

From the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) website:

Mission is paramount at independent schools, and one of the most important responsibilities of every independent school board is to be the guardian of the school's mission. Among other things, the board must adopt the school's mission, vision, and strategic goals and then establish policies and plans that reinforce them.

In addition, each board should be a careful steward of the school's resources and be accountable for the institution's financial stability. Boards oversee operating budgets, ensuring the preservation of capital assets and endowment, and actively help raise money for the school.

Independent school boards must also establish and maintain bylaws that conform to legal requirements – especially their fiduciary duties of loyalty, obedience, and care – as well as always operate in compliance with the law. They must also uphold high ethical standards and avoid conflicts of interest.

Another primary responsibility of the board is to select, hire, evaluate, and establish the compensation of the school head. The board must work in tandem with the head and other school administrators, always being careful to focus its primary work on long-range and strategic issues, not the daily operations of the school.

The board must also keep its own house in order by maintaining accurate records of meetings and policies and ensuring that all its members are actively engaged in board work. It should be open and transparent in terms of communicating its final decisions, yet also keep deliberations confidential. It should develop a clear and intentional program to orient new trustees, continually educate them on the issues before the school, and evaluate their performance. And to guarantee a pipeline of strong leaders, it should put in place a board-leadership succession plan.

Board service requires a significant commitment to the school and its welfare, observance of the highest ethical standards and principles of fiscal integrity, and a readiness to explore challenges and gain consensus with fellow trustees.