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Generative Governance: Making Sense of Problems through Critical Inquiry

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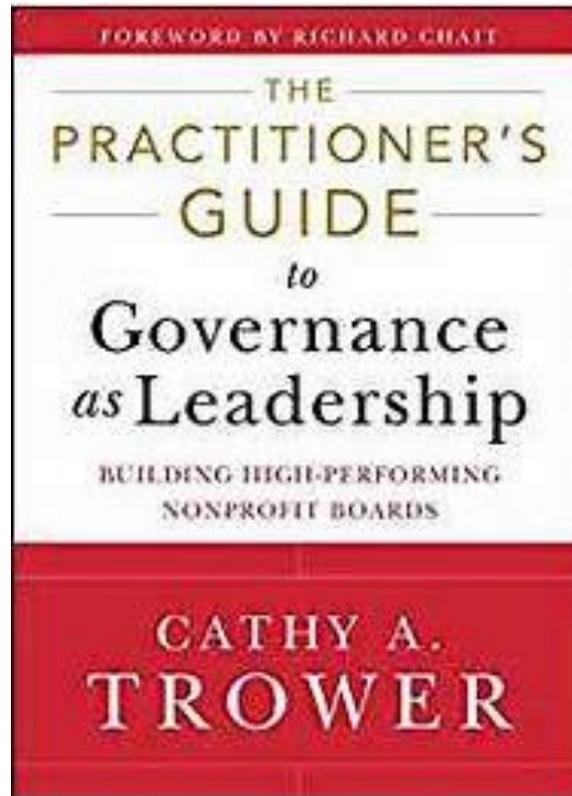
 **asba**
ALBERTA
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Greetings



- Raised in New Hampshire
- 13 years in education reform
- Senior Consultant with La Piana
- BoardSource Certified Governance Trainer
- Trustee, Wheaton College (MA)

Required Reading



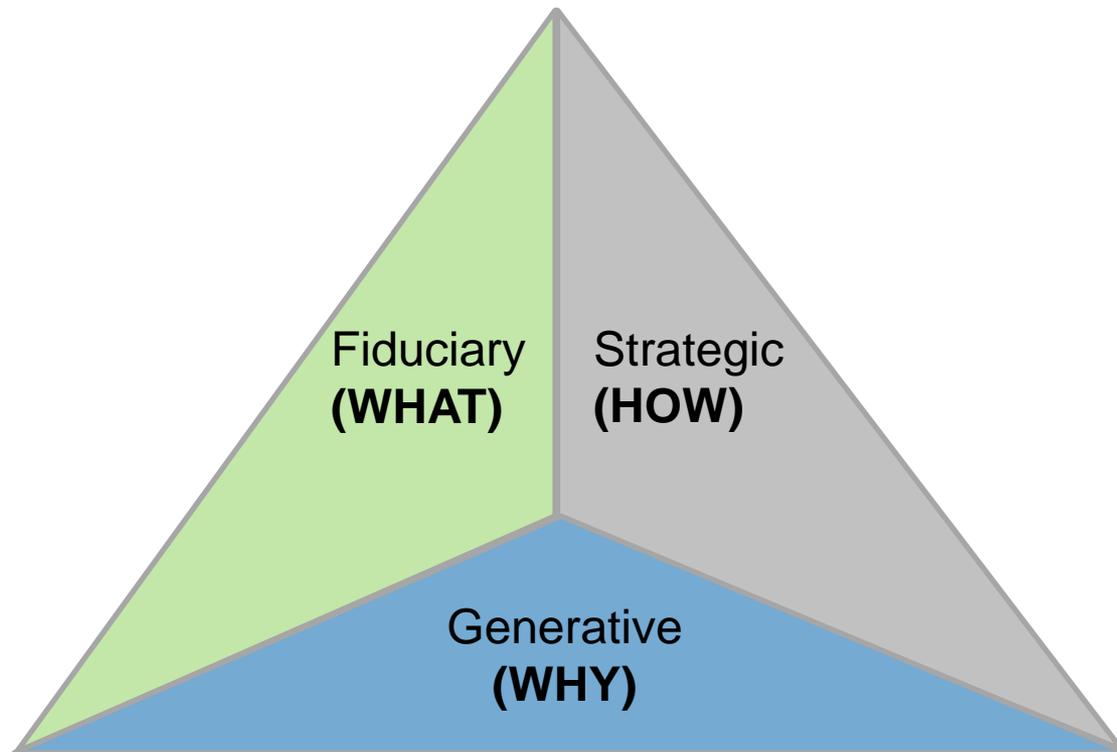
Purpose

- Explain the three modes of governance — fiduciary, strategic, and generative
- Provide practical steps board members can take to elevate discourse at board meetings and become more generative in their thinking and governance
- Apply generative thinking to a current challenge or opportunity facing your school board and better understand how to emphasize framing and inquiry to inform your governance leadership practices
- Assess the inherent power tension between board members and superintendents and clarify how to develop mutual support and accountability

Trends

- Shrinking budgets
- Necessity for holistic educational experiences (i.e. trauma-informed, social-emotional learning, personalized learning, etc.)
- Political tensions
- Demographic shifts/population changes
- Community dynamics
- Increased cross-sector collaboration
- Evolution of social and gender identities

Changing the View on Board Roles



*Richard Chait, Bill Ryan, and Barbara Taylor

Board Meetings

- How are your board meetings going?
- Are they effective?
- What is working?
- What needs to improve?



Achieving Impact Through Trimodal Governance

- Most boards operate within the first two modes.
- Boards can add more value as strategic thinkers than they do as just strategic planners.
- Too much talent goes untapped when the board operates only in fiduciary and strategic.
- All three modes are important!

What would this look like for your board?

What needs to change?

The Models – Changing Your Thinking

Type I - Fiduciary

- **Staff and board define problems and opportunities;** develops, approves and monitors formal plans.
- **Board structure parallels administrative functions.** Premium on permanency.
- **Board meetings are process driven.** Function follows form. Protocol rarely varies.

Type II - Strategic

- **Board and management think together** to discover strategic priorities and drivers.
- **Board structure mirrors strategic priorities.** Premium on flexibility.
- **Board meetings are content driven.** Form follows function. Protocol varies often.

Type III – Generative (Visionary)

- Exceptional boards institutionalize a culture of inquiry, mutual respect, and constructive debate that leads to sound and shared decision making.
- They seek more information, question assumptions, and challenge conclusions so that they may advocate for solutions based on analysis.

What should be atop the board's agenda next year?

What external factors will most affect the organization in the next year?

What are we overlooking at the organization's peril?

What is the most valuable step we could take to be a better board?

Applying a Generative Frame

Using the Issues Identification worksheet, find a partner and introduce yourself. Then for the next 10 minutes...

1. Identify a priority issue for your board – provide some context to your partner.
2. Answer the following questions pertaining to the issue:
 - ✓ How should the issue be framed: fiduciary, strategic, generative?
 - ✓ What appropriate role should the board play in addressing the issue?
 - ✓ In order to make good decisions, what new things will the board need to know and be able to do?
 - ✓ What resources can the Board access to help address this issue?

The Tri Mode Board

	Fiduciary	Strategic	Generative
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation of assets and resources Appropriate use of resources Mission promotion and fulfillment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization moves from its present state to a preferred state There is an engaging, inclusive, and continuous process for assessing and evaluating effectiveness of strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance is inspired by a type of thinking that makes meaning of data, problems, opportunities Cues, clues, and historical trends are incorporated to enable sense-making
Board Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight Ensuring efficient and effective use of resources Compliance and fiscal integrity Select, monitor, and evaluate the CEO Ratify policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scan internal and external environments Strategic planning. Monitor organizational performance and competitive position Define critical success factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconcile value propositions Discern and frame challenges Make meaning – make sense of the circumstances. Think creatively
Key Question	<i>How are we doing?</i>	<i>What is our strategy?</i>	<i>What is our big question?</i>

Timing: Generative Thinking

The Right Time	The Wrong Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There are multiple interpretations of what is really going on and it requires attention and resolution▪ The stakes are high because the discussion does or could invoke questions of core values and organizational identity▪ The decision or action cannot be easily revised or reversed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When the organization is in crisis

Building the Partnership

- Clarify and honor your respective roles
- Communicate early and often
- Show a unified front
- Develop the board
- Plan for transitions in leadership
- Consider the benefits of coaching

Mutual Support and Accountability

Board	Superintendent/Staff	In Partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Establishes mission and direction, ensures the necessary resources, and develops guiding principles▪ Retains ultimate responsibility and power▪ Is accountable to the public trust and organization's constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Supports the board with strategic information, ideas, and connections▪ Manages the affairs of the organization by ensuring appropriate planning, coordination, and implementation of the programs to support the mission▪ Retains immediate, or operational, responsibility and power	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Requires regular and open communication▪ Requires willingness on everyone's part to examine assumptions▪ Benefits from regular and systematic feedback and assessment▪ May need redefinition as the organization grows in size and complexity

Putting It All Together



Encouraging Critical Thinking in the Boardroom

“...learn how to eavesdrop on the mental conversations we have with ourselves as we struggle to strike the right balance between preserving our existing worldview and rethinking core assumptions. This is no easy art to master.”

(Tetlock, 2005, 215)

Thank you



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