

Performance Standards

for Board Governance Certification



Board Governance Certification

What it means

Effective school boards are critical to the success of any school or system—they set the vision, mission, and goals for the district; adopt policies that provide direction in support of meeting the institution's goals, objectives, and strategic plan; adopt and oversee the institution's annual budget; and hire and evaluate the institution leadership. Cognia® helps school boards overcome challenges and advance districts' and schools' continuous improvement efforts.

School boards and school leaders that operate in a cohesive manner with respect, trust, transparency, and clear communication lead a unified team that focuses on specific goals to reach their vision, mission, and beliefs of the system.

The role of school board members is to support schools to help them become better on behalf of their students. Board members should understand what is happening in the institutions they serve in order to make quality, informed decisions and identify changes needed to improve organizational processes and practices. Cognia Board Governance Certification supports school boards in demonstrating their commitment to learners by having them collaborate with leaders to uphold their institution's priorities and to drive continuous improvement throughout their district.

Effective school boards:

- Have a clear vision for the institution
- Communicate their actions to the community
- Work as a team
- Adopt a fiscally sound budget
- Focus on what is best for all students
- Establish partnerships with the community
- Engage in training aligned to their roles and responsibilities
- Advocate at the local, state, and national level for education
- Collaborate and work closely with school leaders for the betterment of the school or system

Quality characteristics

Four key characteristics are evident when a board effectively adopts Cognia Board Governance Certification Standards and engages in Cognia's peer review process for certification and continuous improvement.

CULTURE OF LEARNING: the governing authority's focus on creating a broad and welcoming culture, inclusive of stakeholder feedback, and focused on the institution's success

LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING: the governing authority's ability to understand their role in effective governance, including oversight of the institution's strategic direction, ensuring long-term financial stability, and ensuring policies align with governmental and legal requirements

ENGAGEMENT OF LEARNING: the governing authority's open communication with institution staff, members of the community and policymakers to ensure varied perspectives are considered in decision-making and partnerships are established to support the institution's mission and vision

GROWTH IN LEARNING: the governing authority's ability to use academic and non-academic learner performance data to make decisions that lead to an improved educational experience for each and every learner

These characteristics serve as our model for identifying and discussing board governance quality. Additional information will be available to members to show how the standards align with these characteristics.

Framework for improvement

Cognia Performance Standards for K–12 and Postsecondary Institutions and their key characteristics are the foundation of our approach to continuous improvement—not just certification. These are the elements that should guide every school board to ensure high-quality educational experiences and operational effectiveness in their system or school.

The Board Governance Certification Standards define the practices of an effective school board and provide the criteria for improvement efforts that will energetically and visibly grow learners, teachers, leaders, and organizations.

Board Governance Standards

STANDARD 1

The governing authority embraces effective collegiality and collaboration among its members and other stakeholders within the institution and community.

STANDARD 2

The governing authority holds itself to the highest standards of integrity, promoting a welcoming environment that supports all aspects of the institution's success.

STANDARD 3

The governing authority collaboratively establishes strategic goals that align with the values of the institution and community, directing the institution's purpose and plans for improvement.

STANDARD 4

The governing authority understands its role and evaluates the effectiveness of its performance based on established criteria and performance measures.

STANDARD 5

The governing authority collaborates with the institution's leadership to establish and implement processes that ensure the ability to plan effectively and utilize resources efficiently.

STANDARD 6

The governing authority establishes, monitors, and revises policies to ensure they align with the institution's mission and vision as well as legal and regulatory standards.

STANDARD 7

The governing authority creates and implements communication strategies to engage with the community and is open to stakeholder feedback.

STANDARD 8

The governing authority embraces ongoing professional learning focused on its roles and responsibilities in making a meaningful contribution to the institution and community.

STANDARD 9

The governing authority employs collaborative practices and ideas to advocate and build partnerships with community stakeholders to foster and support the institution's vision and mission.

STANDARD 10

The governing authority collaborates with the institution's leadership and demonstrates a commitment to learner success by making data-driven decisions and monitoring learner progress toward desired outcomes to support the success of all learners.



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