

TRANSITIONING TO POLICY GOVERNANCE MOVING THE BOARD OUT OF ADMINISTRATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

Mt. Juliet Christian Academy, a ministry of the First Baptist Church of Mt. Juliet, has been in operation for over 30 years. Located just outside of Nashville, the 540 student school has operated under the typical church school committee model with regard to its organizational structure. For too long the School Committee has focused on running the school and not on growing the school.

As part of a long term strategic plan, the School Committee (Board) desired to make the transition to Policy Governance and to revise the mission and vision statements for the Academy. The process involved, first and foremost a commitment from the School Committee to make this transition. Then it required a confidence in the administration that this change would provide a benefit to the school. Within a year time frame, we desired to develop a new set of policies including making necessary changes to the church constitution as the school operates under the 501c3 of the church.



PROJECT RESULTS

The desire to accomplish this goal within our one year timeline required a commitment on the part of the various people involved in the process. The team of committee members, administrators, pastors and lay leaders from the church met on numerous occasions to work through the various elements of this process. A task force was assigned to propose changes to the church constitution. The project was scheduled to be completed by the end of May 2009 and was actually completed by the middle of April. The new policy went into effect April 13, 2009.

What Was Accomplished?

- Revision of the mission and vision statements and core values
- Completion of the Policy Governance manual
- Revision of the employee handbook
- Division of tasks were defined whereby the school committee governs and establishes policy and the administration oversees the day to day operations of the school.
- The administration now has the authority to make changes in the operational policy under the provisions of the new policy.



A COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND LEARNING



Greg Scheck, Headmaster

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- Making a shift from one governance style to another was a huge project. Thankfully, because of the commitment of the entire School Committee and administrative team, as well as the belief that this paradigm shift was in the best interest of the school, it was a great success.
- The entire process required a great deal of time and reading on the part of all parties including several all day Saturday sessions as well as subcommittee meetings as we hashed out many areas of concern.

Some of the challenges we faced:

- Communication with church pastoral staff and lay leaders regarding constitutional changes.
- Healthy discussion regarding the respective roles of the board, administration and church.
- Lack of prior knowledge and understanding about the Policy Governance paradigm on the part of the school committee.

Recommendations:

- If at all possible, use an outside consultant to facilitate this transition rather than the headmaster.

