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Lutheran Education Advancement Plan

Advancing Lutheran Education for Future Generations across the Great Lakes Bay Region

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Best Practices of Boards of Education

(or Equivalent Governing Entities)

of Lutheran Schools

May, 2014

with Minor Revisions: May, 2015

with Additional Minor Revisions: June, 2016

An electronic copy of this document is available upon request:
Go to ils@immanuelbaycity.com. Specify your desire to receive the *LEAP* document entitled Best Practices of Boards of Education of Lutheran Schools.
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Background - *Lutheran Education Advancement Plan - LEAP Alliance*

Since early in 2011, representatives of twenty-three *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* churches/schools in the *Great Lakes Bay Region* of Michigan have collaborated on strategic planning and action – the *Sustainable Lutheran Schools Project,* seeking *to* affirm, support, and enhance Christian educational ministries in our churches and schools. The structure, planning, and actions have been known as the *Lutheran Education Advancement Plan,* with a vision statement that has been and remains: *Advance Lutheran Education for Future Generations Across the Great Lakes Bay Region.* From January of 2013 through December of 2015, planning and action occurred under leadership from the "*LEAP* Implementation Team," and further planning and action came through many task forces. In December of 2015, following study and development, the *LEAP Strategic Plan* became the *LEAP Alliance*, and the *LEAP Implementation Team* became the *LEAP Alliance Board of Participants.*

Development of Board Best Practices

LEAP committees and task forces have devoted diligent efforts to many and varied aspects of the *LEAP* vision. One task force, since January of 2013, has addressed the subject of "Effectiveness Training for Education Boards." That task force continues to function by keeping this "Best Practices document" current, and by offering education board training programs and materials. It is hoped that the Best Practices document has proven to be, and will continue to be instructive and helpful for the guidance and training of board members and other educational leaders. We join such persons in praying blessings of our God upon ministries of high quality education with distinctive Christian focus in our Lutheran churches and schools.

Differences from Church to Church and School to School

There are a variety of governance structures in our individual settings. It is also understood that some of the "governing entities" associated with our schools and congregations are actually not known as governing boards, but rather as day school boards, day school committees, boards of directors, or some other terms. It is understood that some who will read and consider the best practices that follow are associated with boards in congregations that do not operate schools. Despite such differences existing, the following best practices are nevertheless presented as well worth being considered, adopted and practiced.

In the following material it should be understood that references to "Board of Education" refer to any Christian education governance entities associated with *LEAP* schools/congregations, and "school" refers to whatever educational entity they govern.

Best Practices of Boards of Education of Lutheran Schools

In Lutheran church/school settings where highly effective boards of education are in place and functioning well, it is likely that many of the best practices listed below are consistently in operation.

Purpose / Philosophy / Mission

1. The congregation(s) has/have a purpose/philosophy/mission statement for the school. The board promotes the development and maintenance of this statement.

Board Member Selection

2. There is a systematic and thorough process for recruiting, vetting, and selecting candidates for potential membership on the board. Prospective candidates are asked about their Lutheran faith, their potential "boardsmanship" strengths and skills, their backgrounds and experiences, and their views regarding the value and importance of Christian education and the school. The vetting process for selecting potential board members may rely upon input from some or all of the following individuals – the pastor, the principal or a lead teacher, the congregation's nominations committee chair, or the current or just retiring board chair.

3. Potential board members are considered for board candidacy with consideration given to balance on the board. The board should determine the criteria of balance.
   Examples: . . . parents of children in the school / non "school parents"
   . . . male / female
   . . . younger / older
   . . . occupational diversity

4. Board members should be faithful participants in worship, regular participants at the Lord's Supper, and students of God's Word.

5. When some of the potential candidates for board membership are parents of school-aged children, then among those potential candidates primary consideration for nomination/appointment is given to those candidates whose school-aged children are enrolled in the school, rather than to parents of children who are able and eligible to be enrolled in the school, but are not so enrolled.

Personal Beliefs, Attitudes, and Understandings of Board Members

6. Individually, and together in board settings, board members engage in fervent prayer for school children, school families, the school staff, and the mission and ministry of the school.

7. Each member of the board is a committed, faithful steward of time, talents, and financial gifts.

8. Board members frequently attend Church and School events.

9. Board members are enthusiastic advocates for the school. Every board member promotes and speaks well of the school ministry.

10. Every member of the board is expected and enabled to know and articulate the formal mission of the school.

11. Each board member knows that he/she does not represent a group or classroom community of students within the school. Rather, he/she represents the congregation(s) and has the best interests of the school and all of its children in mind.

12. Board members do not bring "personal agendas" to their board roles. They do not use board membership as a way to solve issues related to themselves or to their children or other family members.

13. Board members know and understand the principles of Matthew 18. The board follows these principles as it carries out its responsibilities and particularly when addressing grievances.

14. The board has a policy to deal with how issues/grievances are addressed. All members are made aware that they may be approached by persons wishing to bring concerns to the board for solutions. The board members know and practice the procedures in place to deal with such situations. Examples: listening courteously to concerns relating to policies or practices, referring these to the board chair, avoiding triangulation, not listening to concerns relating to particular persons but redirecting these to the individuals (Matthew 18), and explaining the "chain of command" in place.

Practices and Procedures of the Board and Board Members

15. At least annually, the board conducts and/or participates in training sessions to orient new members and to strengthen and enrich all members.

16. The board uses an ethical and effective process for selecting its board leaders.

17. Governing documents for the board clearly and consistently identify the purposes of the board, lines of authority, lines of accountability, responsibilities, and limitations.

18. The roles of each board office (secretary, pastoral advisor, chair, etc.) are delineated in print for all members.

19. All board members have been supplied with thorough, well developed board policy manuals separate from general board procedural manuals. The policy manuals have been updated as policies have been revised or eliminated or as new policies have been adopted, so that the policy manuals are kept current. Every policy is dated.

20. The board chair develops meeting agendas or works with the school administrator to do so. The agendas are written documents, and they are distributed in advance of the meeting by an established regular deadline. All board members are permitted to suggest agenda items by a preparation deadline.
    - Late agenda items may be added at the meeting with formal consent of the members present. It is recommended that most decisions on late items be deferred to the next meeting, allowing time for consideration and preparation.
    - "Timed agendas" are recommended to keep the board(s) on task.

21. The board chair conducts the meeting, focuses the board on issues rather than people, is strongly supportive of the administrator in the context of the board meeting, holds members accountable, and may act for the board in emergency situations.

22. The board chair enforces time allocations for topics of discussion, adjusts those allocations when appropriate and agreed upon by members present, ensures orderliness, handles votes according to *Robert's Rules of Order*, breaks tie votes of members present, appoints committees, monitors the emotional meeting climate, controls outbursts, and calls recesses when appropriate.

23. The role of the board secretary is to maintain accurate and complete records of board decisions and policies. This includes: taking minutes by recording exact wording of motions, repeating the wording of motions before votes are taken, recording results of motions as passed or not passed, distributing minutes in a timely fashion (within one week of meetings), filing minutes after they have been approved, circulating approved minutes to all designated persons, and ensuring that decisions that affect policies are entered into policy manuals.

24. The school administrator works to keep the board mission-focused, considers what policies need to be updated, prepares written reports and presents them to the board, consults with the board chair regarding agenda preparation, generally provides for board orientation and training, brings policy recommendations to the board together with background information, and communicates board policies to staff and constituencies.

25. Effective boards meet regularly – at least nine times per year. There are procedures in place for calling special meetings when urgent issues arise or when it becomes necessary to involve the full board in between regular meetings.

26. A committee structure is recommended whereby smaller groups of members meet prior to regular board meetings, research information for full board review or approval, and provide supporting data for recommendations of new, modified procedures or policies.

27. The board abides by clearly defined policies restricting either some or all forms of open attendance at meetings and executive sessions. The board chair makes certain that these policies are adhered to.

28. All board members respect the confidentiality of board matters. They use caution and restraint outside of board meetings, knowing that they act as board members only when the board is in session or when they have specifically been assigned to carry out particular board tasks. They do not otherwise speak outside of board meetings concerning board actions or board meeting conversations.

29. Individual members of the board abstain from participating in discussion and voting on matters when there is, or may be a personal conflict of interest.

30. Though they may sometimes hold minority views, all board members publicly support decisions of the board.

31. All board members are expected to be present at every meeting. Normally, absent members will have excused themselves in advance of a meeting. A policy is in place for removal of board members with excessive absences.

32. The board annually reviews the administrator's job description, involving the administrator in the process.

33. The board ensures that the administrator is evaluated annually, using criteria based upon the administrator's job description, and using a process that works well and is helpful to the administrator and to the school.

Concern for the School Administrator and Staff

34. Seeking the guidance of our Lord and working together with others as established policies dictate, the board gives high priority attention to staffing the school with God-fearing, well-qualified people.

35. The board annually adopts and communicates both board and administrator goals, involving the administrator in the process.

36. The board has a policy for non-Synodically trained faculty to obtain a colloquy within a reasonable length of time.

37. The board encourages professional development for all professional and support staff by setting policy and providing resources.

38. The board has policies and carries out practices to care for and recognize professional and support staff, showing appreciation and giving honor to them. Examples: celebrating service anniversaries, noting ministries well served, and recognizing educational accomplishments.

39. By fulfilling the board role(s), the board enables the faculty and staff to more fully engage in serving students and parents.

40. The board advocates for, and/or recommends competitive salaries for the professional and support staff to the church/school budget process.

Communication Beyond the Board

41. The board, in its official capacity, communicates with the school professional and support staff only through the school administrator.

42. The board, through its chair, carries out the responsibility of regularly reporting to the congregation and responds to input from the congregation in a timely manner. The board also, through its chair, provides the opportunity for individuals to request items to be added to the board agenda and responds in a timely manner to those individuals.

School Governance

43. As board policies are established, reviewed, or revised, special attention is given to making certain that such policies are fully consistent with the school's established and articulated mission.

44. The board is responsible for setting policies to direct the board and the school administrator. The administrator acts as the school's chief operations officer. The roles of setting policy and administering the school are distinctly separate. The school administrator operates the school so that it is open tomorrow. The board creates policy that assures that the school weill be open in five years.

45. The school administrator implements board policies, establishes procedures for school operations, supervises staff, makes decisions not limited by policy, makes decisions to deal with immediate issues, and together with the professional and support staff, operates the school on a day-to-day basis in accord with established procedures that are consistent with board policy. The board expects the administrator to hold the school personnel accountable to the ministry.

46. Governance policies are determined only at official board meetings. Those policies are recorded in the minutes and soon thereafter in the board policy manual.

47. With input from staff members, the board has developed and published a strategic plan (in many settings, a three to five-year strategic plan) that is studied and upgraded at least annually.

Funding the School

48. The board takes a lead role in providing stable funding for the school and its mission.

49. The board receives regular financial reports and exercises financial oversight of the school.

50. The administrator, with input from the staff, recommends an annual budget to the board.

Enhancing Christian Education

51. The board has a process in place to collect data from interested groups for evaluating the effectiveness of the school and the board for the purpose of strategic planning.

52. The role of the board includes supporting the congregation(s) in nurturing life-long Christians.

53. The board is committed to ensuring that the school is recognized in the community for quality Christian education, high standards, effectiveness, and valuable services provided for its students. These qualities are described with metrics that the school's publics can understand and share with others.

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Explanation/Clarification Needed? Input to be Offered?

Where we might offer explanation or clarification regarding information presented in the list of "Best Practices," be encouraged to contact any one of us, the members of the "*LEAP* Effectiveness Training for Education Boards Task Force" . . .

. . . Brian Young, Chair (bbyoung32@gmail.com)
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Additional "Boardsmanship" Resources

. . . two documents developed by leadership at Peace Lutheran Church in Saginaw (989-793-9025), entitled, respectively, "Board of Directors Member Nomination Form" and "A Statement of Commitment to the Expectations for Board of Director Members of Peace Lutheran Church"

. . . a board evaluation instrument employed by the Zion, Bay City, Lutheran School governing board ("Christian Day School Committee") - Contact Zion's school office (989-893-5793). The instrument lists each of the 53 "Best Practices of Boards of Education (or Equivalent Governing Entities) of Lutheran Schools," and calls for each board member to indicate the degree to which, in his/her view, each "Best Practice" aptly describes the governing board.

. . . a board evaluation instrument developed by "Independent School Management," which has been adapted, and is employed by the Board of Directors of Valley Lutheran High School to facilitate a self-assessment process - Request copies of the instrument and explanations from VLHS Executive Director/Principal, Dr. John Brandt (989-790-1676).

. . . an *LCMS Michigan District webinar* (52 minutes) presented by Dr. Bruce Braun entitled "So Now You're on the School Board?" - Go to michigandistrict.org/webinars, and then to "January 2013." Select "Watch Recording," or "Download Slides." Help needed? Call 734-665-3791.

. . . a *Lutheran Education Association* webinar (55 minutes) presented by Dr. Neil Sandfort, entitled "Serving on the School Board" – accessible to *LEA* members on line . . . lea.org→resources→LEA Webinars→Archived Webinars→School Board: Serving on the School Board / There is a lengthy wait while the webinar loads. Request help, if needed at708-209-3343.

A Lutheran Schools Governance Resource Provided by our Synod

The "Best Practices" in our list are not offered in depth or detail. We defer in this regard to other presentations/publications. One such resource is an excellent publication that we recommend for further study - a 440-page document entitled "Governing Manual for Lutheran Schools (A Resource for Administrators and Boards)," published in 2002 by the Board for District and Congregational Services-School Ministry of our *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*. Call Synod offices at 314-996-1000, extension 1294, and ask for assistance in accessing this document.

Contents of the "Governing Manual for Lutheran Schools (A Resource for Administrators and Boards)" are as follows . . .

. . . Forward (6 pages)
. . . Chapter 1 - Board Policy Development (14 pages)
. . . Chapter 2 - Relationship to the Board and to its Constituents (9 pages)
. . . Chapter 3 - Board/Administration Relationships / Staffing Responsibilities (36 pages)
. . . Chapter 4 - Individual Board Member Responsibilities (13 pages)
. . . Chapter 5 - Board Organizations and Meetings (16 pages)
. . . Chapter 6 - Board Development (28 pages)
. . . Chapter 7 - Curriculum Responsibilities of the Board (9 pages)
. . . Chapter 8 - Board Legal Considerations (7 pages)
. . . Chapter 9 - Board Financial Responsibilities (44 pages)
. . . Chapter 10 - General Resources . . .
-A Policy Manual Table of Contents (12 pages)
-School Academic Policies (22 pages)
-A Sample School Administrator's Manual (200 pages)
. . . Chapter 11 - Schools with Non-Traditional, Alternative Governance Systems (7 pages)