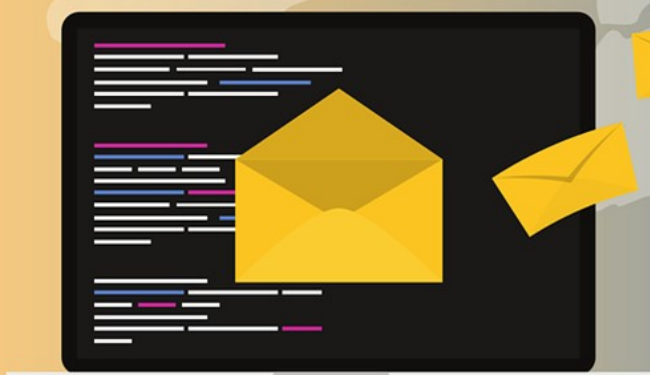




If you are interested in governance... this is a must read for you!



GOVERN UPDATE Newsletter

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Governance Mindset

By Rick Maloney

An excerpt from the book on [A Framework for School Governance](#) (2018)

To be ready to govern, a board must establish (and maintain) a Governance Mindset.

Findings, from the Iowa Lighthouse Study, show that the most effective school boards, as measured by student achievement, are those who adopt an **elevating view** – in effect a growth mindset about the capacity for growth in students' ability to achieve high standards through their learning efforts. The positive effects of a growth mindset can be extended through similar board beliefs about **staff** in their instructional

This article will describe **Governance Mindset**, the first component of the responsibility for **Board Readiness**, and the first of ten components that make up the four domains of governance (**Board Readiness, Strategic Voice, Operational Guidance, and Accountability**).

1a. Governance Mindset [Does your Board have a governance mindset?]

The development of a governance mindset in our view is the most important characteristic of effective trustees...Having a governance mindset is understanding the role and responsibilities of the governing board and how individual trustee leadership can enhance the positive, value-added impact of the governance process. – Davis Campbell and Michael Fullan¹

It is not enough to acquire **knowledge** (what you **know**) about governance or the **skills** (what you **do**) for governance. Boards must as a first priority develop a **mindset** (what to **be**) that predisposes them to act on their knowledge and apply their skills to perform the strategic governance role of a board.

The importance of this task. The board's core accountability function is directly related to and dependent on its concept of responsibility. If we accept responsibility to serve the public interest, we must be willing to account to the public for district performance, holding accountable all those who answer to the board. We must also hold ourselves accountable to the public, collectively as a board and individually as board members. Having a governance mindset requires that we bear the full mantle of **responsibility** and with it the full spectrum of **accountability** for the performance of the district, the board, and its individual board members. A

and managerial roles, beliefs about the **board** collectively in its governance role, and beliefs about **board members** individually in their boardsmanship role.

Further research (**Lighthouse II**) studied efforts to bring about improvements in student learning through board professional development aimed at increasing background knowledge underlying and reinforcing the beliefs described in the findings of **Lighthouse I**. Researchers found that not only board beliefs, but also board efforts to learn, **do** make a difference:

When local school board-superintendent teams generate a districtwide focus on improved achievement and engage local administrators and teachers in creating or strengthening key conditions that support continuous improvement it will result in high and equitable student achievement and elevated beliefs across the system. – Mary Dellagardelle⁵

The effective board adopts a governance mindset, ready to act because it has a solid foundation on which to act. It understands its purpose and defines its role in relation to its responsibilities. Distinguishing its own role from that of the superintendent and staff whom the superintendent manages gives the board the right perspective when providing strategic and operational guidance, communicating expectations that are both lofty and achievable, then pursuing those expectations with an accountability mindset based on a servant-leadership orientation and the formative dispositions of a growth mindset. The result of a governance mindset is fulfillment of the board's purpose: assuring positive student outcomes.

Indicators. The following indicate a board mindset committed to servant-leadership and a belief in growth based on effort:

governance mindset adopts an attitude of ***servant-leadership*** and an orientation of a ***growth mindset*** to enable a board to fulfill its governance responsibilities.

Petersen and Fusarelli describe, at one end of a continuum, overconfident boards that think of themselves as “far superior to ***mere educators*** such as the superintendent,” and at the other end, overly humble boards that “seldom question the professional expertise of the superintendent.”² A servant leader attitude permits neither of these extremes. The servant leader takes full leadership responsibility, balancing the idea of ***responsibility to*** (the role of a servant) against the equally important idea of ***responsibility for*** (the role of a leader).

A ***servant-first*** decision is symbolically represented in the oath of office administered when a board member takes office. In addition to deciding to be ***servant-first***, a board also must intentionally ***step up*** to its responsibility for others by taking charge as ***owner-representative*** and leader of the district. Regardless of the levels of individual talent, including dispositions, knowledge and skills possessed by its members, the board as a legally defined entity must accept full responsibility for all district performance.

The ultimate end toward which effective school board efforts should be directed is student learning.

Research conducted by psychologist **Carol Dweck** indicates that the most successful students are those who develop and employ a growth mindset – a core belief that intelligence is not fixed, that it has a capacity to grow, and that growth in learning is strongly influenced by the learner’s efforts.³

The value of a system-wide growth mindset is validated by school board research. A landmark study of school boards in otherwise similar districts that

- The board conducts an oath of office ceremony when adding new members, then follows up the ceremony with board discussion of the oath and its meaning.
- The board expresses a belief in all students’ ability to grow and achieve at higher levels.
- Board decisions reflect a belief that all students can handle advanced curricular offerings.

Governance Mindset consists of 4 primary* elements: ***Commitment to Serve***, ***Willingness to Lead***, ***Belief in Growth***, and ***Work Ethic***.

* ***Servant-leader*** orientation (commitment to serve and willingness to lead) and ***growth mindset*** (belief in growth and willingness to do the work needed for that growth) are necessary for a governance mindset but are insufficient when we consider each of the board’s governance responsibilities, component by component. More specific ***dispositions (beliefs, values and attitudes)*** are also necessary to prepare the board to perform each of its responsibilities. Such dispositions supplement essential elements of a governance mindset and will be included in descriptions of each component of those major board responsibilities.

1 Campbell, D. & Fullan, M. ***The Governance Core***, pg. 30.

2 Petersen, G. & Fusarelli, L. *Systematic Leadership amidst Turbulence: Superintendent-School Board Relations under Pressure*. ***The Future of School Board Governance***, pg. 127.

3 Dweck, C. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, pg. 13.

4 Bartusek, L. (ed.) ***IASB’s Lighthouse Study: School Boards and Student Achievement***.

significantly differed in their student achievement test scores concluded that a board's beliefs about students' ability to learn **do** make a difference in student achievement:

In the high-achieving districts, the board/superintendent team and school personnel consistently expressed an “elevating” view of students. Students were viewed as emerging and flexible, and the school’s job was seen as releasing each student’s potential. – Mary Dellagardelle⁴

IOWA School Board COMPASS: A Guide for Those Who Lead, pg. 4.

- 5 Dellagardelle, M. *The Lighthouse Inquiry: Examining the Role of School Board Leadership in the Improvement of Student Achievement*. **The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation**, pg. 204.

A Governance Excellence Conference that you won't want to miss. June 19-21, 2025. All are very welcome.

A Collection of Governance and Leadership World Experts in One Place At GOVERN for IMPACT's 2025 Annual Learning & Connecting Conference



Join Us at GOVERN's Annual Learning and Connecting Conference



**TRANSFORMING YOUR
ORGANIZATION'S IMPACT:
GOVERNANCE AND
LEADERSHIP IN ACTION**

June 19-21, 2025, Montreal, Canada

GOVERN for IMPACT's Annual Learning and Connecting Conference (Jun 19-21, 2025) will be held at The Alt Hotel Montreal (at the corner of Peel and Wellington streets) nestled in the [trendy Griffintown neighbourhood](#), close to the city's centre and steps away from the Lachine Canal and Old Montreal. From Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport, the hotel is less than half an hour by car/taxi/uber.

Conference Fees

- Affiliate Fee = \$790 USD
- Organization Affiliate = \$740 USD per person for 3 or more
- Young Governance Professional (age 35 yrs or younger) = \$300 USD
- Non-Affiliate Fee = \$860 USD

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

FEATURED WORKSHOP SESSION:

Board Leadership To Create Courageous Strategic Direction Through Ends (Critical Outcomes)

GOVERN for IMPACT'S ANNUAL GOVERNANCE LEARNING AND CONNECTING CONFERENCE

June 19-21, 2025

An invitation for Boards to
lean into their highest
purpose with intention and
boldness



Karen Fryday-Field
Senior Consultant
Meridian Edge Leadership
& Governance Consulting



Paul Smith
Board Futurist
Founder, Future Directors

In this thought-provoking session, participants will explore the critical leadership role of Boards in creating courageous Ends. Board leadership is essential to ensure organizational focus and impact. Dive into the concept of Ends as critical outcomes, which focus on those served and specify the value of these outcomes. Explore how Boards can inform their Ends leadership and the importance of generative and high-level strategic thinking in shaping organizational direction. Participants will gain insights into the essential qualities of Board courage and perseverance, especially when making challenging Ends (Critical Outcomes) decisions that require clarity, focus, and future-oriented leadership.

This session will emphasize the need for Boards to embrace a generative and strategic mindset, recognizing that no organization can achieve all the good that needs to be done. Through thoughtful Ends Policies, Boards can lead with purpose and ensure their organizations focus on what matters most. Attendees will leave with practical tools and inspiration to lead their organizations through Ends direction with confidence, clarity, and courage.

[**CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL CONFERENCE PROGRAM**](#)

A photograph of a man and a woman in profile, both smiling and clapping their hands. The man is wearing a plaid shirt and sunglasses. The background is blurred, suggesting a social gathering.

At GOVERN for IMPACT'S ANNUAL GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE

Enjoy the Friday Night Gala
and...

Experience the Soul of Montreal
– Art, Music & Community –

Come Together for a Night of “Community”

Friday, June 20, 2025

Step away from the conference room and into the heart of Montreal for a unique Friday evening of art, culture, and connection at the GOVERN Gala Fundraiser. Only \$115 USD for this amazing cultural experience!

- **Start your evening with a scenic 15-minute walk** from The Alt Hotel along the picturesque Lachine Canal to the *Montreal Art Centre and Museum*. Housed in the historic Caledonian Iron Works Co building (est. 1879), the Centre celebrates local visual and performing artists in a vibrant, inspiring space.
- **Enjoy a complimentary beverage** while mingling with colleagues and exploring open art studios and curated galleries.
- Then, head next door to the charming **Lord William Pub** for a delicious "Traditional Pub" meal with great company.
- After dinner, return to the Centre's cozy Piano Bar for a memorable musical experience featuring **Christine Ghawi**, Canadian Gemini Award-winning actress and singer. Let Christine take you on a journey through French and Quebecois culture with a performance that reflects the vibrant musical spirit of Montreal.

Following the program, feel free to stay and enjoy the Piano Bar or head back to the Lord William Pub to continue soaking in the Montreal vibe on this special **summer solstice** evening.

This is more than just a networking event — it's a celebration of community, culture, and connection. We can't wait to see you there!

Formal Reminder of the Announcement of GOVERN for IMPACT's Annual General Meeting

**Thursday, June 26, 2025
5:00-6:30 pm Eastern Time**

This Annual General Meeting will be held virtually on Zoom. All are welcome to attend. Those who are current affiliates will have voting privileges.

Celebrating Those Who Better Their Best Policy Governance Knowledge - Graduates of the Policy Governance Proficiency Program

Congratulations to the 2024/2025 graduates on completing the Policy Governance Proficiency (PGP) Program. We celebrate:

- Grace Dang
- Tammie Rix
- Laney Shaler
- Pam Orr
- Joe Bradley

You are shaping future governance excellence tomorrow, by excelling today.

We are proud of you. See upcoming interviews on GOVERN's website of these graduates sharing their learning and experience in in PGP.

Better Your Best by Joining this Amazing Educational Experience and
The PGP Program is delivered online and is accessible from anywhere in the world to English-speaking participants who have a good internet connection.

Time Investment

- Orientation webinar is held in the latter half of September.

How You Will Learn

- Reading and videos
- Webinars
- Group and Individual sessions with the Unit Instructor (the format depends on the Unit)
- Writing Assignments

of Governance in Theory, Principle, and Practice

- From October, 2025 to May, 2026, you will attend nine instructional webinars.
 - Each session takes place on Saturday morning at 11am Eastern Time (NYC/Toronto) and lasts 2 hours.
- Plan to spend an average of 8-12 hours per week in reading, completing assignments and quizzes, individual or small group session with the Unit instructor, and personal study time

- Team Project Presentation
- Final Exam

GOVERN FOR IMPACT

DISCOVER MORE DETAILS

CLICK HERE TO APPLY

Virtual Course to Achieve the Designation of “Governance Systems Professional (GSP)”

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The work of GOVERN for IMPACT is supported by people who believe in the work of this organization. [Click for more information on giving and contributing to the organization and board excellence work being undertaken by the people of GOVERN for IMPACT.](#) Join our generosity team.

Operational/Strategic Office Contact

GOVERN for IMPACT is a national organization providing Policy Governance principles and practices in the non-profit, for-profit and/or public sectors and who want to gain more general governance knowledge.

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