

NAIS Annual Conference: Governance Workshops February 25-26, 2021

Engaged Governance: How Boards and Stakeholders Connect

Independent school board members struggle with how to engage appropriately with stakeholders. Individual members who are also part of the community are torn between good practice and their personal connections to stakeholder peers. Boards, as a whole, regularly receive low ratings from stakeholders on surveys, especially in terms of communication and engagement with the community. This panel discussion will explore healthy and useful ways boards can communicate and engage, while still operating within the parameters of good practice. Join Triangle consultants and three board chairs of very different types of schools in discussing this important topic.

Presenters: Marc Frankel, Triangle Associates; Melanie Harris, Professional Children's School (NY); Chris Mullis, Providence Day School (NC); James Harris, Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School (NY); Judith Schechtman, Triangle Associates.

Thursday, 2/25 1:15 - 2:00 pm

Building a Better Dashboard for School Financial Health

Many schools and boards use dashboards to evaluate the operational and financial health of their schools. Recently, the Gunston School (MD) developed a "dashboard triangle" in an attempt to capture the nuanced relationship between external economic and demographic forces and their relation to our internal trends and performance. This presentation will outline the key elements of this dashboard triangle, and we will pay special attention to macroeconomic factors, showing how schools can employ publicly available data from the Federal Reserve to improve the monitoring of key economic forces impacting our schools.

Presenter: John Lewis, HOS, The Gunston School (MD)

Thursday, 2/25 3:30 - 4:15 pm

Take a Deep Breath: Manage Leadership Transition and Not Have It Be a Crisis

There is no more important decision that a board makes than the hiring of the head of school. The increase in turnover of these positions gives heads and trustees pause to consider how best to manage the hiring process. To attract highly qualified leaders, schools need to be flexible, transparent and open to change. What has worked in the past may not be suited for the future. There are important issues around communication, timing, and inclusion that play a critical role in the search process. The unexpected happens; leadership transition doesn't have to be a crisis!

Presenters: Robert Vital, Bruce Dennis, and Burke Zolosh, Carney Sandoe & Assoc

Friday, 2/26 1:15 - 2:00 pm

Effective Financial Governance for Independent Schools

Every independent school trustee must effectively steward the school by fulfilling their fiduciary role, and the board's partnerships with the head of school and business officer are critical. This dynamic program, supported by a new publication from NBOA and authors, Ron Salluzzo and Phil Tahey, will foster a deeper level of fiduciary stewardship and financial governance. Trustees will enhance their understanding of the multifaceted independent school business model and complex drivers impacting it to ask the right questions to inform more strategic discussion. School leaders will learn how best to report information to ensure financial stewardship and long-term sustainability.

Presenters: Mark Makunas, Jennifer Hillen, NBOA; Ron Salluzzo, Attain, LLC; Rick Branson, CT Assoc of Independent Schools

Friday, 2/26 1:15 – 2:00 pm

Effective Decision Making: The Key to Unlocking the Power of Diversity and Equity in Governance Practices

While boards make many decisions, few boards pay attention to the conditions that support effective decision-making. These conditions include an intentional focus on diversity and equity that boards frequently consider an “add-on” to their processes. Evidence shows that when groups of decision-makers pay attention to several factors—including the diversity of thought on the team and the equal inclusion of all perspectives—they make better decisions. This workshop presents specific information regarding effective decision-making practices including addressing bias, increasing the diversity of thinking, and enhancing equity and inclusion that will ultimately strengthen board culture.

Presenters: Brooke Carrol, Acies Strategies; Valaida Wise, Dr. Valaida Wise Consulting

Friday, 2/26 3:30 – 4:15 pm

Knowing Your Why: How Schools Can Improve the Head Search Process

When faced with replacing a head of school, search committees often rely on incomplete assessments of school climate, culture, and short- and long-term needs. Building on NAIS' prior research on factors affecting head of school turnover, we will present recent findings on how boards choose a new head of school, their motivations for hiring specific candidates, and recommendations for search committees, boards of trustees, and current and prospective heads.

Presenters: Anne-Marie Balzano, Margaret Anne Rowe, NAIS

Friday, 2/26 3:30 – 4:15 pm