

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

**5.1** *The governing body, representing the diversity of stakeholders, functions according to its approved constitution and bylaws.*

### **I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?**

Benchmark 5.1 addresses two aspects of governance: namely, membership diversity and adherence to constitution and bylaws or other governing documents. First, this benchmark challenges administrators to recruit and select board members keeping in mind gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and needed skillsets. Second, the benchmark raises the importance of the board's governing document (usually called a constitution and bylaws) that specifies how the board is structured, the rights of members, and the procedures by which rights can be exercised.

Outstanding boards are populated by diverse membership, focused on their appropriate role, engaged in their assigned committee work, and committed to respond to the needs of the school. A productive board establishes committees according to the bylaws and is made up of members with the needed skills who can set goals and expectations in their committee area to significantly benefit the school the board serves.

### **II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?**

The following are guiding questions for school leaders and the governing body to ask to ascertain if this benchmark is being implemented:

- Is there a roster listing membership on the governing body that includes areas of expertise, gender, race/ethnic background, geographical location, community connections, service on board committees, and number of years on the board (Terms of Office)?
- Is there a matrix used by the Nominating Committee to determine whom to recruit for board membership based on the needed diversity?
- Does the Nominating Form ask for information to ensure the needed diversity keeping in mind gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and required skillsets?

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- Does each member's packet or binder include a current copy of the constitution/bylaws including the date of implementation and references to updates?
- Is there a board meeting agenda showing the annual review of the constitution/bylaws?
- Does the agenda for the orientation meeting with new members include time to present the constitution/bylaws?
- Is there a copy of the annual board self-assessment which is conducted at the conclusion of the school year with attention to bylaws compliance?
- Is the constitution/bylaws in a highly visible and easily accessible place on the school's website that is organized with other school board material?
- Are minutes of meetings and records of decisions in keeping with constitution/ bylaws filed in a safe and convenient place?
- Are non-confidential versions of the minutes (or a summary) available to the public or school stakeholders?
- Are parent newsletters available that show board members' attendance at parent meetings, board updates at meetings, etc. in order for stakeholders to get an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the board?

### III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level **3-Fully Meets Benchmark**,

the governing body membership represents the gender, cultural and ethnic diversity of the school community and the needed skillsets to carry on the work of the board for the good of the school. This diversity, coupled with the board's adherence to its governing document, results in a board that contributes greatly to the success of the school and its vitality, as evidenced by their impact on the quality of the school's performance and operational viability.

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### At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

the administrators, in collaboration with the Nominating Committee/Governance Committee, work year-round to identify and recruit prospective members that ensure the targeted representation of gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and skillsets needed to carry on board work in order to sustain a vibrant school into the future. This is evidenced by the Nomination Committee/Governance Committee's reports to the full board. Furthermore, the committee is charged with creating succession plans for each board position to ensure continued diversity. This is evidenced by the documented succession plan and board's faithful adherence to it.

At level 4, the administrators and board ensure that the governing document is kept updated and relevant as needed. More importantly, the administrator(s) and board chair continually monitor the board's execution of the framework for effective governance. The governing body has a state of the art constitution and bylaws, and both are posted and shared with the full community. The governing body intentionally monitors itself to ensure consistency of practice as approved by the bylaws.

### At level **2-Partially Meets Benchmark**,

the administrators, in collaboration with the board, attempt to recruit prospective members representing the targeted gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and needed skillsets with some success but not consistently, as evidenced by the reports from the Nominating/Governance Committee and the current roster. From observable evidence of both attendance at a meeting and board minutes, the governing body appears to function according to its approved constitution and bylaws, but is not held accountable for carrying out its responsibilities as listed in the governing document. In particular, committees are not held accountable to the administrators and board chair for completing their assigned goals or tasks.

At this level, the administrators and board members have limited knowledge about the content of the governing documents. This is evidenced through conversations with both the administrators and board members.

### At level **1-Does Not Meet Benchmark**,

the administrators and governing body have not systematically recruited and selected board members to represent the appropriate gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and needed skillsets. This is evidenced by board roster and

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attendance at a board meeting. The board does not have a constitution or bylaws, or the current constitution and bylaws are outdated or ignored.

### IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

#### **To move from level 1 to level 2,**

- Determine the kind of diversity and skillsets that represent the school community and can address the needs of the school.
- Assess the gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and skillsets of the current board membership. A matrix is a useful tool to do this.
- Appoint a nominating committee/governance committee of the board to be tasked with this effort. This committee would be responsible for updating the matrix and report to the full board the area/s of diversity that the recruitment process should focus on.
- Form a task force to create a constitution or bylaws if one does not exist. The archdiocese or diocese is a great resource that can provide policies and guidelines for the development of a governing document.
- Establish and act on a plan to provide an in-service training for the entire board and the school's administrator on the implementation of the newly developed constitution and by-laws. A similar in-service for boards with an existing constitution and by-laws will be an opportunity to identify outdated articles or sections. Once revised or updated the administrator and chair move the document for final approval to the appropriate approving agent.

#### **To move from level 2 to level 3,**

- Recruit new members to maximize the gender, cultural, ethnic, and skillset diversity to advance the goals of the board, aligned to the mission and needs of the school
- Understand and commit to the role and responsibilities defined in constitution and bylaws. The board conducts regularly scheduled meetings and organizes its committees to optimize its productivity for the benefit of the school's performance and operational viability.
- Schedule a board planning retreat and short mini in-service trainings to provide the board time to better understand its purpose as well as to identify goals/activities for the coming year.

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### **To move from level 3 to 4,**

- Identify and recruit prospective members that ensure the representation of gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and needed skillsets on regular schedule to replace termed out board members.
- Create succession plans for each of the board positions to ensure continual diversity.
- Ensure that the governing document is kept updated and relevant as needed.
- Continually monitor and assess the board's implementation of the framework for effective governance.
- Post and share with the school and broader community the board's state of the art constitution and bylaws on an annual schedule.

**V. What are some key terms for common understanding? (Refer to the Glossary for the terms listed below.)**

Governance  
Governing body  
Catholic education stakeholders  
State of the Art Constitution and bylaws  
Framework for effective governance