

# FROM THE BOARD

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE  
JANUARY 23, 2025 BOARD MEETING



GSSD.CA

## January 23, 2025, Regular Meeting

The Regular Board meeting on January 23, 2025, was held at the Good Spirit Education Complex. The following trustees were present: Chairperson Jaime Johnson, Christopher Balyski, Shannon Leson, Jan Morrison, Cara Makort, Kelly Palmer, Jamie Smart-Sondergaard, Jay-Cee Brass, Steve Variyan, and Kendra Stav. Also in attendance were division office staff, including Director of Education/CEO Quintin Robertson, Chief Financial Officer Keith Gervais, Communications Coordinator Lauren Denysek, and Superintendent of Learning Lisa Wotherspoon.

## Meeting Opening

Board Chairperson Jaime Johnson commenced the meeting at 10 a.m. Trustee Stav then reviewed GSSD's meeting norms and respectfully recognized that the meeting was taking place on Treaty 4 Territory; the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Assiniboine, and homeland of the Métis Peoples.

## Approval of Minutes

The meeting package included the minutes for the December 12, 2024, Regular Board Meeting, which were prepared by Chief Financial Officer Keith Gervais. The approved minutes can be accessed on the GSSD website: [GSSD](#) | [Board](#) | [Board Meetings](#) | [December 12, 2024](#)

## Delegation

As outlined in Board Policy 7, the Board will make provision for a delegation to make a presentation at a Board meeting in the interest of improving the education provided in Division schools. There were no delegations.

## Coding with Grade 4P at Columbia School!

On Tuesday, December 17, 2024, Mrs. Patzwald and her Grade 4 class at Columbia School dove into coding using Dash Robots. Michelle Morley, Digital Learning Consultant, introduced the group and highlighted the power of Blended Learning. The students explored coding, teamwork, collaboration, and new concepts, guided by Mrs. Patzwald, who was excited to share her recently acquired knowledge. Inspired by the fall





professional development session hosted by the Good Spirit School Division and Logix Academy, she was amazed at what Dash Robots could do and was eager to learn more!

While Mrs. Patzwald had some experience with HTML and Java years ago, this was her first deep dive into coding. Dash’s block-based approach made coding accessible and user-friendly for both her and her students. "It’s incredible how Dash breaks complex concepts into manageable pieces," she shared. "It’s amazing to watch the kids come up with unique and creative solutions—they’ve been teaching me so much!"

At the January 23rd Board meeting, Mrs. Patzwald and five students showcased their coding journey and demonstrated their new skills. The Board was thrilled to see the students so engaged, highlighting how blended learning extends beyond the classroom. When asked if they saw coding as part of their future careers, the students enthusiastically said yes!

Be sure to check out the [full video now live on YouTube](#) to see Grade 4P’s assignment and outcomes. It’s entertaining, inspiring, and a fantastic glimpse into the power of coding in the classroom!



## Accountability Report

### Improving Student Outcomes: Assessment Data – Fall 2024 Early Literacy Report

Lisa Wotherspoon, Superintendent of Learning at the Good Spirit School Division, presented an accountability report on early literacy data for Fall 2024, aligning with the division's priority of high-quality teaching and learning.

She highlighted that before COVID, 80% of Grade 1-3 students were reading at or above grade level, leaving 20% needing support. Research, including the Science of Reading, identified structured approaches to address this. Lisa explained the five pillars of Structured Literacy, which teach the critical skills students need to become proficient readers.

For the 2024-25 school year, two new assessments were introduced for Kindergarten-Grade 3 students:

- **LeNS (Letter and Sounds Assessment):** Evaluates students’ understanding of how letters and letter combinations correspond to sounds. *(pictured right)*
- **CC3 (Castles and Colheart 3):** Measures word-reading ability using regular words, irregular words, and non-words to assess decoding skills. *(pictured right)*

Good Spirit School Division

### How Do We Know How Our Students Are Doing?

#### The Letter Name Sound (LeNS) Test

Identifies what students know about how letters and letter combinations (graphemes) match the sounds they make (phonemes).

### The Castles and Colheart 3 (CC3) Test

Identifies students' ability to read words.

Regular Words	Irregular Words	Non Words
best long seat box table	chop beach yacht tent route	dash full pile trapz lenth
nest ship head alert lock	grape meadow cabinet forecast three	loop pleach game leaf jobz

These tools replaced the Fountas & Pinnell Assessment in Grades 1-3, providing a more targeted and structured approach to early literacy.

### Assessment Results

Two key literacy assessments, the Letter Name Sound (LeNS) Test and the Castles and Coltheart 3 (CC3) Test, were used in the fall of 2024 to measure student performance. The data showed:

According to the LeNS data:

- 77% of Grade 1 students are falling within the "average range" for sound accuracy
- 20% of Grade 1 students are "at risk" for sound accuracy
- 79% of Grade 2 students are falling within or above the "average range" for sound accuracy
- 16% of Grade 2 students are "at risk"

According to the CC3 data:

- 80% of Grade 2 students are in or above the "average range" for regular words
- 16% of Grade 2 students are "at risk" for regular words
- 77% of Grade 2 are in or above the "average range" for irregular words
- 16% of Grade 2 students are "at risk" for irregular words
- 73% of Grade 3 students are in or above the "average range" for regular words
- 22% of Grade 3 students are "at risk" for regular words
- 71% of Grade 3 students are in or above the "average range" for irregular words
- 73% of Grade 3 students are in or above the "average range" for non-words
- 20% of Grade 3 students are "at risk" for non-words



### Strategic Actions

The division implemented several initiatives to address gaps in literacy:

- Partnerships and Training: Collaborations with experts like Dr. George Georgiou and professional development for PreK-3 teachers focusing on effective reading instruction.
- Resources and Tools: Early literacy screeners, phonics instruction sequences, and resources UFLI, Under One Sun and decodable books.
- Intervention Plans: Data reviews and personalized intervention strategies for at-risk students.

### Future Strategies

Plans include rolling out targeted reading intervention lessons, exploring Tier 3 strategies for specific needs like auditory processing and decoding, and supporting English language learners through programs like Lexia. GSSD is also building upon existing reconciliation strategies to include and consult with Indigenous community members.

### Key Takeaway

The report highlights promising trends in early literacy, with most students performing in the average range, but highlights the need to address gaps for at-risk learners. By fostering professional growth, adopting evidence-based practices, and tailoring interventions, the division is committed to improving foundational literacy skills for all students.

For a more comprehensive overview, please refer to the full report linked below. To view the accountability report in its entirety visit: [GSSD](#) | [Board](#) | [Board Meetings](#) | [Board Accountability Report – Improving Student Outcomes: Assessment Data](#)

## Board Development

### Governance Skills Development

Keith Gervais, Chief Financial Officer, presented the Board Development on Financial Oversight and Budgeting.

At the board meeting, key points about budget oversight were discussed, emphasizing the Board's responsibility under *The Education Act, 1995* to manage budgets in compliance with provincial regulations. The process is guided by principles of transparency, accountability, equity, and alignment with strategic educational goals.

Highlights included:

- The budget process involves strategic planning, revenue forecasting, stakeholder engagement, Board approval, and continuous monitoring. Stakeholder engagement is key in building trust with the community.
- Revenue comes primarily from provincial grants, local taxation, and other sources.
- The Board oversees financial compliance, monitors risks, and ensures resources meet diverse student needs, while senior administration handles day-to-day budget management.
- Challenges like fluctuating enrolment, funding adjustments, and rising costs were acknowledged.

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT**  
TOPIC: FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND BUDGETING  
JANUARY 23, 2025, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

**Information for the Board - 10 Fast Facts**  
These fast facts provide a foundation for trustees, particularly new ones, to understand their responsibilities, ethical expectations, and the scope of their role within the Good Spirit School Division.

- 1 Mandated Oversight:**  
Under The Education Act, 1995, the Board is responsible for preparing, approving, and managing budgets in compliance with provincial regulations.
  - Under The Education Act, 1995, school divisions in Saskatchewan are mandated to prepare and manage annual budgets in alignment with provincial funding regulations and educational priorities. The Board is responsible for approving the budget and ensuring compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
- 2 Core Principles:**  
Effective oversight relies on transparency, accountability, prudence, equity, and strategic alignment with educational goals.
  - Ensure open communication about financial matters to build trust with stakeholders.
  - Monitor expenditures to ensure they align with approved budgets and strategic goals.
  - Make decisions that safeguard the division's financial sustainability.
  - Allocate resources to address the diverse needs of all students.
  - Align budgeting decisions with the division's strategic plan and educational outcomes.
- 3 Budget Process:**  
Key steps include strategic planning, revenue estimation, expenditure planning, stakeholder engagement, Board approval, and ongoing monitoring.
  - Setting priorities based on student needs, enrolment projections, and government directives.
  - Forecasting funding from provincial grants, local taxation and other sources.
  - Allocating resources to various programs, services, and operational needs.
  - Consulting with administrators, teachers, parents, and community members.
  - Reviewing and approving the proposed budget.
  - Regularly reviewing financial reports to track progress and ensure compliance.
- 4 Revenue Sources:**  
School division budgets depend on provincial grants, local taxation, and other funding sources.
- 5 Board's Role:**  
The Board approves the budget, monitors financial performance, ensures compliance, and evaluates risks.
  - Evaluate financial risks and mitigation strategies.
- 6 Senior Administration's Role:** Administration prepares and implements the budget while monitoring day-to-day financial operations.
- 7 Best Practices:**  
Regular reporting, clear policies, training for Board members, independent audits, and scenario planning support strong financial oversight.
  - Provide financial updates at Board Meetings to review actual vs. budgeted performance.
  - Develop and adhere to financial policies and procedures.
  - Provide board members with the knowledge and skills necessary for financial oversight.
  - Annual external audits verify financial integrity.
- 8 Challenges:**  
Financial planning must address enrolment fluctuations, provincial funding changes, rising costs, and the balance between equity and efficiency.
  - Fluctuating student numbers can impact revenue and resource allocation.
  - Adjustments in government funding levels can create budgetary pressures.
  - Inflation and increased operational costs require proactive financial planning.
- 9 Recommendations:**  
Utilize the Finance Committee, conduct policy reviews, and advocate for adequate funding to enhance oversight effectiveness.
  - Regular updates on financial performance and emerging risks.
  - Conduct annual reviews of financial policies and procedures.
  - Engage in professional development related to financial management and governance.
  - Advocate for adequate provincial funding to meet the division's needs.
- 10 Goal of Oversight:**  
Ensuring resources are used effectively and transparently to achieve the division's educational objectives.
  - By adhering to best practices and maintaining a collaborative approach, the Board can fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities and foster trust among stakeholders.
  - Board of Education's Budget Development Framework is used throughout the budget process.

LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS...ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

[Click here to enlarge the image!](#)

The session reinforced the importance of financial best practices, such as regular reporting, independent audits, and policy reviews, to ensure resources are used effectively to achieve educational outcomes.

To access the full document of the 10 fast facts visit [GSSD | Board | Board Meetings | Board Development – Financial Oversight and Budgeting](#)

## Advocacy Session

### Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools Board of Education

The January Board meeting provided an excellent opportunity for the Good Spirit School Division (GSSD) and Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools (CTTCS) Boards of Education to connect and begin building a collaborative relationship. Following the recent election in November, this gathering was an important step in fostering understanding, trust, and alignment as the Boards discussed shared goals, potential partnerships, and future outcomes.





Present at the Advocacy session from Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools was Director of Education Barb MacKesey, Trustee Kobyłka, Trustee Schrader, Trustee Maybanting, Trustee Niezgodą, Vicechair Gibson, and Chairperson Zaryski.

The session began with introductions about the two divisions and from everyone present, followed by lunch, creating a relaxed atmosphere for conversation and networking. The discussion then transitioned into a valuable exchange about the missions, values, and priorities of GSSD and CTCS, highlighting common areas for collaboration and opportunities to work together to support students and communities.

The meeting set a positive tone for ongoing cooperation between the two divisions, emphasizing the importance of working together to achieve shared educational goals.

## **New Business**

### **Approve the French Immersion Designation**

Under Section 180.3 of The Education Act (1995), the Minister of Education is mandated to designate schools where French is the principal language of instruction in designated programs. In this context, a board motion is necessary to request the Ministry of Education to officially designate the French Immersion program at Melville Comprehensive School (MCS). Students who participate in the French Immersion program have the opportunity to fulfill bilingual program graduation requirements and earn a “mention bilingue” on their high school diploma. The benefits of designation include enhanced credibility of the program and greater access to various programs and initiatives available to the division.

At the January Board Meeting, the Board passed the Motion “*that the Board approve the attached “Recommendation for Designation Form” for the French Immersion program at Melville Comprehensive School for the 2025-26 school year.*” The GSSD Administration will submit the necessary documents to the Ministry.

### **Review the Melville Comprehensive School Governance Agreement**

Melville Comprehensive School (MCS) operates under a unique governance agreement between the Good Spirit School Division (GSSD) and Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools (CTCS). This partnership reflects a shared education model, where GSSD educates grades 7–12 students in the Melville area, including CTCS students in grades 10–12. The agreement emphasizes collaboration through a joint Governance Authority, shared facilities, French immersion, and religious studies programming, while respecting the school's spiritual and cultural heritage. Director of Education Quintin Robertson recently reviewed the agreement with the Board, providing historical context for new trustees. No changes were made, highlighting its ongoing relevance in supporting Melville's diverse educational needs.



## **Policy Review**

The Board reviewed and approved updates to several Board Policies, including changes to Board Policy 2A to reflect School Community Council (SCC) engagement. Other updates included minor revisions for clarity, updated references, and added review dates. The revised policies are now available on our website for review.

- [Board Policy 2A Annual Work Plan](#)
- [Board Policy 4B Code of Conduct Sanctions](#)

- [Board Policy 5 Role of the Board Chair](#)
- [Board Policy 6 Role of the Vice Chair](#)
- [Board Policy 7 Board Operations](#)

## Director’s Report

### Professional Development Opportunities

Director of Education Quintin Robertson highlighted upcoming professional development opportunities within the Division, including the January 6, 2025, PD day, which offered over eight sessions for staff to attend. Of particular interest to the Board is the *Beginning Your Journey Toward Becoming an Anti-Racist Educator* session, scheduled for March 5–6, 2025. Board members are encouraged to participate, as past trustees have found this learning opportunity valuable, gaining significant insights and knowledge.

### Review of the Board Budget Development Framework for 2025-2026

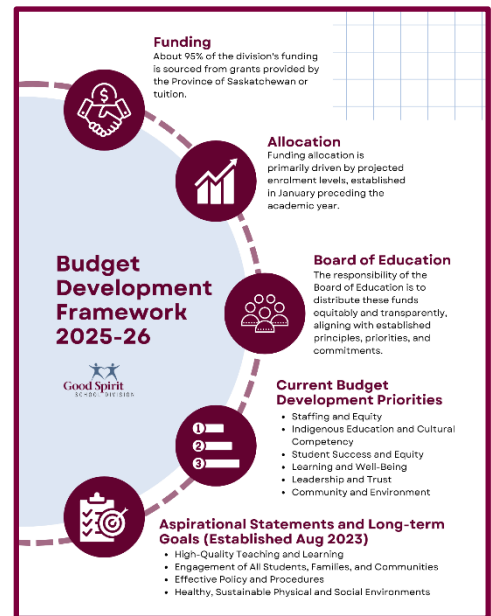
During the review of the Board Budget Development Framework for 2025-26, the board examined various key aspects. The session included an in-depth look at how GSSD is funded. It also covered a comprehensive overview of what GSSD represents, encompassing our aspirational statements, motto, mission, vision and values. Furthermore, the board discussed various considerations and priorities, which are crucial in shaping the framework and guiding the division’s strategic financial planning for the upcoming year. This review was essential in aligning the budget with the overall objectives of GSSD. The Board will approve the Board Budget Development Framework for 2025-26 during the February 27, 2025, Regular Board Meeting.

### Financial Update

Keith Gervais, Chief Financial Officer, presented financials up to the end of December, noting that we are one-third of the way through the fiscal year.

- **Revenue:** Overall, revenue is on track at just under 33%, aligning with the timeline. No concerns were reported.
- **Expenses:**
  - *Governance:* Savings are expected due to lower election costs, as fewer elections were needed.
  - *Instruction:* Expenditures are under 40%, primarily due to budgeting for higher salaries with Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF) participating in binding arbitration.
  - *Facilities (Plant):* Spending is under budget, with anticipated savings likely to roll over to next year for larger projects.
  - *Transportation:* Expenditures are on track and expected to align closely with the budget.

Total expenditures are at approximately 35%, with no major concerns noted.



## Facilities Update & Yorkton Regional High School (YRHS) Tour

Keith Gervais, Chief Financial Officer presented the Facilities Update and YRHS Tour to the Board.

Keith provided updates on various projects:

- **Saltcoats and Churchbridge Renovations:** Phase 2 of classroom renovations is complete.
- **Cultural Room for Norquay School:** Discussions are ongoing with NOR administration.
- **Summer Projects:** Many projects will be managed by the GSSD team and scheduled during the summer break.
- **MCS Washrooms:** Three sets of washrooms have been renovated, with work continuing.

Keith also mentioned two applications for minor capital projects:

- Renovations at Esterhazy High School (EHS)
- Roof replacement at Canora Composite School (CCS)

He gave Trustees a virtual tour of Yorkton Regional High School (YRHS), showcasing:

- Renovations from the 2023 Major Capital Project.
- Practical and Applied Arts (PAA) spaces, including construction, automotive, welding, electrical, and machine shops.
- The large cafeteria and the renovated gym with upgraded flooring and lighting (2018).
- The beautiful library at the school's center.
- The Anne Portnuff Theatre, a valuable community resource.
- Century Field, a popular track and football facility.

You can explore YRHS for yourself through the virtual tour on our website: [YRHS School Tour](#)

## Review of the 2025-2026 School Year Calendar

A calendar committee, including representatives from Good Spirit School Division, Good Spirit Teachers' Association, Christ the Teacher Catholic School Division (CTTCS), and Christ the Teacher Teachers' Association, collaborated to develop draft calendars for the 2025-2026 school year. Each year, GSSD and CTTCS work together to create two calendar options, giving stakeholders a chance to voice their preferences. For the 2025-2026 school year, feedback on the two draft calendars will be collected from January 16 to 30, 2025.

Once the majority vote is confirmed, the finalized calendar will be submitted to the Ministry for approval. After approval, GSSD will share the official calendar with students, families, staff, and stakeholders to support preparations for the upcoming school year. GSSD values the annual collaboration with CTTCS and the calendar committee, fostering trust and consistency within the community.

To learn more about the calendar options and vote on your preference, [click here!](#)



## Administrative Procedures

The Board was informed of the Administrative Procedures that have undergone revision and review since the Regular Board Meeting on December 12, 2025. The following APs have been finalized and posted to the website:

- [AP 151 - Parent, Staff and Students Inquiries or Concerns \(Updated January 2025\)](#)
- [AP 261 - Sweat Lodge Consent Waiver \(NEW January 2025\)](#)
- [AP 412 - Supervision and Evaluation of Professional Staff \(Updated January 2025\)](#)

## Closing Items

### Committee and Conference Reports

On Wednesday, January 8, 2025, Trustees Morrison, Smart-Sondergaard, Brass, and Pohl joined Admin Office Staff, Director of Education Quintin Robertson, Chief Financial Officer Keith Gervais, and Communications Coordinator Lauren Denysek at The Role of the Director & Sr. Staff in Working with an Elected Public Sector



Board workshop. The event was hosted by LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents of Saskatchewan). The day began with an insightful presentation by Ted Amendt and Ben Grabinski, who shared their extensive knowledge on leadership and governance structures. In the afternoon, participants engaged in team-based case studies and problem-solving exercises, focusing on effective governance, policy, and procedures. The workshop proved educational and helped strengthen relationships between Trustees and GSSD staff.

### School Community Councils & Celebration

Trustee Johnson shared that Kamsack Comprehensive Institute (KCI) held their January 23<sup>rd</sup> School Community Council (SCC) meeting at the local rink to enhance community engagement.

Trustee Leson highlighted East Central District Athletic Association's efforts to train officials and develop future leaders.

Trustee Palmer visited Langenburg Central School (LCS), where Grade 10 students are receiving First Aid training. The school is exploring creative ways to expand this training to more students.

Trustee Stav noted that SCCs in Melville are collaborating with the city's Youth Council on grant applications for nutrition programming. Youth Council members assist in preparing the grants, and if funding is received, it will be distributed among participating schools. This is a great way to get youth involved in what's happening in their schools and communities!

Trustee Smart-Sondergaard commended Esterhazy High School's (EHS) student representation at a recent SCC meeting, expressing how impressed they were. The last EHS SCC meeting included discussions around Administration in the school and demonstrated strong collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

Trustee Brass shared that they recently traveled to Hawaii to support a student from the Key First Nation who also attends Norquay School. The student participated in a volleyball tournament where their team achieved success among 400 competing teams!

Trustee Variyan attended an SCC meeting last week and shared positive feedback about the Division. He highlighted the team's appreciation for Division staff and noted the success of ongoing trust-building efforts.



## Upcoming Important Dates

January 25, 2025	2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Round Dance for Truth & Reconciliation – Hosted by GSSD
January 30, 2025	Indigenous Council Meeting – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Saskatoon
January 30 & 31, 2025	SSBA School for New Trustees - Saskatoon
February 6, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting – virtual, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
February 13, 2025	Public Section Executive Meeting – via Zoom, 9:00-10:30 am
February 17, 2025	Family Day – No School, GSEC will be closed
February 27, 2025	Regular Board Meeting
March (Date TBC)	General Insurance Plan Loss Prevention Seminar, location TBD
March 10, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting – virtual, 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.
March 27, 2025	Regular Board Meeting
April 2, 2025	Indigenous Council Meeting – 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., Saskatoon
April 3, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting In-person before Spring Assembly, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Saskatoon
April 3, 2025	Public Section Executive Meeting, Time TBD, Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Saskatoon
April 3 & 4, 2025	Spring Assembly – Saskatoon, Sheraton Cavalier Hotel Downtown
April 18, 2025	Good Friday – No School, GSEC will be closed
April 21, 2025	Easter Monday
April 24, 2025	Regular Board Meeting
May 19, 2025	Victoria Day – No School, GSEC will be closed
May 22, 2025	Special Board Meeting
May 26, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting – virtual, 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.
June 4-6, 2025	Employee Benefits Plan Seminar, location TBD
June 5 & 6, 2025	Public Section General Meeting & Professional Development Event - Regina DoubleTree by Hilton
June 12, 2025	Regular Board Meeting
August 13, 2025	Evaluation & Special Board Meeting
August 14, 2025	Regular Board Meeting
September 18, 2025	Board Chairs Council – In-person, Regina, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
September 30, 2025	Deadline for Submissions for the 2025 Premier’s Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence & the 2024 Award of Distinction – 4:30 p.m.
October 1, 2025	Deadline for Bylaw Amendments (for the AGM) – 4:30 p.m.
October 16, 2025	Deadline for Resolutions (for the AGM) - 4:30 p.m.
October 20, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting – virtual, 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.
November 16, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting – In-person before Fall Assembly, Regina 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. - Directors are invited to this meeting
November 16-18, 2025	Fall General Assembly and AGM – Regina, Delta Hotel

**Upcoming Board Meetings:** February 27/25, March 27/25, April 24/25, May 22/25 - Special Board Meeting, June 12/25, August 13/25 - Evaluation & Special Board Meeting, August 14/25

**Location & Time:** Good Spirit Education Complex at 10 a.m. 5B Schrader Drive, Yorkton, SK S3N 3Z4

To submit photos or stories regarding the Board of Education or an individual Trustee in your school community, please contact lauren.denysek@gssd.ca.

Board Policy 7 Board Operations: [GSSD](#) | [Board](#) | [Board Policy Handbook](#)