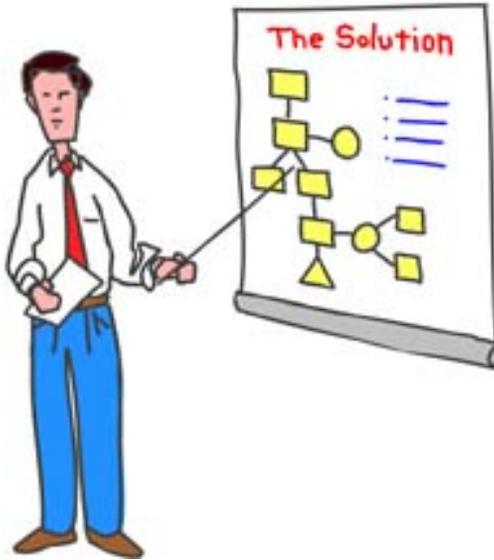


The Provincial Department of Education is developing a Ministerial statement on the use of Policy Governance by District Education Councils.

### QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD TABLE

- ? How much time has the board spent talking about its vision and issues directly related to whom it is accountable in recent months?
- ? In what ways could Policy Governance improve board performance and achieve what it should on behalf of its ownership?
- ? Is the board effectively using the consent agenda? What other items could be placed on the consent agenda to free board time?
- ? To what extent is the CEO empowered to do the job without consulting with the board? How is the CEO held accountable for results under the current system?
- ? Do all members of the board clearly understand their roles? To what extent does the board speak with one voice?



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## timely TOPICS



**Policy  
Governance**

Guess who is looking at Policy Governance?

## JOHN CARVER'S MODEL: A LESSON IN GOVERNING THROUGH POLICY

Imagine this scenario: It's 7 P.M., and the board meeting kicks off with a 20-minute discussion of budget bids followed by an impromptu give-and-take over the best strategy administrators should use to promote their organization.

*"Very competent individuals can come together to form a very incompetent board." John Carver*

After debating budget cuts for the upcoming year, the chair opens the meeting for public comment period and nobody takes the podium, as usual. The board approves the bills and adjourns.

*What happened to achieving what the organization wishes to achieve?*

Researchers have not thoroughly studied the connection between governance and achievement of goals, but board performance is facing heightened scrutiny nonetheless. More eyes are turning toward what's happening in the boardroom.

John Carver's model of Policy Governance is being used by many boards to make them more effective and free them to focus on the "meat" of their jobs: achievement of the organization's raison d'être...reason for being.



Books and articles on John Carver's model of Policy Governance can be found at [www.carvergovernance.com](http://www.carvergovernance.com)

### What is Policy Governance?

Most board members, of course, understand the need to focus on policy instead of administrative details. But, the Carver model expands that

principle. The idea is that the board's job is to set ends (goals), sustain connections with various publics, and monitor the CEO's progress toward the ends or goals.

Under this model, the CEO is the board's only employee. Rather than telling him or her what to do, the board puts in writing what the CEO is not allowed to do. The CEO in pursuit of the board's ends or goals may do anything not limited by board policy. The board then monitors the CEO's performance against the established goals outlined in policy criteria.

Advocates of the model argue it allows CEOs to do their jobs, provides absolute clarity about roles, increases accountability, keeps boards focused on goals and improves relationships with the community. Critics, however, worry the CEO assumes too much power under Policy Governance and that it oversimplifies the complex nature of board dynamics.

Even boards unwilling to adopt the model in its entirety may find value in the principles of Policy Governance.

1. The board is the trustee for the owners (e.g. the public).
2. The board speaks with one voice – or not at all.
3. Board decisions should be policy decisions.

4. Policy should be formulated by determining the broadest values before progressing to more narrow ones.

5. The board should define and delegate, not react and ratify.

6. The pivotal duty of the Board is to determine the desired ends or goals.

7. The board's role in deciding means is in limiting executive discretion, not prescribing action.

8. The board establishes its own culture — its beliefs and customs — through policy.

9. The board must create a relationship with the CEO that is empowering and safe.

10. The CEO's performance must be monitored rigorously but only against policy criteria.