

## **Purpose of the Board**

The purpose of the board is to advise the pastor in making policy for the school's educational programs.

## **Mission and Philosophy of the Educational Community**

One of the board's most important functions is to develop, with the help of the administrator and staff, a mission and philosophy statement for the parish's educational programs. A mission statement sets clear purpose and direction for the educational community. The philosophy is a statement of beliefs held by the educational community.

Once these statements have been established the board has the responsibility of annually reviewing the mission and philosophy statements. This review should allow the board to:

- fully understand the origin and rationale for these documents,
- make necessary changes to better reflect the current educational community,
- approve the needed changes,
- insure the effective communication of these documents to key audiences within the educational community.

## **Policy**

The board is to advise the pastor in making policy for the parish educational programs.

### **Definition of "Policy"**

A policy is a statement which gives direction for administrative action. A policy sets a goal or an end to be achieved. A policy answers the question, "what does the board want to see happen?" However, a policy is more specific than a goal-statement. For example:

**Goal Statement:** The students of the school should have a thorough understanding of Catholic doctrine.

**Policy Statement:** All students in the school shall receive instruction in the Catholic religion, whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic.

In this example, a policy statement takes a step towards making the goal more specific. In this instance, the policy establishes a specific course in religion for all students.

However, the board must be careful about becoming too specific. Greater specificity leads to the determination of not only the end but also the means. The determination of means is actually an administrative role. Such rules are not to be made by the board but by the appropriate administrators. Administrative rules answer the question "who?" "when?" "how?" Examples of administrative rules for the preceding policy are provided below.

**Administrative Rule:** Students in the primary grades will receive religious instruction for thirty minutes each day.

**Administrative Rule:** The series of religion textbooks will be the text used in all religion classes.

The preceding examples should help to clarify the differences among goal statements, policy statements and rules. The policy statement is the method used by the board to make more concrete one or more of its goals. Though giving a specific direction to be followed in the educational programs, the policy statement does not give the method to achieve that purpose. The educational experts, the professional staff, properly determine means and methods. To determine if a statement is a policy or rule the following question may be asked. "Does this statement leave room for discretionary action on the part of the administrator?" If the answer is "yes", it is a policy. If the answer is no, it is a rule.

Policy does the following:

1. Give general direction to the administration
2. Anticipate and forestall crises
3. Clarify expectations for students, parents, teachers and others
4. Reduce subjectivity, inconsistency and arbitrariness

### **Sources of Policy**

The following are sources of policy.

1. The primary condition leading to a policy statement is a problem in the operation of the educational program. These problems arise when the administrator is not certain of the action to be taken in a novel situation. After reviewing board policies, the administrator may find no direction given to cover the situation at hand. The administrator in presenting the problem to the board recommends the options deemed most appropriate. The board can then discuss the matter and develop an appropriate policy statement.

While the formulation of local policies most often occurs in response to needs demonstrated to the board by the administrator, this does not mean that the board may not initiate policy action on its own. For the most part policy-making is a reflective process involving analysis of present conditions, past policies, and new alternatives. The administrator is the person who brings all the elements of the analysis together. The board does not merely adopt the policy recommended by the administrator, but it reflects the thinking of the parents and the community in discerning the appropriate policy decision. The process is further augmented by the pastor who, from his position as representative of the Church and as pastoral leader, adds another dimension to the decision.

2. The broad framework of educational policy for Catholic education in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois as formulated by the Office for Catechesis. These policies and additional guidelines are disseminated through the Diocese in the Policy Manual.

3. Finally, policy statements arise from a number of external sources. These sources are federal and state laws affecting educational opportunities for special assistance from another community agency, or the findings of educational research and development.

### **Evolution of a Policy**

Policy development often follows the steps outlined below:

**Determine the need:** The board should ask itself whether the policy they are considering really is the best way to respond to the need. Is it petty? Is it likely to recur? Does it really require a program rather than a policy?

**Identify the issues involved and the facts surrounding them:** The board asks the questions: What do we know about the matter? Are there likely to be varying points of view on how to address it? What assumptions, beliefs, and values underlie these points of view? Who has vested interests? What authorities, principles, or laws need to be respected?

**Gather data:** The identification of issues and the facts surrounding them will lead the board to a search for further information to support one (or more) policy options. This information is used for formulating the policy, building the rationale for it, and projecting possible consequences for the position recommended.

**Draft the policy:** The board generally designates one person to write a policy proposal. The recommended policy proposal should be briefly and clearly stated and supported by attached documentation.

**First reading of the policy:** At the first reading of a policy proposal, the policy is presented to the board for understanding and clarification of what is being recommended. This is an opportunity for questions to be answered. The proposal is not debated at this time nor are changes made to it.

**Consult:** If other groups are affected by the policy, there should be sufficient time for these groups to meet and to submit their opinions to the board.

**Second reading of the policy:** The second reading of the policy proposal affords the board formal opportunity for discussion and vote. At this time, the proposal can be accepted, amended and accepted, sent back to the writer for reworking, or rejected.

**Approve policy:** Once passed by the board a policy then must be submitted to the pastor for approval.

**Promulgate policy:** The board should inform all of those affected by board policy when policies are added, deleted, and changed. Those impacted by the policy should receive copies of it.

**Evaluate policy:** It is the responsibility of the board to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies after they have been operative for a reasonable amount of time. This might be several months or a year depending upon the circumstances. A review of this type may demonstrate that the policy is inappropriate or inadequate. This would then necessitate further policy action by the board. The board's evaluative function is part of the mechanisms for accountability. In addition the board should have an internal mechanism for reviewing all policies on a regular basis (perhaps every five years). The board, as representative of the community is responsible for monitoring the programs for the community and for ensuring that the kinds of programs that the community desires are being provided.