

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
A departmental organization chart (supplemented with a directory of key staff contact information) is publicly available on the school board’s web site.	Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis and through a variety of communications vehicles (e.g., websites, email, memos, town halls, etc.).	Yes
Key senior staffs, of all functional areas, are members and participants in sector committees of provincial associations and/or Ministry workgroups.	Yes

Establishment of an Effective Governance Model

The Board has adopted a governance model that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of trustees from those of the senior administration. The Board is composed of eight trustees. They have responsibility for setting the broad policies that reflect the school board’s values, vision and strategic direction.

The Administrative Council is composed of the Director of Education, Superintendent of Education, Superintendent of Business, Manager of Information Systems and Human Resources Administrator. The Administrative Council is responsible for the implementation of the Board’s strategic direction, and leads the management of the school board through a collaborative process. There is a varying degree of participation of managers and superintendents in the decision-making process.

The Director and two superintendents make the decisions for the system. Manager of Information Systems and Human Resources Administrator attend parts of the administrative council meetings that pertain to their areas of responsibility, and are involved in decisions applicable to these areas. The Administrative Council may also involve principals or other consultants in decision-making to obtain full information on a specific issue.

This governance structure has been approved by the Board and is clearly documented in the school board's *Governance Process* policies.

The Director of Education has a positive relationship with the board of trustees. The Director's role is broadly stated in the Board’s policy, and includes accountability to the

Board and compliance with *Outcomes* policy and *Executive Limitation* policy.¹ The Board delegates the day-to-day implementation of these policies to the Director of Education. The *Delegation to the Director of Education* policy clearly states the authority and accountability of the Director. The Board's by-laws are currently being revised to ensure they are consistent with the school board's policy governance model.

Training for new trustees is provided using a training package and informal discussions of trustees' and board administration roles and functions. New trustees meet with the Director of Education, the Chair of the Board and the Superintendent of Business, and can attend the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association (OCSTA) conferences and annual general meeting.

School board administration reviews governance policies with new trustees, and they are encouraged to discuss any aspects of these policies with the Director of Education. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Board ensure that trustees adhere to the governance policies. The Board has been developing the current governance model over the past several years. On the whole, the Board is able to function effectively in its role and is committed to evolving its governing approach over time to achieve the best results.

Development of the Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Board Improvement Plan

The board of trustees developed a multi-year strategic direction which outlines the school board's goals and objectives for academic and non-academic functions. The 2008-2011 strategic direction provides a framework for policy development and planning at the operational and departmental levels.

Each year school board administration develops a strategic action plan to implement the Board's strategic direction. The strategic action plan sets out actions under eight areas (pillars) established by the Board, and indicates timelines and responsibilities.

School board administration has established a development and consultation cycle for strategic planning. The strategic planning process begins in the spring of each year in conjunction with the budget development process, and includes feedback from parents, trustees, teachers, union groups and principals, as well as the broader Catholic community. As part of the strategic planning process, the school board reviews the multi-year strategic direction, and develops a strategic action plan for the year. Each year in November, school board administration presents the annual report and strategic action plan to all stakeholders.

¹ The Northwest Catholic District School Board Governance Policy

The monitoring of performance against the established goals is conducted by the Superintendent of Education, using school improvement plans, discussions with the school board community and school data. The Director visits schools monthly to discuss student data, student achievement and successful instructional strategies with principals. The Director provides monthly reports to trustees on progress against the established targets.

In addition to the multi-year strategic direction and the annual strategic action plan, school board administration planning activities include an annual board improvement planning focus, which highlights key activities for program and management teams. The document indicates staff responsible for specific activities and timelines.

In 2007-08 the school board implemented a school effectiveness framework to develop improvement plans using SMART goals. A Board Improvement Plan, developed through extensive consultation, addresses the academic priorities and initiatives of the school board based on EQAO results in writing and reading. As part of school improvement planning, principals (along with their school improvement team members) completed the school self assessment framework.

The multi-year strategic direction, annual strategic action plan and system program priorities are aligned. The school board's annual planning documents are not consolidated into an annual Board Improvement Plan.

It is notable that the school board has established the school effectiveness leader position, which is dedicated to working with the principals and teachers on the Board and school improvement planning processes. The position also enables the school board to focus on the application of new learning strategies for teachers.

Decision-Making Process

The school board has formal, documented and easily accessible policies and administrative procedures for governance and administration, which are available on the school board's website. Management has a positive working relationship with the Board, with a decision-making process that addresses student achievement targets and operational performance.

There is an established process and a formal protocol for setting the agenda for Board meetings. The Administrative Council develops potential agenda items for Board meetings and obtains input from the trustees on additional agenda items. The Administrative Council reviews draft agenda two weeks before the Board meeting. A standing Pre-Board Committee (Director, Chair and Vice Chair of the Board) finalizes the agenda. This agenda protocol will likely be formalized as part of a review of Board by-laws.

The Board's policies are developed by the Director of Education and board of trustees. There is an established three-year cycle for review of Board's policies. The Board follows a calendar of review for the policies or updates them as needed. Policies published on the school board's website clearly indicate when they were created and revised.

Management develops administrative procedures that support the implementation of the Board's policies. The administrative procedures are developed by the Director of Education, Senior Administration and department managers. There is no schedule to review and update the school board's administrative procedures. School board administration reviews and updates the administrative procedures in line with changes in Board's policies and new ministry policies and directions. The Board of Trustees is provided with updates on administrative procedure changes. The last review date of each procedure is noted on the school board's website.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The school board's senior administration appears to be organized effectively. Two superintendents, who report to the Director, have oversight over the academic programs and operations of the schools. The HR Administrator reports to the Director, Superintendent of Business and Superintendent of Education. The Manager of Finance and the Manager of Information Systems report to the Superintendent of Business.

The school board's organizational chart identifies the reporting relationships between the senior management team and other school board staff. However, the delineation of roles and responsibilities could be enhanced. For example, the organizational chart currently shows the HR administrator reporting to three individuals—the Director, the Superintendent of Education and the Superintendent of Business. While the administrator is likely to support the work of all three individuals, additional clarity could be provided by re-examining the nature of the reporting relationships and amending the organizational chart. The organizational chart is published on the school board's website.

The Director of Education, HR Administrator and Manager of Information Systems are based in the school board's corporate office in the Town of Fort Frances. The Superintendent of Business and Superintendent of Education are based in the corporate office in the City of Dryden. Given the significant distance between the two offices, the senior administration team ensures effective operation and minimizes travel with videoconferencing technology.

The Board's Committee of the Whole forms several committees which includes OECTA and CUPE bargaining committees, Salary Committee for Senior Administration,

Principals and Vice-principals, Staff Funded Leave Plan Committee, OECTA grievance Committee, Board/School Council Liaison Committee, Secondary School Awards Committee, Catholic School Advisory Committee and Environmental Committee. The Board's Statutory Committees include Special Education Advisory Committee and Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils, Student Discipline Committee. The Board also has several standing committees including: Pre-Board Committee, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Advisory Committee, Thunder Bay Diocesan Trustees' Association Executive and Diocesan Office of Catholic Education.

On average, the board of trustees meets once per month. Meetings are not scheduled in July and August but may be called at the discretion of the Chair. With the school board's area, at least half of the scheduled board meetings are conducted via videoconferencing.

The school board recognizes the need to plan for pending retirements at the senior management level in the near to medium term. However, the school board has not developed a formal succession plan for its senior management positions. Management undertakes leadership development programs for teachers and encourages school principals to pursue further professional development. Management noted that two out of five school principals have obtained a postgraduate degree. One principal has completed the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program provided by the Ontario Principals' Council. Vice-principals are provided with leadership experience opportunities to facilitate succession at the school level.

The Board's *Governance Process* policies broadly define the Director's role and accountability. Each November, the Board conducts performance evaluation of the Director of Education based on the presentation of the Director's annual report and the new strategic action plan.

Stakeholder Engagement

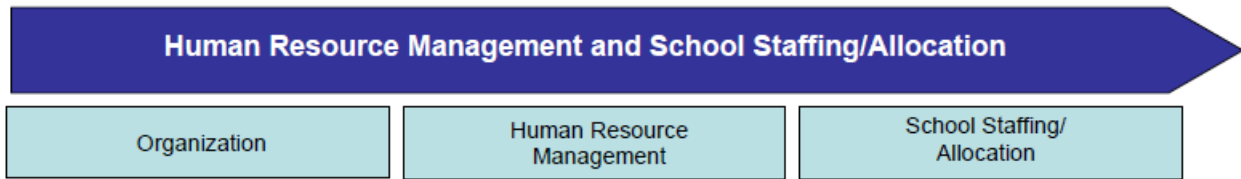
The school board has demonstrated that it consistently administers its responsibilities (both directly and through its committees) in an open and transparent manner. Various communication channels (emails, surveys, newsletters and website postings) keep key stakeholders engaged throughout the year. The Director of Education gathers input from all of the school board staff, principals, school councils and teachers to set the annual strategic direction for the system.

Senior administration actively participates in various committees both across the sector and locally. The school board's senior administration team is also extensively involved in community initiatives and partnerships.

Recommendations

- Management should consolidate the school board’s annual planning documents into an annual Board Improvement Plan that includes the actions and objectives listed in the Strategic Action Plan and System Program Priorities documents. This consolidated planning document would include academic program plans and operational plans, and allow the senior management team to streamline their reporting of specific achievements. The annual Board Improvement Plan should be aligned with the objectives in the school board’s multi-year strategic direction. It should set specific, measurable targets and timelines for key activities of the school board. This would enable management to track and report progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
- Senior administration should re-examine the nature of the reporting relationships and revise the organizational chart accordingly.
- The school board should develop a formal succession plan to manage departures of key staff.

3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation – Findings and Recommendations



Effective management of human resources ensures an adequate number of qualified staff throughout the organization can perform their prescribed duties. Policies and procedures to develop staff are in place, through performance appraisals, professional development and support services. Staff allocations to schools and classrooms meet the Ministry’s class size requirements, and are congruent with the school board’s collective agreements and allocation models. The allocation models adopted by the school board ensure the most effective teaching and learning practices.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the school board’s adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of a review of the data provided by the school board and on-site field-work, which included interviews with all key HR staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

3.1 Human Resource Organization

The review of the organization of the HR department assesses:

- Whether appropriate policies and procedures have been established and maintained to support the HR functions and required priorities, and whether they are aligned with the school board’s directions;
- Whether an annual departmental plan setting out the goals and priorities and their alignment to the school board’s strategic directions has been established;
- Whether the roles and responsibilities of staff support the key functions, activities and practices of HR;
- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for HR organizations, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full.

Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The HR department’s goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan. They are aligned to the annual board improvement plan, accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified responsibilities.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The HR department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is available.	Yes
Senior HR staff has appropriate designations (e.g., Certified Human Resource Professional, etc.).	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management has processes in place to monitor HR policy compliance.	Yes
HR Management provides regularly scheduled HR policy awareness, training, and education sessions.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Although the school board’s annual strategic action plan indicates HR priorities and timelines, the HR function does not have a formal annual departmental plan. The plan would describe its goals and priorities, and provide a framework for tracking and reporting on the department’s progress throughout the year.

The current priorities of HR include: implementation of software for absence tracking and payroll, development of interfaces between the school board’s financial management system and OnSIS, and the development of an accessibility and disability plan. The HR function has developed a health and safety plan for the school board. The HR function leads the school board’s information and privacy management project.

