



# New York State Association of Independent Schools

## Principles of Best Practice

### Board of Trustees

**The board is the guardian of the school's mission. It is the board's responsibility to ensure that the mission is relevant and vital to the community it serves and to monitor the success of the school in fulfilling its mission.**

**The following Principles of Best Practice are set forth to provide a common perspective on the responsibilities of independent school boards. The board and the head work in partnership in fulfilling these principles.**

1. The governing body speaks with one voice and ensures that the governance of the school is clearly defined, transparent, and understood by all constituents.
2. The governing body provides for the continuity of mission and recognizes that its primary work and focus are long-range and strategic.
3. The governing body provides stability in transitions of leadership for itself and its head of school.
4. The governing body undertakes formal strategic planning on a periodic basis, sets annual goals related to the plan, and conducts annual written evaluations for the school, the head of school, and the governing body itself.
5. The governing body ensures that adequate financial resources are provided for the school.
6. The governing body has appropriate policies to support the creation, review and approval of an annual operating and capital budget as well as a realistic multi-year financial plan.
7. The governing body ensures appropriate administrative follow up as a result of an outside, annual professional audit and the corresponding management letter.
8. The governing body ensures that the school has in place adequate provision for risk assessment and management including the transfer of risk through appropriate insurance coverage.
9. The governing body understands its central role in institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.
10. The governing body is responsible for the careful selection and contracting of the head of school and ensuring that the head of school receives appropriate support, evaluation, and compensation.
11. The governing body selects a strong chair who develops a positive and productive relationship with the head of school.
11. The governing body delegates the responsibility for the operations of the school to the head of school.
12. The governing body reviews and maintains appropriate by-laws that conform to legal requirements while assuring that the school and governing body operate in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
13. The governing body creates a conflict of interest policy that is reviewed annually with, and signed by, individual trustees.
14. The governing body keeps full and accurate records of its meetings, committees, and policies and widely communicates its decisions.
15. The governing body is responsible for establishing school policies and the administration is responsible for establishing administrative practices.
16. Members of the governing body must always put aside any special interest, personal issue, or agenda when fulfilling their responsibilities.
17. The governing body avoids sharing negative perceptions with non-trustees and ensures the confidentiality of all conversations that are conducted by the governing body and its committees.
18. The governing body participates in an effective program of board development that includes annual new trustee orientation, ongoing trustee education, evaluation and self-evaluation, and board leadership succession planning.
19. When appropriate within its mission, the governing body ensures that issues of gender, diversity, and multiculturalism are appropriately considered in policymaking and governing body membership. In addition, governing body composition reflects the strategic expertise, resources, and perspectives (past, present, future) needed to achieve the mission and strategic objectives of the school.
20. The governing body operates effectively and has developed policies and procedures to guide the governing body and the school leadership in the implementation of the NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation.