

# Trustee FOCUS

ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TRUSTEES AND PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A SECURE FUTURE.

*"When the employer [the school board] and employee [the CEO/school head] arrangement is working properly, both parties benefit." — Dr. Wayne Grudem, Business for the Glory of God*

## Some Practical Thoughts on Policy Governance®

### A Q&A with Dr. Phil Graybeal

By John Schimmer, Ed.D.

In my last issue, November 2010, I was privileged to share with you the Q & A session I had with my good friend, Dr. Phil Graybeal (founder and president of Graybeal & Associates—[www.graybeal.org](http://www.graybeal.org)). In this issue I am presenting the rest of the questions and Phil's responses. But first, a special **Thank you!** to Phil. I so appreciate your willingness to participate, and your candid answers. I am confident this information will be of enormous help to our readers.



**Question:** Some boards call themselves a "policy governance board" because they accept Carver's overall philosophy of how a board should operate, but they reject or "modify" certain parts of the model. Would you care to comment on this?



**Answer:** I certainly want to acknowledge the value of boards using as many good principles of governance as they can. What boards often misunderstand is that the Policy Governance® system of leadership is the trademark name of a conceptually coherent and integrated technology of governance developed by Dr. Carver to fit together in a certain way. It works because it was designed that way. Many boards have the mistaken idea they can simply pick and choose from a buffet of best practices and expect excellence in governance to result. My question is why would you want to modify or change what works? Would you put a KIA transmission in a Mercedes or Timex parts in a Rolex?

Most "Carver modifications" I've observed come from misunderstandings of the model's design. Instead of investigating how to accomplish what they would like to say and do while staying within the model, boards simply give up. Excellence in governance requires both knowledge and perseverance.

**Q:** Can Christian school boards effectively use Carver's concept of monitoring even if they are not a PG® board?

**A:** Monitoring can be done by any board under any system. Monitoring in its simplest form is simply the process of determining what is happening (or not happening) in relation to the board's expectations. The strength of the process within PG® is that the board collectively and clearly knows what it wants and doesn't want, and has articulated this through board policies. Without well-crafted policies, the monitoring process is often described as "foraging about." In the absence of a clear set of targeted policies, the board doesn't really know what to look for or ask, and monitoring can easily degenerate into random examination of hot button personal agendas or squeaky wheel complaints. In its best design, monitoring is the board's careful due diligence to assure itself and others that the school is being properly stewarded for the glory of God.

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⊕ Preserving the Heritage

⊕ Appraising the Present

⊕ Planning the Future



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**Q:** Can Policy Governance® succeed in schools that continue to have frequent CEO turnover?

**A:** It is my view that no model of leadership prospers in the midst of frequent administrative turnover. I am pleased to state that schools I know of, using PG® well, have higher levels of administrative tenure.

**Q:** Speaking of excessive turnover in leadership, what affect does excessive trustee turnover have on the success of Policy Governance®? Do you support the common practice of “Term-Limits?”

**A:** While I typically recommend 3 year renewable terms for board members, I want to be clear in stating that I believe a school does a good thing when good board members are allowed to remain on the board for several years. Once a competent board member is in place it simply doesn't make sense to force trustees to leave just when they are “getting the hang of it.” It's been said, a stable school needs a stable staff, and I believe the same is true for the board; trustee continuity coupled with a strong commitment to an annual evaluation within the context of a well-defined model can be a strong formula for success in governance.

**Q:** In the November issue we chatted about monitoring in the context of CEO evaluation, would you recommend ques-

tions a board might ask in the monitoring process?

**A:** It is difficult to get the right answers if you don't ask the right questions, so allow me to suggest several questions a board might ask:

- Is the policy interpretation reasonable?
- Does the data demonstrate compliance with the interpretation?
- Is an operational definition of this policy explaining how the CEO will turn policy into action and know it is working? (Hint: It's helpful for the CEO to begin interpretations with a phrase like “Achievement/Compliance will be demonstrated when...”)
- Is there sufficient rationale to convince us that the operational definition is verifiable and reasonable?
- Does the interpretation address all aspects of the policy?
- Is the data sufficient to show compliance with the interpretation?
- Is there anything about the interpretation of this policy which raises concerns that the existing policy does not accurately capture the board's values?

If your school board has not read, *Boards That Make A Difference*, I enthusiastically recommend it to you. ⊕

#### Reference

Carver, John. *Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations*, 3rd Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 2006.

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**For information about school board training at your school, contact John Schimmer Consulting Services, Dallas, TX, at (972) 247-6558, or by email, [jschimmer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jschimmer@sbcglobal.net). When using email, be sure to place in the subject line “Requesting Board Training Information.”**