

In the Boardroom.
How Great Boards
Meet

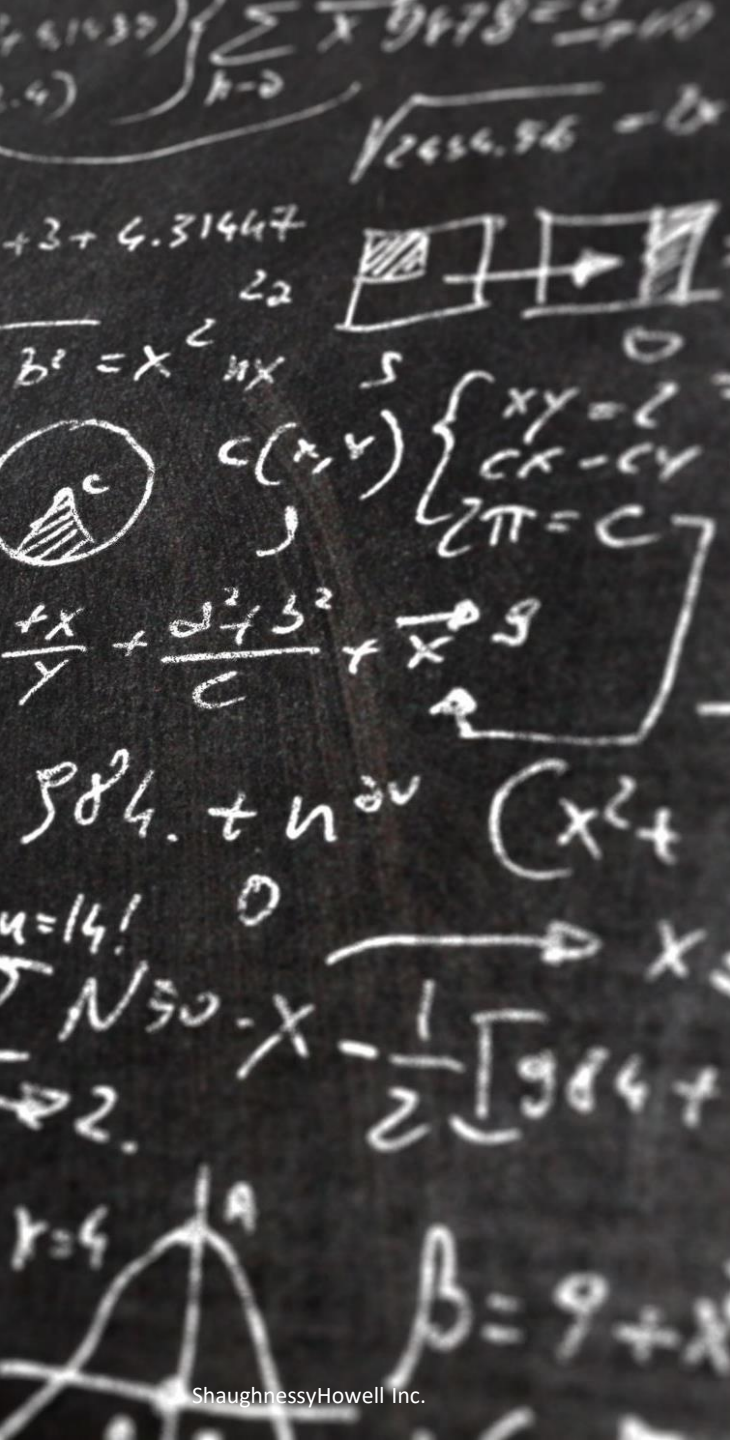
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**No one has
ever said,**

*I wish I could
spend more
time in
meetings*





What brings me here?

Experience in Education:

- Trustee, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, 2003-2010
- Consultant to boards from both systems across the province as well as to the Ministry of Education, OPSBA and OCSTA, OESC

Board member:

- St. Jerome's University, St. Mary's General Hospital, A Better Tent City, Parents for Community Living as well as two Foundations

Consulting and facilitation:

- Capacity Canada (EIR) – Emerging Governance Strategies, Effective Board Support for Executive Assistants, Fundamentals of Not-for-Profit governance (gamification)

PROCESS:
STRUCTURE
ISSUES

PEOPLE:
PRACTICE
ISSUES

PRIORITIES:
FOCUS ISSUES

What are we going
to talk about?



Process: Structure issues

Effective and productive meetings include:

- Well-structured agenda that includes
 - Consent agenda
 - Timed sections
 - Page references
 - Outcome/purpose: decision, information, discussion
- Reports that address the work of trustees:
 - Compliance with policy or previous direction
 - Progress on MYSP

What happens instead?

The hard truth is, bad meetings almost always lead to bad decisions, which is the best recipe for mediocrity

Time is spent on items that belong in the consent agenda

Chair:

- Doesn't manage conflict
- Allows discussion to go off topic
- Allows people to be repetitive and speak beyond what is useful

Staff verbal reports duplicate what was already presented in the agenda package

Trustees accept informational reports as evidence of compliance

Meetings run for hours, sometimes into morning hours

Roberts Rules / parliamentary practice used as weapons instead of tools

Committee of the Whole treated as a Board meeting



People: Practice issues

Effective trustees:

- Understand and accept their roles as defined in the Act and in their bylaws
- Work with other trustees as a team to advance the agenda of the System
- Ask questions and listen
- Come prepared

What happens instead?

All too often people think they are experts in education just because they went to school or because their children are currently in school

Trustees come unprepared and expect to be 'caught up'

(Lately – pull the 'newbie' card)

Code of conduct is used as a weapon

Trustees allow bias to affect their ability to listen and incorporate others' arguments

Dissenting views result in entrenched positions rather than opening discussion

Factions form, 'parking lot' discussions used to voice dissent and to complain

Little effort put into building strong working relationships; instead energy put into building coalitions

Few questions enhance discussion or advance deeper understanding

Board discussion

Oversight (Fiduciary)

What are the top reasons we are not hitting this target?

Help me understand why you think this metric is trending in this direction?

What are the risks associated with this?

Foresight (Strategic)

If we keep going down this road, where will we be in two years?

How will the classroom of the future be different than what we have now?

What will be the impact of shifts in demographics in our region?

Insight (Generative)

What would students and parents say about this?

What would we have to change in our culture for this to work?

Why would someone select our system over that of our co-terminous board?

June is budget month

Does it balance? (*Are we in compliance?*)

What assumptions did you hold when the budget was created? (*What drove this?*)

How does the budget reflect our priorities for students? (*Are we mission-consistent?*)

What services are we providing to which students at what cost, and what are the benefits and results? (*What is our return on investment?*)

What are the risks? (*Are we being responsible stewards?*)

If something happens and we have to cut, where would we go? (*Can we be nimble?*)



Priorities: Focus issues

Historic focus shifted from setting curriculum, selecting textbooks and hiring teachers to student achievement and school board governance

1. Set direction
2. Ensure resources are in place
3. Monitor performance and hold the DoE accountable
4. Bring forward the concern of parents, students, supporters of the board

What happens instead?

All too often members of a board are like fire fighters on the ground, battling flame when they should be in the helicopter above the fire, able to see how extensive the blaze is, which way the wind is blowing, and where the resources need to be deployed.

A lot of time spent on issues that are not tied to strategy or student achievement

Questions and discussion that address operational issues dominate

Fail to distinguish between user and owner voices

Ineffective approaches to consultation with parents, students, supporters of the system

Governing well is no easy task.

*It takes
knowledge, skill
and experience.
It takes courage
and character.*

*And it takes
teamwork ... for
the best interests
of the people the
board serves.*

