



National Association
of Episcopal Schools
Excellence Through Association

Principles of Good Practice for Governance in Episcopal Parish Day Schools

National Association of Episcopal Schools

Over nine hundred parishes and cathedrals in the Episcopal Church have a school as part of their ministry. Parish day schools are a vital dimension of the Episcopal Church's ministry of outreach, and each year a growing number of children are nurtured in mind, body, and spirit in our parish schools.

The NAES *Strategic Plan 2001* describes governance of day schools in the parish setting as a challenge because "the levels of communication and accountability required by the complex nature of Episcopal schools' relationships with other Church entities call for special expertise and leadership development." The complexity of governance in the parish day school model can include more than twenty-three groups of stakeholders, which adds up to thousands of people with intersecting interests who are part of the school setting. It is no wonder that vestries, rectors, school boards, and heads, who share the responsibility for governance of parish day schools, so often seek support from NAES to help them understand their roles and responsibilities.

Parish and school leaders are responsible for ensuring effective governance in parish day

schools. The way individual leaders relate to one another creates the atmosphere in which everything else happens between church and school. Bylaws and canons set the parameters of the mission and its outcomes, but they cannot initiate a sustainable conversation between church and school. Only people can.

In an effort to assist leaders of both church and school in effective governance in the parish day school setting, schools where thousands of children and families grow and learn each year, NAES has developed this set of *Principles of Good Practice for Governance in Episcopal Parish Day Schools*. While most of the principles are applicable to all parish schools regardless of their incorporation, some are applicable only to not separately incorporated schools and their sponsoring organizations. The *Principles* are intended to:

- support the professional and lay people of both the church and school as they seek to be responsible, caring leaders and partners in the governance of the day school.
- assist vestries, rectors, school board members, and heads in understanding:
 - their roles and responsibilities, and
 - the boundaries that define each particular role in the governance process of a day school.
- guide discussion and processes as leaders strive to create trusting, collegial, and mutually fulfilling relationships in the parish day school setting.

On a practical level, NAES anticipates that the *Principles* will be brought to bear on important aspects of our schools' institutional life, particularly:

- church-school relations;
- vestry, board, and staff orientations and the understanding of the various roles and responsibilities;
- parent orientation processes;
- strategic and annual planning processes;
- leadership transition processes;
- • regular self-study of governance processes as part of an academic accreditation self-study;
- vestry, board, rector, and head evaluation processes;
- marketing to the community the unique church/school partnership found in parish day schools.

The National Association of Episcopal Schools series of *Principles of Good Practice* has been developed to share best practices found in Episcopal schools, to delineate the important issues that are common to Episcopal schools, and to offer guidance as each school develops and reviews policies and practices. Because each Episcopal school is unique, there is not a "one size fits all" formula for Episcopal schools. However, NAES seeks continually to promote effective governance in Episcopal schools and invites school and church leaders to use the *Principles* as a tool in planning, modeling, and encouraging additional reflection about governance practices.