consistently and with respect. Listen to others and be tolerant of their views, even if they differ from yours. Be willing to compromise. Don't let your personal views, or the interests of a stakeholder group that you may represent, become an obstacle to achieving outcomes that are in the best interests of the school and its students. Abide by the code of conduct for school board members.
Be prepared for meetings	Read the agenda, previous meeting's minutes and papers before the meeting. Discuss issues with others prior to the meeting if needed.
Take your responsibilities seriously	The school board is responsible for sound financial management of school funds. Ask questions about the monthly financial statements so that you understand how the school's finances are allocated in order to achieve strategic direction and priorities.
Maintain focus on the board's work	Be mindful that the board's primary purpose is to perform its functions whilst acting in the best interests of the school and its students; and to focus on the continued improvement of student progress and performance. School boards work on governance and strategic issues at the school. The principal manages the school's day-to-day operational matters. Keep asking yourself 'is this the board's work?'
Talk with stakeholders and the community	Be aware of stakeholder and community views and keep them informed about the issues that are being discussed. It is important to listen to their views and encourage discussion about school and current education issues. At least one member of the school board should attend Parents and Citizens Association meetings as it provides an appropriate and useful way of communicating with this sector of the school community.
Talk to the principal and other school board	Establish contact with the school and become knowledgeable about it. Understand the school by being involved in what happens there

members	and by communicating with the school on a regular basis, whilst being cognisant that schools are busy places and staff are focussed on the education of students.
Maintain confidentiality	<mark>While school board matters should be as open as possible, there are times when information must remain confidential and all members must adhere to this requirement.</mark>
Be familiar with ACT educational issues	Take note of any publicity about current educational topics. Ask the principal about these if they seem relevant to your school. Principals usually include information about Directorate activities in their report.
Be familiar with school-based arrangements and Directorate policy	School-based arrangements should be available to the school community. The school board should be familiar with any related Directorate policies and the processes for policy management in the Directorate.

PART 4 -
SUPPORT

4. Support for school boards

Training
All appointed school board members are invited to attend training activities offered periodically by the Directorate. Principals will inform board members about opportunities that arise.

Resources
Comprehensive information about school board functions is available on the School Boards pages of the Directorate's website, including a fact sheet of information sources.

The Directorate's website also provides information about system priorities and strategies, policies and programs.

Contact us
For more information about school board matters, contact the school's principal in the first instance. If the principal is unable to assist, contact the Governance and Community Liaison Branch: **phone**: 02 6207 6846 or **email**: EDUSchoolBoards@act.gov.au.

PART 5 - APPENDICES

Appendix 1   **Glossary of Terms**

Glossary of Terms

- ***ACER*** is the Australian Council for Educational Research, developers of the National School Improvement Tool.

- ***Action Plan (AP)*** is the annual planning tool developed by schools that maps strategies, processes, programs, interventions and resources required to achieve desired impact (Priorities) for students.

- ***Annual School Board Report*** is the annual report required by the *Education Act 2004* about the board's operations during the year. The report is approved by the board, provides evidence that school goals and system commitments are being achieved, and fulfils legislated reporting requirements.

- ***Conflict of interest*** is a situation arising from a real or perceived conflict between the performance of public duty and private or personal interests. A conflict of interest can range from minor to severe.

- ***Education Act 2004*** details the legislated requirements for education and training in the ACT.

- ***Impact Report (IR)*** is the primary means by which a school annually reports, to the community and the Directorate, the student-impact of its improvement efforts. Generated by the school, it describes accumulation and analysis of evidence over time of progress against school Priorities, the outcomes of actions undertaken in the current Action Plan and school contributions to whole-of-system Strategic Indicators.

- ***Legal protection*** means that board members who act honestly are not civilly liable for acts or omissions done in the exercise of their functions as a board member.

- ***National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy*** (NAPLAN) is a national program of assessment undertaken of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in May each year. NAPLAN results provide information about student achievements in relation to proficiency levels in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy.

- ***NSIT*** is the research based National School Improvement Tool utilised across Australian schools. It is available from https://www.acer.org/au/school-improvement/improvement-tools/national-school-improvement-tool

- ***Priorities*** are the 'big ticket' items a school intends to work on and are focused on student outcomes. They incorporate explicit targets from multiple sources of evidence that can be tracked over time. Priorities are developed through analysis of system and school data and aligned with whole-of-system strategic indicators.

- *Public Sector Management Act 1994* provides the legislative framework for the majority of employees in the ACT Public Service. The *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (Act) sets out service-wide employment conditions and values.

- *Regulations* mean rules and administrative codes issued by governmental agencies at all levels (local, state/territory and federal). While not laws, they have the force of law, since they are adopted under authority granted by statutes, and often include penalties for violations.

- *Report of Review (RoR)* is the public report of findings from a school's School Review. The RoR provides explicit point-in-time assessment of the efficacy and embeddedness of a range of practices in a school. Findings do not describe performance of student outcomes; as this is undertaken through data analysis during development of a school's SIP. Descriptors for each NSIT Domain put into functional terms the processes and practices that directly support whole-school improvement.

- *School* means a public school as defined in the *Education Act 2004*.

- *School board* means the board that is established under the *Education Act 2004* to work with the principal to endorse and oversee the strategic direction and priorities for the school and to perform the functions of the board specified in the Act.

- *School Improvement Plan (SIP)* is the five-year improvement agenda for a school. Prior to 2018 it was called the 'School Strategic Plan' or 'School Plan'. The SIP is a collection of two or three sharp and narrow improvement Priorities.