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**ABSTRACT**

This handbook takes an up-to-date look at the complex issues of trusteeship and school governance. Although addressed to trustees of independent schools, it contains valuable insights and suggestions for all who serve on boards, in and out of education. The main topics covered are "Governing Boards," "The Board and the Head of the School," and "Selecting a New Head and Getting Him Started." Material new to this edition includes comments on the nature of trusteeship, orientation of new trustees, evaluation of the school and of the head's performance, and contractual relationships with the head. (Author)

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# The Independent School Trustee Handbook

Francis Parkman  
and  
E. Laurence Springer



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E. Laurence Springer, A.B., Princeton University; M.A., University of Buffalo; Litt.D. (Hon.), Princeton University, served as teacher and administrator in independent schools for thirty-seven years before retiring in 1961 to establish an office as educational consultant in La Jolla, California. He was headmaster of the Pingry School (N.J.) for twenty-five years, from 1936 to 1961. He served on the National Council of Independent Schools' governing board for five years, was active in the affairs of the Independent Schools Education Board, and was chairman of the committee that planned the merger of the two organizations in 1962. Since his retirement from Pingry, Dr. Springer has made surveys and recommendations for well over a hundred schools in all parts of the United States, and he continues to serve as adviser and consultant on all kinds of independent school problems.

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## Preface

This handbook, first published in 1964, has been widely used as a reference and guide by trustees and school heads. A revised edition, published in 1970, reflected changes in the responsibilities and methods of operation of boards of trustees that developed during the late 60's. Now, four years later, we are publishing a third edition, with further revisions and additions that take into account the impact on schools of the continuing rapid pace of change, particularly as it has affected institutional governance, an area of school life that, until recently, has received little attention or understanding beyond the stating of a few general principles.

The successful administration of an independent school depends, first and foremost, upon a sound working relationship between the board of trustees and its executive, the head of the school. This has always been true, but in today's climate, which finds independent schools faced with unprecedented pressures and challenges, the need for effective communication and understanding is more acute than ever before. Much of what has been added, or given greater emphasis, in this edition has to do with this relationship and its dependence upon a clear understanding—frequently reviewed and renewed—by each party of their respective and joint roles, functions, and responsibilities. Thus, while the handbook is addressed primarily to trustees, its substance and advice are of equal significance to school heads. We hope it will be as widely read by heads as by trustees and that it may serve both as a basis for discussion of mutual concerns.

In preparing this edition, we were fortunate again to have the editorial guidance of the original authors, Francis Parkman and E. Laurence Springer, both of whom remain active as consultants to independent school trustees and heads. Dr. Parkman was primarily responsible for the rewriting and preparation of the new manuscript as well as for the considerable research that was carried on as a basis for strengthening and expanding sections of the handbook dealing with contractual arrangements between head and board, evaluation of the head's performance, and the question of whether the head should or should not be a member of the board of trustees. Reflected as well in the revision are the comments and suggestions of a number of experienced trustees and school heads whose advice was sought by Dr. Parkman.

The authors wish to make emphatically clear that their use of "he" and "headmaster" throughout the text does not reflect any chauvinistic bias. Rather, it was done simply to avoid the monotonous use of "or she" and

"or the headmistress." The same is true in the case of "alumni" and "alumnae."

The Board of Directors of NAIS has formally endorsed this handbook as a statement of generally accepted principles of sound practices for independent school administration.

Wishing to be sure that the handbook was faithful to the views of experienced trustees of a representative group of NAIS schools, we asked the board presidents or chairmen named below to review the manuscript, and they have authorized us to say that, without necessarily subscribing to every detail, they are pleased to give their general endorsement to the publication. The National Association of Independent Schools is very much in debt to them as well as to the many other people who have contributed to the production of this third edition.

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August 1974

## CHAPTER I

# GOVERNING BOARDS

**M**uch of the material in this handbook deals with the basic procedures of trusteeship in an independent school: the division of responsibilities between board and head, the relationship of each to the other, the functioning of the board and its committees, and the board's occasional but all-important task of choosing a new head and getting him started. Here we want to touch briefly on the philosophical aspects of independent school trusteeship.

To begin with, it is self-evident that the board of an independent school has a primary responsibility to its immediate constituents—it has to be operated effectively in the interest of those connected with it as students, teachers, and parents. This is its most direct but by no means its only responsibility.

There is a larger and a more continuing interest, one that is reflected in the word "trustee," as opposed to words like "director" or "manager" for the school is in fact held in trust. The trustees have in their custody the integrity of the institution, its standing and reputation built by the founders and by those who have labored over the years; they hold in trust its future as well as its present, and their collective judgment will affect it as an instrument of service to the constituents who are to come.

Furthermore, trustees are more than the protectors and supporters of the particular institution they serve; they have a responsibility as well to independent schools generally. We can paraphrase John Donne and say, "No school is an island"; each is in some way representative of all such institutions, and all of them are somehow affected by the way in which any one of them is conducted and governed. Thus the boards that live up to their responsibilities, and they are the great majority, help not only their particular school but the institution of the independent school in general. Contrariwise, where a board acts irresponsibly it not only fails its own school but damages the position of all such schools.

Finally, the independent school, like any nonprofit tax-exempt entity of a similar nature, has a responsibility beyond service to its immediate constituents and to independent education: it has a public responsibility that is in no way diminished by the fact that the institution is authorized to be under private management. It is a part of the vast enterprise of education in the United States, with an obligation to share its experience and its professional skill in the development of educational thought and practice.



And it is a part, too, of its community, with a role to play in its well-being. In short, service to the public from which it derives its charter is an underlying responsibility for the school and, thus, for its trustees.

The guidelines contained in this book will, we hope, be helpful to trustees in carrying out their responsibilities on behalf of their respective schools. We believe that these guidelines will be the more effective if placed against the background of these general introductory comments on the nature of trusteeship.

A properly functioning board and a good working relationship between it and the headmaster, one in which mutual confidence exists, can significantly strengthen school administration and provide an over-all framework within which the school can thrive. It is the purpose of this handbook to help schools and their boards and their heads reach such a goal.

A board, to function well, requires strong staff support from the administration under it, and it is the responsibility of the headmaster to see that this support is provided. A headmaster should welcome the counsel that a strong board can give him. A strong board, in turn, should hold the headmaster fully responsible for the school's administration and should not attempt to usurp any of his administrative responsibilities.

The headmaster should see to it that the board deals with major matters and not with trivia. For its part, the governing board should seek mainly to establish objectives and policies and to insist upon the selection of competent people. If a salary plan is handicapping the selection of competent teachers or staff, a good governing board should upgrade the compensation plan so that the school can compete effectively for the caliber of people it needs. Furthermore, a board should expect assistance from the headmaster and his staff in defining the school's educational objectives and planning its organization for administration; in establishing requirements for plant, money, and people; and in making long-range plans.

## DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES: BOARD AND HEAD

For an effective relationship, understanding and acceptance of the basic division of responsibilities between board and headmaster must exist. There used to be some who defined it as meaning that the trustees run the financial affairs of the school and the head runs the educational side; while this worked after a fashion, it was never really acceptable. Much to be preferred is the following definition, taken from a statement about college and university trusteeship:

The relationship between trustees and president is best described in terms of the familiar distinction between policy and operation. The board limits itself to broad considerations of policy. The president is the operating head of the institution.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"The Role of the College and University Trustee," p. 10, reprinted from the Annual Report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for 1961-62.

**And again (from a piece of advice for school heads):**

Keep in mind the basic division of responsibility; the board sets the purpose and policy of the school, you operate the school so as to carry out that purpose and policy. Each complements the other but neither wanders uninvited into the other's backyard.

**And finally (from advice to college trustees):**

**DON'T MEDDLE . . .** Do your best to see that the organization is good, that it is well manned, and that it runs smoothly—but don't try to run it.<sup>2</sup>

Lest anyone be tempted, after reading these quotations, to think of the head as one who merely carries out the decisions of others, let it be said that any head who is worth his salt will see himself as educational leader. He is bound to have, and the board can rightly expect him to have, plenty of ideas for the development of the school, for the board to consider. But the head must never forget that the board is the boss.

Since trustees can often be helpful on administrative matters, and school heads are bound to have views on policy, it would be absurd as a practical matter to set up a sort of Berlin wall, with a "they shall not pass" complex on either side. Nevertheless, clear understanding and acceptance of the principle of separation of functions are necessary.

Once objectives and policies have been systematically defined and approved, the governing board should permit the administration to conduct its affairs within the framework of those policies, checking only to be sure that the policies are, in fact, being observed and are operating as expected.

This division of responsibility is the fundamental rule for successful functioning of the board and for a successful relationship with the headmaster. Let us turn now to some other principles which have emerged from the experience of many thriving schools.

## BOARD COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. *A board should include a diversity of talent.*

Governing boards vary greatly in size. There is no magic number that should be prescribed, although the average board seems to have 15 to 21 members.

More important than the size of the board is having trustees of dedication, competence, and stature. All sources from which to select board

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<sup>2</sup>C. A. Coolidge, former member of the Harvard Corporation, and long-time trustee of an independent school, in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, Feb. 4, 1956. An extension of these quotations is the following from an article by Charles A. Nelson, of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.: "The art of trusteeship consists largely of discovering and holding the middle ground of policy making, eschewing with equal vigor the posture of mere validation on the one hand and the usurpation of administrative authority on the other" (PMM & Co., *Management Controls*, May 1972, p. 92).

members of this caliber should be systematically and fully explored and used. It is well for the nominating committee to have in mind a job description of the kind of person desired to fill vacancies, so that needed talents may be added to the board. Choosing board members primarily from one profession or walk of life, or from those who can bring only limited experience to the handling of the school's affairs, should be carefully avoided. A board should reflect strength, vision, experience, and a blending of educational, managerial, investment, business, and legal talents, as required. Such diversity of talent permits a board to make its maximum contribution to school administration.

There have been various attempts to give pithy definitions of the qualifications of the ideal trustee. One version has it that "affluence, influence, and interest" are the desiderata. Another says he should be "dynamic, diligent, and decisive," and a ready "contributor of care, cash, comfort, and counsel." A third has it that a useful trustee should contribute two of the following three: wealth, work, and wisdom. While in all of them there is reference to ability to give money (and a wealthy and generous trustee is a very fine thing), it would be most unfortunate if able and interested men and women of modest means were deterred from (or not even considered suitable for) serving by the thought that a trustee must be able to give money as well as time and thought. Many a school counts such board members among its most valued trustees.

When the nominating committee seeks to fill a vacancy, it will naturally look to the balance of the current membership in matters of age, vocational and professional qualifications, and sex. (The advantages of having women on the board and thus profiting from their insights and special contributions as well as from their energy are so clear that any board still pursuing an all-male policy is missing a valuable resource.) The following suggestions from a handbook on the subject of school trustees<sup>3</sup> may serve as a useful checklist:

1. Is he a person whose views on life and on education are such that his presence will enrich the committee and, either directly or indirectly, contribute to the spiritual health of the school? (The most valuable member may be the inspired layman rather than the professional educator who may be tempted to kibitz.)
2. Is he free to attend meetings regularly and to work on sub-committees?
3. Has he a real interest in the school? Is this interest likely to grow?
4. Is he willing to take on work and does he complete a job he has undertaken? Is he discreet and able to keep confidences?
5. What additional attributes will he bring to the committee: experience in business? in a profession? in community service? as a homemaker? Is he outstanding for his judgment? for initiative? for leadership?

*Composition of the board.* The advantages of bringing new blood regularly to boards of trustees, and of retiring gracefully those members whose capacity to serve, or whose interest in serving, has declined, have

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<sup>3</sup>*Handbook for Committee Members of Friends Schools* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1958).

become increasingly clear in recent years. Accordingly, most new schools have provided for fixed terms for the trustees on a rotating basis, and a large number of older schools that originally had self-perpetuating boards of life members have changed their by-laws to the same effect. Usually, the term of office is three, four, or five years; sometimes a member goes off the board automatically after two or three terms for a period of one year before being eligible for re-election.<sup>4</sup>

The headmaster may be a full and regular member of the board, a member by virtue of his title—*ex officio* (with or without a vote)—or not a member at all.<sup>5</sup> We prefer the *ex officio* situation, partly as a simple matter of status, but, more important, on the ground that the obligations and responsibilities of a regular trustee should not be assigned to the headmaster, who is the professional leader of the school, and also because he ceases to be a trustee when he ceases to be a headmaster. Whether or not he is a trustee, he should attend all meetings, and if for some reason the board wishes to meet without him, it should be the duty of the president to inform him of the meeting and its purpose, and, immediately after the meeting, of its results. The minutes of all meetings should of course be furnished him.

There is little disagreement about the advisability of having an outside educator on the board—the head of another school, a college professor or dean, even a college president, though the college president is apt to be far too busy to function effectively as a school trustee. It is helpful for both school head and trustees to have more than one person on the board with academic experience and an academic point of view. Many school boards have found such an arrangement very satisfactory indeed. If the educator is another school head, it is advisable that he *not* be the head of a very similar school or a close friend of the school's own head.

Now we come to the question of membership on the board by representatives of the other groups having a direct and legitimate interest in the school and its policies and progress: alumni, parents, faculty and, last but by no means least, students.

Alumni representatives are common on boards of independent schools. They may be elected to the board, usually for a fixed term, by the alumni association or by the alumni in individual balloting, or be elected by the board from a slate nominated by the graduates' association. Provision for alumni representation on the board should include nomination and election procedures that will, so far as possible, ensure the selection of valuable trustees.

As for parents, it would be surprising if a board did not have parents in its membership as a natural result of the selection of interested persons for the board. Quite a few schools provide in their by-laws for specific repre-

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<sup>4</sup>See the samples in Appendix C.

<sup>5</sup>In 1973-74, NAIS conducted a survey of more than 600 school heads asking whether they were board members, whether they had contracts, whether their performance was regularly reviewed, etc. The results are reported in Appendix F.

sentation of the parent group, usually in the person of the president of the parents' association, or of some equivalent group, serving on a term basis.

Finally, we would emphasize that, while alumni and parent trustees are valuable for communication between the board and the school's graduate and parent groups, these special trustees should not feel that they are there to give special representation to the interests (and perhaps prejudices) of the group from which they are chosen, but rather that they accept, like any other trustee, general responsibility for the welfare of the school.

What about faculty representatives? Not many years ago it was rare for a school to have a faculty member on the board, and boards in general had few contacts, formal or informal, with the teaching staff. In recent years, however, many faculties have wanted a share in the decision-making process or at least a chance to express their views. In a concurrent development, boards have become more aware than they used to be that good communication and understanding between faculty and trustees are of great importance and that they need the benefit of faculty opinion in many of their decisions. The number of schools that have provided for faculty membership on the board is a little over a quarter of the NAIS membership, and about half of these faculty representatives have the right to vote.<sup>6</sup>

Similar considerations have led to the provision by some schools (about one in 15) for some form of student representation on the board. Others arrange for one or more students to attend meetings (or parts of them) as observers or (in effect) consultants.

It is of course for the board to decide whether any or all of these groups shall be represented on the board, and, if so, how the representatives shall be elected and for how long. Board membership is only one way of fostering two-way communication with these groups; from one point of view, it is too formal and too narrow. More points of contact can be established through representation on trustee committees (see the discussion of board committee structure in section 3, below). The important thing is to ensure that there is communication with each group, so that board members may be fully aware of attitudes and influences that have a strong bearing on the health of the school and their decisions concerning it.

*The nominating committee.* Most persons who are asked to become board members are flattered and honored, but the nominating committee should point out to the prospective member what responsibilities and duties are involved and just what is expected by way of service.

It is also wise for a board (if its state laws permit) to keep one or two

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<sup>6</sup>One school's board that does not provide for faculty representation on the board requires its head to tell the faculty about any nonconfidential discussion and decisions made at a regular meeting. It backs this up by seeing to it that every faculty member gets a copy of the minutes of each meeting, which, in this case, do not reflect any of the discussion and debate that might precede a vote.

vacancies so that a place will be available when it is desirable to add a particular person needed for special reasons.

The nominating committee can and should exercise a great influence on the vitality of the board. Accordingly, it should be a standing committee, with some continuity of membership from year to year. It can seek the views of the board president, and, in the course of its work, will naturally confer with the school head, for his contacts with parents and others perhaps not well known to the board members may enable him to name some very suitable candidates. It should review annually, in a coldly analytical manner, the record of each trustee who is up for re-election. Anyone who fails to measure up to the obligations of trusteeship should be tactfully asked to vacate his place to make way for a more active new member. The committee should attempt to achieve some rotation, but should also maintain continuity. One helpful device is to establish more than one kind of trustee—parent trustees, term trustees, alumni trustees. Thus a parent trustee may continue only while he or she has a child in the school, but a valuable former parent may be elected a term trustee. While some schools have a classification of "permanent trustee," there are good arguments against it. In an increasing number of schools there is a statutory retirement age for trustees, or else it is understood that trustees resign on reaching a certain age. Some schools give retired trustees the status of "honorary trustee" and thus get the valuable help of an advisory group of elder statesmen.

*Orientation of new trustees.* Rotation plans for the tenure of trustees result in boards' getting several new members, usually inexperienced, each year. Shall the new trustee sit silently, catching on, during the first year of his term, in a sense wasting part of the time for which he has been elected? After all, if terms of service are short, a new trustee might spend half of his first term getting oriented, perhaps making mistakes that could be avoided. Or can he be made, or make himself, useful and knowledgeable from the start? Rather than having each year a group of new members who can contribute little, a concerted effort must be made to help them be useful right away. The nominating committee, the board president, and the school head can all have a part in the effort, and the part of each should be made clear, so that no one of the three can assume that one of the others, or both, will take care of it.

The division of labor will of course vary. The nominating committee, before the prospect agrees to be nominated, makes sure he understands that he isn't being invited to assume an honorary position; that attendance at meetings, service on committees and other time-consuming activities will be expected of him; that the school, like every other institution, has problems to be faced; and that he isn't wanted merely for his particular form of expertise but for the good judgment and all-round knowledge he can bring to bear on all kinds of problems.

The board president, once the prospect has agreed to serve, or at the latest immediately after his election, can reinforce these considerations. He should discuss with him the special service he can render (and on which

committee), explain the principal policies agreed on by the board, give him some insight into current problems of the school, and explain board practice about the handling by individual trustees of complaints by faculty or parents.

The headmaster can show him the physical plant, make clear some of the space problems, talk about hopes or plans for development, and answer questions about curriculum and staff.

The new trustee himself can examine the policy manual (see section 4.c., below) and familiarize himself with the charter, by-laws, and catalogue of the school, the statement of goals and the curriculum, and such basic facts as the enrollment, number of faculty, salary scale, condition of the budget, and the admission situation. If he will then address himself thoughtfully to the minutes of the meetings and the headmaster's and other reports over the past couple of years, have a talk with the chairman of the committee to which he is assigned, and (we venture to suggest) give this handbook a careful reading, he should be much more ready than new trustees usually are to take his share in the consideration of the school's concerns and to make his own special contribution to the board's deliberations.<sup>8</sup>

*The board president.* It is not too much to say that the effectiveness of a board of trustees depends on its president. If he is a person with deep interest in the school and time to spend on its affairs, and if also he is a person of capacity, sagacity, and understanding, the board and its committees function effectively, its policies are clear and consistently followed, its relations with the school head are smooth and characterized by mutual understanding and respect, its long-range planning is up to date, its fund raising, both annual and capital, is well led (though not necessarily by him), the school's relations with its clientele and the community are in good order, additions to the board are wisely selected, the talents of board members are well used, and the trustees understand the principles by which they as individuals, in their relations to school head, faculty members, parents, community, and to the board itself, should be guided.

The school head and the board president, under ideal conditions, make a team of two in which each understands the other and carries his appropriate part of the burden of leadership in a spirit of reciprocal confidence and respect. We cannot stress too strongly the vital importance of a close working relationship between the head and the board president. If limited terms are the rule for ordinary trustees, the board president should have partial but not unlimited exemption, for a good president who works well

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<sup>8</sup>One school prescribes an orientation session for new trustees, prior to their first board meeting, and asks that each one have a copy of and "be acquainted with" (1) the by-laws of the school's association; (2) *The Independent School Trustee Handbook* "published by NIS"; (3) the board's statement of trustee-headmaster working relationship; and (4) the board's statement of "working philosophy."

<sup>9</sup>See especially Morton A. Rauh, *College and University Trusteeship* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969), Chapter 9, for some helpful comments on the subject of the new trustee.

with the school head should be not only allowed but persuaded to stay on as president for a substantial number of years.

All of this must be accompanied by a caution about the obvious dangers of a one-man board—but a good president will be well aware of those dangers himself.

An important responsibility of the president is to sit down with the headmaster at least once a year for a session in which he can give the headmaster a candid appraisal of his work, and the head, in turn, can make clear any unhappiness he has about the board or any of its members. At these sessions, which will ideally be friendly but frank, the headmaster can be told of any aspect of his performance which, in the view of the board, needs improvement. A good deal more is said in Chapter II about this evaluation process.

## 2. *The most important single function of a board is to develop basic policy.*

To assist the board in strengthening its policy role, the following suggestions are offered.

a. *A board should use its time for policy consideration.* The headmaster and his staff should review the matters reaching the board and its committees in order to make sure that they are questions of policy rather than routine, repetitive items. For example, a board should set the policies for appointing staff members of the school, but thereafter the administration should make all actual appointments in accordance with these policies, keeping the board advised of all changes. If a board approves of appointment qualifications, salary levels, classification plans, and number of employees by grade authorized in the budget, then it has far more control over the process than by approving lists of individual appointments and promotions. By setting policies, a board can guide administrative officers in their work and, at the same time, establish a bench mark against which their effectiveness can be judged.

If the board has a committee structure, it is good practice to require that every matter of business and policy to be brought to the board (except in urgent exceptional circumstances) be referred to the appropriate committee for study and recommendation. Unfortunately, the meetings of some boards can get bogged down in minutiae—matters of operational detail, petty complaints about discipline, the amount of homework assigned, even the food. Other boards may meet only two or three times a year at a hurried luncheon conference, with insufficient time to hear reports and deliberate on them. Boards and their major committees should meet at such times and places as best fit their needs, but the time should be used for discussion and action on policy matters. Most day school boards meet five to eight times a year; most boarding school boards meet three or four times annually, but for considerable periods of time, often spending the better part of a weekend at the school. It is good practice for a board to meet regularly (if not invariably) at the school, thus giving board members the opportunity to visit classes and to become



visible to teachers and students, talking with them informally. In this way, they can not only see the school in action, but help to counteract the notion, often held by both faculty and student body, that trustees are a mysterious group that makes decisions about the school without really knowing anything about it.

b. *The board should have controls to ensure that its policies are being followed.* The headmaster should be made responsible for notifying the appropriate persons of action taken by the board and for maintaining any controls necessary to ensure that this action is carried out. He should report regularly to the board regarding the action taken.

3. *The governing board should have a simple and functional committee structure to assist it in its policy considerations.*

Most successful boards function through standing committees, each one of which concentrates and specializes on a certain area of school operation. No committee has autonomous power. All committees are responsible to the board, to which they make recommendations on policy matters, and may exercise only those powers delegated to them by the by-laws. If each committee feels a sense of responsibility for one area of board policy-making, it can then go into depth in its study of that situation and take the time to bring to the board carefully thought-out proposals. Ideally, every trustee should serve on at least one committee. Some boards have too many committees, some of which were appointed originally for specific purposes and have continued even though the original purpose has been achieved. Other boards have too few committees and thus lose the advantages of specialization that accrue from the committee system.

In schools having an organized committee structure, the committees listed below are usually to be found, though not always under the names shown here. We describe the functions customarily assigned to these committees, noting one or two areas of difference of opinion. Some boards prefer to do without a committee structure, or to have a more simple one. It is suggested, however, that whether the school be new or old, whether the board has many committees or none, the functions described below have to be provided for somehow. The wise board president will see that in one way or another there is appropriate delegation of responsibilities to members of the board and some specialization by them.

There is no reason why committee memberships should be limited to members of the board. By providing places on appropriate committees for teachers or administrators on the school's staff, and for students, parents and alumni, a board can expand its contacts with these groups and get valuable help. And a committee chairman who is alive to the possibilities can increase the contacts still further by inviting to his meetings on an ad hoc basis others who can provide some special knowledge of the subject to be discussed—persons who can give important help to a committee but cannot spare the time necessary for full board membership.

If the committee system is to function properly, committees must meet when a problem needs study and when the next meeting of the full board will need a committee recommendation. Experience shows that someone, in most cases either the board president or the headmaster, and more usually it is the latter, must work closely with committee chairmen and keep things moving.

*The executive committee* (where one exists, and not all boards have one) should consist of four or five key people, not necessarily the officers of the board. The executive committee should meet for purposes of making decisions only in emergencies, and should never become a superboard or a policy-making group in itself. The danger of such a development is one reason many boards have no executive committee: there is no surer way to kill interest on the part of trustees than to have the executive committee do most of the planning and thinking. It will soon divide the board into first- and second-class citizens. The executive committee, however, often functions as a long-range planning committee, setting goals for the school to attain. It may also be authorized to expedite the transaction of business between meetings of the board, especially where its members include the chairmen of other major committees.

*The finance committee* should be concerned with the process of budget-making. It should work with the headmaster and business manager in developing the budget; it should hear the proposals of the headmaster for salary increases, which, in a well-established school, can be reported to the committee not later than January for the coming school year, and then be ratified by the board in January or February; it should study the fringe benefits of the faculty; and it should recommend any changes in tuition or other student fees. In its examination of faculty and staff salaries and benefits, it should not forget to study those of the headmaster.<sup>9</sup>

The committee, or perhaps a subcommittee, should make recommendations to the board concerning the school's financial aid program, the policy of making grants,<sup>10</sup> and the amount of money to be available each year for such aid. Ordinarily, the committee is not directly involved in the selection process, but does review the actions taken by the admissions director or other persons to whom the power to act is delegated.

The finance committee is also responsible for the insurance program of the school, which must provide for a wide variety of contingencies and liabilities, and for the investment of the school's funds. These functions are often exercised by subcommittees of the finance committee. If the school's portfolio of securities is large, a separate investment committee

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<sup>9</sup>The *Administrative Salary Survey*, published periodically by NAIS, is helpful in this respect.

<sup>10</sup>The School Scholarship Service, sponsored by NAIS and operated by the Educational Testing Service, provides a means for determining the financial need of financial aid applicants through a standard method of computation. Over 700 schools, a great many of them NAIS members, belong to this service and make grants in accordance with the principles it has established.

may be desirable. Schools with sizable endowments sometimes have the trust department of a bank or other investment counsel exercise supervision over securities, subject to review by a small committee or subcommittee on investments.

While the finance committee should not be saddled with the responsibility of planning for fund raising, which is usually the function of the development committee (see below), it must be involved in all decisions regarding investments (proportion in equities, for example) and the possible use of capital gains as income.<sup>11</sup>

*The buildings and grounds committee*, whose duties are indicated by its title, should also work with and through the headmaster and business manager. Schools with extensive property generally have two separate committees—one for buildings, one for grounds. These committees are usually small and are composed of persons both interested and competent in these fields. When the school undertakes the construction of a new building, the buildings and grounds committee usually works with the architect and contractor, although sometimes a special ad hoc committee is formed for the purpose. Experience has shown that one person, and one person only, should represent the school in dealings with architect and contractor. Otherwise, confusion is inevitable.

*The education committee* should have faculty representatives on it, and it might well have an "outside" educator or two, whether or not they are members of the board. Its special role should be to explore, with the headmaster, his ideas for the improvement of the education provided by the school (including under the term "education" every aspect of the school's program) and to keep the actual curriculum under constant review. From time to time, the education committee should meet with a department of the school in order to learn more about the school's internal workings, and it should take soundings of student opinions and attitudes. Thus it will be in a better position to inform the rest of the board and the public at large of what the school is doing and to appraise the headmaster's recommendations for change.

Not so long ago, education committees were absent from the committee structure of many schools, with educational policy being largely left to the headmaster. Now this policy is one of the central concerns of the trustees, and the education committee is correspondingly important. The educational world is full of diversity and experiment, and programs and methods that were formerly unquestioned are now strongly challenged. The headmaster needs the ideas and judgment of an intelligent group of "lay" committee members to hear and assess his recommendations, to guide his decisions, and to evaluate results. In addition, the education committee can help the board meet its responsibility of interpreting the school's program and policies to its constituencies and to the outside world.

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<sup>11</sup>See *Managing Educational Endowments*, Report to the Ford Foundation, 2d ed., July 1972 (Office of Reports, Ford Foundation, 320 East 43 St., New York, N.Y. 10017).

*The development committee* should supervise and manage all fund-raising activities. Some boards delegate to this committee the long-range planning for the school's development, including enrollment projections, plant expansion, endowment funds, and other aspects of growth and development. But since development planning leads to fund raising, other boards have delegated the planning function to the executive committee, and only fund raising to the development committee. Either way, *all* fund-raising plans by whatever group—alumni, parents, students—should be cleared by the development committee. If the school has a development director, he will naturally work closely with this committee.

Later on we talk of the responsibility of the headmaster in fund raising. Here we must speak of the trustees' part, which is fully as important as the headmaster's. Every trustee of an independent school must be aware of the serious financial problems that face these schools and of the necessity of strengthening the financial sinews of his own school. So it can be said that, while in most aspects of the school's life and program initiative and leadership must come from the headmaster, in this area especially the trustees cannot wait to be led. They must match the headmaster in determination to add new financial strength, and, while giving him the benefit of their judgment, also give him the encouragement of their understanding and support.

Once the goals are defined and an effort to raise funds is approved, they must work 100 per cent for its success. When a campaign is announced to the school's public, it should be possible to say that every trustee has made a pledge. Trustees must set an example of the kind of giving they expect from others and carry the brunt of the work in campaigning, soliciting, and all other aspects of the program.

*4. There should be a specific organizational responsibility for policy development and planning, and regular staff assistance should be furnished to the board.*

Members of a board serve without compensation and spend much valuable time on school matters. To enable them to use their time most effectively in behalf of the school, they should be given continuing staff assistance. The assistance needed is not only the provision of secretarial services, but review and documentation of items for board consideration, preparation of agenda, and development of recommendations on policy and other matters which the board is expected to consider. Most of the preparation and staff work must be done by the head.

The following steps are suggested.<sup>12</sup>

a. *The headmaster of a school should be assigned the responsibility for proposing policy-development recommendations and plans for the in-*

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<sup>12</sup>In the paragraphs that follow, and indeed elsewhere, we obviously have in mind a school that is well established and large enough for the head to have a "staff" and some "top administrators" to help him. Many schools do not meet those qualifications; their boards and heads will know how to adapt to their own situation the principles set forth.

*stitution's future.* Policy-making and planning are closely related. Policies that are considered and approved by the board must be compatible with, and must help to realize, plans for the school's future, which the board must also consider and approve.

Accordingly, each of the top administrators and department heads reporting to the headmaster should assist him in proposing these policies, particularly for his own area of operations. The policies should not be merely those required to solve immediate problems, but should constitute a total policy framework that will permit the board to control its work by policy direction. Furthermore, each of these persons, in conjunction with the headmaster, should propose long-range plans for his area, which should be coordinated in the master plan for the school. School planning should include detailed long-range academic plans, plans for the physical development required to carry out those plans, and financial plans that show in detail the staff and resources needed.

More and more schools are developing long-range planning committees that meet regularly to discuss and recommend goals for the near and far term, and then annually review and revise those goals. On such committees, boards would do well to have representatives of all interested groups--trustees, administration, faculty, alumni, parents, and students.

Only when the headmaster and his staff propose policies for board consideration, as well as detailed long-range plans on all activities, can a board apply its variety of experience and analytical talents toward considering the major factors affecting the school's future. With this type of staff assistance, a board would be able to spend its time and energy on matters of major importance to the school, rather than on consideration of detail.

b. *The headmaster should clear his proposals through the appropriate board committees or officers before presenting them to the full board.* If this is not feasible, then he should submit a report to the board in advance of its meeting. It is good policy for the head to have all trustees posted in advance concerning matters coming up for consideration, even when a board committee has acted favorably on a policy proposal. In fact, it is a good idea for the head to circulate his own report (not too long or full of detail for a busy trustee to read) in written form in advance of every meeting, even if it deals with matters not calling for action by the board. The more information the trustees have before a meeting, the more likely they are to make the best use of their time and to act with good judgment on proposals made to them. Many boards avoid making hasty and ill-considered decisions by not taking action at any meeting on a matter that has not been on the agenda sent to the trustees in advance.

c. *A policy manual to regularize the board's means of policy communications with the administration is helpful.* The headmaster and his staff will do well to prepare a policy manual for the board and the administration to guide them in their work. Without a written record of approved policies, administrative officers may spend considerable effort in

determining what action a board has already taken on questions that arise; a board may conceivably take action on the same matter twice. It is difficult, at many schools, to find a record of prior policy decisions of the board because of the mass of routine material in board minutes and the lack of an index or manual of board policy decisions.

The policy manual does not need to be a formal, specially prepared affair. Excerpts from the board's minutes can be filed in a looseleaf folder, with decisions classified by subject.

Typical subjects that might be included in such a manual are:

- Objectives of the school: philosophy of education, geographic areas to be served, and size of school
- Admissions policy: siblings of children already in the school, children of alumni, academic qualifications, and financial aid
- Budgeting: budget preparation, control, format, and reports
- Staffing: salary administration, leave, separation, compensation, and perquisites
- Committees and staff: organization, assigned responsibilities, and reporting duties
- Objectives for all income-producing activities such as the bookstore and major athletic contests

The relationship of the headmaster to the board frequently needs specific definition and improvement. Many headmasters are not sure just which matters require board approval, and consequently send more items to the board than may be necessary or desirable. Again, the headmaster sometimes appears not to understand his responsibility and that of his staff for developing policies for the board to approve and to use in their control of his work. Too often, policies are developed on a piecemeal basis only as problems arise.

Often there is a lack of regular reporting back to the board on actions voted by it. The policy manual can prescribe an effective reporting process and assign responsibility within the administrative staff for follow-up on board actions.

*5. There should be provision for regular reporting to the board so that it may evaluate the various phases of the school's activities.*

In carrying out its responsibility to supervise and guide the school's operation, the board will want to do far more than keep a watchful eye on the periodic statements of income and expense and the balance sheet. It needs to evaluate the school in its many aspects and as a whole, and for this it must depend in large part on reports prepared by the headmaster and his staff.

a. *Evaluation reports.* Periodically, the headmaster should require his top staff to prepare a confidential report for himself and the board that evaluates needs, accomplishments, and the personnel in their respective areas of responsibility. He should coordinate these reports in one of his

own that gives his views regarding over-all accomplishments and plans for the future. From time to time, he should also evaluate the performance of his principal administrative staff for the board or a designated committee of the board.

Each staff report should outline the method of evaluation being used, the plans for improving any weak spots in the operation, and the help that may be needed from other sources. These reports should cover both academic and administrative matters and should be discussed fully by the board. If this device is properly used, it will serve as a regular stock-taking and a frame of reference for both the administration and the board.

This process may sound rather formidable, but these reports do not need to be prepared and submitted at any one time; they can be spread over an entire school year, or even over two or three consecutive years.

b. *Statistical reports.* So that the board can evaluate the reports furnished it and be kept informed on various phases of the school's work, the headmaster should regularly furnish statistical data concerning the school's operations. These statistics should be in a historical series, with interpretation where necessary. Much of the information can be given in a series of graphs, each of which shows an entire historical trend. Once started, these charts can be readily updated. Statistical measures that might be used in such reports are:

- Number of applicants for admission and for what grades; number of students admitted and to what grades; number of alumni children, number of younger brothers and sisters applying and number and percentage of each category accepted; geographic or neighborhood trends in applications
- Ratio of students to faculty
- Number of courses and class section sizes
- Faculty salaries
- Classroom and laboratory use
- Cost per student of student services (admissions, athletic department, meals, etc.)
- Fund raising; annual giving and capital

Other cost figures can be developed as units or work volume are established for each major activity, and the board can be given data useful for reaching decisions on policy factors.

c. *Legislation and regulations.* The board also needs periodic reports on federal or state regulations and legislation regarding nonpublic schools, including developments in aid programs for such schools in the federal government and the various states. In addition to his other duties, the headmaster must keep posted on this whole new area of concern, hardly thought of until a few years ago. The board may well be asked to join with other schools in pressing for certain legislation, or in opposing unwelcome legislation—a form of cooperative effort that appears increasingly to be necessary in many states. In some schools, one of the trustees is assigned

the duty of keeping up to date in this area, as a sort of one-man committee to work with the school head and report to the board, if necessary, with recommendations for action. Bulletins from NAIS on federal legislation and from regional or state associations of independent schools on state legislation are the two primary sources of this kind of information.

6. *The board should carry on a continuous evaluation of the school.*

An important duty of the board is that of evaluating the school. (Another not unrelated duty, appraising the performance of the school's head, is dealt with in Chapter II). Assessing the quality of a school in its various aspects is a difficult task, because much of the evidence contained in the reports just mentioned is certain to produce differences of opinion and of interpretation. Furthermore, the quality of the product can hardly be measured in the same way as the quality of automobiles or electric toasters coming off an assembly line, in terms of mechanical efficiency, safety, and durability. Again, a school is not static, it cannot be examined from various angles in a testing laboratory; it is moving and dynamic, and it generates a dozen different kinds of reactions, attitudes, and for a multitude of reasons.

Nevertheless, the board must do its best to judge the school's performance, and here are a few notes on how to attack the problem.

a. Evaluation has to be a continuing process, not an effort to render a judgment on the school as a whole or at a given moment in time.

b. The assessment should be made in terms of the school's declared philosophy and purpose.

c. In addition to the objective measures listed in section 5, above, scores on College Board aptitude and achievement tests, on the National Merit Scholarship tests, college placement records, and results of other standardized tests at both elementary and secondary levels are available and useful, but their significance is subject to misinterpretation. They must be used with great care, for they can be affected by specific admissions policies, by the quality and quantity of applicants, and by factors beyond the school's control.

d. One of the most significant measurements of a school's performance is to be found in the opinions of its alumni. Many schools make it a practice to poll their recent graduates periodically (those from one to four or more years out). They can be asked to assess their experience in school, the strengths and weaknesses of the program as it stood in their time, and what they estimate to have been the total effect of the school on them. The administration can also systematically collect each year the records of its graduates in the next stage of their education (college or secondary) and get some clues, also to be used with caution, about the quality of their preparation in various subjects.

e. Most important of all, an effort must be made, through teachers, students, and parents, to get the "feel" of the school, to get a sense of faculty and student morale, of the integrity and dedication (that over-



worked but still meaningful word) of the teachers, a sense of the students' spirit and of their interest in the school and what goes on in it. This is one place where success in building communications pays off. The assessment in this all-important area is likely to come from the collective and cumulative opinions of all the board, gained through their various contacts, over a period of time rather than stemming from a calculated effort in any given year.

f. The school head may well have an interesting and helpful appraisal of his own, and he should be asked for it.

g. Unprejudiced observers can be exceedingly helpful. Many schools are visited periodically by committees of their regional accrediting association, or of their own independent school association, and reports submitted after those visits deserve careful study.<sup>13</sup> The school may also engage one or more consultants to visit it and provide an outside evaluation of the school as a whole or of its performance in particular areas. If this is the case, the instructions to the consultants should be clear and precise, and the planning of the project, from the beginning, should be done with the full understanding and cooperation of the head, who should work out the details.

As already suggested, the kind of evaluation we are talking about will not have a timetable and a deadline and be completed at a certain date. And it will be most effective and reliable if it doesn't put anybody on the defensive or make him feel a need to justify himself, if it's carried on, in other words, in a positive spirit, with all hands—trustees, head, faculty and students—taking pride in the strengths that can be identified and working together to formulate plans looking to the correction of the weaknesses.

*7. Trustees are responsible to their various constituencies and should render reports to them in appropriate ways and at appropriate times.*

The very name "trustee" indicates that both the individuals and the group known as the board of trustees are entrusted with responsibilities. It is, therefore, implicit that they should account for their stewardship.

Uppermost in the minds of most trustees is their responsibility for the school's financial and business affairs, for keeping it solvent and its plant in good order. This is certainly a prime responsibility, though we hope we have already made it clear that it is far from their only responsibility. The board must see to it that the principal of the school's capital funds is kept intact (unless the deed of gift in certain cases allows it to be spent) and not endangered by unwise borrowing. Good management of funds goes be-

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<sup>13</sup>The independent school division of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, a regional accrediting association, in its latest (1972) manual for the visiting committees that carry out school evaluations, includes a section on "The Decision-Making Process," with sub-headings on "The Role of the Governing Body" and the roles of administration, faculty, students, parents, alumni, and the community. See Appendix E.

yond conserving and takes into consideration the inflationary trends that seem to be a fact of life today.

And the record of the board and the school in financial matters should be exposed to the examination of friends and potential contributors. It is correct practice for a school to publish its figures on annual operating income and expense, the latest balance sheet resulting from an independent audit, and, if the school is lucky enough to have invested funds, a list of the investments.

In what other ways are trustees responsible? In addition to their legal responsibilities (often not clearly understood) under the laws of the state in which the school is incorporated, they are, broadly speaking, responsible to the parents, the students, the faculty, the alumni, the patrons and contributors, and to the free society from which the school's independence is derived.

*To parents.* In a few schools, parent-owned or controlled, some or all of the trustees are elected by the parents and the trustees render a report at an annual meeting of the parents. In most schools, however, both boarding and day, boards are self-perpetuating and elect all or most of their members. In these situations, an annual written report is usually rendered to the parents by the headmaster on behalf of the board, covering major activities and developments of the year. The fact that a board is self-perpetuating does not free it from its responsibility to consider the interests and opinions of the parents.

*To students.* Since the principal reason for the existence of any school is to provide sound education for the students, it is obvious that the trustees are responsible for the students' welfare. The board's responsibility to the students is carried out chiefly through powers delegated to the headmaster and the faculty, but the interest of the modern student in his education and in his school's policies is clear and lively, and so the wise board will find ways and means, both formal and informal, for consulting the students and exchanging views frankly and honestly with them. One way would be for a member of the education committee to sit in on occasional student council meetings, to get their points of view, and, at the same time, to interpret board actions to them.

*To faculty.* The board is surely responsible for the welfare of the faculty. With the leadership and advice of the headmaster, the board must provide an adequate salary scale and fringe benefits, physical plant and equipment, and other facilities for the proper functioning of the educational program. This kind of responsibility is usually understood by trustees, but the relationship should not stop there. Most boards recognize the importance of furthering the professional development of the faculty, including the head, by providing funds for summer courses or travel, for attendance at professional meetings, for visits to other schools, and, ideally, for sabbatical leaves. The temptation to squeeze such allowances out of a tight budget will be strong, but it has to be resisted, for they help keep teachers enthusiastic, on their toes, and growing in professional

skills and in background knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Also, though we have already spoken of the importance of communication and understanding between faculty and trustees, we would emphasize again the desirability of establishing structural arrangements that enable the trustees to explain plans and policies to the teachers and enable the teachers to make their views known on plans and policies in effect and under consideration.

*To alumni.* Since many alumni retain an interest in their school and contribute to its welfare, they are entitled to regular reports. Most schools do, in fact, send their alumni a bulletin with news of the school and its alumni. But at certain alumni meetings, and particularly through a special annual report of the headmaster mailed to all alumni, parents, and friends, the board's stewardship should be reported. If these groups are to be asked to support the school through annual giving and capital fund campaigns, they are entitled to a full report from the management that describes the financial condition of the school, gifts received during the past year, and the administration's plans for the future. This kind of information, while it may be actually a part of the report of the headmaster, is in fact a report from the trustees. The headmaster will naturally include, of course, many other aspects of the school program—any interesting changes in or additions to the curriculum, admission problems at the school, college entrance problems, the spiritual aspects of the school's life, development of the library, and other similar subjects.

*To friends.* What has been said above applies fully to friends, patrons, contributors, both past and potential. It is the board's responsibility to see that these groups are fully informed.

*To society.* Finally, as emphasized in our Foreword, the board is responsible, in a broad sense, to the community and to our democratic society, which makes possible the existence of independent schools. The tax-free status of most independent schools, and their freedom to experiment in educational techniques and philosophy—these considerations require that trustees be conscious of their responsibility to the community in general.

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<sup>14</sup>NAIS has two summer training programs specially designed for school heads and one for assistants in administration. Details are furnished on application to the NAIS office. For budget purposes, one school uses as a rule of thumb for an allowance for "faculty development" a figure of \$200 per faculty member.

## CHAPTER II

# THE BOARD AND THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL

It has already been emphasized that a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities of board and headmaster is fundamental to the smooth functioning of a school's administration. Chapter I was devoted chiefly to the board and the way it operates. This chapter concentrates on the board in its relationship to the headmaster. Let us begin by a restatement of the responsibilities of both parties.

On the part of the trustees there are three primary areas of responsibility.

*Institutional policy.* The trustees set all basic policies of the institution, such as whether the school will be for boys, for girls, or both, what grades will be included, the educational philosophy of the school, the scale of tuition payments, the salary scale, the size and nature of the enrollment, and other similar matters.

*Financial resources.* The trustees have primary responsibility for the physical property of the school, for the raising of funds necessary to provide the needed physical facilities,<sup>1</sup> and for satisfactory management of the school's operating funds.

*Long-range plans.* The trustees should set the direction the school should take in order to accomplish its long-range objectives. They must see to it that the needs for funds, personnel, and space for the future are developed so that interim decisions will fit into the future plan.

While the formulation of policy in these areas is clearly the responsibility of the trustees, they will not only give weight to the views of the head but may also rely on him for initiative and leadership.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEAD

It is the duty of the headmaster to carry out the policies established by the governing board and to serve as the professional educational leader for the institution which naturally includes the internal administration of the school.

There are certain areas of the headmaster's responsibility that can be

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<sup>1</sup>In this connection, see the last two paragraphs of the discussion of fund raising, below, p. 24.

clearly spelled out. In all of these areas he must, of course, act in accordance with policies approved by the board.

*Planning the future of the school.* The headmaster, with the help of whatever committee is in charge of long-range planning, is responsible for developing plans for the near- and long-term future of the school. Such plans include:

- Enrollment objectives
- Academic course offerings
- Class size
- Size of faculty
- Plant additions or alterations necessary
- Financial requirements

After the appropriate committee has developed and recommended plans, these should be reviewed and approved by the board. They should be projected at least five (or, better, ten) years ahead, and should be reviewed and updated every year in the light of developments.

*Enrollment.* The headmaster is responsible for the enrollment and the manner of handling admissions to the school. If the school is new and small, and if active promotion and solicitation of students are required, the prime responsibility rests with the headmaster. Trustees should be willing to help and probably can be extremely helpful with some prospects, but the basic responsibility is the headmaster's.

*Admission.* The headmaster and his committee on admissions must have the sole and final right to decide on the admission of students, acting in accord with basic admissions policy established by the board. Trustees will receive pressure from their friends on behalf of applicants—particularly if admission to a school is highly competitive. The headmaster should be glad to hear from trustees who can add significant information concerning a family and a candidate, but he must have the last word on the admission of students, provided he is operating within the board's established policy.

*Discipline.* The headmaster must assume responsibility for the discipline of the students. If the discipline of students is poor, the problem must be resolved by the headmaster, and the trustees have every right to hold him responsible.

*Dismissal of students.* The headmaster must have the right to dismiss a student who, in his judgment and in the judgment of his professional associates, should be separated from the school either for academic reasons or for reasons of behavior. As a matter of discretion, tact, and good communications the headmaster will often notify trustees of an impending action or of an action taken; this should be done not to ask permission, but rather to inform, so that the trustee can answer any questions that may come to him.

*Financial aid.* The headmaster or some member of his staff to whom he may delegate this responsibility should discuss financial aid with parents



who request it and should inform them of the policy of the board. A procedure that works well in many schools is to have parents complete a standard financial aid form for review by the headmaster and a committee to which the board has delegated authority to act. Such a process provides some objective basis for making grants and removes the awarding of grants from the realm of personal negotiation, which can prove embarrassing.<sup>2</sup>

*Relations with faculty.* The headmaster should have sole responsibility for the employment of teachers and other staff members; he should not be required to present alternative candidates for the board's consideration. He must take the responsibility for appointing the best persons to be found at salaries within the established salary range, scale, or policy laid down by the board.

Individual salaries of new teachers have to be established by the headmaster himself. Salaries of continuing teachers may well be reviewed by the finance committee or another committee so that trustees may see that the general policy of advancement of teachers on the salary scale is being properly observed. If the headmaster wishes to create a new position of some importance to the school, such as the position of director of studies or assistant headmaster, he should, of course, discuss this with the appropriate trustee committee, and the position and its salary scale should be established before discussions or interviews with candidates take place.

*Publicity.* The headmaster should have the responsibility for, and the supervision over, all publicity for the school. He must, of course, delegate this, since he himself, except in a very small institution, cannot possibly take care of this duty along with his other manifold responsibilities. Moreover, it may well be that a trustee working in the area of public relations or journalism or advertising can be extremely helpful, and can, in fact, make a real contribution by undertaking some or all of the work involved. Nevertheless, the headmaster should assume responsibility for the over-all supervision of press releases and statements to the public, regardless of who does the actual work.

*Financial affairs.* A school budget is always more than an estimate of income and expense for a given period of time, for it also reflects the educational philosophy of the school. Therefore, the headmaster should always take the lead in preparing the budget, assisted by the business manager if there is one. Together they should present their proposals to the finance committee of the board, which should satisfy itself regarding the soundness of the proposals. Once the finance committee and the board of trustees have approved the annual budget, the business manager, the headmaster, and others empowered to spend money should be free to do so within the limits of the budget without having to make requests to the trustees for each expenditure of funds. It may be added that for good budget control there should be prompt preparation of monthly expense figures, with cumulative totals for the year to date and comparisons with

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<sup>2</sup>See Chapter I, note 10, on the School Scholarship Service.

the previous year's figures and with the current budget. The headmaster and the board's finance or executive committee can properly expect the business manager to have such figures available within a very few days of the end of each month.

*Maintenance of property.* The headmaster is responsible for seeing that routine maintenance and repair of the physical property are carried out. He and his staff are on the grounds daily, and the trustees are not, and it is his responsibility to see that the buildings and grounds committee is informed of any unusual conditions affecting the property of the school.

*Health and safety.* The headmaster is responsible for the health and safety of students while they are under the school's jurisdiction. It is most important that requirements of state and local authorities be satisfied by the school's health and safety regulations.

*Fund raising.* To what extent is the headmaster responsible for fund raising? Must he raise the money for needed projects, or is this a trustee function? Can a headmaster refuse to help raise money on the ground that his job is academic and he therefore cannot leave the school for outside activities?

As in many other areas of difference of opinion, the truth lies at neither extreme, but somewhere in between. In all aspects of school administration, the headmaster must and should exercise leadership, but he needs the active support of his trustees as well as of alumni and parents. The headmaster should be alert to the developing needs of the school and the funds needed to strengthen the program and plant. He must talk over these requirements with the appropriate committees of the board and the board itself, and together they must decide on the ways and means to raise the funds.

In a capital campaign for any sizable amount, it generally pays to employ reputable fund-raising counsel. Exceptions might include situations where one or two key persons in the school family have had successful experience and can devote virtually full time to the campaign, or where the number of prospects to be seen is small and most of the people live in the same community.

The headmaster should not be expected to call on all of the parents, lest he be placed in embarrassing situations with actual or prospective donors whose children are not successful in school. He should work with special-gifts prospects, key leaders, and alumni; help organize parent soliciting teams; personally see foundation and corporation executives whose organizations may contribute; and in general work wherever his influence and personal touch are most needed. Potential major donors will expect to see the head of the school.

## REASONS FOR UNSATISFACTORY RELATIONSHIPS

Since the responsibilities outlined above can be so clearly stated, why does a lack of understanding between headmaster and board arise in so

many schools? Often enough it is because communications between them are poor, or have not been handled with tact. In addition to defined areas of responsibility, there are also rules of the road.

One type of headmaster, for example, violates such rules by trying to "get ahead of his interference"; he may make policy decisions without the consent of the board. He may also make other important decisions without consulting board members. He may do this because he feels that, since he is the head of the school and the professional, he is entitled to make decisions on all matters where the board has not specifically reserved the decision to itself. Another headmaster, who is somewhat insecure, may bother individual trustees by telephone calls or letters on all manner of minor affairs, annoying them with routine problems of internal administration that he ought to take care of himself. At board meetings, he may waste the time of the board by bringing to its attention many minor matters and requests for permission to do things that should be clearly within the province of the administration to do.

But the headmaster is not the only culprit. For example, some trustees, frequently officers or committee chairmen, may become officious and individually try to dictate to the headmaster, or perhaps tell the head groundskeeper or maintenance man or the athletic director what he is to do. Bad feeling and confusion are bound to result, and it should be emphasized again that no individual trustee has authority to give orders or directions to the headmaster or to any members of his faculty or staff. Such authority rests only with the full board in a duly constituted meeting, and decisions of the board should be communicated to the persons concerned through proper channels.

Some businessmen on boards of trustees try to boss the headmaster as the result of their own long experience in industry. Such men think of the headmaster as a kind of plant manager, a subordinate to be given orders. Such a view of the headmaster is clearly in error, for he is not a subordinate or employee in the usual business sense of the word. Although he is employed by the board, once he is engaged he becomes the person to whom they should look for direction and leadership. As a professional educator, he should be expected to lead the board and the school. A clearer analogy is to think of the head of the school as a kind of prime minister; he is a part of the board in spirit, yet stands somewhat apart from them as their leader, and he is their leader as long as he commands the confidence of the board. When he loses this confidence and can no longer command a clear working majority of the board to support him, his government must fall.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING A SOUND RELATIONSHIP

Further pursuit of these ideas may make them more concrete. We have stated that the board makes policy, but we have also stated that the headmaster should be a leader. In his role as leader, it is his responsibility to propose policies, but to do so through proper channels. Experience has



shown that the proper avenue of approach to the board on the matter of new policies is through the appropriate committee of the board. Therefore, the headmaster who, for example, after consultations and discussions with the faculty wishes to propose an important curriculum change, will be wise to discuss this first with his trustee committee on education. This committee, which has the time and personnel to study educational policy questions in detail, can give the proposal the attention it requires and can then, with the headmaster, report its recommendation to the board. By taking this approach, the headmaster immediately has several informed trustees who understand the problem and who can help support his plan. Of course, if the committee turns down his proposal, he will probably not bring the matter to the board.

Similarly, if the headmaster wishes to increase the basic salary scale of the faculty, he will do well to discuss the matter thoroughly and in detail with his finance committee. Here again, when the matter is presented to the entire board, the committee will understand the reasons for the increase in the salary scale and will support the headmaster's recommendation.

The converse of these procedures is equally true. A valuable channel of communication from the board to the headmaster is through the appropriate board committees. The various committees of the board have a good opportunity, in a smaller and more intimate setting than the full board, to question the headmaster concerning policies and to inform themselves more fully on the operation of the school.

To use another analogy, the headmaster and board may think of themselves as the executive and legislative branches of the school administration. As clearly as the Constitution of the United States defines the areas of its executive and legislative branches, there is inevitably some overlap in jurisdiction and function. It is within this gray area of overlap that friction or a power struggle sometimes develops—as naturally in a school as in a government.

The best way to avoid this kind of friction is for the board and headmaster to think of themselves not as competing branches of a single government, but rather as members of a single team. The members of a team have individual functions, but singly they cannot be successful. Only through unity and cooperation under proper leadership can there be success. It will help a great deal, therefore, if heads of schools and trustees think in terms of unity, with the members of the board on the one hand being active in their corporate capacity to establish policies and making themselves individually available to the headmaster for help when he wants it, and the headmaster on the other hand functioning continually as the chief executive officer of the institution, its leader, but always conscious of his responsibility to the board and to his school constituency.

## ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE HEAD'S PERFORMANCE

A significant element in promoting and maintaining a sound relation-

ship between board and head is the regular evaluation session, in which, to put it in simple terms, the head can find out how he's doing and at the same time register any concerns he has about the board's performance. To repeat what was said earlier, the discussion ideally should be friendly but frank.

About two thirds of the more than 600 heads who responded to a recent survey (see Appendix F) had some kind of review (usually annual, sometimes at longer intervals) of their contract or oral agreement. It also appeared, however, that often it was not the kind of candid appraisal we are talking about, but merely a brief report of action at a board meeting continuing the head's employment for a year, or a note from the treasurer telling of a raise in salary and confirming other benefits for another year.

If things are going along all right, one might ask why an evaluation session is needed. We believe that the head, just like a faculty member, should have the help and reassurance or cautioning (no doubt some of both) that would be provided by a regular review of his performance. This is clearly the view of many school heads who are getting one and many more who are not. Here are two illustrative quotations, both from active school heads:

I have often felt very lonely in my job, and the lack of any reaction—praise or blame—has made the loneliness more acute. Some periodic review of how the head is doing would certainly be helpful.

It would like a contract to create a reason for the board to evaluate the head's performance at least once a year.

What we are urging, and what most heads would like to have, is an informal review in which the head can learn the views of the board as to his performance—where he is successful and where he seems to be less so.

Who is to do it? In nearly half of the cases reported in the survey, it was the chief officer of the board, the chairman or the president; in nearly as many instances it was either the executive committee or the full board. We think that ordinarily it should be the president alone or with such other officers or members of the executive committee as he may wish to involve, rather than the full board. We believe that the chances for a frank and reasonably informal exchange of views are better if the reviewing group is small. It is suggested, however, that the president ask all members of the board for their individual appraisals prior to the evaluation session so that he may be fully aware of the feelings of all his colleagues about the head.

How often? At least once a year, perhaps best in late fall or early winter, when the budget and salaries for the following year are about to be considered, and certainly more often than every two or three years, as is now the case with some heads. And if there is serious criticism of the head, and a situation that might deteriorate, the sessions should be more frequent than once a year, and very specific.

What shall be said? Obviously it depends on circumstances, and we make a suggestion or two only since we hear that trustees sometimes hesi-

tate because they don't feel confident of how to go about it. The description of the head's duties and responsibilities in the by-laws, in the head's contract, or in any memorandum of expectations drawn up at the time the head was engaged could supply a framework or checklist. Communications will probably loom large on any such list: has the head been exemplary or not in keeping the president and the board informed? With respect to changes made or in the making, has he been successful or not in interpreting and explaining to parents and alumni, as well as to trustees, faculty, and students, the how and the why of them? Has he taken the time and the trouble necessary to involve others in the decision-making process? Has he stayed on the right side of the board-head division of responsibilities, or has he ventured mistakenly into policy-making or involved the board too much in what should be the province of administration? These are only suggestions. There is little doubt that in any actual situation the topics to be discussed will make themselves evident, providing opportunities for noting areas where praise is due as well as others where there is room for improvement. The talk on both sides should be direct and candid, and it is sensible for the president to put in a memorandum (with a copy for the headmaster's private file) a summary of the salient points made.

The headmaster would do well to make a written self-evaluation before the session. One head not only does this but also invites his faculty to evaluate him and carries the results into the meeting. And since the communication is two-way, this is his chance to speak about the performance of the trustees and their president (Mrs. X isn't following the ground rules about parental complaints; Mr. Y is trying to give orders directly to the head maintenance man; the whole board is tending to encroach on administrative turf).

We recognize the fact that, if the relationship between head and board president is what it should be, much of what might be discussed at an evaluation session will have been brought up from time to time without ceremony. Nevertheless, we think there is merit in a planned session in which the president may be accompanied by other trustees and reflect a consensus of the board.

This need not be a traumatic experience for the head, nor, since no one is perfect, a source of undiluted satisfaction.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, just as trustees face increased demands and expectations, so do school heads. The position of headmaster has always been a demanding one, with unrelenting pressures on his time and energies from many directions, and with many decisions to be made. Now new problems have to be

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<sup>3</sup>The process is not unlike the annual evaluation in businesses, where management by goals is the way of life. In Herbert F. Mayer, "The Science of Telling Executives How They're Doing," *Fortune*, January 1974, is a pertinent word of caution. "The worst mistake an evaluator can make is to let some executive who's barely making it leave the session harboring delusions about great prospects in his future. At the same time, the evaluator has to be careful not to crush the executive . . . under an avalanche of devastating criticisms" (p. 102).

met, or old ones having new complications—curriculum, teaching methods, discipline, personnel, finance, every aspect of school life. The making of decisions involves extended discussion with representatives of the groups affected, followed by the time-consuming process of explaining and interpreting the new ways of doing things.

The increase in demands on school heads is certainly a partial explanation of the noticeable trend toward shorter tenure.<sup>4</sup> We stress this increase because we think it important for the trustee of a school to be aware of the nature and extent of the burdens their head is carrying and to recognize the possibility that the demands of the school may be damaging his home life and endangering his (and his wife's) health and morale. They may find it advisable, as many boards have, to add administrative help, or to encourage, urge, or even require the head to break away periodically for rest and recreation, to regain perspective on the school and its problems.

### AVOIDING FRICTION—THE HEADMASTER

How can the headmaster avoid making major blunders that arouse the wrath of the trustees or cause them to lose confidence in him? Even though he is the chief executive officer and leader, he will be well advised from the point of view of diplomacy and tact to talk over anticipated decisions and serious problems with the president of the board, or possibly with one or two other senior trustees in whom he has particular confidence. He ought to feel free to talk with them on a friendly and unofficial basis if need be.

Let us assume, for instance, that the headmaster, who is relatively new and young, feels it necessary to dismiss a teacher who has been on the faculty for a longer period of time than has the new headmaster. Technically and legally, the headmaster has a right to hire and fire members of the faculty. He can stand on his rights and take action without consulting the board. If he is wise, however, he will first discuss this matter with his committee on education and with his board president. Or suppose it is necessary to dismiss the child of a family that has long been associated with the school or the child of a major contributor in a recent campaign. Here again, the headmaster is perfectly within his rights to take this action if he feels it is necessary. On the other hand, to secure his defenses, he would do well to explain the impending action to the president of the board and possibly a few other trustees. This is not meant to imply that the headmaster is asking permission to do these things, but rather that he wishes the trustees to understand fully his reasons for his actions. When he is convinced that a moral issue or the integrity of the school is at stake, he must stand fast in the face of the most formidable opposition; only thus can he maintain his own integrity.

Another way a headmaster can avoid making major blunders with

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<sup>4</sup>A recent survey showed that 25 years ago the average tenure of school heads was 12 years. Now it is little more than half that.

board members is to keep close to public opinion. For example, a headmaster may wish to lead his school in a new direction. If conditions are right, he may be able to do it speedily, but if board and community are not ready for the move or do not understand it, to plunge boldly ahead may set back by years the very cause the headmaster espouses. He may have to be content with a period of preparing the ground. So it is important that the headmaster keep his ear to the ground and know what students, parents, and others are saying about the school. His contact with his faculty must be continuous and personal, to keep him aware of their feelings and their state of morale. When the headmaster is also active in community affairs, mingling with parents, trustees, alumni, and others, he is better able to anticipate troubles before they become serious.

In line with these suggestions, the headmaster needs to be receptive to advice. The young, inexperienced headmaster in particular must avoid trying to assert his own position by flouting the advice of experienced persons who know the community. The man who does this is as foolish as the young adolescent who flouts the advice of parents, teachers, and other elders, and he is equally likely to come to grief.

Again, in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation, the headmaster should always consult with the committee chairman before requesting a meeting of a committee and should discuss with him the proposed agenda and major topics coming up for discussion. Similarly, the headmaster should discuss, with the president of his board, the agenda for the board meeting itself and the topics he intends to bring up for discussion and decision.

Finally, the headmaster can avoid major blunders by paying very careful attention to preparation and staff work before any meeting with any group of trustees. He must be sure he has the supporting documents and figures to back up his statements. He should amass a great deal more material than he is likely to use, just as a doctor must have a great deal more knowledge than he may be called upon to use in any one case. When complex or controversial problems are to come up in a committee meeting, factual material and other relevant information should be sent to trustees ahead of time. Moreover, after any committee meeting or board meeting, it is the responsibility of the headmaster to carry out decisions of the board and to report to the appropriate officials, or to the entire board in some cases, the fact that the decisions have been carried out. The headmaster must use his judgment whether he can do so through a telephone call—to a committee chairman or officer of the board—or whether he should inform the entire board in writing. In short, a smoothly working board and smooth board-headmaster relations depend heavily on the thought, imagination, initiative, and hard work of the headmaster.

### AVOIDING FRICTION—THE TRUSTEES

How can trustees avoid making major blunders? They must respect the headmaster for his professional position and for his experience and knowl-

edge. They should have the same kind of confidence in him professionally that they have in their lawyer or their doctor and deal with him as an equal, not as a subordinate. (Trustees should also recognize their responsibility toward a new headmaster by seeing to it that he and his wife are properly introduced to the community.)

It has already been pointed out that individual trustees have no authority over the headmaster and have no right to instruct him or give him orders. Only the full board of trustees, meeting officially, may request or even demand that the headmaster follow certain directives of the board. The trustee who usurps the authority of the board and takes it on himself to tell the headmaster how to run the school must be brought into line by the president of the board and other trustees or be dropped as a trustee.

Trustees inevitably will receive complaints from disgruntled parents and even occasionally from a disgruntled teacher. A trustee should never attempt to solve the problem but should always refer the complaining individual directly to the head of the school. The trustee's duty then is to inform the headmaster at once that the individual has made a complaint. If the headmaster does not hear from the individual within a reasonable time, he should make it his business to talk with him.

If the parent or teacher has already talked to the head and is still not satisfied, then the trustee may either refer the complainer to the president of the board or listen without comment and offer to take it up with the president for such action as may be indicated. It is for the president of the board, not for the individual trustee, to talk the matter over with the school head and decide how to handle the matter from there on. It is generally agreed that going *around* the head to the board or to individual members of it is to be discouraged, except in the rarest of circumstances, as tending to undermine the necessary and proper authority of the chief operating officer of the school, namely, its head.

By the same token, trustees hearing complaints in the community should support the headmaster, assure the complainant that the headmaster desires to do the right thing and that a call on him should result in satisfaction, and inform the head of the talk they have heard. Whatever the cause of complaint or dissatisfaction that comes to the attention of a trustee, the head should never be left unaware of it but have the chance to profit by it, to correct a situation that needs correcting, or to defend his position or his action.

A particular responsibility rests with the president of the board of trustees, for it is his duty to keep his trustees in line. We have already spoken of the importance of indoctrinating and orienting new trustees; it is not a bad idea for the president to use the annual meeting as the occasion for reminding the whole board not only of the ground rules in the kinds of situations just mentioned, but also of the working arrangements for the division of powers, duties, and responsibilities between head and board.

## A CONTRACT FOR THE HEAD?

The question is often raised whether the head should have a written contract, for a year or longer, with the board. The recent survey of the opinions of school heads on this subject brought out some interesting facts and divergent points of view (see Appendix F). About half of the heads had something in writing—a contract or letter of agreement—and about the same number, though not necessarily the same people, favored a contractual arrangement. Often the contract was no more than an undertaking of the board to pay a certain salary, with fringe benefits and perquisites spelled out with some care, and an agreement to those terms by the head. Many who had no contracts argued emphatically against them: "If relationships are sound, contracts are unimportant"; "If trust and respect between head and board go, all the paper in the world is worthless"; and most of this group preferred the "gentleman's agreement" under which they worked. Many others, however, suggested that contracts would help avoid misunderstanding, that boards change and verbal agreements are forgotten, and so on. And, significantly, many of those who were happy with their no-contract status with their own board said they would favor a contract for their successor, or would want one if they moved to another school, or that they had one when they started (but felt it was no longer necessary), or favored a contract for the early years of a new head.

Clearly opinions differ, and it is a matter of mutual agreement between head and board whether to formalize the arrangement by a contract (or by a letter to the head and signed by him, which amounts to a contract). Whatever the form of the understanding, there are two objectives to be achieved. One is to set up a working relationship between board and head in which the chance of misunderstanding can be minimized, and the other, particularly important in these days of shorter tenure for heads, is so to regulate the process by which the relationship is terminated as to avoid damage or unnecessary difficulties to either party.

Accordingly, we look with favor on something in writing (1) that spells out in detail the head's salary and perquisites and makes it clear who pays for what in the way of housing, insurance, transportation, school entertaining, and so on, so that there can be no misunderstanding on this score; (2) that contains a paragraph or two specifying the duties and responsibilities of the head, and those of the board, or refers to the paragraphs in the school's by-laws that deal with them; (3) that provides for an annual review of performance, as discussed earlier (and see Appendix F), with details as to when and by whom; and (4) that specifies the procedures to be followed for renewal of the agreement as well as its termination. (See Appendix C for sample agreements.)

## TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT

It is safe to assume that many a board-head relationship will not con-

tinue until the head's retirement. There will surely be instances where it will continue to that end with great benefit to all, but there are all sorts of possible reasons for its being terminated at some point before that. A board may wish to initiate a change; so may the head. Schools at different times in their existence may need different kinds of leadership. The board or the head, or both, may sense such a need and decide that a change of leadership is desirable.

The head may wish to move to another part of the country, or to a different kind of school; he may be asked to consider a position with greater responsibility, one he sees as a career opportunity he cannot pass by; or he may feel he has done all he set out to do at school X and wants the challenge of a new set of problems at school Y; or he may be tired out and seek a less demanding occupation.

Or differing opinions, strongly held, may develop between board and head on a policy question so basic that neither party can accept the other's views about how the school should operate. Assuming frank discussions, good will on each side, and ample notice, it should be possible to resolve any of these situations amicably and with assurance of a smooth transition.

However, there can be other situations where the path may not be so smooth and clear. Take the situation, for example, in which the board has supported the head, worked conscientiously with him and done its best to guide and direct him, but has become increasingly doubtful of his eventual success. A new school year is well along, but evidence of incompetence or lack of leadership on the part of the head has become so conspicuous that the board is convinced that there must be a change and that it must happen before the next school year begins. It is too late to give appropriate notice, but the board must ask for the head's resignation and announce the impending change as soon as possible.

A quotation from a handbook written for committee members of Friends schools (the committee of a Friends school is the equivalent of a board of trustees) is appropriate for consideration here.<sup>5</sup>

#### Termination of Service

As soon as it becomes apparent to the committee that the head of the school is not carrying his responsibilities well or is making repeated unwise judgments, there are definite questions which the committee should ask itself. Has it examined carefully its own actions, to assure itself that methods of operation and areas of responsibility have been clearly defined and faithfully adhered to? Has the head of the school been given the authority he needs to operate the school within the framework of committee policies? Has the committee, because of its concern for the welfare of the school, been solicitous to the point of meddling? With these questions answered satisfactorily, the committee should labor kindly with the head in order to resolve the difficulty. Failing in this objective, the committee faces the painful step of making a change in leadership.

*Recommended practices.* The key factor to be reckoned with in any termination, whether initiated by board or head, is the matter of adequate

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<sup>5</sup>*Handbook for Committee Members of Friends Schools*, p. 15.



notice. In the interests of the school as well as the head, notice should normally be given before a specified date in the year—at least eight to ten months before the end of a given school year, or, better still, a year before. Such extended notice is essential in order to give the trustees time to search for and secure a successor and, similarly, for the head to find a new position. The hiring process in the independent school world is governed by the special rhythm of the school year and is normally carried on during the fall and early winter months, with appointments being announced no later than March and new heads taking over during the summer. When this schedule is followed, changes are accomplished with a minimum of disruption to the normal year-to-year functioning of the school.

If there is a written agreement or contract, it should certainly cover the matter of notice. Even when there is no agreement, the reasons for notice cited above still apply and must be taken into consideration.

Because notice plays such a critical role in the termination process, it becomes essential to make provision for equitable financial settlement when for some reason appropriate notice cannot be given, as in the case cited above. In such instances, we recommend as sound practice the continuation of salary beyond the school year in which dismissal occurs for a period of sufficient length to enable the dismissed head to secure acceptable employment. In determining what is "reasonable," consideration should be given to the timing of the dismissal (the later in the school year the greater the obligation), the length of service of the head, his personal and family circumstances, the financial condition of the school, and any other pertinent factors.

In practice, such settlements have ranged from six months to a year. In some cases, agreements call for continuation of salary for a specified number of months, or until the head has secured another position; in others, they provide for a specified period, or amount, of separation pay without condition.

*Practices to be avoided.* A board should not start a search process or engage a new head without letting the incumbent know he is on the way out. The latter is entitled to the earliest possible notice, and a search process carried on covertly is an affront to the school's constituents as well as to the head.

A head should not negotiate for a new position in secret, telling the board he is leaving only after he has secured the new job.

Dismissal action should be taken by the whole board, not by individuals or committees. If the head wants an opportunity to discuss his situation with the board, he should be given one, prior to final action.

Individual trustees should not on their own initiative try to encourage a head to resign by a hint to him that such action would be welcomed by the board.

Except for reasons of physical or mental health or of moral turpitude or serious dereliction of duty, a head should not be required to leave a school in the middle of the year; and, conversely, it goes without saying that a

head should not leave a school in the middle of the year except possibly for some compelling reason of health or family crisis.

These "don'ts" are listed because there have been at one time or another instances of all of them, unlikely as it may seem. They all violate in one way or another the spirit of sound board-head relationships. Furthermore, they are certain to result in damage to reputations—whether the individual's, the board's, or the school's. They inevitably will make it more difficult to attract candidates to fill the position, and they are very likely to create serious disruption and disaffection among the school's constituents.

*Help from the outside.* When the board-head relationship is in trouble and gives indications of falling apart, it is possible that an outside dispassionate view may be helpful in resolving difficulties and in getting the situation back on the track, or at least in working out an orderly termination procedure. The executive officers of NAIS are more than willing to respond to requests for their advice or for suggestions of impartial and experienced outsiders who can advise with disinterest and objectivity.

## CHAPTER III

### SELECTING A NEW HEAD AND GETTING HIM STARTED

The selection of a new head is the most important decision a board of trustees is ever called on to make. Hardly anyone will quarrel with that statement, yet some boards, faced with the necessity of finding a new head, seem to handle the problem without the care and deliberation the importance of the choice dictates, with results which are too often unfortunate. The two earlier editions of this handbook went into considerable detail on the selection process. The subject is given much less space in this revision, not because it has lost importance or because NAIS has lost interest—quite the contrary on both counts. If anything, the importance of doing the job well has become even clearer, and NAIS now has a separate publication on the subject, with suggestions not only for the board doing the searching but also for the persons who may turn up as candidates.<sup>1</sup> A board that faces or anticipates facing the problem of finding a new head (or a head for a new school) is encouraged to get in touch with NAIS, to get this booklet, and to ask about other forms of assistance.

The booklet offers guidance for the school's board from the moment a change is decided upon, through the necessary preparation for finding and screening the candidates, on through the actual screening and the preliminary and final interviews, to the final selection and the *thorough* and open exchange of information and opinion between board and prospective head. Experience with a number of instances of dissent and discord between boards and heads strongly points to the skimping or neglect of this last process as a frequent underlying cause of heads resigning or boards deciding to make a change. The booklet also stresses the importance of some form of participation in the selection process by the various constituencies of the school. Finally, it makes clear that it is important to give the candidate's wife<sup>2</sup> (when the field has been narrowed

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<sup>1</sup> *The Selection and Appointment of School Heads* (see Appendix A). To assist boards of trustees in the search for a new head, NAIS maintains the Headmaster Clearing House Service. Boards that elect to subscribe to the service receive a copy of this booklet, various listings of candidates, and the general advice and counsel of NAIS staff members.

<sup>2</sup> Here we can abandon the convention that "he" includes "she," "headmaster" includes "headmistress," and so on. While a headmaster's wife often has an important place in the school led by her husband, instances where the headmistress's husband is similarly involved are rare, and the circumstances of the involvement will certainly be different.

down) more serious attention than the kind of casual looking-over she will get at a chiefly social gathering of trustees and wives or of faculty.

### THE HEADMASTER'S WIFE

In many schools, especially boarding schools, a good deal is expected of the headmaster's wife, but little is said about it at the pre-hiring interviews or on the visits to the school. Not long ago, over 200 headmasters' wives answered an extensive questionnaire about their role, and a report summing up their replies had this to say.:

In respect to the "hiring procedures," the [Trustee] Handbook should be revised to take seriously into account the person whose life may be committed at the same time as her husband's, and of whom there may be great unspoken expectations. The trustees ought to recognize her as an individual and not just as an adjunct to her husband. They should allow her an opportunity to hear what the expectations are (if any) and to respond according to her choice. The evidence . . . points to an enthusiastic involvement, ever voluntarily increasing. But she is not the one being hired, and doesn't believe she should be taken for granted as part of an "automatic package deal."

Once expected to be mostly a "friendly, gracious, intelligent, noncontroversial, attractive hostess," the headmaster's wife now looks more to the opportunity to work closely with her husband in a joint and vital enterprise. Again quoting from the questionnaire, "The times *are* changing and headmasters' wives *are* individuals—perhaps more committed to service than the average but more and more eager to do that serving in their own way." It is clear that (unless in the school concerned the headmaster's wife has no part to play) in the selection process a promising candidate's wife should be taken seriously as an important part of a team, and she should have a chance to discuss what may be expected of her and what she feels best able to contribute. When the selection process has been completed, and thereafter, the board must not take the headmaster's wife for granted, but, recognizing the demands and difficulties of her position, review them sympathetically from time to time, and, if necessary, be responsive to the idea that her share in the life of the school may need to be revised or reduced.

### AFTER THE NEW HEAD TAKES CHARGE

Some special attention must now be given to something that is of almost equal importance to that of selecting the new head: ensuring the success of the new administration and giving it strength and support. Even though many boards give the choice of a new head all the care and attention it deserves, they pay too little attention to this second concern, again with unfortunate results. It is perhaps not too fanciful to compare a school and its new head to a newly married couple. If the marriage is to work, each must be ready to adjust to the other—to get used to the other's ways, and to recognize and be ready to help avoid or overcome difficulties that are



apt to arise—until full understandings are reached and the partnership can be considered a success.

It can be a touchy period, taking as much as a year or two for faculty, parents, and students to get over the discomfort of change. It would be surprising, and unusual, if there was no group that regretted the departure of the old head and was uncomfortable, or at least unconvinced, about the new one. As in most processes, there is a wrong way and a right way for the trustees to go through this period.

*The wrong way.* Let us paint a picture, by no means imaginary, of what can happen. The retiring head is a person who has won the respect and affection of the school community. The school has been his life, at least in recent years. It bears his stamp and reflects his views. Many of the staff were engaged and developed by him; not only does he know them well but he knows their families and their families' problems. Many of the trustees are his own former students, and he is almost a "father figure" to a large portion of the alumni.

The new head is young and—at least in this situation—untried. The trustees, a bit anxious about the transition, ask the retiring head to stay on as a member of the board of trustees, to help the new head and generally keep an eye on things. The retiring head is well aware of the dangers of interference with his successor, and he wants him to succeed. Being vitally interested in the school, he is sure that the way he intends to help cannot possibly be considered interference.

So the new head takes charge, and there is very likely a honeymoon period when everyone is happy. But pretty soon the new head makes a change in something "we've always done that way." The former head, while accepting in theory the proposition that a school must move and change if it is to stay alive, is inclined to think that *this* change is a mistake, that it implies a criticism of the way things were done before. Nevertheless, determined not to interfere, he keeps silent; not so some of the staff (and no doubt some of the parents, too), who are so devoted to the former head that they are sure that anyone who is going off in a different direction from the one in which he led must be making a mistake. Several write or telephone to their former chief, who can't help listening somewhat sympathetically, and with a little subconscious satisfaction over troubles he is certain would not have arisen if he had been in charge. Two or three teachers have friends on the board of trustees to whom they register their concern. Several of the trustees listen to the story and start talking among themselves. Very possibly neither the former head nor any of the aggrieved faculty, nor any of the trustees who listen to them, lets the new head know that he is being criticized, or for what.

Pretty soon another similar situation, another flurry of telephone talks and letters; and then another; and there is a group of the faculty who talk among themselves about the defects of the new leader, and some trustees who wonder whether a wrong choice has been made. Still no communication with the new head, but through a helpful teacher or a friendly trustee

he gets wind of trouble and of the development of a dissatisfied group on the faculty. He may also learn that the former head and some of the trustees have been listening to the complaints without telling him about them. His confidence is shaken, he becomes uncertain in his course of action, he doesn't know whom he can trust, he suspects some of the teachers are turning the students against him, and the moment comes when a committee of the board waits on him and tells him with kindness and sadness that they think it's best for the school that he resign. The result: the abrupt end of a promising start as an administrator by the new head, and some tarnishing of his escutcheon; another shock to the school community; another search for a new head, perhaps made more difficult by reluctance on the part of other promising young candidates to take the post in the light of the short stay of the previous head and the feeling that, if the trustees are the kind to allow this sort of situation to develop, the next person may be no more fortunate.

We repeat—this is by no means an imaginary picture. The sequence of events described can be documented by reference to a number of actual situations, though there are of course variations, and sometimes the process is spread over several years. The points to be made are, first, that this sad series of events—sad for the new head, for the trustees, and for everyone else connected with the school—happens in spite of the fact that everyone—retired head, trustees, teachers, and any parents and alumni who get into the act—has the best intentions in the world and nothing but the best interests of the school at heart; and, second, that it can happen anywhere and is a danger for trustees to reckon with whenever there is a change of administration at a school. Accordingly, we want to make some suggestions about how the chances of a successful transition can be improved. These, too, are not imaginary; they are taken from actual situations that have worked out happily.

*The right way.* The trustees do *not* invite the retiring headmaster to continue on the board (nor, it may be added, do they invite him to retain an official connection with the school as director of development, director of alumni relations, or whatnot). In fact, if he is a regular rather than an *ex officio* member, and shows signs of wanting to stay on, they politely make it plain to him that they would like him to resign. In the first place, they know that his advice and help will be available whether or not he is a member of the board, and they know how hard it will be for the new head to run the school with his predecessor looking over his shoulder; how hard, too, for the new head to bring in recommendations to the board for changes with the former head sitting right there. They also know, having been reminded by the board president, that if they have good friends on the faculty they may well hear tales of woe from them about the new administration, but that in all cases it is their duty to ask whether the matter has been discussed with the head, and, if not, to say that that is the first thing for the teacher to do (and the trustee gets on the phone without delay to advise the head that he can expect to hear from Mr. X). He fol-

lows the same procedure with any parent (at *any* time it may be added), and makes sure in each case that the president of the board is aware of what is going on.

The *retiring head* moves away from the community where the school is located, though it must be said that distance of the former head from the scene is no guarantee that there won't be trouble. By the same token, if he lives around the corner it can be as though he were on another planet. It all depends on the person and the posture he adopts. He tells his faculty at their last meeting together that he is dissociating himself completely from the school,<sup>3</sup> that he has confidence in his successor and wants them to give him their loyalty and support, and says that, while he hopes to hear from them and see them often, if for any reason they are troubled about anything to do with the school, they should talk first to the head and then, if not satisfied, to the president of the board of trustees, but not to him, the about-to-be-retired head. If, during the succeeding months, any of the faculty forgets this admonition and writes or telephones or calls to express discontent about the way things are going, he reminds the teacher about his stance and talks of other things.

The *president of the board* has a special responsibility not only for advising board members about the correct handling of complaints from teachers or parents, but for keeping the lines of communication open with the new head, making sure the head knows of dissension or dissatisfaction in the faculty, or in the parent body, discussing with him the matters that have caused it and ways of handling it, suggesting action that might reduce and eliminate it. Above all, he makes him feel that he, the president, is a friend who wants to make the new administration successful, one who

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<sup>3</sup>Here is an actual example of a headmaster doing it the right way:

#### TO FACULTY AND FACULTY WIVES:

As I said at our last Faculty meeting in May, Jane and I will need your help in an important matter connected with the change in administration.

It is obvious that a new headmaster should not find the old headmaster looking over his shoulder. At least it should be obvious, though I have known a number of retiring headmasters who have accepted invitations to remain on the boards of trustees, have felt free to offer unrequested advice to their successors, have expressed hurt and disappointment over changes, etc., *ad* (I regret to report) *infinitum*. These blatant forms of interference I trust I can avoid.

Judging from the experience of some of my colleagues, however, there is a more subtle trap for a retired headmaster: the continued involvement in discussion with teachers of controversial school issues, whether they be matters of educational policy, personnel, or whatever. Jane and I will try to avoid this trap but, since we plan to live in the area and will continue to see our friends, many of whom are members of the faculty, we need your help in keeping such subjects off our agenda for a few years. You know, I trust, that this request does not indicate any loss of interest on our part in all of you or in the school.

I could not possibly express here our gratitude to you all, but we feel it. Good luck!

John Doe  
Headmaster

is ready to and will support him through a period of considerable storm and stress. It is almost inevitable that a few parents and a few teachers will find things to complain about in a new administration, if only because it is not just like the old one. If the board makes it clear that the new head has its confidence and backing, the situation will almost certainly right itself soon enough.

The head, too, must do his share of keeping the lines of communication open, talking over any difficulties that have arisen (which the board president may not know about), and not trying to conceal them in the hope that they may not come to the attention of the board. It may be said that, when the head and the board president have reached a point where they cannot talk together easily, the situation is ripe for trouble.

We do not want to be too dogmatic about what the different parties should do—headmaster getting off the board, refusing to discuss with his friends among the teachers their concern about what is happening at the school, and so on. We have known situations where the retired head stayed on the board because the new head begged him to do so; and the retired head could be helpful by counseling the teachers on how to improve matters at the school while supporting the new incumbent and by quietly and tactfully giving the new head a bit of good advice about the personalities involved and how to handle them. But we do feel that the first picture we painted can lead to trouble, and that the second indicates a recognition of the dangers inherent in a transition period. The important things are the attitudes of the people involved, maintaining communication with the new head, and avoiding "behind-his-back" discussions between teachers, trustees, and the retired head.

As is so often the case in all kinds of affairs, good judgment and understanding as well as good intentions are needed. With those qualities in the ascendant, the board and the new head can enter into the kind of fruitful partnership that leads a school to success.



## CHAPTER IV A POSTSCRIPT

Trustees, in our experience, are hard-working, conscientious, and intelligent men and women. It is hard to see how the independent school could have remained in existence or could continue without them. If we were to have any criticism, it would probably be that they are too ready to confine their activities to budget and plant, and too shy or too modest to get involved in the educational and human side, which is the heart of the matter. We hope that this booklet will give them some encouragement for doing so (while carefully observing the distinction between policy and administration!). Just as war is too important to be left to the generals, so education is too important to be left to the educators.

The fact that this handbook has been revised for the second time since its original publication ten years ago testifies to the steady evolution, in this period, of the role and responsibility of the independent school trustee. We have seen no reason to change in any significant way the statement of fundamental principles which we made in the first edition. There are, however, some additional illustrative points of view that have emerged with some strength in recent years.

There is little need to speak of the new problems that have come to the fore. No one who has been trustee of an independent school needs to be reminded of them—persistent inflation, new kinds of disciplinary problems, new relationships between trustees, administrators, teachers, and students, the shift from single-sex schools to coeducation or coordinate education, new philosophies about teaching methods and what's to be taught—to mention only the most conspicuous examples. Abundant credit must be given to boards and school heads for the fact that most schools have not merely successfully breasted tides that seemed capable of overwhelming them, but have moved forward. And while board-head relationships are not invariably perfect, there is plenty of testimony from a great many school heads that they not only have no complaints on this score, but, on the contrary, they have a most rewarding relationship with their board and find its members thoroughly supportive.

As has happened in more than one earlier era, there have been some who have predicted the end of independent schools, but again, as in earlier times, these predictions have proved premature. For example, NAIS has on its membership list (counting active members and schools subscribing to its New School Services) 78 schools that were not in exist-

ence ten years ago, and there must be many more that have not yet made themselves known to NAIS. (New schools usually mean new and inexperienced trustees. If in this booklet we have occasionally seemed overdirective to trustees, that is one reason, and we ask to be excused and to have it noted that we have been similarly direct about the responsibilities and occasional failings of school heads.)

These pages make it clear enough, we think, that being trustee of an independent school is not an honorary position or a sinecure; it calls for hard work and intelligent judgment on many difficult matters. We hope that trustees will find many of their questions answered in this handbook. If there are other questions, the staff of NAIS will be happy to hear them and to try to give or find for them the best answers obtainable.

## APPENDIX A

### NAIS PUBLICATIONS

The following publications of possible interest to trustees may be ordered from the National Association of Independent Schools, 4 Liberty Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02109:

- Independent School Administration*, by E. Laurence Springer, 1967. \$2.50.
- Accounting for Independent Schools*, a manual of uniform accounting procedures for independent schools, 1969. \$2.50.
- Administrative Salary Survey*, published periodically; latest edition, 1974. \$2.00.
- Analytical Study of Instructional Personnel Policies in NAIS Member Schools*, prepared by Henry Lahlberg, Jr., 1972. \$.75.
- Annual Statistics of NAIS Member Schools*, published annually as special issue of *NAIS Report*. \$1.00, or available through subscription to *NAIS Report* (see below).
- Benefit Plans for Faculty and Staff*, 1969. \$1.00.
- The Budget as an Introduction to Financial Management*, by Dexter K. Strong, 1971. \$1.25.
- Coeducation Packet*, a variety of data on the movement to coeducation, mergers of schools, reports from schools of their experience with coeducation, 1973. \$4.00.
- American Nonpublic Schools: Patterns of Diversity*, by Otto F. Kraushaar, the first comprehensive study of America's private schools, published by The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972. \$10.00.
- The Nonpublic Schools and the Public: A Panel Discussion*, 1974. \$1.00.
- The Selection and Appointment of School Heads*, by Frank R. Miller, a manual of suggestions to boards of trustees and candidates, 1971. \$1.00.

#### *Available by subscription*

- The Independent School Bulletin*, the professional quarterly journal of the Association. \$5.00 per year.
- NAIS Report*, the Association's newsletter reporting on events, legislation, publications, and developments of particular interest to administrators and trustees. Four regular issues per year plus special issues to report on surveys of tuition fees, salaries, enrollment, and other statistical data. \$3.00 per year.

## APPENDIX B

### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

#### 1. Relations between board and head, with regard to termination, excerpted from *Professional Standards of the Head Mistresses Association of the East* (revised 1971)

##### IV. Standards for Relationships between School Heads and Boards of Trustees.

An understanding, either written or oral, normally exists between the Head of the School and the Board of Trustees covering the obligations and remuneration of the Head. Many mutual obligations, however, cannot be easily specified or foreseen. When unusual problems arise, both school Heads and Boards may falter or take steps harmful to the school and to themselves. The Head Mistresses Association of the East hopes that the following general principles may be helpful to all concerned:

1. *General.* Every effort should be made both by the Trustees and by the Head of a school to maintain a complete and common understanding of school policies and procedures through regular meetings and constant communication. Trustees should have opportunity and encouragement to visit the school frequently and to familiarize themselves with school affairs. If the Head faces serious problems he/she should inform the Trustees soon enough to enable them to gain adequate information on which to base their advice or decision. If the Trustees feel any dissatisfaction, they should first speak promptly and frankly to the Head. In every case, the purpose is always to maintain mutual understanding and to remedy problems before they reach major proportions.
2. *Resignation of the Head.* In the event that a school Head's appointment is to be terminated either by his/her own wish or by a decision of the Board, those concerned should give serious thought to the welfare of the institution and its students and to the future professional and financial welfare of the Head.
  - a. *Resignation initiated by the Head.* A head who intends to resign must give the Board ample time to find a successor and, except under unusual circumstances, must fulfill his/her contractual obligations for the current academic year. Notice to the Trustees of at least a full year is strongly recommended. Lesser notice should be given only for an exceptional reason, and, except for urgent cause, February first should be considered the latest date at which resignation may honorably be tendered for the following year.
  - b. *Resignation initiated by the Board.* A Board of Trustees should request a Head's resignation only after careful consideration and candid discussion with him/her period of time. If a Board then concludes that the interest of the school requires the Head's resignation, the following procedures are recommended to avert the serious damage which may be done both to school and Head by hasty and ill-considered action:
    - (1) Resignation should be requested insofar as possible long enough in advance to give the Head ample opportunity to find a suitable position. Academic positions are customarily available only during a limited period of the year. With proper foresight, a Board should usually be able to give notice of a full year. Except for gravest cause, every effort should be made to avoid the departure of

the Head in the course of an academic year. Both the Board and the Head should carefully weigh the cost of a temporarily difficult situation against the harm that may be done to the standing of the school and to its teachers and students by the abrupt or arbitrary termination of the appointment of the Head.

In all cases, the Board and Head should make every effort to maintain a climate of feeling which will make it mutually agreeable and appropriate for the Head to continue in office until the expiration of the term of notice.

- (2) Financial arrangements will vary according to circumstances, but, in addition to fulfilling the contractual commitments, a Board of Trustees should recognize through its settlement that in the event of an emergency dismissal late in the school year, a Head will in all likelihood be unable to find suitable employment for the next school year.

- c. *Public Announcement* It is in the interest of the school that both the Board and the Head come to an agreement as to the most dignified procedure for handling the public announcement of the Head's resignation.

## 2. *Relations between schools.* Excerpted from *Code of Ethics*, Independent Schools Association of the Central States, November 1973

The unqualified approval for full membership and accreditation by ISACS of any member school shall be, in part, dependent upon that school's compliance, in spirit as well as in word, with high professional and ethical standards. Specific guidelines include the following:

1. No school shall attempt to influence a teacher to break a contract already signed with another school. If no renewal contract has as yet been signed, however, the Headmaster seeking his services should secure the consent of the Head of his present school before negotiations for a change are consummated.

2. No school shall seek to enroll for the same year a student who is currently enrolled in another school.

3. Financial assistance is customarily granted to students on the basis of need. Where there may be competition between member schools for the enrollment of a new student, the most important consideration must be the welfare of the student himself. Extreme care must therefore be taken not to use financial aid, misrepresentation of facts or other unethical practices to influence the student's decision.

4. No school shall accept a transfer student without consultation with his previous school, or without ultimately securing appropriate records.

5. All reports and information exchanged between schools concerning pupils, parents, or teachers must be kept completely confidential.

6. Any school, upon receiving a request from a qualified school for a statistical or personal report on a former student, should comply promptly with said request. If, for some good reason, it is either impossible or inadvisable to send such a report, the former school is expected to so notify the person requesting the information.

## APPENDIX C

### EXCERPTS FROM CONTRACTS AND BY-LAWS

#### 1. A sample contract

Dear Bill:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am writing to convey our offer of a new contract of employment to supersede entirely your present contract as of July 1, 1973, on the following terms and conditions, which were approved by the Board at its special meeting held June 26th, 1973.

##### 1. Duration and Review of Contract

The Board of Trustees hereby renews your contract with the school for a period of five years, beginning July 1, 1973, and continuing through June 30, 1978, subject to two formal reviews: the first, to be completed by July 1, 1975, shall be a complete review, at which time either party can re-negotiate any item in the contract; the second review to begin in February, 1977, shall be undertaken to negotiate terms of a new contract. There shall also be informal reviews of any matters of concern to the School, the Headmaster, and or the board of Trustees, between the Headmaster and the Board of Trustees each year, or whenever necessary, to maintain free communication between the Headmaster and the Board of Trustees.

##### 2. Compensation

A. Salary: The salary of the Headmaster, effective July 1, 1973 or as soon thereafter as the increase may be legally paid, shall be \$..... In the event that wage-price regulations prohibit an increase to the intended level at the present time, the salary shall be raised as of July 1, 1973 to the maximum permissible rate and shall be advanced to the aforesaid rate at the earliest possible time. No later than December of each year of the contract, including 1973, the Board of Trustees shall review the salary and shall make adjustments as it deems appropriate. The fringe benefits applicable to the Headmaster shall be at least equivalent to those provided the faculty at large.

B. Residence: The Headmaster shall be required to live at the residence at ..... for which all utilities—gas, electricity, water, fuel and telephone—shall be provided at the expense of the School.

C. Expense Account: An expense account shall be provided in the annual budget for the Headmaster's professional functions, including travel, meals, lodging, dues for professional organizations, gifts, and entertainment. If the Board of Trustees considers other cultural, social, or community memberships desirable, initiation fees and dues shall be at the expense of the School. In general, if reasonable expense is incurred on behalf of the school, the School shall reimburse the Headmaster for such expense.

D. Vacation: The Headmaster shall have one month of vacation time during the summer. In addition to regular school vacations, the Headmaster shall have ten days during the school year, to be taken at his discretion.

##### 3. Duties

A. In relation to the Board of Trustees: as the chief administrative officer for the Board of Trustees, the Headmaster shall be expected to carry out the policies of the School and the decisions of the Board of Trustees. He shall be expected to anticipate the developing needs of

the School, and the community, and to interpret these needs and changes to the Board of Trustees. He shall be responsible for keeping the Board of Trustees well-informed on all matters pertaining to the school at all times. The Headmaster shall be a member of all Committees related to the school.

B. In administration of the school: the Headmaster shall be the administrator and educational leader of the school. He shall have general supervision over the academic and administrative operation of the school and subsidiary activities sponsored by the school. The Headmaster with the Business Manager shall be responsible for the preparation of the Annual Budget. All administrative, faculty, and staff members' duties shall be delineated by the Headmaster and these employees shall be responsible to the Headmaster.

C. Fund Raising: during the term of this contract, a Fund Raising Drive will probably be launched. The Headmaster with the support of the Board of Trustees shall initiate and develop leadership for such a campaign toward the successful conclusion of the Drive.

D. Outside activities: The Board of Trustees recognizes the need of the Headmaster to have time to represent the School as a professional consultant (not to exceed approximately 10% of total working hours) or as a participant in professional organizations.

Please accept this contract by signing the original and seeing that it is in the minutes of the Board of Trustees.

On behalf of the Board  
of Trustees.

Accepted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## 2. Procedural statements

### A. Orientation of new trustees (from a single school)

The members of the Board of Trustees of . . . . . School are elected to this body by the . . . . . Association. The Board operates according to the . . . . . School Association by-laws, with which each member must acquaint himself. It is the total Board membership which assumes the ultimate responsibility for the operation and continuity of the school and, through the headmaster, sees that the policies of the school are carried out. The elected officers and the appointed committee chairmen have added responsibilities, but not implied privileges. The value of each member is understood to be equal.

- A. In order to prepare and educate new Board members for the responsibilities, there will be an orientation seminar held prior to the first fall Board meeting. Each new Board member should have copies of, and be acquainted with:
1. The *bylaws* of the . . . . . School Association.
  2. *The Independent School Trustee Handbook* authored by NAIS.
  3. *The Board of Trustees-Headmaster Working Relationship* authored by the Headmaster and the Board of Trustees of 1968.
  4. The . . . . . Board of Trustees Working Philosophy.
- B. At the (first) September Board meeting:
1. The Board president will discuss:
    - (a) The role of every member.
    - (b) The duties of each committee.
    - (c) The planned objectives and considerations for the ensuing year.

2. The headmaster will outline:
  - (a) His working relationship with the Board.
  - (b) The primary objectives of the school in this year.
  - (c) The tasks and problems of present and future concern.
3. And the entire Board shall welcome, consider and attempt to answer any questions posed.

*B. Responsibilities of the head (from three different schools)*

A. Duties. The headmaster, subject to the general supervision of the Board of Trustees, shall have plenary authority over the conduct and operation of the school. He shall be the head of the faculty and shall have authority to employ and discharge teachers, instructors and other employees of the school, subject to the approval of the Board, and shall be responsible for the routine administration of the school, the determination and supervision of the courses of study, the disciplining of pupils and generally for all things that may be necessary for the proper conduct of the school.

B. The Board of Trustees is charged with responsibility to establish policy for the School and has ultimate responsibility for execution of the policy established. Execution of policy established by the Board and administration and operation of the School pursuant to such policy is the responsibility of the Headmaster. His responsibility and authority includes curriculum, personnel, business administration, admissions, discipline, relations with parents, alumni, community, other educational institutions and the general public, religious and moral standards and training of the students. It is recognized that he may delegate many of these functions to others on the staff and faculty to handle in accordance with his instructions.

The Headmaster will keep the Board of Trustees informed of developments in the school through reports at regular meetings and special reports when necessary. He will consult with the President of the Board, standing committees or others on the Board as circumstances require between meetings of the Board. He will serve as ex-officio member of each standing committee of the Board and assist the Board in long-range planning.

C. Duties and Authority. The *Headmaster* shall be the executive officer of the School. He shall have full authority to prescribe the program and curriculum of the School, and it shall be his exclusive responsibility to submit to the Board for its advice and consent the names of all persons for appointment to the faculty of the School and for the discontinuance of service of any member of the faculty of the School. The Headmaster shall engage and terminate the employment of all employees of the School on behalf of the association other than members of the faculty, upon such terms and conditions as the Board may approve. The Headmaster shall have complete jurisdiction over the discipline of the students of the School, and he may in his discretion in order to promote or maintain such discipline, suspend or expel any student from the School. The Headmaster shall have such other powers and duties as the Board may, from time to time, prescribe and determine.

*C. Termination and review (from two different schools)*

A. AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF . . . . . ACADEMY, A CORPORATION DULY ORGANIZED AND EXISTING UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK (HEREUNDER CALLED THE "BOARD") AND . . . . (HEREINAFTER CALLED THE "HEADMASTER"):

This agreement shall run from July 1, 1972 to June 30, 1977 and shall be automatically extended from year to year thereafter. This agreement may be cancelled by either party by giving the other party one year advance written notice of its desire to terminate this contract effective June 30, 1973 or any June 30th subsequent thereto.

The President of the Board will meet formally with the Headmaster each year in May, and whenever the Board has concerns about his work, to evaluate the Headmaster's performance



of his duties and express candidly any concerns that the Board has. The President will then report the results of such conferences to the Board of Trustees at their subsequent meeting.

B. The term of your employment shall be extended for successive periods of one year each subject to salary and benefit negotiation. In January of each year and prior to any renewal of this agreement, you will meet and consult with the President of the Board of Trustees for a review of progress in achieving goals and objectives which will be established annually for your office and the school. Either party may, at least sixty days prior to such annual review, give written notice to the other by registered mail of intention not to renew such employment.

C. (See Section I of sample contract, above).

## APPENDIX D

### BOARD-HEAD RELATIONSHIPS

#### 1. From the policy handbook of a large coeducational independent day school

1. Headmaster is primarily responsible to the Board of Trustees and not to any individual committee or member for the twelve-month operation of the School. Routinely, the Headmaster works closely with the President and the Executive Committee.

2. Headmaster and Board of Trustees must work within the By-Laws of the School Association. The philosophy of the school as developed over the years should serve as a guide for the future growth of the school.

3. Headmaster will work directly with individual members of the Board and with sub-committees on specific problems. The Headmaster should report unusual problems to the President of the Board or to the Executive Committee.

4. The Headmaster is responsible for:
- (a) Helping establish the school budget
  - (b) Adherence to the school budget
  - (c) Hiring and firing of paid personnel of the school
  - (d) The total program of the school
  - (e) The safety rules of the school
  - (f) The admission and emission policies of the school

5. Headmaster will make a report to the Board of Trustees each regular meeting. This report will keep the Board well informed about what is happening at school.

6. The President of the Board may ask the Headmaster for a preview of his monthly report prior to the meeting. To the degree possible, the President of the Board and the Headmaster will communicate with each other prior to every meeting of the Board of Trustees to inform each other of new business to be brought up at the meeting and any areas of discussion which may be of particular interest or concern.

7. Between regular meetings the Headmaster should report any unusual problems to the President or proper sub-committee chairman.

8. The Headmaster will inform the faculty about any relevant non-confidential discussion and decisions made at a regular monthly meeting.

9. Each year, in November, the Executive Committee of the Board will evaluate the work of the Headmaster. A yearly letter of reappointment will be sent to the Headmaster from the President expressing the will of the Executive Committee.

10. The Executive Committee will inform the Headmaster of possible disagreement with his performance and request a thorough discussion to determine what steps must be taken.

11. The Headmaster will inform the Executive Committee of any major problems interfering with the performance of his duty.

12. If either the Board of Trustees or the Headmaster wish to terminate their relationship, the decision should be made in writing as early as possible in the school year, but hopefully a year before actual date.

September, 1972

## 2. Excerpts from a statement on the relationship between governing bodies of schools and headmasters from an association of school heads in another English-speaking country

Understanding of the relative positions of the Governing Body and the Headmaster is essential. Usually the Governors are charged by the Act of Incorporation or other constituent document with the management and superintendence of the affairs, concerns and property of the School and are required to act so as to promote the purposes for which the School is established. The whole responsibility for its conduct rests upon them. While retaining in their hands the control of financial and property matters, they delegate to the Headmaster their duties and powers as regards discipline, courses of study, selection and management of staff, and school activities generally. They should give him their confidence and allow him a wide freedom in the exercise of the powers entrusted to him; but they have the right and obligation to be consulted on any matter of policy affecting the welfare of the School; and, if a difference of view upon such a matter arises between them and the Headmaster and all efforts to resolve it fail, it is their view which must prevail.

Such differences will seldom occur, and, if they do, will be easily settled, if each party maintains the right attitude to the other. The relation should be one of complete trust, with unlettered freedom of discussion, with a full understanding on the Headmaster's part that the ultimate responsibility is that of the Governing Body, and with a generous recognition by the Governing Body that the Headmaster should be given full freedom in the carrying out of his duties. In the day to day running of the School in matters of local organisation and discipline, and in the selection and management of staff, the Headmaster should not be under the constraint of constant observation and criticism. The Headmaster on his side must inspire the Governors with confidence that he can be relied upon to bring to their notice everything which they should know about the state of the School so that they may discharge their responsibilities.

The relationship indeed calls for constant wisdom and discretion on all sides.

Cases will occur in which a Governing Body or some of its members become to a greater or lesser degree dissatisfied with the Headmaster. The faults may be on either side or on both sides. The Governors may have been misinformed, or mistaken in judgment, or impatient; the Headmaster may be really failing in one way or another to meet the requirements of his position. Unless wisely handled, such a position may become one of real danger. In all relations between the Governing Body and the Headmaster, the key position is held by the Chairman of the Governing Body who must possess the confidence of both sides, do justice to both sides and be ready to take the initiative where necessary in bringing any causes of friction or tension to fruitful discussion.

## APPENDIX E

### THE ROLE OF THE BOARD

The manual referred to in Chapter I, note 13, is the *Manual for School Evaluation*, published in 1972 by the Commission on Independent Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, one of the six regional educational accrediting bodies in the United States. Some of the questions under "The Role of the Governing Body" are:

3. Describe the orientation given to newly-elected members of the governing body, either prior to or early in their period of service on the governing body.
4. What provisions are made for keeping members of the governing body abreast of developments in education?
5. Attach a sample of the agenda of the most recent meeting of the governing body. How was this agenda developed?
6. Describe any committee structure established in the governing body.
7. How do various segments of the school community receive reports from the governing body and / or its committees?
8. Describe a recent policy decision made by the governing body. How was the matter initiated and by whom? What was the procedure used by the governing body? What was the decision? How was this action made to those affected?
10. What responsibility does the governing body assume for evaluation of the chief administrative officer? How are their conclusions transmitted to him and by whom?

(Note. It may be added that questions of this type are also beginning to appear in the evaluation processes carried on by regional associations of independent schools.)

APPENDIX F

**SURVEY OF SCHOOL HEADS  
CONCERNING BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRACTS**

How many heads of schools are members of board of trustees? Should they be members? Do school heads have written contracts? Should they? What should the contract cover?

As these and other related questions were being asked with increasing frequency by both trustees and heads, NAIS undertook in the winter of 1973-74 to obtain, through a questionnaire to the heads of schools, a picture of current practice. The findings below are based on information and opinions supplied by 620 school heads—75% of those to whom the questionnaire was sent—as well as a number of trustee chairmen whose views were solicited.

1. *Board membership.* The first question asked for the head's status, whether as a full member of the board of trustees, an *ex officio* member (and in this case whether with or without the right to vote), or not a member, and for comments on the advantages or disadvantages of the status. The returns from 604 heads were as follows:

	<i>No.</i>	%
Full member	167	28
<i>Ex officio</i> member		
Voting	67	11
Nonvoting	153	25
Did not say	<u>34</u>	<u>6</u>
	421	70
Not a member	<u>183</u>	30
	604	

It is of interest to note that of the 70% who were members, full or *ex officio*, of their boards, slightly more than half (56%) had voting rights. Put negatively, over half of all the heads (counting nonmembers and non-voting *ex officio* members) were without voting rights.

Of those commenting on their status, the vast majority—277 to 20—liked it, whatever it was. Here are some sample comments.

*From those who are full members*

- a. I am totally involved in all policy decisions. Also it makes me one of the team, not "merely" an "employee."
- b. Am working *with* the trustees, and not for or against them.
- c. Am not simply an employee directed to implement policy; I'm expected to direct policy-making and to lead.
- d. Full membership underscores the cooperative relationship between trustees and head. Any other kind of membership points up the employer-employee relationship, which is not conducive of the fullest trust and confidence.

*From those not board members or not having a vote*

- a. I do not think I should be (a member). Clarity of role is essential. I am employed by the trustees as the educational leader of the school and its chief administrative officer.
- b. The chief advantage seems to me that I cannot vote, therefore, I am never forced into the position of siding with one group or another.
- c. I have a detachment that is useful. To be able to say, "The Trustees decided . . ." is a great help at times.
- d. I was asked to be on the board but preferred to have the vacancy filled with a new board member.

*From those feeling it makes little or no difference whether or not the head is a member or has a vote*

- a. Membership is neither good nor bad—a vote is only important to break a tie, and that would indicate too sharp a division; better not bring it to a vote.
- b. Relationship between head and chairman is *far* more important than status on the board.
- c. I've worked with boards in both ways—member and nonmember. It doesn't make any difference. (This view was voiced several times.)

There was no significant expression of opinion about "full" membership versus *ex officio* status. In general, there was very little dissatisfaction. There were many comments like "comfortable," "happy," "see no advantage," "no problem."

II. *Contract status.* The next question asked the school heads, "Which of the following apply to your contractual arrangements with the Board?"

	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Formal contract	114	19
Letter of agreement	148	25
Nothing in writing	<u>329</u>	56
	591	

Of those working under a formal contract, not quite half were on a one-year contract, the others on two-, three-, four-, or five-year contracts, with two's and three's predominating. Although more than half checked "nothing in writing," it should be noted that many of these indicated that *initially* (when they were first appointed) there had been a contract or a letter of agreement. Others noted that their reappointment, and often their salary, were annually recorded in the board's minutes.

III. *Desirability of formal contract.* Another question asked, "Do you favor a formal contractual relationship between head and board? Why or why not?"

	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	326	62
No	178	34
Neutral or undecided	<u>19</u>	4
	523	

Many of the "No" answers were rendered in terms of particular circumstances, as evidenced by comments like "not for me," "not here," "not in this situation." Others seemed to think of a contract principally as an instrument committing board and head to a term of years. A number of others, while registering a "No" answer because of their own relationship with their board, hedged on the general question with comments like "not for me, but for my successor," "not here, but if I went elsewhere," "or future headmasters 'Yes,' for me 'No.'" Other replies were more clear-cut.

*From those definitely in favor of a contract*

- a. Boards of Trustees change and understandings or even goals previously agreed upon can be forgotten very easily and quickly. (There were many comments about avoiding misunderstanding.)
- b. Yes. A contract helps to avoid any conflict with relation to areas of responsibility, relationship with the board, period of employment, salary and fringe benefits, termination of employment.
- c. The document should include a precise job description, showing just what the head is and is not responsible for executing.
- d. Yes—to protect the head in the termination process, and second to create a reason for the board to evaluate the head's performance at least once a year.

*From those opposed*

- a. This is one area left in which agreements between gentlemen are still binding. If there are philosophical differences no legal contract is going to salvage administrative difficulties.
- b. If relationships are sound, contracts are unimportant. (There were

many in this vein about trust, respect, cooperation. Without them a contract is worthless.)

- c. No. The insecurity keeps you on your toes!

*From some neither wholly for nor wholly against*

- a. Yes—for a new head.
- b. Yes—when first hired.
- c. Would want one for first three years, then live by my performance.
- d. Yes, if board sees head as an employee; no, if board sees head as part of the "team."

*Is a contract "professional"?* (two sharply contrasting views)

- a. Anything less than a contract lacks professionalism.
- b. A contract is unprofessional and unnecessary.

IV. *Contract review.* "Is contract or agreement (written or oral) reviewed and renewed, annually or periodically, and with or by whom?"

	No.	%
Yes—annually	333	70
Yes—periodically	77	16
No	<u>66</u>	14
	476	

Nearly a quarter of those who returned the questionnaire (144 out of 620) did not answer this question at all. Among the affirmative answers that were recorded, the kind of review provided could not readily be identified. Some spoke of an item in the board's minutes, which suggests one kind; others of a note from the treasurer specifying salary and benefits for the ensuing year, which indicates another; there were others who mentioned a brief (perhaps perfunctory) meeting with the board president; and still others obviously had a full-scale and frank discussion and review of the head's (and the board's) performance. It was not clear, therefore, what *proportion* of the affirmative votes were from heads who had the satisfaction of this last type.

*From two who clearly did*

- a. The executive committee of the trustees meets without me to discuss my job and then the president of the trustees discusses with me the comments made.
- b. I ask for and receive a performance evaluation every year. This is done informally by the President, who incidentally also asks me to evaluate him and the board.

*From two who did not*

- a. I have often felt very lonely in my job, and the lack of any reaction



- praise or blame—has made the loneliness more acute. Some periodic review of how the head is doing would be appreciated.
- b. More emphasis could be placed on annual evaluations of the head by the president or chairman, in much the same way faculty come up for review by the headmaster.

As for the "with or by whom" question, the head of the board of trustees—chairman or president—was mentioned most often (163 cases); the executive committee or the full board, with about the same number between them (161 cases); and the rest were scattered: the board president with others, education committee, instruction committee, personnel committee, finance committee, treasurer.

V. *Termination procedures.* (1) "Does your contract or agreement stipulate procedures to be followed in the event either you or the Board chooses to terminate the contract?" and (2) "Do you feel that such provision is desirable?"

To *question 1*: the response was overwhelmingly in the negative, with 463 (83%) answering "No," and only 94 (17%) answering "Yes."

To *question 2*: the response was strongly affirmative, with 311 (73%) voting "Yes," and 118 (27%) voting "No," indicating clearly that a substantial majority of those who do not have such an understanding feel that it would be desirable.

Some of the comments showed that the writers were thinking primarily of termination resulting from a crisis situation.

*In favor of formalizing termination procedures*

- a. A number of abrupt and poorly handled terminations recently indicate the functional inadequacy of the concept of a "gentlemen's agreement" in times of strain.
- b. Yes, to protect the head from the decisions which may be made in haste during a crisis situation.

*Opposed or doubtful*

- a. The kinds of people who will have problems dissolving the contractual relationship will have those troubles whether or not there are written provisions.
- b. A good board will see that you are treated properly, a poor board probably will not.

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In our view, there can hardly be standard procedures for termination "in times of strain," for every situation will have its own special circumstances. There can, however, be written into a contract, a letter of agreement, or the by-laws, a section about how "normal" termination is to be handled, whether initiated by the head or by the school, with provision for

due notice in ample time to protect both parties. See Appendix C, "Termination and Review," for samples from two actual contracts.

The problem of a separation *without* due notice hinges on questions of financial settlements and protection of the reputations of the school and the head from avoidable damage. These belong more in the realm of ethics than in that of stipulations in a contract.

In conclusion, we return to the annual review and evaluation as a desirable and constructive process for both head and board, a potential safety valve that forestalls explosions. In its best form, it can mean a thorough and helpful evaluation session, formal or informal, that gives the head a clear idea of where he stands, where he is doing well, and where his performance is not up to the board's hopes and expectations, and in general clears the way for understanding and cooperation for the next year. At the same time, the head can make any comments he wishes about the board's performance. It amounts to an airing of any and all concerns of the board and the head.