



**Academy of Dover**  
**Mapping Board Excellence**  
Key survey results: August 2015

**Mapping Board Excellence Program**

Delaware Association of Nonprofit Advancement designed the Mapping Board Excellence Program to help develop the governance function of nonprofits Boards of Directors and thereby the long-term community impact of the nonprofit organizations in the State of Delaware. This program, which was created in conjunction with the Standards for Excellence Institute in Maryland, includes a survey and self-assessment after the Foundations of Board Excellence workshop, an analysis of those responses, and a follow visit with the Board Chair and Head of School to review. This study is meant to identify the strengths of current board governance and to assist the school in planning for growth and further learning.

The Academy of Dover held its workshop on August 7, 2015. Members then received the 25-minute survey and self-assessment and were given two weeks to anonymously respond. Of the ten board members, seven members completed the board excellence self-assessment survey. An additional member started it, but stopped after the first section. While a higher response rate would have been preferred, the results clearly indicated particular areas of strengths and opportunities for growth.

**The Results as a Whole**

In general, when asked seven times about the various categories as a whole, the board rates itself as AVERAGE in performing most of the functions of a board, with an average score of 3.09 out of 5.

**Key areas of praise and confidence:**

- The organization's mission and vision are clear
- The board conducts its business at regular meetings with advance agendas and is aware of its role and expectations.
- The board is committed to the mission of the school
- The board understands the role of diversity and feels that it adequately reflects the diversity needed.
- Every single respondent felt valued by the school
- The Head of School provides the board with important information that lies outside the usual monitoring

- Key financial knowledge is known
- Key operational policies are known

Key areas of growth opportunities:

- There is a need for a formal strategic planning process\*
- The board does not evaluate its own performance\*
- Succession planning and orientation for new board members is needed\*
- Board committees could be more active, with written progress reports
- Resource Development within the board and wider community needs to be developed\*

*\*Noted in the workshop as areas of greatest need, so not surprising to see them here.*

## **Results By Category of Question**

### **Mission and Planning**

These results were a mixed bag with high-level mission and vision ranking very high, but once the questions became more specific, the ranking dropped.

3 of the 8 respondents answered Don't Know or Not Applicable to questions pertaining to strategic planning and goals based on a strategic plan.

### **Board Effectiveness**

This area was ranked high in most every question except the one of evaluating its own performance.

4 of the 7 respondents answered Don't Know to questions regarding expectations for board members and whether they take off their 'board hat' when volunteering in the school. 4 of the 7 also responded Don't Know in the two questions that regarded the evaluation of the Head of School and her professional development plan.

### **Board Composition and Succession**

Composition and recruitment of potential board members is seen as generally strong, and every board member strongly agreed that they feel valued by the organization.

4-5 out of 7 respondents answered Don't Know in succession planning, engagement of retiring members, and term limits for board members.

### **Effective Meetings**

Meetings are generally perceived to be well run and informative. The only low ranking question related to written reports by board committees.

### Financial, Legal and Ethics: Risk Management

This was the highest scoring area in the survey, which is most likely a function of the board's increased activity in all of these areas in this past year. Every question but one received high scores and confidence in knowledge.

5 of the 7 respondents answered Don't Know or Not Applicable to approving the latest 990.

4 of the 7 respondents were confused as to whether the board periodically reviews the policies and bylaws.

### Resource Development

This was the lowest scoring area in the survey, with 6 of the 8 questions not only ranking low, but also more than half of the respondents saying Don't Know or Not Applicable. This was consistent with the workshop conversations surrounding areas of greatest need.

### **Results as Individual Responses**

Because of the great number of "Don't Know" and "Not Applicable" in the survey, an analysis of individual responses was made. Of the seven complete responses, only two individuals gave varied, but confident responses showing knowledge of every question. The remaining five had between 12 and 25 of the 77 questions that they were unable to answer. (16% and 32% of the total respectively.)

### **Recommendations**

- A celebration of mission clarity, effective meetings, and successes and board effectiveness in the areas of finances, legal obligations and risk management
- Increase board member knowledge via
  - The addition of a governance committee, which would develop policies that govern the Board
  - A thorough review of current governance including the more detailed areas surrounding mission and planning
  - Initiating a strategic planning process
- Development of succession planning, recruitment, and orientation of new members

*Of note: 71% of current members joined the board because of an invitation from a friend or colleague, 57% joined because they has a personal connection with the school, and 43% liked that their professional skills were needed. Of little importance was the reputation and prestige of the organization. In your recruiting planning, then, first make connections in the wider community with the school, and then personally ask those new connections to join you.*
- Development of resources and fundraising by the school
  - The addition of a Fundraising committee

It has been my pleasure to work with you. Please contact me with any further questions or needs.

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