

Discernment and Onboarding for New Members of a Catholic School Advisory Council or Catholic School Governing Board

Section A: Characteristics of Effective Catholic School Advisory Councils or Boards

Many are called, but few are chosen.
--Matthew 22:14

The following information is for Pastors, Principals, Governing Board Chairs, and Advisory Council Chairs in the discernment of new lay leaders for Catholic education. Those who are interested in serving on an Advisory Council or Governing Board in Springfield Diocese will be active disciples of Jesus Christ who seek to advance the Catholic mission of our Catholic Schools. Please read over these principles and invite anyone who is considering Board or Council service to look them over, prior to completing a formal application.

Effective Catholic Advisory Councils or Governing Boards have the following characteristics:

- **Reasonable Size**—an Advisory Council or Governing Board should be comprised of enough people to ensure a distribution of skillsets while remaining small enough to be effective at providing advice and insight on key decisions. Eight to twelve members would be a good target for schools with enrollments up to 500 students.
- **Mission-driven Members**--All Catholic Council or Board Members should be purpose-filled practitioners of their faith and subscribe to all of the teachings of the Church—including, but not limited to—those on human identity, sexuality, and gender, since the formation of Catholic, missionary disciples of Jesus Christ is the highest ideal of the school's mission and are to be the key components of the school's culture and framework for instruction. Because the Council or Board leads the missionary efforts of a Catholic School, non-Catholic Board Members will need to be able to support the mission of the school, including those portions that touch on what the Church teaches about herself, as founded by Jesus Christ Himself, to proclaim the truth of His salvific ministry and having the authority to promulgate the definitive interpretation of the Christian scriptures.

INITIAL:

Board or Council Chair: _____ New Member: _____

- **Differentiated Representation**--Councils and Boards should not be comprised predominantly by parents or grandparents of currently enrolled students, in order to ensure that decision-making for strategic initiatives remains objective and healthy. A sound composition for a Catholic Advisory Council or Governing Board would include no more than one-third, current parents or grandparents; at least one third, parishioners who do not have children or grandchildren currently enrolled in the school, but who do have a deep commitment to the Catholic mission and identity of the institution; and no more than 2 non-Catholics, with those individuals bringing specific skills or professional experience in law, marketing, business, or other areas that will provide sound advice to school leadership outside of Catholic mission issues or religious instruction.

INITIAL:

Board or Council Chair: _____ New Member: _____

- **Term Limits**—Advisory Councils and Governing Boards should have By-laws that make provisions for term limits. 5-7 consecutive years of Board service allows an individual time to contribute to the Catholic and scholastic mission of the school, while ensuring that other members of the community can share the labors and triumphs of the institution.

INITIAL:

Board or Council Chair: _____ New Member: _____

- **Long-term Focus on Key Objectives**—Effective Advisory Councils and Governing Boards direct their attention and labors to long-range goals associated with the school’s strategic plan and mission, usually on the strength of the school’s Catholic identity, its fiscal stability, and its operational vitality. This is best accomplished by not primarily looking at individual and immediate personnel or materiel questions, but rather the factors needed for the school to be vibrant in one to three years.

INITIAL:

Board or Council Chair: _____ New Member: _____

In discerning strong candidates to serve on their local Council or Board, Pastors, Principals, Council Chairs and Board Chairs should look for individuals who are:

- Well-formed and active in the Catholic faith
- Experienced and successful in business, law, accounting, or a service industry
- Able to articulate how they can best serve the long-term goals and interests of the school, rather than seeking a seat on the Council or Board because they have a personal animus against the school’s teachers or leadership team (sometimes parents are tempted to become Council or Board Members to settle a grievance with one or more members of the school staff; this should be avoided at all costs).

I have read, understand, and agree to follow all of the principles outlined above:

Board or Council Chair:

New Board or Council Member:

Date:

Section B: Application and Onboarding of New Council or Board Members

The following checklist outlines the steps required for an Advisory Council Chair or Governing Board Chair to verify for prospective new members.

Completed Application

All sections reviewed, initialed, signed, and dated: Y | N

Principles of Effective Advisory Councils and Governing Board Reviewed: Y | N

Review of By-laws

Council or Board Chair has reviewed By-laws with new member: Y | N

Prospective Member understands the role and authority of the Bishop of Springfield as outlined in the By-laws of the school: Y | N

Higher Calling, Higher Standards

Prospective Member has read document: Y | N

Prospective Member has had a chance to ask questions on document: Y | N

Council or Board Training Videos

Prospective Member has watched training videos: Y | N

Prospective Member has had a chance to ask questions on training: Y | N

Safe Environment Training

On-line criminal background check submitted: Y | N

Cleared criminal background check received: Y | N

Safe Environment training program completed: Y | N

Acknowledgement of Policy on Working with Minors completed: Y | N

Volunteers and sexual abuse of minors completed: Y | N

Board or Council Chair:
Name (please print below):

Signature:

Date:

New Board or Council Member:
Name (please print below):

Signature:

Date:
