



# TAPA Board of Trustees Guidebook

2024-25

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# About This Guidebook

**The purpose of this guidebook is to clearly communicate the role of the Board of Trustees.**

The guidebook outlines how members of the Board of Trustees work with each other and with others across the TAPA school community.

The guidebook does not replace the comprehensive [Board Bylaws](#). Rather, this guidebook exists to bring added transparency and shared understanding.

Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts (TAPA) is an academically rigorous, arts-integrated public charter school for students in grades 5-12. TAPA is woven into the diverse and creative fabric of the city of Providence, fostering engaged, well-rounded artistic leaders.

## **TAPA's Mission Statement**

Through a rigorous arts-integrated program, TAPA, a public charter school in Providence, Rhode Island, cultivates artist-scholars who are prepared for collegiate and professional success and leadership in a global society.

At TAPA, arts are the catalyst to connect neighbors, amplify voice, and empower a safe community. Our students develop the artist mindset and a lifelong spark for learning.

## **TAPA's Vision Statement**

Through the Ensemble effort of the students, staff, and community, TAPA students will embrace and utilize their artistic talents, pursue post-secondary success in academic and artistic fields, and become active members of a global society.

# Why We Have a Board of Trustees

The TAPA Board is a formalized, independent body of community leaders, constituents, and other interested community members whose role is to forward the school's mission and vision and ensure the security and sustainability of the organization.

The TAPA Board is responsible for:

- Commitment to the mission,
- Adherence to the bylaws and policies of the organization, and
- Fiduciary responsibility to ensure the financial integrity of the organization.

The Board also provides fresh perspective, expanded networks, expertise, and financial support. It has legal authority and liability, and works directly with the Head of School to brainstorm, discuss, debate and make major organizational decisions.

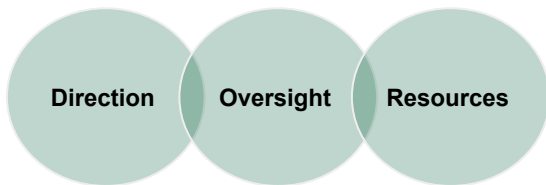
Board members agree to uphold the **Duty of Care**. This duty requires board members to “act toward others and the public with watchfulness, attention, caution and prudence that a reasonable person in the circumstances would.” Put simply, each board member must make their best effort to care for the organization's success and sustainability.

Ruszkowski, C. N. NM PED. The Role of the Governing Board in School Success

# What the Board Does

Board responsibilities include:

- Be Active Partners
- Be Familiar with TAPA
- Build Community Relationships
- Raise and Protect Vital Resources
- Plan & Develop Policy
- Ensure Legal and Ethical Integrity



Source: <https://boardsource.org/board-staff-interaction-faq/>

The Board of Trustees works in partnership with the Head of School to achieve the organization's mission and vision.

As a governing body, the Board of Trustees sets the strategic vision, monitors organizational health, provides financial oversight, and protects the enduring existence of the school.

Being familiar with TAPA and building relationships with individuals across the school community is also essential work. These relationships and understanding of TAPA enable the board to advocate and make decisions in the best interest of the school.

# How the Board Operates

1. We listen to others with an open mind.
2. We speak with a respectful tone.
3. We ask questions to learn and understand fully.
4. We value the voices, time, and contributions of our fellow board members, staff, students, and families.
5. We are constructive in the feedback and guidance we give, and we are open to feedback ourselves.
6. We share our concerns directly and transparently.
7. We work toward solutions.
8. We support one another, and help where we are able.
9. We hold ourselves and others accountable to their commitments.
10. We place the success of our students at the center of decisions.

## TAPA Beliefs and Values

### *Anti-Oppressive Creative Community*

- **Inclusion and Anti-Oppression:** Practicing inclusion in our curriculum, instructional practices, and school climate, and supporting responsible citizenship and allyship
- **Creative Expression:** Empowering creative expression through the arts, and using the arts to unite, understand, and heal
- **Readiness:** Preparing all students for success after TAPA

*“Advancing the purpose of the organization requires a healthy culture of inquiry inside and outside the boardroom. Questioning and challenging assumptions, seeking information, and testing perceptions against realities can help reinforce strengths or expose weaknesses. Protecting the integrity of the organization is part of the board’s job as stewards of the mission.” - [Board Source](#)*

# How We Work Together As a Board

## Board Meetings

- The board meets at least quarterly, and meetings are run by the President.
- Agendas are posted on the Secretary of State's OMA website and in the TAPA lobby 48 hours in advance of each meeting.
- Meeting minutes are shared and approved at the subsequent meeting.
- Board meetings are open to the public, including all members of the TAPA community.

## Committees

- There are three standing committees: Executive, Finance, and Education. Other committees operate as needed, including Fund Development, Human Resources, Nominating, Plant and Property, and ad-hoc committees formed by the president.
- The frequency with which committees meet is based on workload, timelines, and organizational priorities.
- With the exception of the Executive Committee, committees may be supported by staff as non-voting members.

## Additional Support

- Board members may attend events and support TAPA in other ways, as needed and available.

## Outside Consultation

- When board members assess that additional expertise is needed, the board seeks appropriate professional advice that may include legal counsel or other consultation. The board strives to communicate the purpose behind the engagement of any external partners.

# What Committees Do

## Executive Committee

- Coordinate and monitor **all board efforts**, plus critical/emerging issues.
- Responsible for the annual performance **evaluation and support plan** for the Head of School.

## Education Committee

- Set **standards** and expectations of student academic progress, and monitor continuous progress.
- Recommend **curriculum** changes and education policies.
- Ensure budget development is driven by **educational goals** and needs.

## Finance Committee

- Lead **audit** responsibilities including approval of auditor and reviewing accounting practices and expenditures .
- Present the **annual budget** to the board for approval, and monitor financial performance under the budget.
- Advise the Treasurer regarding **investments**.

## Fund Dev. Committee

- Assist in the **planning and development** of the long-range financial resources of the school.

## HR Committee

- Assist in setting and reviewing **human resources policies**.

## Nominating Committee

- Examine qualifications of **prospective members**.
- **Nominate** members to the board and to offices.
- Provide **orientation** for new members as to their roles, duties, and obligations.

## Plant and Property Committee

- Conduct research and make recommendations regarding **facilities and physical plant** development.

Staff involvement in board committees is highly valued as a way of enabling collaboration between staff and the board, and as an opportunity for staff voice to be reflected in the board's work. With the exception of the Executive Committee, all committees may involve one or more members of the broader TAPA community, as appointed by the Board President.

In addition to the listed committees, the Board President may appoint **ad-hoc committees and working groups** from time to time. These groups are typically time-limited and focused on completing work in a specific area.



# How the Board Works with Others

## Working with School Leadership

- By design, the board has a highly collaborative relationship with the Head of School. The board and Head of School work together to achieve the vision and mission of the school. The board president, in particular, is expected to maintain regular communication with the Head of School.
- The Head of School is a non-voting member of the board, as well as the Executive Committee, Nominating Committee, and Finance Committee.
- The board sets the strategic vision, and the Head of School works with staff to implement the vision.
- While this relationship is collaborative and supportive, there is accountability. The board, and specifically the Executive Committee, is responsible for the Head of School's annual performance evaluation and support plan.

## Working with School Staff

- The board sets policies and expectations for systems that enable teachers and staff to create effective learning environments and support every student.
- As a small, community charter school, the board and school staff are uniquely positioned to work hand-in-hand. We work hard to avoid an us/them dynamic, instead finding ways to work in partnership to achieve our goals for students.
- Concretely, staff may be asked to support a board committee, or to prepare information requested by the board.
- Staff representatives, elected by Staff Council, serve on the board and help to facilitate communication between staff and the board. Additionally, the Head of School helps to communicate board vision to staff, and staff successes and concerns to the board.
- Board members visit the school and attend school events, to the extent they are able, in an effort to connect with and support staff.

## Working with Students and Families

- Student representatives, elected by Student Government, serve on the board and help to facilitate communication between students and the board.
- Similarly parent representatives serve on the board and help to relay parent perspectives.

# How the Board is Elected and Terms

The TAPA Board of Trustees is a group of elected individuals who volunteer their service to TAPA.

The board is comprised of between 8 and 20 individuals.

The bylaws state that the board should include:

- Up to 3 parents of current students;
- Up to 2 TAPA teachers;
- Up to 2 professional artists;
- A representative from higher education; and
- A representative from Trinity Restoration, Inc.

## How are board members elected?

- Members are elected by the board.
- Current TAPA teachers are elected by their peers (Staff Council) to serve on the board.

## How long do board members serve in their role?

- Members are elected for 3 year terms.
- Members are limited to 2 consecutive terms.
- Staff representatives serve 1 year terms.

## What are the officer roles, and how are they elected?

- The officers are the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The specific duties of each officer can be found in the [board bylaws](#).
- Officers are appointed by the Nominating Committee, and elected by the board.
- Trustees who are teachers are not eligible to be officers.

# Who We Are

First and foremost, we are individuals who care about TAPA! We believe deeply in the school's mission and vision, and we care about the health and success of our students and staff.

We are volunteers who lend our time and expertise to assist TAPA to the best of our abilities. Outside of TAPA, we are parents and grandparents, and working professionals. Some of us bring experience and expertise in education, while others contribute communications, finance, and leadership expertise from the business sector.

We share in common our commitment to Providence youth, and we are continuously in awe of the talents of TAPA staff and artist-scholars.

# Why We Serve

"Educators at TAPA have built a unique community that blends arts and academics, and focuses on what's best for every student - I am proud to support their dedication, talent, and success. I am also excited to see the school continuing to grow to serve even more students in the years ahead." - *Sandi Connors*

"I believe every student needs a personalized education that serves their needs and helps them dream big. I'm on the TAPA board because I know this school does just that." - *Ellen Foley*

"I wanted to be a part of an educational institution that fosters intellectual growth, creative and critical thinking. Also one that empowers students to think independently rather than simply being taught what to think." - *Dionne Gomez*

"I want to share my time and talents with an organization that supports the dreams and aspirations of our young people so that they can become the best and most productive adults. I also participate in TAPA to show our students another face that looks like them, so they know they can be/do anything they want." - *Larry Kellam*

"I stay on the TAPA board because I really believe in what the school stands for and want to support our diverse student community, especially those who are multilingual. It's important to me that we create a welcoming space where every student feels valued and can succeed. I also think it's crucial to advocate for all school staff and ensure their voices are heard on the board. Having representation for the staff is key to building a strong community where everyone can thrive. Being part of the board lets me help make that happen." - *Smaylin Reyes*

"TAPA embodies my belief that the arts play an integral role in developing the next generation of leaders in our diverse and ever-changing global society." - *Mary Robbins*

"I serve because I'm passionate about empowering students. TAPA's unique approach resonates with my experience as an educator, and sparks joy and creativity." - *Sarah Whiting*

# Connect with Us



## By Email

- Contact Sarah Whiting, Board President, at [whiting179@gmail.com](mailto:whiting179@gmail.com) or [board@tapaprovidence.org](mailto:board@tapaprovidence.org).

## Board Meetings

- Attend public meetings to listen and observe\*
- Give public comment
- Review board meeting minutes

## School Events

- Attend school events including board meet-and-greets

## School Surveys and Other Channels

- Participate in surveys and other requests for input

\*Contact the Head of School at least 2 days in advance if interpretation or other accommodations are needed to participate in a board meeting.

Every board member is committed to TAPA, and welcomes opportunities to connect and learn more about students, family members, educators, and staff.

**Don't hesitate to reach out or say hello!** We value our relationships with the school community.

## Reasons to Reach Out

- Invite the board to attend a school event or learn more about student work
- Share an idea to strengthen the school's success and sustainability
- Bring a question or feedback to the board

If you have a concern or complaint, please follow the Appeals Policy, which begins with bringing the matter to an Assistant Head of School.