



Principles of Good Practice for Leadership Transitions in Episcopal Schools

*Approved by the Governing Board of the
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The board of trustees of an Episcopal school has many important responsibilities: supporting and promoting the school's mission, setting institutional policies, focusing on strategic priorities, ensuring financial strength, evaluating annually the board's performance and, as trust-holders, providing leadership and vision to ensure the school's continued sustainability. In supporting these goals, the board has another significant responsibility: the selection, support, nurture, and evaluation of the person who will serve as the head of the school.

When a transition in school leadership occurs, it must be carefully and thoughtfully handled. The responsibility for selecting the new leader rests with the board; it is the single most important act the board undertakes, an action that impacts every aspect of the school's future.

In parish day school settings, policies regarding authority and decision-making

during leadership transitions vary. Thus, the board's decision in the selection of a new leader may ultimately require the consent of the vestry and the rector. A leadership transition time is an opportunity to clarify and strengthen the relationship between a church and parish day school. However, the transition processes delineated by these principles provide good practices for all Episcopal schools, including independent Episcopal schools. NAES recommends that parish day schools also use the *Principles of Good Practice for Governance in Episcopal Parish Day Schools* as a resource during leadership transitions.

If your school is not facing a leadership change this year, it is likely that sometime in the next few years it will be. The percentage of heads retiring in the near future is expected to be over 50%. According to the experience of NAES, on average 10% to 20% of Episcopal school headships change each year. NAES recognizes that when a leadership transition occurs, it is unsettling for a school and its constituents. School community members feel most vulnerable when a leader departs—especially if it is the head. When the head of school changes, a whole new leadership team must be developed. Trust-building and relationships begin anew. Thus, guiding a school through a leadership transition must be initiated with competence and care.

In an effort to assist leaders of both church and school in navigating the waters of change that leadership transitions bring,