



School Board Framework

Everyone Matters: Honesty, Excellence, Fairness, Respect

December 2010

FOREWORD

The Education and Training Directorate recognises the importance of school boards in providing robust forward-thinking school governance at the local level to ensure that schools meet the present and future needs of their school community. The Directorate values the commitment of parents and carers, community members, staff and students who volunteer their time and skills in building effective school communities.

The ongoing work of school boards in all public schools is vital to the Directorate achieving its ambitious goals in the *Strategic Plan 2010 – 2013: Everyone Matters* and must reflect the core values of the Directorate: Honesty, Excellence, Fairness, Respect.

School boards work in partnership with the principal and have specific responsibility for establishing the strategic direction and priorities of the school, monitoring and reviewing school performance, developing, maintaining and reviewing curriculum, approving budgets and policies for the effective use of school resources and management of financial risk.

The Directorate's *School Board Framework* reflects the importance of this partnership supporting the school board structure to ensure robust support and accountability for the school boards in fulfilling their responsibilities.

School-based decision making has been a feature of ACT public schools since 1976. Recently, there have been significant developments to school operating environments. This has included the introduction of new models of schooling, the amalgamation of preschools with primary schools, significant developments to ICT integration into teaching and learning, and changes to operational arrangements such as management of school records, school cleaning and maintenance of fire and ventilation systems.

In 2009 the Allen Consulting Group conducted a review of the existing School Based Management (SBM) model. The review offered recommendations to strengthen the governance of public schools and enhance the way local decision-making occurs at the school level as a means of improving overall operational flexibility. These recommendations included:

- School board members be provided with increased training opportunities
- the Directorate aims to ensure that appointed members are selected to complement the board's existing skills mix
- School boards be encouraged to use their powers to co-opt members with requisite skills, and
- governance structures of pre and primary schools (including school boards) reflect the integration of pre and primary schools.

The Directorate welcomes these recommendations and has already commenced implementation through the provision of enhanced training and support activities and website resources.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend and thank our parents and carers, community members, staff and students who volunteer their time and skills to build and enrich effective school communities.

The Directorate will continue to work with principals, school board chairs and school board members to ensure that the role of school boards continues to be recognised and supported in meeting the individual needs of school communities.

Diane Joseph
Deputy Director-General

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1 BACKGROUND

The *Education Act 2004* (the Act) requires that each ACT public school have a school board as a way of sharing authority and responsibility with the local school community.

School boards are based on two principles:

1. school communities should have decision-making responsibilities and should be able to determine their own educational policies, and
2. decision-making at the school level should involve Directorate staff, and the school community, including parents, carers and students.

The Act specifies school board mandate and functions, including participation in the selection panel for the appointment of principals, the constitution of school boards, the proceedings of board meetings, and the responsibilities associated with financial and reporting requirements.

The school board in each school is responsible for:

- setting and monitoring the school's strategic direction, and
- reporting on the achievements of the school to the school and wider community as well as to the Directorate.

Day-to-day management of school operational matters is the responsibility of the principal.

School boards include elected representatives from the school and wider community and play a vital role in representing the views of constituent groups. The School Board is responsible for regular communication of school board matters, priorities and achievements to constituent groups within the school community including:

- parents and carers
- staff
- students, and
- representatives from the wider community.

The Directorate recognises the important role performed by school boards as schools move toward greater autonomy in line with the principles of school-based management.

2 SCHOOL BOARD FUNCTIONS

Section 39(1) of the *Education Act 2004* defines the functions of a school board of a public school as to:

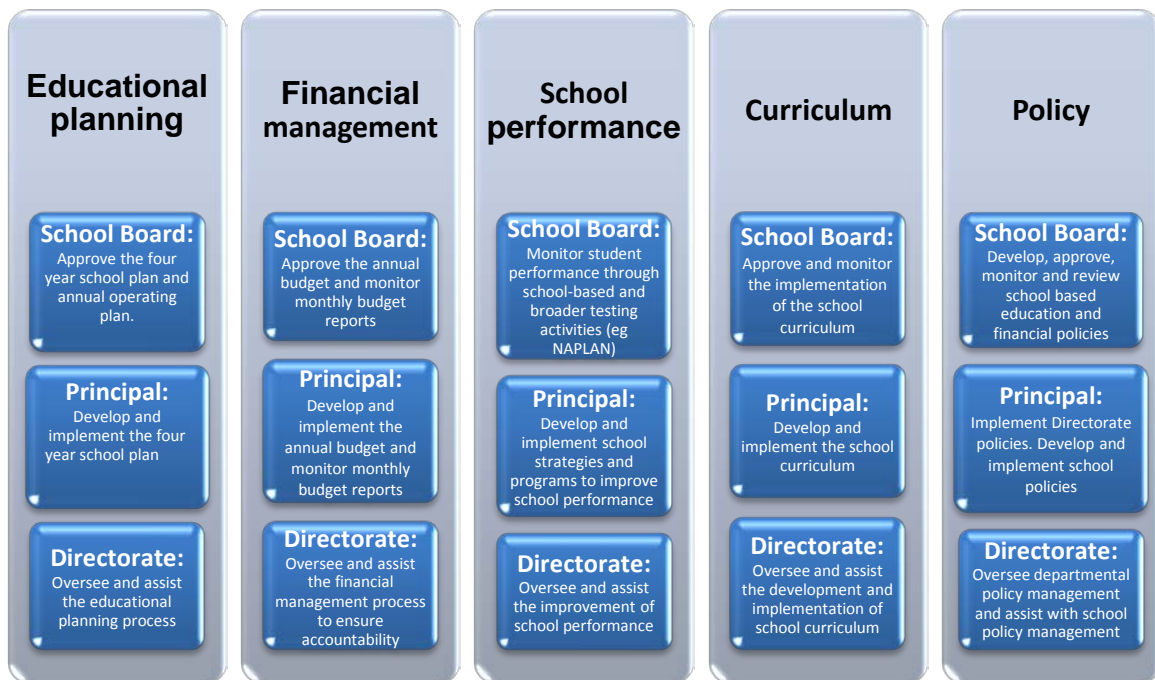
- establish strategic direction and priorities for the school
- monitor and review school performance and to report on it to the Director-General, parents of students at the school and staff
- develop, maintain and review curriculum for the school

- develop and review education policies at the school
- establish budgetary policies for the school and approve the school budget
- establish policies for the efficient and effective use of school assets and the management of financial risk
- develop relationships between the school and the community and between the school and community organisations
- make recommendations to the Director-General on issues affecting the school and to give effect to the Director-General’s directions, and
- encourage parent participation in their children’s learning.

Additionally, school boards also have the authority to exercise any other function given to the school board under the Act or any other Territory law.

The school board chairperson presides at meetings of the school board and has a casting vote if an issue is unable to be resolved by the board. The school board chairperson works in partnership with the principal, other school board members and the school community to implement the Director-General’s directions for the benefit and improvement of the school. The school board is encouraged to be interactive, dynamic and innovative in order to promote the activities of the school and ensure excellence in school performance.

The school board works in partnership with the school principal and the Directorate in order to achieve the strategic objectives of the school. Examples of how the shared responsibility works are represented in the following diagram:



3 TYPES OF SCHOOL BOARDS

The composition of the school board is determined by the Director-General of the Directorate following approval from the Minister.

Most school boards are classified as 'general' and include the school's principal as well as elected representatives from the school's:

- Parents and Citizen's Association
- Staff
- Students (high schools and colleges), and
- the broader community.

Some schools may require a school board with a different composition to reflect their unique structure. These schools are classified as:

- schools in special circumstances, or
- school-related institutions.

Birrigai Outdoor School is a school in special circumstances and the Early Childhood Schools are school-related institutions.

4 SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

The election of school board members is subject to specific legislative and best practice requirements, detailed in the Act and the Directorate's *School Board Manual*. Eligibility criteria for nominations and voting exist to ensure that the school board represents all components of the school and broader community.

Before appointments can occur, some positions will require an election. The composition of the school board, quorum requirements and meeting operations are detailed in the Act. Appointments to the school board are made by the Directorate's **Returning Officer**.

The **Returning Officer** is the person with the delegated authority from the Director-General to make appointments to the school board and to make decisions in relation to school board matters. The Returning Officer is the Director, Planning and Performance branch.

The **Assistant Returning Officer** is responsible for coordinating the election process in each school. An Assistant Returning Officer is required for each public school to perform this important function. The Assistant Returning Officer can be a staff member, parent or student, but must not be a member of the school board or nominee for election.

The Directorate provides training and ongoing support for all Assistant Returning Officers. As the Act requires school board appointments to commence on 1 April in the year of election, common dates for nominations, voting and appointment of school board members are set by the Directorate. Indicative timeframes for school board elections are provided below:

Activity	Action	Week number								Timeframe	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Advertise positions	Assistant Returning Officer makes information about vacant positions available to school community	△									For 7 days
Nominations open	Assistant Returning Officer opens nominations on advertised day and time		△	△							For 14 days
Nominations close	Assistant Returning Officer closes nominations on advertised day and time										After 14 days
Voting opens	Assistant Returning Officer opens voting on advertised day and time				△						For 7 days
Voting closes	Assistant Returning Officer closes voting on advertised day and time										After 7 days
Election return form submitted	Assistant Returning Officer submits election results to the Directorate					△					Within 5 days
Appointments made	Appointments are made by the Returning Officer						△	△			Within 14 days (by 1 April in the year of appointment)
Results published	Assistant Returning Officer publishes election results to the school community									△	Within 7 days
Appointments monitored	Assistant Returning Officer monitors school board appointments and responds to resignations or absences										Ongoing

5 SUPPORT

Support for school boards is provided by a number of areas of the Directorate including:

- Planning and Performance branch
- Financial Services section
- Educational Performance and Reporting section, and
- Schools Network branch.

Planning and Performance branch section conducts formal training activities for Assistant Returning Officers prior to the commencement of school board elections in February of each year and is available to assist individual Assistant Returning Officers with issues relating to elections.

All appointed school board members are invited to attend training activities conducted in May of each year specifically designed for:

- Parents and Citizen's members and appointed members
- Student members and principals
- Staff members, and
- School Board Chairs.

The School Board Network is held each term by the Planning and Performance and Schools Network branch to provide a networking opportunity for School Board Chairs or a representative and Principals.

Resources

The Directorate's *School Board Manual* provides detailed information about roles and responsibilities of school boards, as well as information about school board elections. The manual is available at http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/school_boards

The *School Board Manual* has been reviewed following the SBM review and information about school board elections has been updated in consultation with the ACT Electoral Commission.

Comprehensive information about school board functions is available on the Directorate's website at http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/school_boards.

Contact us

For more information about school board elections or operations, contact the Planning and Performance branch: phone 6205 9185 or email: DETGovernance@act.gov.au.