

## 30% ? . . . No. Really?

**T**rustees hold the school in trust; they are the ones with ultimate responsibility for the viability, sustainability, and future of the school. So how much time should a head spend supporting the board of trustees?

Somewhere a while back, I heard the statistic that 30 percent of a head's job should be devoted to board work. At first, I was taken aback, but after careful reflection, I confirmed the pronouncement with an experienced consultant at a recent state conference for trustees and heads. The 30 percent also comes from talking to many heads, hearing how little time they actually spend on board matters, and seeing how evident the correlation is between head anxiety and board dysfunction.

One of the least discussed, misunderstood anomalies of a board/head relationship is that the board hires the head and is the head's "boss," and yet, the head guides and directs the board on what it needs to do.

What could a head possibly do to spend that much time in an already time-consuming job? In collaboration with board leadership, here is a small sample of how the head should be supporting the board:

- Help the board meet its fiduciary responsibilities.
- Keep the board organized by coordinating and monitoring board and committee meeting agendas.
- Monitor bylaws and policies, assuring recording of minutes and board policy.
- Guide the board to do due diligence in governance. The head must be the teacher in these matters.
- Attend all board, committee, and task force meetings.
- With the board chair, assure that the Committee on Trustees is carrying out its charges of trustee recruitment, the board's self evaluation, new trustee orientation and board professional development. This is probably the most time-consuming, critical piece of good board governance.
- Gather and disseminate governance professional development opportunities.

Finally, the most critical aspect of this process is making sure that a board sets its annual board agenda each year, and part of that process is translating those agenda items into goals and objectives for the head of school. It really does require 30 percent of a head's time to support the board—because supporting the board really means supporting the school. Most certainly, time well spent.

---

## Going the Distance

**R**ecruiting international students is a growing trend for independent day schools, and was the subject of a recent *Washington Post* story ("U.S. Prep Schools Push to Recruit Foreign Students," by Michael Alison Chandler, March 30, 2010). A few noteworthy facts:

- "Rising numbers of East Asian students [are] capable of paying full fare"
- Independent schools are "posting ads in foreign newspapers, redesigning their Web sites in multiple languages and taking part in recruiting fairs"
- "35,000 foreign students attend primary or secondary schools in the United States, not including one-year cultural exchange programs"

International students make sense today for two strong reasons: meeting enrollment figures (and tuition income), and widening the school's horizons. Tom Farquhar, head of The Bullis School in Potomac, Maryland, visited

China on a recruiting trip for his coed, grades 3-12 school recently. One reason he gives for admitting students from China (which The Bullis School has done for several years): "We wanted to increase awareness at our school of this very important country far away."

But why are more international families willing to send their children here? To get ahead, is the simple answer. "Fiercely competitive education systems in East Asia are helping stoke a culture of study abroad. The number of families looking overseas for an alternate way up the career ladder has dropped in Korea recently but grown in Vietnam and boomed in China," Chandler reports.

While the financial toll on an international family is substantial (as much as \$40,000 per year for tuition, lodging, and travel), it is considered a good investment. "Western degrees and English fluency are highly valued in the [East Asia] job market at home," one sociologist explains. ♪