



HEADLINES

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Governance 101

It has been a year since I arrived at Somersfield after ten years of traveling all across Canada, the United States and even Europe yapping at Boards and Heads about governance. I knew it all. Based on my experience as a public school superintendent, independent school Head and Executive Director of CESI, the school's accrediting body, I thought that there was little that you could tell me about the mechanics of good governance. Then I came to Bermuda.

A couple of Saturdays ago we had a Board retreat comfortably hunkered down on a drizzly day at the Dinghy Club in Paget. There was an agenda, but it wasn't rigidly followed as the meeting moved organically from one key topic to another. Somersfield's Chair of the Board, Tom Vesey takes a low-key, somewhat folksy and self-deprecating approach to leadership, but he is masterful at his task. We are blessed as a school to have a Board that can boast a wealth of bright and creative minds. They are parents and community members, educators and business people, entrepreneurs and professionals of all stripes.

They sat around the table on that Saturday morning and doggedly pursued tangents, got mired in "what ifs" and generally tried to stray as far from closure as possible on any topic. The result was a discussion that was rich and nuanced and full of surprises.

What did they discuss? Philosophy and vision and kids and learning and sustainability and legacy and everything that you would want a strategic board to talk about. What did they avoid? Nuts and bolts and day to day and niggling concerns.

What did I learn about governance in the process? I learned that effective "management" of the Board is not necessarily effective leadership. I learned that talented Boards trust their Head but don't necessarily believe him exclusively on any given issue. They challenge, they push and they question. An old colleague of mine once said that Boards never make the wrong decision. If they don't do what you want, it either means that you were wrong or that you didn't make your case well enough. In either event, it is up to you to change and not them. It was good advice, and I feel fortunate to work with people who believe in the school and its mission and who are going to hold my feet to the fire to ensure that things happen the way that they should. It always seems that life gives you what you need. I came to Bermuda in part to enjoy the daily company of my wonderful partner and beautiful young boys after spending years where I spent more time inside airport lounges than in my own living room. That change of life has been beyond amazing!

But I have rediscovered something else en route. The joy of being part of a learning community. The energy and resilience of children. The amazing depth of commitment of teachers and staff to do everything they can for the families that trust in them. The amazing contribution of volunteers who could just as easily be sipping cocktails or playing tennis but instead give of themselves to ensure that everyone's child gets just that much more attention.

Mostly I have been reminded in the past year that I had been an "expert" for too long and that I really needed to go back to school. Thanks for reminding me.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Admissions Session (P5/6 and MYP)

January 28th

MYP Personal Project Fair

January 29th

February Break February 8th—12th

Boys Adrift Community Forum

February 8th

7:00 p.m.

Bermuda Math Educators Network- ing Meeting

February 15th