

# *Sharing Our Gifts*



THE PREPARATION AND FORMATION OF BOARDS  
IN  
**XAVERIAN BROTHERS SPONSORED SCHOOLS**



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## **THE PREPARATION AND FORMATION OF BOARDS IN XAVERIAN BROTHERS SPONSORED SCHOOLS**

The Mission of the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools flows directly from the Mission of the Congregation of the Xaverian Brothers which is:

*to serve the Church in its work of evangelization,  
particularly through the Church's ministry of education.*

*(Mission, Vision, Values  
Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, p. 1)*

The effective operation of the Board is an essential dimension of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools and is a great gift to the Xaverian Brothers Congregation and to the Church. The first responsibility of the Board is “to promote the understanding and implementation of the mission and philosophy of the school in accordance with the Mission, Vision, Values and the Calls, Goals and Criteria of Xaverian Sponsorship” (*XBSS Strategic Plan, 2001*).

In order to carry out the Mission of Xaverian Sponsorship, the Xaverian approach to education is marked by collaboration of many (Board, Administration, Faculty, Staff, Parents, Students, Alumni, etc.). Xaverian sponsorship relies strongly on the vision and abilities of Board members working individually, in small groups or committees, and as a body of the Board, to carry out the Mission, Goals and Values of Xaverian sponsored education.

Like many Catholic educational institutions over the last thirty years, Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools have confronted a number of issues including their very survival. Financial challenges determined to a large degree the principal work of the Boards. Because of sound financial management, good planning, and God's favor, today's schools are in a very different situation and they are thriving. As the schools continue to grow and change, there is increasing concern about their “*identity*.” Consequently, an important new role has emerged for Boards in Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, and it involves promoting the understanding of what it means to be a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School today. This vital role will significantly shape the future of the schools and determine the overall effectiveness of the Boards.

The Xaverian approach to education is *not* just about “*education*”, although it clearly promotes excellence in education. Xaverian education is also not just about the *management and business* involved in conducting a *good school*, although it definitely requires effective management and sound business practices. At its foundations, the Xaverian approach is based on the conviction that *education is a ministry* – an action of service to and with others flowing from a deep faith commitment.

The Xaverian approach to education is also a specific way of doing *Catholic Education*. The Xaverian approach to education enables those who participate in it to understand the mission and ministry of Jesus and the challenge of Jesus to be his *disciples* who strive to *transform the world* into a more *caring and just society*.

## THE PREPARATION AND FORMATION OF BOARDS

Those who are invited to be Board members come to this role with a high level of competency and expertise in a particular field of endeavor and usually have a deep appreciation of the quality and effectiveness of a specific Xaverian school. However, many new Board members do not have an in depth knowledge and understanding of mission and core values that link Xaverian schools, the principles and processes that foster the effectiveness of these Schools, and their personal role and responsibility to this network of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools.

Individuals who are invited to be Board members want to succeed in this new role. They welcome and appreciate receiving appropriate preparation and ongoing education to be effective and successful in the variety of responsibilities they will have as Board members. This preparation and ongoing development is described by the term *Board formation*.

Achieving the knowledge, understanding and competencies needed to carry out the essential elements of the Xaverian approach to education requires that those who serve as Board members in Xaverian schools experience both initial and continuing formation as Board members. In order to assist them in understanding and growing in their vision, roles and responsibilities, ongoing formation is provided for Board members in four major areas.

### THE DIMENSIONS OF BOARD FORMATION

**A. Understanding Faith and Ministry-** Understanding the dynamics of how *faith* develops and understanding how a person's faith commitment flows into service to others are necessary conditions for being able to guide a school to foster these actions in students, faculty and parents. To fulfill this responsibility, Board members need to understand their own faith perspectives and how their individual gifts and talents can be placed at the service of others in *ministry*.

**B. Catholic Identity and Catholic Education-**an awareness of the mission of the Catholic Church and the Church's understanding of the elements of education is foundational for fostering Catholic identity in Catholic schools. While some Board members may not share a Catholic faith perspective, they need to understand and support the Catholic approach to education. Knowing the dimensions of *Catholic Education* is a significant responsibility of Board members.

**C. The Xaverian approach to Catholic Education-**being committed to responding to the *Calls, Goals and Values* of Xaverian sponsored education is an essential quality of Board members as well as of administrators, faculty and staff. The ability of Board members to grow in the knowledge and practice of the Xaverian Mission, Vision and Values is a significant factor for being successful as Board members. The Board has a crucial leadership role in integrating the Calls, Goals and Values of the Xaverian charism into the mission, policies, activities and management of a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School.

**D. Board Leadership Roles and Responsibilities-**Board members need to be effective as mission focused leaders – being able to motivate others – administrators, faculty, staff, parents and students – in understanding and becoming committed to the Calls, Goals and Values of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools. Board members also model a collaborative style of decision-making that fosters a team approach to education as they carry out their major responsibilities as a Board.

## **THE PROCESS OF BOARD FORMATION**

Formation of Board members is not a one-time event or a task that has a beginning, middle and end. Board formation is an ongoing experience. Members of Boards in a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School experience formation as individuals and as members of the Board as a group. Each Board member is challenged and assisted in achieving personal formation in the four dimensions. The Board also grows as a body and experiences formation in the four dimensions as a group.

An initial formation experience is expected of new Board members before, or shortly after, beginning their involvement on the Board.

Through workshops, in-service opportunities, and other gatherings, Board members participate in continuing formation. Formation experiences for Board members are also woven into the process of regular Board meetings. Major gatherings, such as the annual Board Forum and Board Retreats, are rich opportunities for Board formation that bring into interaction the wisdom, vision and experience of Board members from a variety of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools.

Board formation is organically integrated into the patterns and activities of Board interactions, as well as being a specific segment and time in meetings and gatherings.

## **THE CONTENT OF BOARD FORMATION**

Board formation (for individual Board members and the Board as a whole) incorporates a balanced approach to formation in the four major dimensions:

### **A. Understanding Faith and Ministry**

Board Formation presents the meaning of faith and ministry in today's world. Faith is understood as a living, explicit and fruitful reality in one's life. Faith development is a life-long challenge and opportunity. The Goals of faith formation are to help people grow as disciples of Jesus, be members who freely choose to belong to the faith community and are willing disciples in the world. Ministry is understood as service of others that flows from one's faith commitment.

(Reference: *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*,  
U. S. Catholic Bishops, 1999)

### **B. Catholic Identity and Catholic Education**

Board Formation presents the Mission of the Catholic Church as forming authentic disciples of Jesus who are committed to work for the transformation of the world. It includes the essential elements of Catholic Identity as found in the Scriptures, the teaching tradition of the Church and contemporary Church documents. It also incorporates the six Dimensions of Catholic Education: knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, community and missionary spirit.

(Reference: *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*,  
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999)

### **C. Xaverian Approach to Catholic Education**

Board Formation also includes opportunities to understand and promote the specific character of the Xaverian perspective and implementation of Catholic Education. The

major qualities of the Xaverian educational perspective are found in the *Mission* and *Vision* of Xaverian Educational Ministry, the six Calls of Xaverian Sponsored Education, the Strategic Goals of Xaverian Education and the challenge of living the *Values* of the Xaverian charism.

(Reference: **Foundational Documents** of Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools)

#### **D. Board Leadership Roles and Responsibilities**

Board Formation includes the understanding and skill development in mission-focused leadership to be able to motivate people toward achieving identified goals in a variety of situations, modeling a collaborative style of leadership, and the major responsibilities and actions of Boards: ensuring the implementation of the Xaverian mission and philosophy, developing the strategic plan, policy development and approval, selection and evaluation of Head of School, and financial oversight.

(Reference: ***XBSS Strategic Plan-2001***)

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR BOARD FORMATION**

The concept of Board Formation, for individual members and the Board as a group, will not just happen and cannot be left to chance. Board Formation is not an optional activity for Boards in Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools. Board formation is an essential responsibility of each Board member, and it is a particular responsibility of Board leaders to ensure that Board formation experiences are provided as a regular element of the activities of the Board.

The Board Chair and the Head of School, working in close collaboration with the XBSS Office Liaison and the Board Nominating and Assessment Committee, have the significant responsibility to see that Board members have the opportunity for initial and continuing formation for this ministry of service.

The Xaverian Brothers Sponsorship Office also has a significant role in Board formation. The office staff members continually advocate for the essential importance of Board formation, and they assist boards in assessing their needs related to the dimensions of formation. The staff also assists in arranging for opportunities for Board formation as part of local, regional and national gatherings of Board members from Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools.

The Corporate Members have the responsibility to ensure that the formation of Boards, both as a group and as individual members, is authentically integrated into the vision, interactions and activities of the Boards. The form and effectiveness of Board formation is an important element of the information received from individual schools that is regularly reviewed and evaluated by the Corporate Members.

Through effective and ongoing Board formation, the gifts and talents of the Board members, as individuals and the Board collectively, are identified and shared in providing collaborative leadership for Xaverian Sponsorship.

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