Building and Nurturing the Board your School Needs in a Time of Change

NYSAIS TRUSTEE GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE
The Rise of AltSchool and Other Micro-schools

Combinations of private, blended, and at-home schooling meet needs of individual students

By Michael B. Horn

From San Francisco to Austin, Texas, to New York, new forms of schooling termed micro-schools are popping up.

As of yet, there is no common definition that covers all these schools, which vary not only by size and cost but also in their education philosophies and operating models. Think one-room schoolhouse meets blended learning and home schooling meets private schooling.

As Matt Candler, founder of 4.0 Schools, writes, “What makes a modern micro-school different from a 19th century, one-room schoolhouse is that old school schools only had a few ways to teach—certainly no software, no tutors, and probably less structure around student to student learning. In a modern micro-school,
What kind of K-12 education do Millennials want for their kids?

Diverse learning options are important to the generation, survey finds

08/26/2016 | ConsumerAffairs | 📜 Family & parenting

By Sarah D. Young

Sarah D. Young has been a columnist for a blog aimed at Millennials and has also worked in early childhood education and has been a reading tutor to at-risk youth. Read Full Bio→

Email Sarah Young

Millennials may have gotten a traditional public school education, but they’re not holding their kids to the same standard. According to a new survey, the vast majority of Millennial moms and dads are supportive of alternative approaches to education.

Rather than following the well-worn path, 77% of Millennial parents believe it’s a good idea to create a path to graduation that suits their child’s unique needs.
As the cost of higher education skyrockets, a new Pew study finds that students and families are questioning its value.
K-12 School and District Rankings

Niche ranks more than 100,000 public and private schools and districts based on dozens of statistics and 27 million opinions from 300,000 students and parents. View the full methodology.

Browse all rankings

2016 Best School Districts

1. Tredyffrin-Easttown School District
   Tredyffrin Township, PA

2. Eanes Independent School District
   Austin, TX

3. Jericho Union Free School District
   Oyster Bay Town, NY

4. New Trier Township High School District No. 203
   New Trier Township, IL

5. Princeton Public Schools
   Princeton, NJ

View the full list »
When Private School Tuition Costs More Than College

Private high schools in New England charge more than $35,000 a year on average in tuition.
Slowly, but surely, robots (and virtual ’bots that exist only as software) are taking over our jobs; according to one back-of-the-envelope projection, in ninety years “70 percent of today’s occupations will likewise be replaced by automation.”
Agenda

- High-Performing Boards in an Age of Disruption
- Looking Outside for Inspiration
- Solving Small Problems to Address Big Ones
Top Characteristics of High-performing Boards

- A shared understanding of **roles and responsibilities**
- A strong **strategic orientation**—focusing on what’s most important
- A culture of **self-assessment**, accountability, and open and honest communication
- Healthy attention to board member **recruitment and development**
- Structuring for efficiency, development, and innovation
A Shared Understanding of Roles & Responsibilities

PART 1
The Head...

- Develops and proposes policy questions for the board's consideration
- Hires, supervises, and motivates staff
- Develops and implements school programs
- Manages the day-to-day operations of the school
- Provides vision for culture and climate.
The Board...

- Articulates the values of the school through policies that put the school’s mission into action
- Hires, supports, and evaluates the head of the school
- Opens the doors to fund raising in the ‘community’
- Monitors fiscal management, approves the annual budget, and assures that there is an annual audit
- Selects, recruits, and orients new trustees
- Plans for the future health and well-being of the school.
THE BOARD/SCHOOL HEAD PARTNERSHIP

Characteristics of an Effective Independent School Board-School Head Partnership

- Common Expectations
- Cooperative Planning
- Open and Honest Communications
- Respect
- Mutual Evaluation

...result in a clear and common understanding of...

- Where We Are Going
- Why
- How We Will Get There
- How We Will Know We Have Arrived
Profiles of Governance

- **Governance by default**
  Neither board nor staff plays a strong, forward-thinking role

- **Governance by fiat**
  The board imposes most decisions

- **Executive governance**
  The CEO governs

- **Shared governance**
  Both senior staff and the board are actively engaged in governance

Governance Futures Project
Possible Outcomes of Not Having Shared Governance

- The board functions well only in committees
- Board disengagement
- Lack of strategic thinking
- A polarized board
- Costs to the organization of remaining in the status quo.
Barriers to Moving to Shared Governance

- Not enough time at board meetings
- The pace of change
- The timing of board meetings
- Lack of term limits for board members
- Fear of loss of control by the head
- Not enough trust between head and board.
Operating in the Strategic and Generative Modes: Focusing on What’s Important

PART II
WORK OF THE BOARD

1. It should concern itself with crucial, do-or-die issues central to the school’s success.
2. It must be driven by results that are linked to defined timetables.
3. It must have goals and clear measures of success.

-Chait, Taylor, and Ryan
# The Three Levels of Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board’s central purposes</td>
<td>Reconcile value propositions; Discern challenges; Think creatively; Make sense of circumstances</td>
<td>Scan environments; Review strategy; Monitor accountability</td>
<td>Oversee operations; Ensure accountability; Select and assess Head; Ratify policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type I Fiduciary</td>
<td>Type II Strategic</td>
<td>Type III Generative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of organizations</td>
<td>Bureaucratic</td>
<td>Open system</td>
<td>Nonrational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of leadership</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Analytical/visionary</td>
<td>Reflective learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board’s central purpose</td>
<td>Stewardship of tangible assets</td>
<td>Strategic partnership with management</td>
<td>Source of leadership for organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board’s core work</td>
<td>Technical: oversee operations, ensure accountability</td>
<td>Analytical: shape strategy, review performance</td>
<td>Creative: discern problems, engage in sense making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board’s principal role</td>
<td>Sentinel</td>
<td>Strategist</td>
<td>Sense maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key question</td>
<td>What’s wrong?</td>
<td>What’s the plan?</td>
<td>What’s the question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems are to be solved</td>
<td>Spotted</td>
<td>Solved</td>
<td>Framed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative process</td>
<td>Parliamentary and orderly</td>
<td>Empirical and logical</td>
<td>Robust and sometimes playful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of deciding</td>
<td>Reaching resolution</td>
<td>Reaching consensus</td>
<td>Grappling and grappling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of knowing</td>
<td>It stands to reason</td>
<td>The pieces all fit</td>
<td>It makes sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with constituents</td>
<td>Limited, ritualized to legitimate</td>
<td>Bilateral, episodic to advocate</td>
<td>Multilateral, ongoing to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance metrics</td>
<td>Facts, figures, finances, reports</td>
<td>Strategic indicators, competitive analysis</td>
<td>Signs of learning and discerning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chait, Ryan, and Taylor, *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*
How Do you Get There?

- Build trust between board and head
- Educate the board
- Ensure all trustees understand the school context
- Become data-informed as part of a regular process
- Turn data into business intelligence to act upon.
Building Trust

- **Trust** is built from mutual respect, commitment and an understanding of each others’ roles and requires:

  - **Time** – working and simply kicking back together can form the foundation of a trusting relationship
  - **Transparency** – doctrine of no surprises
  - **Communication** – what we share with each other, how we share it, and how often is the foundation for building trust and growing understanding.
Education is Essential

- Orientation
- Ongoing professional development
- Awareness of school trends/external trends
- Retreats
- Brain-storming time at every board meeting.
Education: Begin with Orientation

- **Session 1: The Role, the School, and the Sector**
  - Mission, vision, and values
  - School overview
  - Industry overview: Major Issues Facing Schools (The Context)

- **Session 2: Board Operations & Culture**
  - Governance structure (including board job descriptions and committee charters)
  - Board meeting agendas, consent agendas, and how meetings are run
  - Board bylaws, policies, and procedures
  - Management vs. governance

- **Session 3: Board Roles and Responsibilities**
  - Fiduciary duties
  - Conflicts of interest
  - Core responsibilities
  - What hat do I wear?
Case Study Vignettes for Trustees and School Leaders

Thanks to funding from the Benedict Foundation for Independent Schools, NAIS created a series of filmed case study vignettes that can serve as built-in professional development at the next meeting of your boards of trustees. Each vignette focuses on situations that happen regularly in independent schools. By viewing these vignettes and discussing them, your board and leadership can prepare for when the situations happen at your school. In addition to filmed re-enactments, for each case study, there are PowerPoint slides that highlight key points that can help facilitate discussion.

View the vignettes on the host site. These vignettes are free for NAIS member schools for a 6-month trial period.

After you have viewed the vignettes, tell us what you think and to what degree they were useful to your board. Please send an email to the case studies team at case-studies@naistax.org with the subject line: Case Study Feedback.
Education: Know Your Own Trends
BECOME DATA INFORMED: DEVELOP SYSTEMS FOR ONGOING DATA COLLECTION

SAMPLE RESEARCH AGENDA

• Environmental Scanning: Monthly
• Parent Research (satisfaction, why students enroll, priorities): Annually
• Admissions Research (students who enroll and who do not enroll, attrition studies): Annually
• Demographic Research (school-age population, family incomes): Annually
• Alumni Research (alumni planning and fund raising, alumni stats for marketing): Every few years
• Image Assessment (community, current and prospective families, colleges): Every few years
Become Data Informed: Read Trend Publications

* **The Trend Letter:**
  
  [www.trendletter.com](http://www.trendletter.com)

* **Herman Trend Alert:**
  
  • [www.hermangroup.com](http://www.hermangroup.com)
While current parents do not feel there are significant faults in any area, they do believe the curriculum should be more challenging.
Data Pinpoints how the Market Views you Against Competition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Competitive Brands Among Current and Prospective Parents</th>
<th>Prep (n=268-331)</th>
<th>School A (n=80-110)</th>
<th>School B (n=22-35)*</th>
<th>School C (n=62-83)</th>
<th>School D (n=26-41)*</th>
<th>School E (n=33-43)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintains high academic standards</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>64% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a challenging curriculum</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>62% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is well established</td>
<td>88% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>36% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a high achieving student body</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>64% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an environment of achievement</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>65% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has dedicated and high quality teachers</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>65% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td><strong>89%</strong></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an edge in college admission</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is difficult to get into</td>
<td>73% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>53% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cares about its students</td>
<td>67% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has strong ethics</td>
<td>64% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>55% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on building students with strong morals, ethics and values</td>
<td>59% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>45% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td><strong>70%</strong></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a warm and friendly atmosphere</td>
<td>56% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>39% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a well-rounded education</td>
<td>54% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>64% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>43% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is innovative</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is involved in the community</td>
<td>41% <strong>C</strong></td>
<td>43% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>34% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td><strong>63%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is ethnically diverse</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td><strong>65%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers high quality extracurricular activities and athletics</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35% <strong>P</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is affordably priced</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td><strong>65%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultivating and Recruiting Great Trustees

PART III
How Do you Find Great Trustees

- Start with dedicated and active volunteers
- Consider donors
- Ask current board and staff for nominations
- Reach out to those beyond your school
- Communicate through multiple channels
- Contact local organizations that teach people how to be effective board members
- Use board or volunteer recruitment web site.
Don’t Stop at the Most Obvious Candidates

- Boards need to be champions for their schools, but they also need to question them. More diverse boards make better decisions.

- Input from those new to the school and with few personal ties to others can bring useful new perspectives.

- Recruit board members to lead not to manage (recruit by discussing challenges facing the school; not skillsets).
Diversity Drives Innovation

Figure 2: Board of Directors and Organizational Innovation in Nonprofit Organizations

BOARD PROCESS
- Board culture
- Board capital (human and social)
- Board cohesiveness
- Exec. Dir.-Board Chair relationship
- Exec. Dir.-Board relationship

BOARD DEMOGRAPHY
- Board size
- Board diversity

VALUE OF BOARD DIVERSITY

• Socially diverse groups are more innovative than homogenous groups.

• Interacting with individuals who are different forces group members to
  • prepare better,
  • anticipate alternative viewpoints,
  • expect that reaching consensus will take effort.

*Scientific America*, Katherine W. Phillips
Questions to Ask Potential Board Members

- Why are you interested in committing your time and energy to us?
- What do you think are the characteristics of a great board member?
- Board members bring experience, wisdom, strategic thinking, and connections. Can you tell us how you would contribute in these areas?
- What kind of autonomy do you have over your calendar?
Structuring for Efficiency and Effectiveness

PART IV
Structures/Processes that Nurture Strategic Governance

- Consent agenda
- Fewer standing committees/more task forces
- Board reflection time (10-15 minutes without agenda)
- Promote disagreement
The Power of Task Forces

“Tissue paper” (use and discard) task forces drive the board toward real-time results, multiply leadership opportunities, and prevent longtime members from dominating standing committees.

Monitoring School’s Health through Dashboards & Performance Metrics

- **Sample Dashboard**
  - enrollment
  - student attrition
  - budget performance
  - faculty attrition
  - diversity trends
  - fund raising results.
New Approach for Dashboards

**Cost per primary outcome.** Most schools have a primary outcome they seek. Reducing cost per outcome over time is the hallmark of a successful program.

**Proportion of incoming students with intended characteristics.** Knowing whether you are veering from this intended profile is critical.

**Stakeholder loyalty.** Research shows that customer loyalty is the best predictor of long-term growth and profitability. Ask your key stakeholders how likely they are to recommend your school to a friend or colleague? net promoter score
Structure and Processes should Nurture the Following:

- A focus on crucial, do-or-die issues central to the school’s success
- A focus on the future not the past
- Results that are linked to defined timetables
- Clear measures of success
- Work that engages the school community and engenders their support.
Looking Outside

PART V
SMALL BUT MIGHTY:
4 SMALL COLLEGES THRIVING IN A DISRUPTIVE ENVIRONMENT
INNOVATION IN HIGHER ED: CASE 1

1: Securing the Resources for Growth

- Setting aside a percentage of the operational budget to fund strategic initiatives
- Inviting donors to contribute into a special president’s fund for innovation

Key Ideas

- Institutions cannot cut their way to sustainability
- Need to abandon what’s not working to make room for growth
- Stakeholders will support difficult decisions in the short run if they are in service of a more purposeful vision in the long run
INNOVATION IN HIGHER ED: **CASE 2**

2. Developing an Outward Focus

- Listening to experts from other industries to learn about new market opportunities
- Visiting organizations outside higher ed to learn how they innovate
- Developing a discipline for identifying and assessing new markets

**Key Ideas**

- Encourage looking outside the industry for solutions
- Support faculty and staff in sharing new data on what they are learning
- Enable a culture of continual learning and risk taking
INNOVATION IN HIGHER ED: CASE 3

3. Overcoming Resistance to Change and Taking Risks

• Involving the campus in defining core values
• Defining a vision worthy of people’s commitment

Key Ideas

• Focus first on small steps and actions to shift culture
• Get clear about mission and vision—why do you exist?
• Develop wholly new approaches or models to meet the needs of emerging markets; don’t try to retrofit existing ones
4: Pursuing Smart Experimentation

- Prototyping and iterating new programs and projects
- Knowing when not to go forward

Key Ideas

- Start small, prove the concept, and then scale according to your objectives
- Know your niche--can you offer something in a unique and compelling way?
Think Small to Think Big!
Thank You

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