

## School Boards

by Patch Blakey

What is the most important component of a classical Christian school? I would hasten to assert that it is the school board. The school board, more than any other “agent” of the school is responsible for the successful operation of the school. A corollary to this is the equally weighty fact that the school board is also responsible for the failures of the school. As the board goes, so goes the school.

Someone may respond that I am being too broad, too sweeping in my characterization of the school board as being responsible for the success or failure of the school. But, this is the nature of the school board. It is ultimately responsible for everything that happens at the school, just as a husband is responsible for everything that happens in his marriage and family or the captain of a ship is responsible for everything that occurs within his command. Responsibility and accountability have a telos, an end point. With schools, it is the school board.

A striking example of this level of responsibility is found in the first man, Adam. Adam was responsible not only for guarding the well-being of his wife, but for all of mankind as well. He failed in that responsibility and we are all the recipients of that failure. In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote of our father Adam saying, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). In the same way, the New Adam Jesus Christ is responsible for the salvation of His bride, the Church. “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by

the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many” (Romans 5:15).

Carrying this responsibility is a heavy burden. For this reason, it is good to look to Scripture for some helpful principles on the formation of the school board. Solomon wisely wrote, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor . . . And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4:9, 12b). Sandwiched between these verses are words to the effect that there is help, mutual support, and strength in numbers. This same idea is mirrored in Proverbs, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov. 11:4; see also 15:22 and 24:6). The idea that these verses convey is that a multitude of leaders is helpful in bearing the burden of responsibility for the school. It is both an aid and a protection. Paul directed the appointment of a multitude of elders in the churches. There is confidence in knowing that others may see things that were not observed by another board member, or may see the issues in a different light.

We all have God-given gifts which implies areas of strength, but this implicitly further implies that we all have areas of weakness. The Church, the body of Christ, is comprised of members with a diversity of abilities. “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He

pleased. If they were all one part, where would the body be?” (1 Cor. 12:17-19). Likewise, there should be a diversity of gifts on the school board, and the various members should respect and appreciate that they are all different, but essential to the proper operation of the school.

While there is diversity of gifts, there needs to be unity of vision, purpose, and commitment. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:2). There needs to be unanimous agreement in the basics: the statement of faith, the philosophical direction of the school, mutual submission, and commitment to the school that they oversee.

If the board can’t agree on a mutually acceptable statement of faith, then it will be an ever-present source of conflict. The same holds for sharing a common commitment to the classical Christian methodology. While there may be varying views on what constitutes classical Christian education, the board members must be fully agreed on what defines “classical Christian” for their school. Likewise, there must be a sense of mutual submission: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

After participating in the majority of ACCS accreditation visits and observing as many school boards, as well as personally serving on two boards at two different schools, the

**Patch Blakey** is the executive director of ACCS.

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boards that worked the best from my observations were the ones which accepted full responsibility for every aspect of the school's operations, but were seldom seen in the daily operation of the school. They did not need to be involved because they had established policies to cover the majority of situations encountered at the school. They had wisely selected an administrator who would faithfully execute the approved policy. They trusted their administrator to act in accordance with the spirit of their policies when circumstances arose that policy did not specifically cover. These

boards were also not controlled by a single, domineering personality. There was respectful give and take among board members, but once a decision had been reached, they all owned it inside and out as their own regardless of their prior positions on the issue. They made the reading of the Scriptures and prayer priorities at each board meeting. They were thankful for all of God's providences, and communicated that thankfulness often, both privately and publicly. And there is more that characterized these successful boards, but this should suffice for the time.

These are only some initial thoughts. The articles in this issue provide much more meat than I have briefly suggested above. I might add that there is far more to making a good board than we could hope to publish in a single issue of *Classis*. Nonetheless, school boards are so key to the successful operation of a school that we thought it essential to begin the discussion at some point. I trust there will be more to be said in the future on the subject of school boards.



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