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Introduction to the Creating an Effective Governing Board Guidebook

Purpose

The word “govern” derives from a Greek word meaning “to steer a ship.” John Carver, an expert on board governance and the author of Boards That Make a Difference, writes, “Governance is not about budget lines, personnel issues and field trip approvals. It is about values and vision and strategic leadership. The re-invention of the school board calls for a new paradigm, a fresh reconstruction of what the work of the board is to be.”

Like other organizations, charter schools often face challenges in building effective boards of directors. Many charter schools report serious difficulty in creating and operating good working boards. Tensions among board directors, conflict between board and staff, and non-functioning boards are among the problems that have plagued charter schools in many places. The nonprofit world is rich with workshop opportunities and guides on nonprofit board effectiveness. Local district boards of education usually are able to draw upon state and national school board associations for consultation and instruction. However, there is little specific guidance on the development and effectiveness of charter school boards.

The Creating an Effective Governing Board Guidebook offers charter developers information on how to prepare and sustain board directors to lead an autonomous public school. It attempts to build upon the best of nonprofit, district and private school governance training and resources.

Why Effective Charter School Boards Are Critical To The Success Of The Charter School Movement

The ability of the charter school to carry out its mission and vision depend on the strength of its organizational foundation. A critical element of this foundation is the charter school board itself. The board carries the mission of the school into the community and brings the views of the community into the school. Its importance to the health of the charter school and its financial base is primary.

Charter schools, after all, are organizations. While charter schools can be organized in different ways, increasingly they exist as independent, freestanding entities apart from the traditional public school system. If we see a future for charter schools within the broader movement of school reform in America, we need to see ourselves as building organizations that will last, organizations that are healthy, thriving, and continuously learning and improving -- organizations that are capable of sustaining dramatic improvements in student achievement.

The charter school governing board is a critical element in developing this kind of organization. Charter school boards will be one of the important places where a new

generation of school leadership develops and strengthens its skill base. These leaders will have impact within the charter schools on whose boards they serve and they can have impact beyond charter schools in the broader community.

Specifically charter schools need boards for some of the following reasons:

- **Boards fulfill a legal responsibility.** A board of directors is a legal requirement for a charter school organized as a nonprofit corporation. Charter schools, as public schools, serve the public and do not operate for any individual's personal gain and they are eligible for special treatment, such as tax exemptions. The charter school is required to have a governing board to ensure that its operations continue to focus on serving the public.
- **Boards provide oversight functions.** In exchange for direct and indirect financial assistance from the state and federal governments, state charter school legislation as well as nonprofit corporation law requires that a group of individuals voluntarily serve on a board of directors and act as guardians of the "public trust." This structure makes the school's management accountable to a diverse group of people who have the general interest of the charter school at heart, are not directly involved in the operational activities of the school, and, due to the voluntary nature of the board, can effectively provide financial oversight since no personal financial gain is involved.¹ The ability of the board to remain objective is critical to its effectiveness in guiding the charter school.
- **Boards promote the charter school's mission.** In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, a charter school needs a board of directors composed of individuals who support the school's mission, believe in it, and seek to promote it. Advocating for the charter school and its educational philosophy is an important function of the board and involves promoting the mission and goals of the charter school within the community and with the wider educational reform arena.
- **Boards help to raise funds.** The ability to raise funds is an important measure of a board's effectiveness in serving a charter school. Board directors who are influential in the community can often successfully elicit major contributions from a variety of private and business sources. Building an active group of financial supporters who regularly donate money to the charter school will increase the resources available to implement the educational program, making it easier for the charter school to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals.

¹ In some states, board members of nonprofit organizations may be paid. Check with the charter school resource center or the office of the Secretary of State in your state to determine what the law requires and allows.

Structure Of The Guidebook

The Creating an Effective Governing Board Guidebook contains thirteen chapters. Each chapter addresses a critical challenge facing charter school governing boards. Each guidebook chapter is structured to include the following components:

- Basic principles, concepts and best practices relevant to the chapter topic.
- Models of essential documents, procedures and practices gathered from charter schools and other relevant examples that will be applicable to the board of a new charter school.
- Worksheets, diagnostic tools and planning forms that can be used to develop the relevant documents, procedures and practices.
- Essential resources relevant to the chapter topic.

The following table summarizes the guidebook structure, listing the chapter title and critical board building challenge in the left column and corresponding key concepts and best practices in the right column:

<u>Chapter and Critical Board Building Challenges</u>	<u>Key Concepts and Best Practices Relevant to Chapter</u>
Chapter 1 - Building the Foundation for an Effective Charter School Board - How does a charter school board clearly define its roles, responsibilities and philosophy of governance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written description of board roles and responsibilities. • Formal process for board director development led by a board development committee supported by the full board of directors.
Chapter 2 - Identification and Recruitment Of Board Directors - How does the charter school board recruit board directors that are committed to the charter school and possess skills, knowledge and other attributes needed in order for the board to effectively carry out its responsibilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written job description for individual board directors. • Clear recruitment priorities based on analysis of current board and future skills and knowledge needs of the board. • Commitment to personal contact with prospective board directors. • Formal orientation sessions to provide critical information before individuals are brought on to the board of directors.
Chapter 3 - Orientation and Training Of Board Directors - How do charter school board directors acquire the skills and knowledge they need to be effective leaders and decision-makers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training and orientation based on skills and knowledge board directors will need to be effective. • Use of written board director manual.
Chapter 4 - Board Decision-Making - How does the charter school board make effective decisions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of decision-making flowchart. • Formal process for policy development by the board. • Decision-making matrix to communicate roles and responsibilities in decision-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making. Functioning executive committee. Organizational dashboard to gauge charter school progress and effectiveness. Providing the board with the necessary information to make effective decisions. Use of a board book that contains agenda and information packet in advance of board meetings.
Chapter 5 - Board Role In Strategic Planning And Thinking - How can the charter school board organize itself in order to function as an effective, future-focused leadership team?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to and active role in, strategic planning. Building dialog on critical issues into every board meeting.
Chapter 6 - Legal And Financial Responsibilities Of Boards - How does the charter school board carry out its legal and financial oversight responsibilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-written, up-to-date bylaws and other governance documents. Standards of conduct for board directors. Financial oversight and risk management policies and procedures in place.
Chapter 7 - Board-Staff Relations - How does the charter school board build and maintain an effective, mutually supportive working relationship with the charter school administrator?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity regarding distinct roles and responsibilities of the board and the charter school administrator. Effective process for hiring the charter school administrator. Annual administrator performance review process.
Chapter 8 - Board-Community/Parent Relations - How does the charter school board maintain strong parent and community relations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal plan for parents, family and community involvement. Use of advisory committees. Board leadership in building community collaborations and alliances.
Chapter 9 - Board Director Motivation And Accountability - How does the charter school board foster and maintain a high level of board director motivation and accountability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual board self-evaluation process. Commitment to board director recognition and appreciation. Personal goal setting by board directors.
Chapter 10 - The Board at Work: Effective Committees - How does the board develop and maintain a committee structure that enhances its overall effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written job descriptions for all committees. Annual committee calendar of major decisions and meetings. Regular reporting to hold committees accountable.
Chapter 11 - Board Role In Fund-Raising - How can the charter school board play an effective role in fund-raising?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund-raising responsibility as a formal expectation of board directorship. Standing board fund-raising committee. Training to support the board's role in fund-raising.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual fund development plan that incorporates a variety of fund-raising strategies.
Chapter 12 - Board Self-Assessment - How does the charter school board continuously enhance its effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of formal board assessment surveys. • Use of the board retreats. • Development of formal plan for board improvement plan.
Chapter 13 - Resources - Where can charter school boards find the resources needed to continuously enhance their effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a variety of local, state, and national resources for board development.

A Few Points to Consider . . .

It Takes Time to Build an Effective Charter School Board

There is no getting around it: developing effective boards requires a serious time commitment. Already busy charter school developers and organizers will find it hard to make this commitment. However the investment of time and energy creates a board that becomes a self-renewing resource that adds value to the charter school.

“They’re Only Volunteers?”

One of the key assumptions throughout the governance guidebook is that the volunteer status of board directors can never be used as excuse for lack of performance. The very success of the charter school, which is to say the success of children, requires a “no excuses” commitment on the part of the board -- the same commitment by the way the charter schools expect from their paid professional staff. While it is absolutely true that some of our board directors, especially those who are low income and/or single parents, face major challenges of their own in their personal and working lives, the charter school board must, nonetheless, expect a commitment and a level of performance commensurate with the considerable authority that a board exercises. In the same way the charter school will look for ways to overcome external barriers to student learning, the charter school board must commit itself to removing barriers to high-performance by the board of directors. The success of the charter school -- in fact the success of the charter school movement -- rests on the success of the charter school board.

The Approach

This guidebook assumes a nonprofit board of directors' approach. Some charter schools may not be quite like this -- they may have more hands-on "working boards" in which members are also involved in day-to-day operations of the charter school, or you may be part of some broader corporate entity. In any case, the material in this guidebook should be somewhat applicable because the same fundamental issues are going to exist for any school. For a fuller description of the "nonprofit" model of governance, see Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: Building the Foundation for an Effective Charter School Governing Board

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does a charter school board clearly define its roles, responsibilities and philosophy of governance?

Common Governance Problems Facing Charter Schools

According to Dr. Chenzi Grignano, director of the Charter Schools Project at Duquesne University, charter schools have been plagued by some of the following governance problems:²

1. Meddlesome boards who become entangled with issues normally entrusted to administrators or teachers
2. Unstable leadership by founders who prove better at articulating a vision than at actually running a school
3. Internal dissension, often exacerbated by insufficiently clear division of roles and responsibilities
4. Lack of professional competence in financial, managerial, or administrative areas
5. Difficulty in balancing input among various stakeholder groups
6. Exhausting volunteers (including board directors) by expecting too much of them

This governance guidebook will provide practical information, tools and techniques to address these and other governance problems. In many cases, the guidebook will offer concrete suggestions for structuring the charter school governing board and selecting operating procedures that prevent many of these problems from arising in the first place.

Barriers To Board Effectiveness

In addition to the problems that plague charter schools, there are a number of additional factors that help to explain why some boards don't function effectively. Taken together, these factors provide a checklist for assessing a board and identifying problem areas. Examining these barriers to board effectiveness can be the first step in revitalizing an existing charter school board or building an effective board from scratch. Let's take a look at some of them now:

- **Temptation to micro-manage.** Practically everyone can share hair-raising stories about boards that spent untold hours discussing trivial subjects while neglecting major agenda items deserving their more careful deliberation. It is critical that the board focuses its attention on issues of critical importance to the

² Grignano, Chenzi, Guidance for Charter School Operators, Charter Schools Project, Duquesne University, 1999.

charter school. In order to do this, the board must avoid the temptation to micro-manage or meddle in lesser matters or in areas that are more appropriately handled by the charter school administrator and other staff. A board, meeting monthly for two hours, has approximately 24 hours of meeting time per year to make all of the major decisions as well as address critical issues that come before it unannounced. It is simply impossible to do an effective job within those 24 hours of meeting time, even if only a few hours are wasted on less important matters.

- **Ineffective nominating committee.** Many boards lack an effective nominating committee. We need to remember that the work of the nominating committee has lasting impact on the charter school -- and this committee's work determines who board leaders will be for many years into the future. The nominating committee should be well organized, have a clear sense of recruiting priorities as well as expectations for individual board directors. These elements are frequently missing in many charter schools. If the nominating committee, sometimes called the board development committee, is poorly organized, board directors in turn are not likely to have a good understanding of the charter school and their role as board directors.
- **No plan for rotation.** Another problem is the lack of a plan for orderly rotation of board directors on and off the board. Frequently, there is bylaw language that specifies regular rotation. Sometimes the bylaws requirements are overlooked out of fear that new board directors will not be found. If the same people serve year after year, there is no way for new blood and new ideas to come into the board. Despite their sense of commitment, these same people will make the charter school a "closed organization." Rotation prevents the ingrown possessiveness sometimes found on self-perpetuating boards. In a time of rapid change, the presence of new people who bring a fresh perspective will promote creativity and innovation in board decision-making.
- **Failure to remove unproductive members.** Another problem that leads to poor performance is the failure to remove unproductive board directors. People who are not carrying out their commitments as board directors become major blocks to overall board effectiveness. Again, there is usually bylaw language that specifies a consequence for lack of performance --- usually failure to attend a certain number of meetings. Beyond this formal bylaw mandate, there needs to be a process for evaluating board director performance and making recommendations regarding their future service with the board.
- **Too small.** Sometimes the charter school board is ineffective because it is simply too small in number. When we consider the awesome responsibilities of board leadership, it's easy to see why we need enough people to do the work. The ideal number of board directors is the smallest number that allows the charter school board to be effective. While it is difficult to specify an appropriate size for all charter school boards, in general, a board should range in number from 11 to 21

members. The board's organizational structure will also have bearing on the board size. For example, if there are a large number of committees, the board will need to have more members than one that has fewer committees. We need enough members to lead and form the core of the committees and, in general, share in the other work of the board. We also need sufficient numbers to reflect the desired diversity in the board as well as assure the range of viewpoints that spurs innovation and creativity in board planning and decision-making. Often board ineffectiveness is ascribed to size. The experience of many organizations' boards, including charter school boards, suggests that even a larger board can function effectively if it has a skilled chairperson, a well-designed agenda and well-prepared board directors who have received adequate information in advance of meetings.

- **Lack of functioning committee structure.** The lack of a functioning committee structure is another reason why boards fail to perform at an acceptable level. While it is true that major decisions are made in board meetings, it is also true is that most of the work that supports and implements full board decision-making occurs at the committee level. If the board has a committee structure that functions inadequately, this can lead to poor performance in general.
- **No strategic plan.** The lack of a strategic plan, in most cases, will also lead to poor board performance. If the charter school lacks a strategic plan that provides clear direction -- so critical in this period of rapid change -- the board can spend significant amounts of time talking about topics that simply don't matter. Related to the absence of a strategic plan is the lack of a long-range program delivery and financial development plan that will advance the strategic plan.
- **No plan for orientation of new and old members.** Charter school boards can also fail because they have no plan for orientation of new and old members. Deliberate thought is rarely given to the matter of blending new and old board directors into a well-functioning team. Related to this, is the lack of a formal plan of board training and education to continually upgrade the level of board skills and knowledge.
- **No proactive plan to manage founder's syndrome.** Founder syndrome refers to the dynamic that develops when the founding leader(s) of the charter school, whose vision, high-energy and personal charisma was critical to organizing and launching a new school, becomes a block to the continuing growth and development of the charter school. This "syndrome" is observable in other organizations, both nonprofit and for-profit alike. Each developmental stage of a charter school -- pre-organizing, preparing the charter application, launching the school, early years of operation -- require different skills, expertise, leadership styles, and personal qualities. The conflicts that arise are patterned and predictable, and yet, most of the time, nothing is done to manage the very necessary transition to a more stable and structured leadership team. The results are well known, sometimes leading to the early demise of what would otherwise

have been a great school, other instances resulting in a long, slow, steady drain of energy and goodwill that lessens the long-term prospects for success.

This view has some support in the research on charter schools by Loveless and Jasin (1998) who point out that starting a charter school requires founders to master two primary challenges: first, essential resources must be found (facilities, start up funds, staff, etc.); and second, governance and administrative structures must be established. In particular, these administrative structures need to be established in a way that allows the school to evolve into a 'formal' organization. In other words, one of the challenges for the school is to move from a small, informal organization based largely on the entrepreneurial skills of one to two original founders to a larger, more complex school which operates by formal or established policies and which involves a broad representation of the organization's members. We will talk more about founder's syndrome and its relation to charter school board development later in Chapter 1.

Some of the challenges described above will be painfully familiar, even to charter schools that are relatively new. To some degree, most charter schools and other organizations with governing boards encounter them. The good news is that all of these problems are preventable. Future chapters of this guidebook will explore basic tools and techniques that have proven helpful to boards in addressing the barriers discussed above.

And there is more good news: because charter schools are relatively new organizations, it will be much easier to establish effective board practices from the beginning. In the future, knowledge of these best practices will enable charter school developers to imbed some or all of these practices into the very design of the charter school before it even opens its doors. So there is great reason for hope!

Designing your Charter School Governance Structure: First Steps

Developing a Governance Structure

According to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), the first priority in developing a functioning governance structure should be to review your charter contract for governance requirements. While taking these requirements into account, the governance structure should be tailored to your school's vision, mission, and goals. Every board has the responsibility to develop its own structure, policies, and procedures consistent with applicable laws, requirements of the charter authorizing body as well as the governance philosophy of the charter school leaders. At the same time, charter school experience to date suggests some characteristics of effective governance structures.

The Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota conducted a national review of charter school governance that is a good starting point for thinking about the

details of the governance structure for your charter school. The sample consisted of 30 charter schools from nine states that were interviewed to uncover key elements of successful structures that were common among schools demonstrating improved achievement as measured by standardized tests and other forms of assessment.³ These schools:

- Adopted a structure that reflects the school's mission, goals, and objectives
- Designed a structure that reflects the state charter law
- Used some form of shared decision making
- Created at least one committee/council to address specific issues such as curriculum, finance, and staff development
- Produced a document that explains which decisions are made by whom (i.e., governing board, administrator, committee/council)
- Involved a variety of people in the governing board or in committees/councils
- Employed board training seminars, conferences, and/or retreats
- Selected board directors who shared the school's mission
- Focused on generating a vision and plan for school improvement
- Had relatively simple organization, without multiple levels of bureaucracy
- Were flexible and able to adapt to changing situations
- Stayed true to the mission, vision, or purpose
- Considered the clients' (students') needs at all times

In the introduction to the Charter School Governance Toolkit, Laurie Gardner and Eric Premack pose four essential questions that have to be answered in the design of a charter school governance plan:

1. What powers does a fully vested governing board of an organization have?
2. How much power do we want our charter school governing board to have?
3. Who will have this power?
4. How will the power be exercised?⁴

To some degree, these questions will have been answered in the required description of charter school governance included in the application to the charter authorizing body. For most charter schools, additional detail will need to be added to the governance plan before the charter school opens. Further work will be completed in the first year of operation.

³ Cheung, S. & Nathan, Joe, What Works? Governing Structures of Effective Charter Schools. The Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota

⁴ Gardner, Laurie, and Premack, Eric, Charter School Governance Toolkit, published by Charter Schools Development Center, 1999.

Three Dominant Models Of Charter School Board Governance

Gary R. Gruber, Ph.D., a consultant with Carney Sandoe & Associates in Santa Fe and a moderator of the USCS governance discussion group⁵, offers a description of the three dominant models of governance that prevail in the majority of charter schools in operation today. According to Gruber, there are advantages and benefits in each as well as issues that can arise because of disagreements, lack of clear policies and procedures, faulty communication, inadequate planning and forecasting, different or unclear expectations, and lack of agreement regarding operations. These models exist on a continuum and are not mutually exclusive. Some schools combine elements from each model. The description of the three models below draws on Gary Gruber's writing on the subject as well as the governance model of Leadership High School in San Francisco.

1. School committee or council composed of parents, teachers, administrators and others.

This model draws inspiration from school shared decision-making structures and site based management councils that have operated in various forms in traditional district public schools. According to Gruber, this model may be among the most democratic and representative as it is inclusive, fully representational and delegates management and oversight to one or more of its members. Those in charge have a clear understanding of procedural matters and full inclusion in the decision-making process is essential for this model's effectiveness. Shared leadership with a division of labor according to talent and expertise is seen as the best way to serve the needs of students, families and the community as a whole. The committee or council meetings are usually open to the community and anyone is welcome to attend. This spirit of openness and inclusion are guiding principles in this form of governance and in many cases decisions are reached through consensus rather than taking a formal vote. Members may be elected and/or appointed by various groups (teachers, parents, administrators, school district officials, union representatives and others) and serve at the pleasure of those constituents. They may have defined or rotating terms of service so that others may participate in the governing process. Among the criteria for membership is the desire to implement the mission of the school and the commitment to be actively involved in the decision making process that bears responsibility for the success of the program.

1. A board of directors with a structure of officers, by-laws, and delegation of management to a principal, chief administrator/director or head of school.

This model draws inspiration from the approach to board governance traditionally found in nonprofit organizations. In this model, there is a clear distinction made between the governance work of the board of directors and the administrative/management work of the paid staff.

⁵ Go to: http://www.uscharterschools.org/cs/usdsp/forum/cs_disc/16

In this model, the charter school is a legally incorporated entity governed by state statutes and IRS regulations governing nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations. The board of directors is responsible for governing the school. The Trustees each have a personal fiduciary duty to look out for the long-term well being of the school. The Board is responsible for addressing major matters including: setting the school's general policies and overall curriculum policies; approving and monitoring the annual budget and financial procedures; fund-raising; hiring and evaluating the school's principal; approving personnel policies and monitoring their implementation by the principal; assuring that the charter school fulfills its charter contract; and, strategic planning.

The board is composed of a broad cross-section of the school community and community-at-large and, in addition to professionals and community leaders. In some charter schools, the board will also include the principal, representatives of teaching staff, students and parents leadership. The board generally meets as a whole on a monthly basis. It operates through various committees, including an executive committee consisting of officers elected to manage the board and help monitor school policies.

The board is not involved in handling the day-to-day details of running the school, dealing with specific personnel issues, or addressing individual student needs. Consistent with the best practices of nonprofit corporation management, the board delegates the responsibility for running the charter school and implementing the board's policies to a principal or charter school administrator. Where appropriate, the charter school administrator will delegate some responsibility to other administrators, teachers, and students.

1. Owner/Operator, either non-profit foundation or for-profit, with or without a board or committee.

In some cases, in this model, an advisory committee functions to provide information and support or a board of directors of the corporation or foundation serve in that capacity. Often a larger holding group or company may operate several schools in different locations but still depend upon a local group for advice and guidance. However, decisions rest with the chief executive officer who is the one responsible for the operation of the school. This individual is hired with a job description that outlines areas and lines of responsibility and accountability. This model follows a more structured chain of command that is akin to a business/corporate model of organization. The flow of responsibility follows a chart in which responsibilities are assigned or delegated to specific departments. The managers or directors of those divisions are accountable for what happens within their respective department or division.

The [Creating An Effective Governing Board Guidebook](#) is based on the second model. The tools and techniques presented can be applied, with modifications, to the other models of governance described above. Regardless of the governance model selected, board director recruitment, orientation, ongoing training, committee development, meetings, policymaking, and other elements of board effectiveness will be greatly enhanced through the use of the practices covered in the following chapters.

Grounding the Charter School Board in a Solid Model of Governance: Fundamental Assumptions

There are a number of fundamental assumptions about effective governance that serve as the foundation for the [Creating An Effective Governing Board Guidebook](#). These assumptions may challenge present governance practices of some charter schools. As was noted in the previous section though, some of the strengths of the nonprofit board governance approach can be useful to every charter school.

An effective system of board governance is organized around the following principles:

1. Distinction between governance work of the board and management work of the staff
2. Ends/means distinction with a bias in favor of high impact decision-making.
3. Clarity about who does what (specifically what does the board do and what does the staff do)

Distinction Between Governance And Management

The approach to governance in many charter schools has been influenced by the previous experience of parents, teachers, students, administrators and others who "learned" governance in the traditional public school system. Governance practices in some charter schools, as in other public schools, tend to mix the functions of board governance with parent and community involvement strategies, charter school management and administration, shared decision-making, and teacher empowerment. The approach in this guidebook is to first separate these distinct functions, roles and activities from charter school board governance and then describe ways to link them effectively with each other.

At the risk of over simplifying a complex subject, a clear distinction must be made between "governance" and "management." In an effective charter school, there will be strong links between governance and management. At the same time, there are important differences between matters of governance -- such as making decisions on major policy making or setting overall direction of the school and matters of management -- the effective allocation and deployment of the school's resources on a day-to-day and month-to-month basis in order to achieve the vision and major goals of the school.

The board has a number of major decisions and actions to take. Some of these occur annually; for example, approving the budget, reviewing the performance of the charter school administrator, and monitoring student achievement. The board has limited time in which to make them. It is for this reason that it is so important for boards to use their time well and for board structures and procedures to point them toward major decision-making and away from distractions and lesser matters. It is important to emphasize that board meeting time is a limited resource and this resource should be allocated to making major decisions and developing policies for the charter school.

The charter school board then, must focus its attention on major decisions – monitoring school progress toward meeting the student achievement and other objectives agreed to in the charter contract, budget approval, school-wide policies, strategic planning, charter school administrator appraisal and support. These broader decisions create the space or playing field for board committees, the charter school staff led by the administrator, and volunteers to plan and implement actions in their respective areas of responsibility. Autonomy is granted within the boundaries created by board decision-making in the major areas noted above. The charter school board should not micro-manage or meddle in decision-making that is best done by those responsible for the development and delivery of educational programs and support services on a daily basis. Whenever possible, the board should effectively delegate implementation responsibility with clear instructions and/or suggestions to its committees or the charter school administrator, so that the board can continue to maintain a focus on the big picture. This governance framework is illustrated in the chart entitled “Charter School Governance Framework” in this chapter’s Tools Section.

“Ends” And “Means” Distinction

John Carver, author of Boards That Make A Difference, has popularized the distinction between “Ends” and “Means” in his model of board policy governance. According to Carver, it is the board’s responsibility to prescribe or determine what he refers to as the “ends” and stay away from the “means” except to say what is unacceptable. In Carver’s view, ends policies and decisions have to do with three things: the charter school’s results or outcomes (educational achievement at a level acceptable to the charter school leadership and the charter authorizing body as specified in the contract), the recipients of those results (children attending the charter school), and the costs to achieve those results. “Means” refers chiefly to the approaches or methods used by staff to achieve the ends determined by the board.

While a literal interpretation of Carver might appear to many charter schools to be unworkable, his important work has helped boards of all kinds to focus more on major policy and decision-making and to avoid spending time on more detailed matters that are best left to staff, or the board’s committees. This focus on “ends” policy and major decision-making greatly increases the level of the board’s effectiveness. Charter school boards will benefit from an examination of the Carver model even if they decide that the model as a whole does not meet their needs.⁶ The governance framework chart in the Tools Section of this chapter illustrates this distinction between “ends” on the one hand, and the “means” used to achieve the ends on the other.

According to Carver, it is also the board’s responsibility to set “executive limitations”. Paul Shay, Executive Director of Canada World Youth describes the purpose of

⁶ For a good summary of some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the Carver model, go to the Canadian Centre on Philanthropy, http://www.ccp.ca/information/boards_of_directors/governance/fc242.htm. It should be further noted that the Carver model may not work well if there are not enough “staff” to whom responsibilities can be delegated.

executive limitations: “A board delegates responsibility for the achievement of the ends to the CEO (charter school administrator), and provides parameters on the acceptable means that the CEO and other staff can use. By providing parameters on what the administrator cannot do instead of telling the CEO what to do, the board empowers the CEO and staff to choose the most successful, creative and cost-effective means within the parameters. The board is saying, "Find the best way to achieve these ends, but stay within these boundaries." The boundaries allow the board to clarify what level of risk it finds unacceptable and what ethical standards it insists upon”. For more information of the Carver governance model, see Carver resources listed in the Tools Section of this chapter and in Chapter 13 as well.

Clarity and Agreement About Who Does What

As was pointed out earlier, many problems arise when there is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities between the board and staff of the charter school.

An effective governance model requires that everyone is clear and in agreement about their roles and responsibilities. As noted above, there are numerous examples of charter schools having difficulties because of disagreements regarding responsibilities of board and staff. An effective governance model will require clear and detailed descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the board, its committees, its officers, and staff. Included in this guidebook are sample job descriptions and commissions for each of these groups.

Specific Roles And Responsibilities Of The Charter School Board

The National Center For Nonprofit Boards has developed a list of the basic roles and responsibilities of board directors.⁷ This list can serve as a guide for charter school governing boards as well:

- 1. Determine the charter school’s mission and purpose.** A statement of mission and purpose should articulate the charter school’s goals, means, and primary constituents served. It is the board of directors' responsibility to create the mission statement and review it periodically for accuracy and validity. Each individual board director should fully understand and support it.
- 2. Select the charter school administrator.** Boards must reach consensus on the charter school administrators’ job description and undertake a careful search process to find the most qualified individual for the position.

⁷ Ingram, Richard T., Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.

- 3. Support the charter school administrator and review his or her performance.**
The board should ensure that the charter school administrator has the moral and professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the charter school. The charter school administrator, in partnership with the entire board, should decide upon a periodic evaluation of the administrator's performance.
- 4. Ensure effective organizational planning.** As stewards of the charter school, the board must actively participate with the staff in an overall planning process and assist in implementing the resulting plan.
- 5. Ensure adequate resources.** One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to provide adequate resources for the charter school to fulfill its mission. The board should work in partnership with the charter school administrator and development staff, if any, to raise funds from the community.
- 6. Manage resources effectively.** The charter school board, in order to remain accountable to the charter granting entity, parents and students, its donors, the public, and, in the case of a separately incorporated nonprofit, to safeguard its tax-exempt status, must approve the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
- 7. Determine and monitor the charter school's programs and services.** The board's role in this area is to determine which educational programs and services are the most consistent with the charter schools mission, and to monitor their effectiveness.
- 8. Enhance the charter school's public image.** A charter school's primary link to the community, including constituents, the public, and the media, is the board. Clearly articulating the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public, as well as garnering support from important members of the community, are important elements of a comprehensive public relations strategy.
- 9. Assess its own performance.** It is the board's responsibility to ensure that the total organization is effective in achieving its mission and efficient in using its resources. It should begin this annual discussion by evaluating its success as a board. By evaluating its performance in fulfilling its responsibilities, the board can recognize its achievements and reach consensus on which areas need to be improved.

Matching the Role of the Board with the Charter School's Stage of Organizational Development

New charter schools typically start out with a small number of students, a small budget, and few staff. These start-up charter schools may have a number of founding leaders and other outside advisors who help the charter school administrator plan and implement the educational program and make operational decisions. At some point, the charter school begins to formalize its relationship with founding leaders and outside advisors by creating a managing board, school steering committee or board of directors. In the early years, the board is often composed of the founding members of the charter school who work on a volunteer basis, often in a “hands-on” fashion. However, as the charter school grows, its needs inevitably change. More mature charter schools serve a larger number of students and may begin to operate a variety of family support programs as well. They manage large budgets and employ greater numbers of staff. These more mature charter schools require the input of a larger board composed of members with the special skills needed to establish and shape the mission and policies of the charter school in order to sustain long-term growth. The following table presents a brief summary of the different types of boards that are appropriate for charter schools at the three different levels of development.

Stage of Organizational Development	Stage of Charter School Operation	Type of Board	Board Functions
Emerging Stage	Pre-charter application; design of the charter school	Informal group of founders and other community volunteers	Works directly with staff that carries out the daily work of operating the school.
Growth/Consolidation Stage	Charter granted; school opens	More formal advisory board or small board of directors	Oversees development of the charter school's mission, policies, and operations.
Sustainable/Mature Stage	Ongoing operation; charter contract compliance; renewal of contract	More formal board of directors with established sub-committees	Shapes mission and policies, raises money, and oversees the charter school's financial and educational performance.

The charter school developers will need to plan for the orderly transition from the emerging or planning stage to the growth or operational stage of development that begins when staff is hired and planning members take on new roles as staff, teachers and/or

board directors. According to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), Charter Starters Leadership Training Academy, here are some questions to consider:⁸

- What is the relationship between founders, the board, and day-to-day operators?
- Do all the founders want to remain involved in the school and if so, do they want to serve on the governing board, or as non-board school volunteers or do they want to become members of the paid staff?
- How will new board directors be recruited as the some or all founders leave the governing board in the future?
- What skills and areas of expertise are needed in different stages of development?
- Will the board be able to maintain the workload of a committee of the whole or will the board need to establish standing committees as the school grows?
- In some charter school startup situations, how will the board transition from operational/managerial tasks to governance, policy development and strategic planning?

On the last point, though, NWREL offers the some important suggestions: In the earlier stages of development, it may be more common for the board to engage in more managerial tasks. However, as the board matures, it is to the benefit of the school to shift the focus of the board to policy development and strategic planning. This allows the board to govern and the administrators to manage. This will keep current board directors more fully engaged as it aids in alleviating boredom, conflict, and frustration that can occur from a board that gets tied into managing the day-to-day routine tasks. Board directors who focus on policy and strategic planning often feel more interested and intrinsically satisfied as their skills are more fully utilized.

Suggestions for ways to help the board stay strategically focused include:

- Define clear expectations for the board. Written descriptions of the board's basic responsibilities can help solidify the role of the governing board.
- Create clear expectations for the charter school administrator or principal.
- Structure meetings to direct the board's attention to matters of policy and strategy. This can be done through a clear agenda.

Board Development As A Process

Basic Elements Of Board Development

Development of an effective governing board is an essential component of building an effective charter school. It is a responsibility that the charter school developers need to view as one of their top priorities. Experience demonstrates that boards that dedicate themselves to a planned and systematic approach to board development have the most success and face fewer problems. And a charter school board that isn't pre-occupied with

⁸ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), [Charter Starters Leadership Training Academy Workbook](#) 1999. Module 4: Management and Governance

internal problems can devote more energy to enhancing student achievement. The steps in the development of an effective governing board include:

- **Nominations and recruitment** -- the process of identifying the right individuals to meet the needs of the charter school, helping them understand their roles and responsibilities, and convincing them to become part of the board.
- **Orientation** -- the steps taken to give new board directors the information they need to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively.
- **Training** -- the regular, ongoing efforts to build new skills and knowledge among the existing board directors to enhance performance.
- **Evaluation** -- the annual task of evaluating individual board director performance as well as the effectiveness of the board as a whole.
- **Recognition** -- the ongoing process of recognizing the work and accomplishments of board directors to the work of the board and to the charter school.

In the Tools Section of this chapter, there is a chart depicting the annual board development sequence that shows the relationship in time among these five activities.

Each of these elements in the board development process is critical. For this reason, the board needs to establish a board development committee with responsibility for seeing that each element is in place. The role of this committee is defined in the next section.

Critical Role of the Board Development Committee

Throughout this guidebook, the critical role of the board development committee will be emphasized. A sample job description for this important committee is included in Chapter 10 - The Board at Work: Effective Committees. Here are some responsibilities of the board development committee:

1. Develop board director criteria that express recruitment priorities in terms of skills, knowledge, contacts and resources sought after by the charter school board.
2. Recruiting potential board directors.
3. Present potential board directors to the board (or if the bylaws mandate an election, this committee prepares the slate of candidates in accordance with the bylaws)
4. Provide orientation of potential and new board directors.
5. Provide training and continuing education for all board directors.
6. Provide regular recognition to board directors.

Critical Role of the Full Board

In addition to the critical roles played by the board development committee, the full board has a number of responsibilities in building an effective charter school governing board. They include:

1. Approve board director criteria initially developed by the board development committee.
2. Elect or appoint members to the board (except in cases where the bylaws mandate an election of board directors.)
3. Terminate members for failure to perform adequately (in accordance with authority granted in the bylaws).
4. Establish a board development committee.
5. Ensure nomination an election of officers, again in accordance with authority granted by the bylaws.
6. Ensure an effective nomination process for new board directors.
7. Ensure the valuation of collective board effectiveness and individual board director effectiveness.
8. Rotates board leadership positions to assure continuing leadership development and to foster innovation and fresh thinking on the part of board directors.

All of these responsibilities will be described in more detail in the following chapters of the governance guidebook

Building an effective charter school board is a process. Most assuredly, things don't change overnight in organizations. It takes a commitment on the part of the leaders of the board and the charter school administrator to make it happen. Experience suggests that it can take 2-5 years to create an effective, self-renewing governing board. If the commitment is present, dramatic improvements in existing boards are possible almost immediately by applying the proven practices, tools and techniques that follow. In charter schools that have yet to open their doors, it's possible to build these practices into the governance design from the beginning, thus avoiding many of the governance problems that now plague many established charter schools.

Summary

This governance guidebook has been developed with both the strengths and weaknesses of charter school boards in mind. We consider areas of special importance for the development of effective governing boards, especially those in new and developing charter schools. We examine such topics as: clarity of roles and responsibilities among the board and staff, the need for a long term board director recruitment strategy, effective orientation and training, committee structures that enhance board effectiveness, decision-making with a focus on major issues facing the charter school, forging strong working relationships between the board and staff, board accountability, and others.

An effective board of directors is built upon a number of key practices. The first is a thoughtful nominations and recruitment process that is viewed as part of a broader effort

to identify, involve, and develop board leadership. The second is the presence of an executive committee that facilitates effective decision-making on the part of a board as a whole. The third practice is establishment of a committee structure. The fourth is a process for periodic evaluation of board performance. These processes and structures reinforce each other and lay the groundwork for board effectiveness.

The chapters that follow provide information, tools and techniques that will address these issues facing leaders wishing to develop effective charter school boards.

Chapter 1: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Sample Articles Of Incorporation For Charter Schools That Are Separately Incorporated Nonprofit Organizations. (Source: Leadership High School, San Francisco)
- Bylaws Checklist (Source: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) Charter Starters Leadership Training Academy Guidebook, Module 4 Governance and Management)
- Sample Bylaws (Source: Leadership High School, San Francisco)
- For another set of sample bylaws provided by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States, go to <http://www.isacs.org/monographs/bylawsample.html>.
- Roles of the Board of Directors (Source: Management Cornerstones, Inc., Milwaukee, WI)
- Charter School Board Governance Framework Chart (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training) – in separate file
- The Annual Board Development Sequence Chart (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training) – in separate file

Essential Resources for Defining Board Roles, Responsibilities and Governance Philosophy

- Carver, John, Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations. Jossey-Bass, 1990
- Carver, John, Reinventing your Board. A Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance. Jossey-Bass, 1997.
- Chait, Richard, How to Help Your Board Govern More and Manage Less. National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1994.
- Gardner, Laurie and Premack, Eric, Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition, Charter Schools Development Center, 1999. Section 1 includes a selection of sample foundation documents (bylaws and articles of incorporation that can be adapted to meet your charter school's specific needs.
- Ingram, Richard T., Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.
- Mathiasen, Karl, Board Passages: Three Key Stages in a Nonprofit Board's Life-cycle, National Center for Nonprofit Boards. This publication is probably the only one that focuses in detail on how to understand, anticipate and manage Founder's Syndrome.
- Zeitlin, Kim Arthur, and Dorn, Susan E.. The Nonprofit Board's Guide to Bylaws: Creating a Framework for Effective Governance, National Center for Nonprofit Boards. This publication contains advice on the pros and cons of common bylaw language, a checklist of elements bylaws should contain as well as sample language. A diskette is available with 11 complete sample bylaws that can be easily adapted to meet your needs.

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION of LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL⁹

Article I.

The name of the corporation is Leadership High School.

Article II.

This corporation is a nonprofit public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law for public purposes. The specific purpose of the corporation is to manage, operate, guide, direct and promote Leadership High School, and such other educational activities as the Board of Directors may define from time to time.

Article III.

The name and address of the corporation's initial agent for service of process is:

Douglas T. Gneiser, Esq.
Hancock Rothert & Bunshoft LLP
4 Embarcadero Center, Suite 1000
San Francisco, California 94111

Article IV.

The corporation is organized and operated exclusively to manage, operate, guide, direct and promote LHS, and to educate students, within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3).

Article V.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these Articles of Incorporation, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (1) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) or (2) by a corporation, the contributions to which are deductible under Internal Revenue Code Section 170(c)(2).

Article VI.

No substantial part of the activities of this corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign (including the publishing or distribution of statements) on behalf of any candidate for public office.

^{9 9} State statutes and state regulatory agencies detail what needs to go into the Articles of Incorporation. Check with your state's charter school resource center and the office of the Secretary of State.

Article VII.

The name and address of the person appointed to act as the incorporating director of this corporation is:

Mark E. Kushner
1 Sansome Street, Suite 2100
San Francisco, California 94104

Article VIII.

The property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to the management, operation, guidance, direction and promotion of Leadership High School, and the education of students, and no part of the net income or assets of the organization shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, trustee, officer or member thereof or to the benefit of any private person.

In the event of the dissolution of the corporation for any reason, any assets of the corporation remaining after compliance with applicable provisions of the California Corporation Code shall be distributed by the corporation to another nonprofit benefit corporation whose primary purpose is education.

Dated: August 8, 1997

Mark E. Kushner, Director

We, the above mentioned initial directors of this corporation, hereby declare that we are the persons who executed the foregoing Articles of Incorporation, which execution is our act and deed.

Mark E. Kushner, Director

Bylaws Checklist¹⁰

(Source: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory)

	In Development	Developed	N/A
1. Offices			
2. Purpose			
3. Members			
3.1 Members			
3.2 Associates			
4. Directors			
4.1 General Powers			
4.2 Specific Powers			
4.3 Number, Election And Term Of Directors			
4.4 Resignation And Removal			
4.5 Vacancies			
4.6 Place Of Meetings			
4.7 Regular Meetings			
4.8 Annual Meetings			
4.9 Special Meetings			
4.10 Retirements Applicable To Meetings			
4.11 Quorum And Voting			
4.12 Waiver Of Notice			
4.13 Adjournment			
4.14 Rights Of Inspection			
4.15 Fees And Compensation			
4.16 Restriction Of Interested To Directors			
4.17 Standard Of Care			
5. Officers			
5.1 Officers			
5.2 Election			
5.3 Subordinate Officers			
5.4 Removal			
5.5 Resignation			
5.6 Vacancies			
5.7 President/Chief Education Officer			
5.8 Vice Presidents			
5.9 Secretary			
5.10 Chief Financial Officer (Treasurer)			
6. Committees			

^{10 10} State statutes and state regulatory agencies detail what needs to go into the Articles of Incorporation. Check with your state's charter school resource center and the office of the Secretary of State.

6.1 Board Committees			
6.2 Meetings And Actions Aboard Committees			
6.3 Executive Board (Executive Committee)			
6.4 Other Committees			
7. Self Dealing Transactions			
7.1 Definition			
7.2 Action Of The Board			
7.3 Interested Director's Vote			
7.4 Committee Approval			
7.5 Persons Liable And Extent Of Liability			
7.6 Statute Of Limitations			
7.7 Corporate Loans And Advances			
7.8 Annual Statement Of Certain Transactions			
8. Other Provisions			
8.1 Validity Of Instrument			
8.2 Construction And Definitions			
8.3 Authority To Vote Securities			
8.4 Fiscal Year			
8.5 Conflict Of Interest			
8.6 Interpretation Of Charter			
9. Indemnification Of Agents Of The Corporation; Purchase Of Liability Insurance			
9.1 Definitions			
9.2 Indemnification Of Agents			
9.3 Purchase Of Liability Insurance			
9.4 Nonapplicability To Fiduciaries Of Employee			
10. Amendments			
10.1 Amendment Of Bylaws			

LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL BYLAWS

BYLAWS

for the regulation, except as otherwise provided
by the statute of its Articles of Incorporation,

of

LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

a California nonprofit public benefit corporation

I. MEMBERSHIP

The corporation has no members. The rights which would otherwise vest in the members vest in the directors of the corporation (hereinafter "Trustees") of Leadership High School (hereinafter "LHS"). Actions which would otherwise require approval by a majority of all members or approval by the members require only approval of a majority of all Trustees or approval by the Board of Trustees (hereinafter "Board").

II. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A. Powers

The Board shall conduct or direct the affairs of the corporation and exercise its powers, subject to the limitations of the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law, the Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws. The Board may delegate the management of the activities of the corporation to others, so long as the affairs of the corporation are managed, and its powers are exercised, under the Board's ultimate jurisdiction.

Without limiting the generality of the powers here granted to the Board, but subject to the same limitations, the Board shall have all the powers enumerated in these Bylaws, and the following specific powers:

1. To elect and remove Trustees.
2. To select and remove officers, agents and employees of the corporation; to prescribe powers and duties for them; and to fix their compensation.

3. To conduct, manage and control the affairs and activities of the corporation, and to make rules and regulations.
4. To enter into contracts, leases and other agreements which are, in the Board's judgment, necessary or desirable in obtaining the purposes of promoting the interests of the corporation.
5. To carry on a business at a profit and apply any profit that results from the business activity to any activity in which the corporation may engage.
6. To act as trustee under any trust incidental to the corporation's purposes, and to receive, hold, administer, exchange and expend funds and property subject to such a trust.
7. To acquire real or personal property, by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise, and to hold, improve, lease, sublease, mortgage, transfer in trust, encumber, convey or otherwise dispose of such property.
8. To borrow money, incur debt, and to execute and deliver promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, mortgages, pledges, hypothecations and other evidences of debt and securities.
9. To lend money and accept conditional or unconditional promissory notes therefore, whether interest or non-interest bearing, or secured or unsecured.
10. To indemnify and maintain insurance on behalf of any of its Trustees, officers, employees or agents for liability asserted against or incurred by such person in such capacity or arising out of such person's status as such, subject to the provisions of the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Law and the limitations noted in these Bylaws.

B. Number of Trustees

The number of Trustees of the corporation shall be not less than 15 nor more than 29. The Board shall fix the exact number of Trustees, within these limits, by Board resolution or amendment of the Bylaws. As of the

date on which these Bylaws are adopted, the exact number of Trustees is fixed at 15.

C. Election of Trustees

1. Election. The LHS Principal shall automatically be a Trustee. The Board shall elect the remaining Trustees by the vote of a majority of the Trustees then in office, whether or not the number of Trustees in office is sufficient to constitute a quorum, or by the sole remaining Trustee.

2. Eligibility. The Board may elect any person who in its discretion it believes will serve the interests of the corporation faithfully and effectively. In addition to other candidates, the Board will consider the following nominees:

a. A parent of an active LHS student, who is designated by the LHS Parents' Association to represent that Association (the "Parent Representative").

b. Following the graduation of the initial class, an alumna or alumnus of LHS, who is designated by the LHS Alumni Association to represent that Association (the "Alumni Representative").

c. An LHS teacher, selected by the LHS faculty (the "LHS Faculty Representative").

d. An LHS student, selected by the LHS student body (the "LHS Student Representative").

3. Interested Persons. Not more than 49% of the persons serving on the Board may be interested persons. An "interested person" is: (1) any person currently being compensated by the corporation for services rendered to it within the previous 12 months, whether as a full-time or part-time employee, independent contractor or otherwise, excluding any reasonable compensation paid to a Trustee as Trustee; or (2) any sister, brother, ancestor, descendant, spouse, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, mother-in-law or father-in-law of any such person.

4. Term of Office

- a. The term of office of all members of the initial Board of Trustees shall be one year.
- b. At the end of the first year, the Board shall provide for staggered terms of its Trustees, by designating approximately one-third of the Trustees to one-, two- and three-year terms. Following the expiration of those designated terms, the term of each Trustee shall continue for three years, except the term of any Trustee who is the Parent, Alumni, LHS Faculty or LHS Student Representative shall be one year.
- c. No Trustee, other than a Trustee serving as a corporate officer or the LHS Principal, may serve for more than seven (7) consecutive years.
- d. The term of office of a Trustee elected to fill a vacancy in these bylaws begins on the date of the Trustee's election, and continues: (1) for the balance of the unexpired term in the case of a vacancy created because of the resignation, removal, or death of a Trustee, or (2) for the term specified by the Board in the case of a vacancy resulting from the increase of the number of Trustees authorized.
- e. A Trustee's term of office shall not be shortened by any reduction in the number of Trustee resulting from amendment of the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws or other Board action.
- f. A Trustee's term of office shall not be extended beyond that for which the Trustee was elected by amendment of the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws or other Board action.

5. Time of Elections. The Board shall elect Trustees whose terms begin on July 1 of a given year at the Annual Meeting for that year, or at a Regular Meeting designated for that purpose, or at a Special Meeting called for that purpose.

D. Removal of Trustees

The Board may remove a Trustee without cause as provided by the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation law. The Board may remove any Trustee who:

1. Has failed to attend two or more of the Board's Regular Meetings in any calendar year;
2. Has been declared of unsound mind by a final order of court;
3. Has been convicted of a felony;
4. Has been found by a final order or judgment of any court to have breached any duty imposed by the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law; or
5. For such other good causes as the Board may determine.

E. Resignation by Trustee

A Trustee may resign by giving written notice to the Board Chair or Secretary. The resignation is effective on the giving of notice, or at any later date specified in the notice. A Trustee may not resign if the Trustee's resignation would leave the corporation without a duly elected Trustee in charge of its affairs, without first giving notice to the California Attorney General.

F. Vacancies

A vacancy is deemed to occur on the effective date of the resignation of a Trustee, upon the removal of a Trustee, upon declaration of vacancy pursuant to these Bylaws, or upon a Trustee's death. A vacancy is also deemed to exist upon the increase by the Board of the authorized number of Trustees.

G. Compensation of Trustees

Trustees shall serve without compensation. However, the Board may approve reimbursement of a Trustee's actual and necessary expenses while conducting corporation business.

III. PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The corporation's principal office shall be at 536 Mission Street, San Francisco, California 94105, or at such other place as the Board may select by resolution or amendment of the Bylaws. The Secretary shall note any change in principal office on the copy of the Bylaws maintained by the Secretary.

IV. MEETINGS OF THE BOARD

A. Place of Meetings

Board Meetings shall be held at the corporation's principal office or at any other reasonably convenient place as the Board may designate.

B. Annual Meetings

An Annual Meeting shall be held in May of each year for the purpose of electing Trustees, making and receiving reports on corporate affairs, and transacting other business as comes before the meeting.

C. Regular Meetings

Regular Meetings shall be held at various times within the year as the Board determines.

D. Special Meetings

A Special Meeting shall be held at any time called by the Chair or by any five Trustees.

E. Adjournment

A majority of the Trustees present at a meeting, whether or not a quorum, may adjourn the meeting to another time and place. Notice of the time and place of holding an adjourned meeting need not be given to absent Trustees if the time and place be fixed at the meeting adjourned, except if the meeting is adjourned for longer than 24 hours, notice of the adjournment shall be given as specified in these Bylaws.

F. Notices

Notices of Board Meetings shall be given as follows:

1. Annual Meetings and Regular Meetings may be held without notice if the Bylaws or the Board fix the time and place of such meetings.
2. Special Meetings shall be held upon four days' notice by first-class mail or 48 hours' notice delivered personally or by telephone, facsimile or e-mail. Notices

will be deemed given when deposited in the United State mail, addressed to the recipient at the address shown for the recipient in the corporation's records, first-class postage prepaid; when personally delivered in writing to the recipient; or when faxed, e-mailed, or communicated orally, in person or by telephone, to the Trustee of to a person whom it is reasonably believed will communicate it promptly to the Trustee.

G. Waiver of Notice

Notice of a meeting need not be given to a Trustee who signs a waiver of notice or written consent to holding the meeting or an approval of the minutes of the meeting, whether before or after the meeting, or attends the meeting without protest prior to the meeting or at its commencement, of the lack of notice. The Secretary shall incorporate all such waivers, consents and approvals into the minutes of the meeting.

V. ACTION BY THE BOARD

A. Quorum

A quorum consists of one-third of the fixed number of Trustees.

B. Action by the Board

1. Actions Taken at Board Meetings. The actions done and decisions made by a majority of the Trustees present at a meeting duly held at which a quorum is present are the actions and decisions of the Board, except for purposes of electing Trustees, appointing committees and delegating authority thereto, or amending the corporation's Bylaws, where the action of a majority of Trustees then in office is required by the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law or as set out in these Bylaws.

The Board may continue to transact business at a meeting at which a quorum was originally present, even though Trustees withdraw, provided that any action taken is approved by at least a majority of the quorum required.

2. Actions Without a Meeting. The Board may take any required or permitted action without a meeting if all the Trustees individually or collectively consent in writing to the taking of that action. Such consent shall have the same effect a unanimous vote of the Board, and shall be filed with the minutes of the Board proceedings.

3. Board Meeting by Conference Telephone. Trustees may participate in a Board meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communication equipment, so long as all Trustees participating in such meeting can hear one another. Participation in a meeting pursuant to this section constitutes presence in person at such meeting.

C. Committees

1. Appointment of Committees. The Board may appoint one or more Board Committees by vote of the majority of Trustees. A Board Standing Committee will consist of not less than two Trustees, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.
2. Authority of Board Committees. The Board may delegate to a Board committee any of the authority of the Board, except with respect to:
 - a. The election of Trustees.
 - b. Filling vacancies on the Board or any committee which has the authority of the Board.
 - c. The fixing of Trustee compensation for serving on the Board or on any committee.
 - d. The amendment or repeal of any Board resolution.
 - e. The amendment or repeal of Bylaws or the adoption of new Bylaws.
 - f. The appointment of other committees of the Board, or the members of the committees.
 - g. The expenditure of corporate funds to support a nominee for Trustee.
 - h. The approval of any self-dealing transaction, as defined by the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law.
 1. Procedures of Committees. The Board may prescribe the manner in which the proceedings of any Board Committee are to be conducted. In the absence of such prescription, a Board Committee may prescribe the manner of conducting its proceedings, except that the regular and special meetings of the Committee are governed by the provisions of these Bylaws with respect to the calling of meetings.

D. Standard of Care

1. Performance of Duties. Each Trustee shall perform all duties of a Trustee, including duties on any Board Committee, in good faith, in a manner the Trustee believes to be in the corporation's best interest and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, as an ordinary prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.
2. Reliance on Others. In performing the duties of a Trustee, a Trustee shall be entitled to rely on information, opinions, reports or statements, including financial statements and other financial data, presented or prepared by:
 - a. One or more officers or employees of the corporation whom the Trustee believes to be reliable and competent in the matters presented;
 - b. Legal counsel, independent accountants or other persons as to matters that the Trustee believes are within that person's professional or expert competence; or
 - c. A Board Committee on which the Trustee does not serve, as to matters within its designated authority, provided the Trustee believes the Committee merits confidence and the Trustee acts in good faith, after reasonable inquiry when the need is indicated by the circumstances, and without knowledge that would cause such reliance to be unwarranted.
3. Investments. In investing and dealing with all assets held by the corporation for investment, the Board shall exercise the standard of care described above and avoid speculation, looking instead to the permanent disposition of the funds, considering the probable income, as well as the probable safety of the corporation's capital. The Board may delegate its investment powers to others, provided that those powers are exercised within the ultimate direction of the Board. No investment violates this section where it conforms to provisions authorizing such investment contained in an instrument or agreement pursuant to which the assets were contributed to the corporation.

E. Rights of Inspection

Every Trustee has the right to inspect and copy all books, records and documents of every kind and to inspect the physical properties of the corporation, provided that such inspection is conducted at a reasonable

time after reasonable notice, and provided that such right of inspection and copying is subject to the obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the reviewed information, in addition to any obligations imposed by any applicable federal, state or local law.

F. Participation in Discussions and Voting

Every Trustee has the right to participate in the discussion and vote on all issues before the Board or any Board Committee, except as noted below:

1. The LHS Faculty Representative shall not be present for the discussion and vote on any matter involving: (a) the performance evaluation or discipline of any administrator or faculty member; (b) administrator or faculty compensation; (c) Executive Sessions of the Board; or (d) any other matter at the discretion of a majority of the Trustees then present.
2. The LHS Student Representative shall not be present for the discussion and vote on any matter involving: (a) the performance evaluation or discipline of any administrator, faculty member or student; (b) administrator or faculty compensation; (c) Executive Session of the Board; or (d) any other matter at the discretion of a majority of the Trustees then present.
3. Any Trustee shall be excused from the discussion and vote on any matter involving: (a) a self-dealing transaction; (b) a conflict of interest, (c) indemnification of that Trustee; or (d) any other matter at the discretion of a majority of the Trustees then present.

G. Duty to Maintain Board Confidences

Every Trustee has a duty to maintain the confidentiality of all Board actions, including discussions and votes. Any Trustee violating this confidence may be removed from the Board. Moreover, the LHS Faculty or Student Representative may be disciplined, including immediate dismissal, if Board information is disclosed without the Chair's prior approval.

VI. OFFICERS

A. Officers

The officers of the corporation consist of a President (hereinafter "Chair"), Vice President (hereinafter "Vice Chair"), a Secretary and a Chief Financial Officer (hereinafter "Treasurer"). The corporation also may have such other officers as the Board deems advisable.

1. Chair. Subject to Board control, the Chair has general supervision, direction and control of the affairs of the corporation, and such other powers and duties as the Board may prescribe. If present, the Chair shall preside at Board meetings.
2. Vice Chair. If the Chair is absent or disabled, the Vice Chair shall perform all the Chair's duties and, when so acting, shall have all the Chair's powers and be subject to the same restrictions. The Vice Chair shall have other such powers and perform such other duties as the Board may prescribe.
3. Secretary. The Secretary shall: (a) keep or cause to be kept, at the corporation's principal office, or such other place as the Board may direct a book of minutes of all meetings of the Board and Board Committees, noting the time and place of the meeting, whether it was regular or special (and if special, how authorized), the notice given, the names of those present, and the proceedings; (b) keep or cause to be kept a copy of the corporation's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, with amendments; (c) give or cause to be given notice of the Board and Committee meetings as required by the Bylaws; and (d) have such other powers and perform such other duties as the Board may prescribe.
4. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall: (a) keep or cause to be kept adequate and correct accounts of the corporation's properties, receipts and disbursements; (b) make the books of account available at all times for inspection by any Trustee; (c) deposit or cause to be deposited the corporation's monies and other valuables in the corporation's name and to its credit, with the depositories the Board designates; (d) disburse or cause to be disbursed the corporation's funds as the Board directs; (e) render to the Chair and the Board, as requested but no less frequently than once every fiscal year, an account of the corporation's financial transactions and financial condition; (f) prepare any reports on financial issues required by an agreement on loans; and (g) have such other powers and perform such other duties as the Board may prescribe.

B. Election, Eligibility and Term of Office

1. Election. The Board shall elect the officers annually at the Annual Meeting or a Regular Meeting designated for that purpose or at a Special Meeting called for that purpose, except that officers elected to fill vacancies shall be elected as vacancies occur.
2. Eligibility. A Trustee may hold any number of offices, except that neither the Secretary or Treasurer may serve concurrently as the Chair.

3. Term of Office. Each officer serves at the pleasure of the Board, holding office until resignation, removal or disqualification from service, or until his or her successor is elected.

C. Removal and Resignation

The Board may remove any officer, either with or without cause, at any time. Such removal shall not prejudice the officer's rights, if any, under an employment contract. Any officer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the corporation, the resignation taking effect on receipt of the notice or at a later date of specified in the notice.

VII. NON-LIABILITY OF TRUSTEES

The Trustees shall not be personally liable for the corporation's debts, liabilities or other obligations.

VIII. INDEMNIFICATION OF CORPORATE AGENTS

The corporation shall indemnify any Trustee, officer, employee or other agent of this corporation, who has been successful (1) on the merits in defense of any civil, criminal, administrative or investigative proceeding brought to procure a judgment against such person by reason of the fact that he/she is, or was, the corporation's agent, or (2) in defense of any claim, issue or matter therein. In such case, the corporation will provide indemnity against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by the person in connection with such proceeding.

If the corporate agent either settles any such claim or sustains a judgment against him/her, then indemnification against expenses, judgments, fines, settlements and other amounts reasonably incurred in connection with such proceedings shall be provided by this corporation but only to the extent allowed by, and in accordance with the requirements of, the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law.

IX. INSURANCE FOR CORPORATE AGENTS

The Board may adopt a resolution authorizing the purchase and maintenance of insurance on behalf of any Trustee, officer, employee or other agent of the corporation, against any liability other than for violating provisions of law relating to self-dealing asserted against or incurred by the agent in such capacity or arising out of the agent's status as such, whether or not the corporation would have the

power to indemnify the agent against such liability under the provisions of the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law.

X. SELF-DEALING TRANSACTIONS

The corporation shall not engage in any self-dealing transactions, except as approved by the Board. "Self-dealing transaction" means a transaction to which the corporation is a party in which one or more of the Trustees has a material financial interest ("interested Trustee(s)"). Notwithstanding this definition, the following transactions are not self-dealing transactions, and are subject to the Board's general standard of care:

1. The Board's action of fixing a Trustee's compensation as LHS Principal, a Trustee or corporate officer; or
2. A transaction which is part of a public or charitable program of the corporation, if the transaction (a) is approved or authorized by the Board in good faith and without unjustified favoritism, and (b) results in a benefit to one or more Trustees or their families because they are in a class of persons intended to be benefited by the program;

XI. OTHER PROVISIONS

A. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the corporation begins on July 1 of each year and ends on June 30 of the following year.

B. Execution of Instruments

Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, the Board may adopt a resolution authorizing any officer or agent of the corporation to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of or on behalf of the corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized, no officer, agent or employee shall have any power to bind the corporation by any contract or engagement, to pledge the corporation's credit, or to render it liable monetarily for any purpose or any amount.

C. Checks and Notes

Except as otherwise specifically provided by Board resolution, checks, drafts, promissory notes, orders for the payment of money, and other

evidence of indebtedness of the corporation may be signed by the Chair, Treasurer or LHS Principal.

D. Construction and Definitions

Unless the context otherwise requires, the general provisions, rules of construction, and definitions contained in the California Nonprofit Corporation Law and the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law shall govern the construction of these Bylaws. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, words in these Bylaws shall be read as the masculine or feminine gender, and as the singular or plural, as the context requires, and the word "person" includes both a corporation and a natural person. The captions and headings in these Bylaws are for convenience of reference only and are not intended to limit or define the scope or effect of any provisions.

E. Conflict of Interest

Any Trustee, officer, key employee, or committee member having an interest in a contract, other transaction or program presented to or discussed by the Board or Board Committee for authorization, approval, or ratification shall make a prompt, full and frank disclosure of his or her interest to the Board or committee prior to its acting on such contract or transaction. Such disclosure shall include all relevant and material facts known to such person about the contract or transaction which might reasonably be construed to be adverse to the corporation's interest. The body to which such disclosure is made shall thereupon determine, by majority vote, whether the disclosure shows that a conflict of interest exists or can reasonably be construed to exist. If a conflict is deemed to exist, such person shall not vote on, nor use his or her personal influence on, nor be present during in the discussion or deliberations with respect to, such contract or transaction (other than to present factual information or to respond to questions prior to the discussion). The minutes of the meeting shall reflect the disclosure made, the vote thereon and, where applicable, the abstention from voting and participation. The Board may adopt conflict of interest policies requiring:

1. Regular annual statements from Trustees, officers, key employees to disclose existing and potential conflict in interest; and,
2. Corrective and disciplinary actions with respect to transgressions of such policies.

For the purpose of this section, a person shall be deemed to have an "interest" in a contract or other transaction if he or she is the party (or one of the parties) contracting or dealing with the corporation, or is a director,

trustee or officer of, or has a significant financial or influential interest in the entity contracting or dealing with the corporation.

F. Interpretation of Charter

Whenever any provision of these Bylaws are in conflict with the provisions of the Charter, the provisions of these Bylaws control.

XII. AMENDMENT

A majority of the Trustees may adopt, amend or repeal these Bylaws.

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

The undersigned does hereby certify that the undersigned is the Secretary of the Leadership High School, a nonprofit public benefit corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, that the foregoing Bylaws of said corporation were duly and regularly adopted as such by the Board of Trustees of said corporation, which Trustees are the only members of said corporation; and that the above and foregoing Bylaws are now in full force and effect.

Douglas T. Gneiser
Secretary

Roles Of The Board Of Directors

The Board of Directors of every nonprofit organization plays many important roles in furthering the purpose of the organization. These may include, but are not limited to, the following.

- ❖ **PLANNER:** for the organization's future.
- ❖ **MONITOR:** of the current goals and objectives.
- ❖ **EVALUATOR:** of management efficiency and program effectiveness.
- ❖ **ORGANIZER:** of community constituencies to assist the organization.
- ❖ **EMPLOYER:** of the personnel at the organization.
- ❖ **MOTIVATOR:** of the staff and volunteers.
- ❖ **FUNDRAISER:** to ensure that all necessary funds are available.
- ❖ **CATALYST:** for long-term organizational change.
- ❖ **PROMOTER:** of the total organization as well as of its activities.
- ❖ **SUPPORTER:** of the organization's programs and services.
- ❖ **PROTECTOR:** of the public interest in exchange for tax-exempt status.
- ❖ **ADVOCATE:** for issues and positions which may affect the organization or its constituents.
- ❖ **ADVISOR:** to the Executive Director on issues which fall within the executive's purview.
- ❖ **LEADER:** to move the organization forward and not allow it to stagnate.
- ❖ **GOVERNOR:** to make corporate decisions.

(Source: Management Cornerstones, Inc. Milwaukee, WI, Revised 1989, 1990, 1995, 2000)

Chapter 2: Identification And Recruitment Of Board Directors

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the charter school board recruit board directors that are committed to the charter school and possess skills, knowledge and other attributes needed in order for the board to effectively carry out its responsibilities?

Introduction

According to Dr. Chenzi Grignano, director of the Charter Schools Project at Duquesne University, “charter school governance offers an exciting opportunity to build a public school leadership team around shared values rather than around the unpredictable results of school board elections.” This chapter on identification and recruitment of board directors will offer a step-by-step approach to take advantage of this opportunity.

The first board development practice, and by far the most important, is having an effective board recruitment and nominations process in place. Most board performance problems can often be traced to the casual or haphazard way that some charter schools go about recruiting, selecting and orienting board directors. In many charter schools – and other organizations as well, board recruitment and nominations activities are really ad hoc in nature. Typical bylaw language describes a process in which the board president appoints a nominations committee whose short-term task is to recruit candidates that will fill a specified number of vacancies at the upcoming annual meeting.

A key problem is the traditional nominating committee. In many charter schools, if there even is a formal nominating committee, it typically does little real recruiting work. Instead the nominating committee often relies on whomever is available from a relatively closed "circle of friends and supporters" already known to the organization or the committee members.

In contrast to the typical short-term recruitment process that focuses narrowly on filling anticipated board vacancies for the current year, the process that will be described in this chapter helps to assure that there is a long-range plan for board leadership recruitment and development. In this approach, the identification and recruitment of charter school board directors assumes major importance. More than any other single factor, it will determine the long-term viability of the charter school.

This long-range plan for recruiting and developing future board leadership centers on the following questions: Who will be serving on and leading the board over the next three to five years? What is our plan to scout board leadership talent for the future? How will we go about fostering and developing future board leadership? What we're really talking about here is extending the timeline for board recruitment and development activities.

Elements of an Effective Recruitment Process

Here are some of the characteristics of a long-range board recruitment and development process:

- **Establish year-round committee.** Because board recruitment and nominations is such an important activity, look at it as a year-round committee function instead of the traditional ad hoc nominations process. Reflecting this long-range focus, many boards are changing the name of their nominations committee to the board development committee because developing leaders includes more than nominating people to serve on the boards. It truly is an ongoing, year-round function: prospecting, contacting, recruiting, orienting, supporting, providing ongoing training, and evaluating board directors.
- **Link recruitment to the strategic plan.** It is important to match board recruitment and development activities with the new requirements and demands called for by the strategic plan. The ideal time to do this is right after the strategic planning process has been completed. The charter school board, or the board development committee, reviews the mission, vision, goals and strategies, and then determines any new skills, knowledge, personal contacts and other attributes future board directors will need to possess in order for the board to do its part in advancing the strategic plan.
- **Profile the current board.** At the same time, we need to analyze the current shape of the charter school board. The board development committee can create a profile of the current board using a matrix designed for this purpose. Key factors that define sought-after expertise, knowledge, skills, experience, as well as relevant demographic factors are arranged down the side of the matrix. The names of current board directors are listed along the top of the matrix. The Committee then uses the matrix to complete the profile. In the Tools Section of this chapter, there are examples of matrices for use in board recruitment planning.
- **Focus the recruiting priorities.** By reviewing the charter school strategic plan, the performance requirements of the Charter School contract, as well as the profile of current board strengths and weaknesses, the board development committee identifies the gap between the skills and knowledge needed on the board, and what board directors currently possess. Based on this analysis, the board development committee can now set clear recruiting priorities for future board recruitment.
- **Write a board director job description.** Another key element in the board development process is a written board director job description. For the charter school governing board to operate successfully each member must understand and accept the specific duties and responsibilities that come with board directorship.

More and more organizations have found it helpful to develop a written statement or agreement for board directors. This statement serves as a job description and clarifies board responsibilities. The job description, in very clear language, sets forth the expectations the charter school has of its board directors. The most effective job descriptions are those that state in behavioral terms precisely what board directors are expected to do.

For most charter school boards, key responsibilities include the following:

1. Consistent attendance at regular board meetings;
2. Participation as an active member on at least one committee;
3. Participation in the fund-raising activities of the school in a manner appropriate for that board director; and
4. Preparation in advance before regular board meetings by reading and studying materials sent in advance regarding key actions the board is expected to take at the next meeting.

In addition, many organizations now expect their board directors to attend an annual board planning or education event sometimes held on an evening, or a weekend. While there is no one right way to develop a job description, the format that you choose should cover some of the expectations listed above. There are sample charter school board director job descriptions in the Tools Section of this chapter.

This written job description, which should be periodically reviewed and updated by the board of directors, is the critical tool in recruitment of new board directors. Like anyone contemplating a serious volunteer commitment, prospective charter school board directors will want to know what is expected of them including an estimate of the required time. Avoid the temptation to downplay the responsibilities of board directorship in order to make it “easy” for the board recruit to say “YES.” New board directors will eventually find out what the true expectations are and if they are different from what they were told before coming on to the board, you're in trouble! The sample job descriptions in the Tools Section of this chapter of the guidebook include some of the basic expectations that most charter schools should have for their board directors. The samples are not intended to serve the needs of every charter school; rather, consider them as the starting point in the design of a job description that matches your needs.

Sample Recruiting Timetable

Step 1. Establish A board development committee

As suggested earlier in this chapter, board recruitment is a year-round, ongoing activity. It requires an active committee to guide the process. In some cases, the bylaws will mandate a committee to oversee the board recruitment and nominations. If not, the board needs to establish such a committee. In the past, this committee has usually been called the board nominations committee or the board recruitment committee. More and more organizations are renaming this committee the “board development committee” to reflect the other critical responsibilities of this group. In Chapter 10, there is a sample job description for the board development committee.

Step 2. Prepare For Active Board Director Recruitment

Effective preparation for board director recruitment begins with reviewing the following:

- **Bylaws of the charter school.** The bylaws should spell out who is eligible to serve on the charter school board. There may be specific requirements to include a number of parents, community members, and others. You need to be sure that you are in compliance with the bylaws, which is after all a legal document, regarding composition of the board, length of terms, number of vacancies to be filled, as well as the manner in which vacancies are to be filled. In some cases, board directors are elected from a field of candidates greater than the actual number of vacancies. In other cases, the board development committee is empowered by the charter school board with the responsibility to search for the best qualified candidates and bring a slate to the board which then votes some or all of the slate into office according to provisions of the bylaws.
- **Position description for charter school board directors.** This position description or job description described above spells out the responsibilities of charter school board directorship. If you don't have one, you need to develop one. It is a critical tool in building an effective board. If you already have a position description, review it to make sure it is up-to-date and reflects your expectations of board director performance.
- **Charter school contract.** Similar to the comments above regarding bylaws, it is important that the charter school board be in compliance with the charter school contract. No doubt, there is specific mention of how the charter school will be governed and the specific roles and responsibilities of the charter school board.
- **Strategic plan.** Especially after a new strategic plan has been developed, it is important to review the strategic plan to determine if there are any implications for governance. For example, as a result of the strategic plan, the charter school may have determined that board needs to be more diverse or that the school needs to strengthen its relationship with key segments of the outside community. Such strategic priorities will have bearing on board director recruitment.

Step 3. Develop A Profile Of The Current Charter School Board

The board development committee, utilizing one of the board profile matrices included in the Tools Section of this chapter, develops a profile of the current charter school board. The recruiting matrix analyzes the current board according to criteria set previously. Some common examples of criteria include: age, race, ethnicity, specific skills, community contacts, status as parent of children enrolled in the charter school, etc.

The review activities in step 2 might suggest new criteria to add to the profile and/or criteria that should be dropped. Using the results of the profile, the board development committee creates a set of recruiting priorities that will guide recruitment efforts. Examples of recruiting priorities might include:

- More community leaders who have the ability to raise significant sums of money;
- More individuals living in the community served by the charter school;
- More parents of children who have been enrolled in the charter school less than two years, etc.

Because the recruiting priorities will determine which individuals will be considered for board directorship (and which individuals will not be considered), the recruiting priorities should be reviewed by the charter school board before the board development committee goes on to the next step.

Step 4. Determine Strategies to Build Board Diversity

An issue for charter school boards and board of other organizations today is achieving diversity in composition of the board. According to research commissioned by the Aspen Institute¹¹, factors related to building and maintaining board diversity include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Having a nominating committee that is committed to building diversity.
- Making diversity a priority for the organization.
- Avoiding "tokenism" or an expectation that one person of color can represent the entire community.
- Engaging in cultural diversity training and activities.

The overwhelming conclusion of this study was the consensus that building board diversity is a difficult process that requires constant attention for success. The charter school board, if it is serious about building a diverse board needs to consider a written plan with concrete objectives that reflects some of the points listed above. Without a doubt, the best resource available on the subject is Building Board Diversity by Jennifer M. Rutledge. She states: "On an inclusive board, individual board directors contribute an array of talents, skills, and interests that result from their own experiences and origins. Collectively, the board is enriched by diversity as individuals take advantage of their differences to work successfully together on behalf of the organization."¹²

¹¹Fletcher, Kathleen, Building Board Diversity: Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, The Aspen Institute, August 1999.

¹² Rutledge, Jennifer M., Building Board Diversity, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1994.

Before selecting prospective board directors to contact, considering developing an effective plan for achieving and maintaining board diversity which can include the following steps:

- What does “diversity” mean for your organization’s board? In what ways do you want the board to be more diverse? (Race, ethnicity, age, sex, location, occupation, etc.)
- What are the barriers and obstacles to achieve diversity? What are the root causes?
- What strategies will overcome these barriers?
- Develop recruiting strategies targeted to the groups and constituencies from which you wish to recruit.
- Set specific measurable targets for achieving diversity, for example recruit at least two people with fund-raising skills. Assign accountability for achieving the recruiting targets.
- Monitor progress.

Step 5. Develop An Initial List Of Prospective Board Directors

The board development committee, utilizing the results of step 2 and 3 above as well as input from the charter school administrator, develops an initial list of prospective board directors. Which individuals best fit the criteria, which is to say, which individuals match the recruiting priorities established by the board development committee. It is important to "throw the net wide" and consider a number of potential board recruits greater than the number of projected vacancies. For example, if you are filling four vacancies on the charter school board, initially try to identify 10-12 potential candidates. (You can do it!)

After identifying this initial list of prospective board directors, the board development committee should then examine the individuals more closely in light of the recruiting priorities previously set. Based on this review, the board can rank the individuals within the initial list.

Step 6. Conduct First Round Of Personal Contact With Top Recruiting Prospects

The board development committee is now ready to initiate personal contacts with the individuals at the top of the prospect list. These contacts can be made using a variety of methods. Here is one sequence that seems to work well.

The first contact is made to by means of printed materials mailed to the prospect. (A sample recruitment packet is included in the Tools Section of this chapter) The mailing consists of the following:

- A personalized cover letter that informs the prospect of the board's interest in them, a brief description of the recruitment and nominations process, and asking if they would like to be considered for charter school board directorship.
- A copy of the position description described earlier that details the roles and responsibilities of a board director.
- Additional material about the charter school board and its responsibilities
- A response form that the prospect can return indicating they would like more information and/or they want to be considered for board directorship.

This mailing is followed up with personal calls from designated members of the board development committee to the prospects. This is an important step even if the prospects are already well known by members of the committee. In the personal call, the board development committee member can respond to any questions the prospect may have as well as determine the prospect's level of interest in being considered for board directorship. If the prospect wants more information and/or wants to be seriously considered for board directorship, they are invited to attend an in-person orientation session.

In advance of the orientation session, prospective board directors can also be offered an opportunity to visit the charter school if they are unfamiliar with it, to observe the educational programs in action, and talk with the administrator and other staff. Additionally the prospective board director can be invited to attend a meeting of the charter school board to get an idea of how the school board makes decisions and conducts business. Such activities can also occur after the in-person orientation described in Step 6 below.

Step 7. Schedule And Conduct Orientation Sessions With Prospective Board Directors

The next step is to schedule and conduct in-person orientation sessions with prospective board directors who have responded to the mailing and phone calls described in step 5. These orientation sessions are an opportunity for members of the board development committee, the chairperson of the charter school board and the charter school administrator to explain more fully the roles and responsibilities of the charter school board as a whole as well as individual board director responsibilities. The presence of the board chair and the administrator in such orientation sessions conveys to board prospects the importance of the position they are being asked to consider. It takes time from the busy schedules of key charter school leaders but the payoff is immense and long term. If time does not permit, the second best would be attendance by one or more members of the board development committee and the charter school administrator.

A sample orientation agenda might include the following:

- Welcome and introductions
- Overview of the mission, vision and educational goals of the charter school.
- Overview of the roles and responsibilities of the board of directors.

- Review of the individual board director job description detailing specific expectations (for example, committee work, meeting attendance, involvement in community outreach and fund-raising, etc.)
- Opportunity for board prospects to ask questions
- Declarations of willingness to serve by the board prospects
- Other information required to continue in the board recruitment process (for example, completion of a questionnaire -- see example in the Tools Section of this chapter, etc.)
- Next steps (this depends on the manner in which new members are brought on to the charter school board; for example, will there be an election or will the board development committee create a slate of names that is then brought to the full board for action.

At the end of the orientation session, individuals who now understand what is expected of board directors and who wish to continue in the process, are asked to complete a questionnaire that provides some background information. A sample of this questionnaire, "Charter School Board Application Form," can be found in the Tools Section of this chapter. If your bylaws call for election, some of this information can be included in candidate profiles that are distributed to all individuals eligible to vote. If their interest level is very high, this questionnaire can also be distributed to board prospects in advance of the orientation session. Otherwise they'll need the deadline date for returning the completed questionnaire to the board development committee.

Resist the temptation to excuse some individuals from attendance at the orientation sessions. It is critical that all prospective board directors get the same information and that they all have an opportunity to ask any and all questions before they are asked to indicate their willingness to serve on the board. Remember, these individuals are being asked to make a serious time commitment that, in most cases, spans two to three years. If they insist they don't have an hour and a half of time to attend the orientation, it should raise some questions about their level of commitment. And, heaven forbid, that a board prospect makes a commitment to attend the orientation and then doesn't show without even a phone call. What does this tell you about what to expect from this person in the future. Remember, the board of directors of the charter school is entrusted with major decision-making responsibility. You need a team of people who can be depended upon.

Step 8. Selection/Appointment Of New Members To The Charter School Board.

After the orientation sessions for prospective board directors have been held, the board development committee meets to review all of the individuals who participated. It will be important for the committee to check back on their recruiting priorities set earlier in the process.

In evaluating the prospective board directors, the board development committee should ask the following questions:

- Does the prospect appear to be committed to the mission and educational philosophy of the charter school?

- Can the prospect contribute the time necessary to be an effective board director?
- Does the prospect possess some of the key skills, knowledge and other assets that match the board to recruiting priorities?
- Does it appear that the prospect can place the charter school's purposes and interests above their own professional and personal interests when making decisions as a board director?

The next step, the final selection/appointment of new members to the charter school board, depends on the provisions of the school's bylaws. If the bylaws call for an election from among all interested individuals, the board development committee will develop ballots and other election materials as required.

If the bylaws give the authority for selection of new board directors to the charter school board itself, then the board development committee can prepare a slate that includes the names of the candidates that asked reflect the recruiting priorities that were set at the beginning of the process. The board has the option however, to ask the board development committee to bring the names of all individuals identified in the recruitment process described above. The board will then select a number of candidates to fill the vacant positions.

In either case, whether by election or by board selection, new members then take their place on the charter school board. Other orientation activities occur. See the next chapter for more ideas on how to carry out the orientation of new board directors.

Summary

While it is more time-consuming, if you utilize the approach to board director recruitment described in this chapter, the results will include:

- A more accurate assessment of the charter school's board leadership needs,
- An organized process to identify, contact and secure commitments from the best qualified individuals to fill those board to leadership needs, and,
- A solid beginning on an orientation process for new board directors that has already begun with their first contacts with the charter school during the recruitment process.

Models of these essential documents, procedures and practices gathered from charter schools and other relevant examples that will be applicable to the board of a new charter school can be found in the Tools Section that follows.

Sidebar- Should Family Members Serve On The Same Board?

A question that may arise in the nominations and recruitment process is, “Should family members the serve on the same board?” The National Center for Nonprofit Boards offers the following advice¹³:

If your organization does not have a policy on nepotism on board, it is wise to discuss the issue before it becomes one. There are no laws that forbid family members from serving on the same board, but it is prudent to have a mechanism in place to guide the board in this situation. Enforcing its conflict-of-interest policy is the minimum a board can do to avoid unbalanced decision-making.

Here are some questions for the nominating committee as it screens candidates:

- Is our board small enough to be vulnerable if family members with similar interests arrive to make decisions?
- Can we expect family members always to relate to issues as professionals and leave personal relationships at home?
- Are we limiting diversity on the board by inviting members of the same family to join the board?
- Do we have good processes in place to promote independent decision-making?
- Are we discriminating against candidates on the basis of their marital or family status?
- Are we choosing candidates for their personal qualifications only?

¹³ Source: Website of National Center for Nonprofit Boards. www.ncnb.org

Chapter 2: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Invitation Letter And Packet.
- Position Description For Individual Board Director. (2 Samples)
- Prospective Board Director Application Form.
- Board of Directors Nomination Form (Source: Management Cornerstones, Inc.)
- Board Profile Worksheet. (2 Samples)

Essential Resources for Board Recruitment

- Board Member Orientation. Published by Aspen Publishers, Inc. In spite of the title, this publication includes a number of sample forms and documents useful in every step of the board recruitment process. As an added feature, all of the forms and worksheets in the manual are available on a Macintosh and IBM compatible diskette.
- Building Board Diversity, by Jennifer M. Rutledge. Published by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards. This publication provides a comprehensive approach for developing and implementing a plan to build a board that is more diverse and inclusive. One of the few resources of its kind, it includes a number of worksheets.

Invitation Letter Draft

DATE

Dear [name]:

In April of this year, new board directors will be appointed to the board of directors of the (name of Charter School). You have been recommended to our board development committee as a possible candidate for board service. We are requesting you to give serious consideration to nomination for a board position. A number of one year, two year, and three year board terms will be available beginning in April 2001.

The next several years promise to be exciting ones for (name of Charter School). The (name of Charter School) will continue to have a positive impact child and families we serve. The board of directors will play a central role in this important work.

Because of your experience and involvement in the Charter School and/or community, we feel you are well qualified to be nominated for a board position. As you consider this opportunity, we ask you review the board director position description included in this mailing. As you will see, we are expecting the board to be an active one.

A primary responsibility of board directors is to participate in the development of policy and major decision-making at board meetings held at least eight a year. Another key responsibility is to be active on an ongoing basis in a committee of the board. This year, board nominees will be asked to make that commitment before they are voted onto the board. Copies of committee descriptions are also included in this mailing for your review.

Since its opening in 1998, (name of Charter School) has become recognized as an effective educational leader having real impact within the community. We invite you to become a part of this growing tradition.

A member of our board development committee has been asked to contact you by phone to discuss this invitation with you. You may have already received this call. In the meantime, if you wish to be considered as a candidate for the Board of Directors, please send in the enclosed response form. If your answer is "yes," you will be asked to attend a short orientation meeting to review board responsibilities in more detail and to receive addition information about the (name of Charter School).

If you have any questions, please contact myself or the Charter School Administrator, (name), at 555-5555.

Sincerely,

(Name), President
Charter School Board of Directors

Board Nominations Response Form

Check One:

_____ I am interested in being considered for a Charter School board position.
Contact me with information about the upcoming orientation session.

_____ Contact me. I need more information before I can decide if I want to be
considered for a board position.

Name _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Return By Mail To:

Board Development Committee
Charter School
Address

Or Return By Fax To: 555-5555

Sample Charter School Board Director Position Description

1. Attend regular meetings of the Charter School board, which are each approximately two hours in duration. The board meets at least eight (8) times per year. Be accessible for personal contact in between board meetings.
2. Provide leadership to board committees. Each board director is expected to serve as an active, ongoing member of at least one committee. This requires a number of meetings per year plus individual committee task completion time. Presently committees include educational policy, resource development, strategic planning, board development, personnel, finance, and executive.
3. Commit time to developing financial resources for the Charter School. This includes making a personally meaningful financial gift as well as supporting other fund development activities of the Charter School in a manner appropriate for board directors.
4. Responsibly review and act upon committee recommendations brought to the board for action.
5. Prepare in advance for decision-making and policy formation at board meetings; take responsibility for self-education on the major issues before the board.
6. Participate in the annual board director self-review process.
7. Participate in the annual board development and planning retreat usually held in March of each year.
8. In general, utilize personal and professional skills, relationships and knowledge for the advancement of the Charter School.

I am aware that this board director position description is an expression of good faith and provides a common ground from which board directors can operate. Additional information on the Charter School mission, educational program and board responsibilities is contained in the board orientation materials and bylaws which I have read.

Board Director's Signature

Date

JEFFERSON ACADEMY

Board Member Profile Agreement

Jefferson Academy Board of Directors shall have a firm belief in the fundamental, traditional format and be committed to using the Core Knowledge and Open Court curriculums. Directors shall be fully committed to the charter school concept. The purpose of the Board of Directors is to direct, not manage, the school. Board members shall be able to manage, carry out the Jefferson Academy vision, foster relationships with staff and the school community, and oversee the budget.

Qualifications

- Read Professor E.D. Hirsch's book "Cultural Literacy" and "The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them" and agree with the principle that our society has a foundation of knowledge upon which subsequent learning is built.
- Be familiar with the Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence
- Understand the curriculum used in Open Court
- Be in agreement with the educational philosophy, discipline policy and administrative structure of our school

All board members should attend at least two PTO meetings a year to show support and encouragement for that vital aspect of our school. JA board members will not serve on the PTO board. Board members may chair and serve on committees of the PTO. Prior board experience is helpful. A high value for professionalism and the success of the school is mandatory. Motivation for serving on the board shall be to help guarantee the educational success of students.

All board members are required to attend a yearly board conference where the goals of the board are defined, a board self-evaluation critiqued, outside speakers present information on effective board leadership and other pertinent topics are discussed. The board will annually attend a Board Visit Day. During this time, directors will visit classrooms, talk with the staff and become familiar with current school concerns. The board will annually self-evaluate itself. Goals for the next year will also be determined at that time. Directors shall fulfill their responsibilities on the board, board committees or subcommittees to their fullest capability. All board members should be the best public relations representatives the school has.

Behavioral Expectations

Expectations include a professional demeanor at all board meetings. Issues being discussed shall not be personalized and directed toward any other board member, staff member, parent or anyone else. Confidentiality is expected in all situations. Board members shall respect and listen to ideas being presented by other board members.

Board members fulfilling their responsibilities to their fullest potential shall be encouraged by each of the directors.

When receiving criticisms from parents or other interested parties about staff or other board members, the board member shall direct the speaker to the board member/staff

member which the situation involves. Board members will never speak negatively about staff or other board members to the school community, or parties outside the school community.

Conflicts shall be resolved with the people with which it was created. Board members will commit to resolving conflict directly with each other or with the appropriate staff member and not share the conflict with anyone outside of the conflict, including, but not limited to other parents, other staff members or the media.

Board members shall exemplify integrity, honesty and respect. A dedication and commitment to the vision of Jefferson Academy and the charter school movement shall be top priority for any board member. Any board member finding himself or herself involved in an unresolvable conflict shall put the vision of the school first and step down from the board.

Board members shall abide by the open meetings law [C.R.S. 24-6-401 through 402]. The opening meetings law states that anyone discussing board business, policy, actions, resolutions, etc. with anyone else on the board, except at regularly scheduled meetings, is illegal. "Meeting" with another board member is defined as communication through person, telephone, or any other means. Confidentiality law is also outlined in this section of the statute. Personnel matters, individual students, and negotiations are confidential by law.

Board members missing more than two consecutive board meetings without prior approval for their absence from at least two other board members shall be relieved of their board involvement immediately.

Governance of Jefferson Academy

JA shall be governed by a Board of Directors. The Principal of JA shall answer directly to the board and serve at the pleasure of the board. The Principal shall make decisions on a day-to-day basis and fulfill all administrative duties for the school. The board will maintain the vision and steer the school's direction as it carries out the Mission Statement. As with all charter schools, Jefferson Academy, is an entity separate from the school district in the area of governance. This unique characteristic of charters shall be guarded by each board member.

Board members will not question any decision made by the Principal in any public arena. If a director questions a decision, he or she shall immediately take that concern or disagreement to the administrator in a confidential and diplomatic format. Likewise, the Principal shall agree to the same commitment. Respect for each other shall remain constant.

While at the school, board members shall be mindful of the different roles they play: parent, volunteer, board member, etc. A board member will not use their position of authority while acting in their parent or volunteer roles. Directors shall foster good

relationships with the administrator and staff on a personal level. With humility, each board member will serve the best interests of the school.

Board members shall remember that stepping out of their advisory/board capacity and attempting to run the school as an administrator, will always cause problems.

The vision and mission statement of Jefferson Academy, a fundamental charter school, will serve to guide and direct the board of directors. The goal to continually improve, maintain integrity, serve JA families and ensure academic success for our students shall take precedence in all situations.

Signed, this _____ day of _____, 19__.

_____ Board Member, Jefferson Academy

Charter School Board Application Form

Complete this form and return to the Charter School Board Development Committee by (date)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Relevant Community Experience and/or Employment (attach a resume if relevant):

Why are you interested in serving as a board director of the Charter School?

Area(s) of expertise/Contributions you feel you can make to the Charter School as a board director:

Other volunteer commitments:

For Board Committee Use

____ Nominee has had a personal meeting with the Board Development Committee Chair, Board Chair, Charter School Administrator, or other board director. Date _____

____ Nominee reviewed by the Board Development Committee. Date _____

____ Nominee attended a board meeting. Date _____

____ Nominee interviewed by the board. Date _____

Action taken by the board:

Please return the completed form to the Board Development Committee.

Charter School Board Profile Worksheet – Sample 1

	Term ending 2000				Term ending 2001				Term ending 2002			
Current Board Directors												
GENDER:												
• Female												
• Male												
AGE:												
• 20-35												
• 36-55												
• 56+												
RACE/ETHNICITY:												
• African American												
• Caucasian												
• Native American												
• Hispanic												
• Asian-American												
• Other:												
LOCATION:												
• City												
• Suburban												
• Rural												
• Other:												
CONSTITUENCY:												
• Parent												
• Civic/Business												
• Educator												
• Community												
• Other:												
SKILLS:												
• Fund-raising												
• Public Relations												
• Planning												
• Financial												
• Personnel												
• Legal												
• Education Expertise:												
OTHER:												

Charter School Board Profile Worksheet – Sample 2

Categories to Consider	Mike M.	Leo J.	Jane G.	Allen S.	Doris G.	Sherm H.	Jim S.	Doris C.	Randy H.
Area of expertise/professional skills:									
• Organizational and financial management				X	X	X	X	X	X
• Community development		X	X	X	X	X			
• Administration				X	X	X	X		X
• Academic/education									
• Business/corporate									X
• Accounting									
• Banking and trusts									
• Investments									
• Fund-raising (both professional fund-raisers and those with leverage in getting funds)							X	X	
• Charter school law/regulations		X	X						
• Government representative		X	X						
• Law	X								
• Marketing		X	X						X
• Personnel									
• Physical plant (architecture, engineer)									
• Strategic or long-range planning									
• Public relations									
• Real-estate	X		X	X					
• Community resident		X	X	X	X			X	
• Parent of child in school		X		X		X			

• Business owner									X
Categories to Consider	Mike M.	Leond J.	Jane G.	J. Allen S.	Doris G.	Sherm H.	Jim S.	Doris C.	Randy H.
Personal characteristics									
• Under 35	X								
• From 35 to 50		X	X	X	X				
• From 51 to 65						X	X	X	X
• Over 65									
• Women			X		X			X	
• Men	X	X		X		X	X		X
• Physical disability									
• Race/ethnic background									
• Asian									
• African-American		X		X	X	X	X		
• Hispanic									
• Native American									
• Caucasian	X		X					X	X
• Geographic location									
• City	X		X	X	X	X	X		
• Suburbs		X						X	X
• State									
• Regional									
• Financial position									
• Self-employed									X
• Salaried	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
• Philanthropic reputation								X	

Chapter 3: Orientation and Training of Board Directors

Critical Board Building Challenge: How do charter school board directors acquire the skills and knowledge they need to be effective leaders and decision-makers?

Introduction

Providing new board directors with the information they need to perform effectively is the next critical step in developing a strong board of directors for the charter school. The responsibility for developing and implementing an effective program of board orientation is shared between the charter school administrator and the board itself. There must be a commitment to developing a well-informed board, one with the knowledge needed to lead an effective charter school. Within the board, the responsibility can be delegated to the board development committee that has been already mentioned in previous chapters. The board development committee, working closely with the board chair and the charter school administrator should plan a formal program of board orientation for new members. The elements of this formal program are described in more detail in this chapter.

In addition to this new board director orientation, the board development committee will also be responsible for planning an annual and ongoing board education and training program for all of the board. The board development committee should also plan more specialized training and development activities to strengthen the leadership skills of board directors who are being groomed for other leadership positions within the board. Strategies and program ideas for this ongoing training are also included in this chapter.

This orientation process has already begun during the recruitment and nominations phase described in Chapter 2 of guidebook. Throughout the orientation process, a written board manual will be an indispensable resource. Look in the Tools Section of this chapter for sample table of contents of a board manual.

Before we get into some of the details, a word about the content and the timing of board orientation. In order for it to have maximum value and impact, training and orientation must be provided in a timely manner. The problem for many charter schools is that it can sometimes take new board directors several months and even a full year before they begin to function effectively in their role as board directors. In order to speed up the learning curve, some boards are beginning to deliver board orientation on a "just-in-time" basis. Information, that in the past, might not have been provided to board directors until they were on the board, is now being provided earlier as part of the recruitment process. In this approach, new board directors receive an advance program of orientation training to prepare them to hit the ground running at their first board meeting.

Here's how such a board orientation program might work: even before a prospective board director is voted on to the board, he or she will receive detailed information about the organization, the workings of the board, expectations for individual board directors, and other vital information. An effective "just-in-time" board orientation program will also focus on the

strategic plan of the organization. It is critical that prospective board directors are familiar with the mission, vision, major goals, and strategies of the organization. After the new board director has been brought onto the charter school board, additional information and training is provided so that, to the greatest extent possible, new board directors will be able to actively participate in their first meeting with confidence. In this way the productivity --- and the sense of personal satisfaction -- of new board directors is assured.

Board Orientation Timetable

Now, let's look at the orientation process as it proceeds through the following stages:

During The Recruitment Stage (Before Election Or Appointment To The Charter School Board):

As mentioned above, orientation of board directors of the charter school actually begins early in the recruitment process. In the recruitment stage, by means of printed material mailed to the prospect as well as a face-to-face orientation session, the prospect received an overview of the charter school's mission and strategic plan, the charter school contract, the educational program, financial data, and other background information. The prospect also received a list of expectations of board directors including number of meetings, committee assignments, length of board term and an idea of the time commitment required. They might have also received a list of current board directors and other key volunteers, as well as a copy of the charter school bylaws and the last annual audit of the school.

New Member Orientation (Immediately Upon The Election Or Appointment To The Charter School Board):

After the new member has been brought onto the charter school board, either as a result of an election or by appointment by the charter school board itself, the new board director orientation process continues in the following way.

1. Before the first board meeting, schedule a meeting between the new board director and key individuals in the charter school. Provide a detailed board director manual, which should include bylaws, articles of incorporation, the charter school contract, a thorough description of the educational program including educational philosophy, curriculum, instructional methods, assessment, the current budget, last audited financial statements a list of board directors and their addresses, lists of committees and any staff assignments, copies of minutes for the previous year and a copy of the charter school strategic plan.

Also during this meeting, discuss with the new member options for committee involvement. Refer back to the board director job description presented to the new board director during the recruitment process. (See sample board director job descriptions in the Tools Section of Chapter 2) In most cases, committee involvement by board directors is not an option but rather one of the expectations. There should be a solid match between the interests, skills and preferences of the individual board director and the requirements and challenges of the committee they join. There is more discussion of this match in the chapter on committees.

Here is an example of a new board director orientation program held at Leadership High School in San Francisco. The program is held on a regular school day from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The orientation begins with a welcome and overview by the principal and the board president. This overview covers the history of the school, the charter contract and future challenges facing Leadership High School. Then the board responsibilities, committee structure and board meetings are described in detail. Finally there is a dialogue with new board directors about how their skills and connections can be put to best use in the service of the charter school. At 10 a.m., the new board directors attend classes to observe. At noon, lunch is served. Finally at 1:00 p.m., the new board directors attend a faculty/staff meeting. The program ends at 2 p.m.

2. At the new members' first board meeting, introduce them to all current board directors and staff. Consider assigning a mentor board director to work with the new board director at least through the first several months.

Early Service (During The First Three Months Of The New Board Directors' Tenure):

1. Have regular check ends between the new board director and their board mentor to answer questions and help the member become acquainted.
2. Make sure that the new board director has become involved in their chosen committee assignment and continue orientation to the work of that specific committee. This responsibility is shared by the president of the board, the chair of the committee and when appropriate, the charter school administrator.
3. Continue to provide written background materials to the new member in response to their interests and questions.

Ongoing Orientation (Orientation, Training And Support On An Ongoing Basis For Old And New Board Directors Alike):

1. Consult with the committee chair and staff to obtain full involvement of the new board director.
2. Continue to provide assistance and support so that they can carry out the responsibilities as board directors effectively.
3. Provide opportunities for board directors to attend special workshops related to their assignments and interests. Provide special leadership training to current and prospective officers (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer).
4. Look for opportunities to expand responsibilities of board directors and rotate committee assignments to help satisfy the interests and needs of each board director. This has the added advantage of providing opportunities for continuous development of the volunteer leaders for the charter school.

Determining Orientation and Training Needs of Board Directors

In order to learn what new board directors really need from the orientation and training program, past and current board directors can be asked the following question: "What do you know now that you wish you had known when you first join the board?" The responses can be used to develop the core curriculum. Another approach is to simply ask new board directors to identify areas where orientation would be most helpful.

Related to this last approach, the orientation program can be designed to answer the following questions that prospective board directors are urged to ask by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards¹⁴. You can use these questions, adapted for a charter school board, as a checklist to assess the adequacy of your orientation for new board directors:

Questions about the charter school's educational programs:

- What is the charter school's mission?
- How do its current educational programs relate to the mission?
- Can I visit the school and classrooms to observe firsthand?
- Does the charter school have a strategic plan that is reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis?

Questions about the charter school's financial status:

- Is the financial condition of the charter school sound?
- In addition to the per pupil educational funding, what other sources of revenue does the charter school rely on?
- Does the board discuss and approve the annual budget?
- How often do board directors receive financial reports?

Questions about the charter school's constituents:

- Describe the children and families served by the charter school?
- Are the children and families served by the charter school satisfied with the organization? How do you know?

Questions about the structure of the board:

- How is the board structured?
- Are there descriptions of the responsibilities of the board as a whole and of individual board directors?
- Are there descriptions of board committee functions and responsibilities?
- Who are the other board directors?
- Is there a system of checks and balances to prevent conflicts of interest between board directors and the charter school?
- Does the charter school board have directors and officers liability coverage?

Questions about individual board directors' responsibilities:

- What are the ways that board directors are expected to contribute/serve?

¹⁴ Source: Website of National Center for Nonprofit Boards. www.ncnb.org.

- How much of my time will be required for meetings and special events?
- How are committee assignments made?
- Does the organization provide opportunities for board development and education?
- What is the board's role in fund-raising?
- Will I be expected to make a specific annual financial contribution?
- What role, if any, will I play in soliciting donors?

Ask questions about the board's relationship to the staff:

- Is the board satisfied with the performance of the charter school administrator?
- How do board directors and staff typically interact with each other?

The Board Director Manual

The written board director manual is an indispensable tool in the orientation and training of board directors -- both current and new. The board manual is never a substitute for face-to-face interaction, but without it, effective orientation and training is made much more difficult. The board manual will be a reference used in new board director orientation as well as ongoing board training and education. It also helps to ensure efficient organization and access to these materials.

Contents of board manuals may differ somewhat among charter schools but generally the components of a board manual will include information about the following:

- The charter contract.
- Other legal documents such as articles of incorporation, bylaws, etc.
- Charter school mission, vision and strategic plan.
- The educational plan of the charter school including educational philosophy, learning outcomes for students, curriculum, instructional strategies, assessment methods, etc.
- Board structure and operations including policies, description of board directors' responsibilities, overall committee structure and responsibility descriptions for each committee, decision-making methods, organizational chart, list of current board directors, titles, and all affiliations.
- Staffing structure, job description of charter school administrator, administrator performance review procedures.
- Finances including the charter school's financial history, current financial condition and long-range financial plans, previous year's audit and budget, the current annual budget, the school's investment and banking procedures and other relevant financial information.
- Sample newsletters, brochures, or other publications; Newspaper or magazine articles about the charter school

It is advisable to provide the manual in a three ring binder format so that board directors can organize new materials and papers they'll receive while serving on the board. The three ring binder format also makes it easier for board directors to update their manual with revisions of documents. Some charter schools also have much of this information available on the school website.

A sample table of contents for a board manual is included in the Tools Section of this chapter.

Strategies for Board Orientation

In their book, Improving The Performance Of Governing Boards¹⁵, Chait, Holland and Taylor list a number of strategies for board orientation and training. These strategies and others are described below:

- **New board director orientation program.** First of all, the authors suggest the development of a core curriculum for the board orientation program. This curriculum would address the basic knowledge that every board director needs including the mission and history of the charter school, unique characteristics, information about the external environment the charter school operates within (information about political, economic, demographic, legislative, technological, competitive trends and changes that have significant impact on the charter school and the children it serves), financial information, detailed information about the educational program, and more. Chait, Holland and Taylor make the point that many orientation programs spend too much time on a "detailed review of the board's bylaws, an extensive tour of the physical plant, or a lengthy elaboration of the organizational chart" and don't spend enough time providing information that will help board directors address the major decisions and policy questions facing the charter school.

Usually the orientation is provided face-to-face, sometimes with individual board directors and frequently in small groups. Increasingly parts of the orientation program will be provided in the form of audio and videotapes, as well as on the charter school Website and through other electronic means. As more and more people gain access to the Internet, this will represent a powerful tool for training and orienting members of the charter school board.

¹⁵Chait, Richard, Holland, Thomas, and Taylor, Barbara, Improving The Performance Of Governing Boards, American Council on Education, Oryx Press, 1996.

- **Ongoing board education and training.** In addition to the initial orientation for new board directors, there also needs to be a program of ongoing board education training. Once again, one of the most effective ways to determine content is to ask board directors, perhaps as part of an annual assessment, what they need to know in order to be a more effective member of the board. There should also been effort to link board education training to the critical strategic issues facing the charter school. In the Tools Section of Chapter 5, The Role of the Board in Strategic Planning, there is a worksheet to board can use to identify the critical strategic issues that require the boards priority attention and what information board directors feel they need in order to effectively address those issues. After training priorities have been determined, the strategies offered by Chait et al can meet the board's needs for ongoing education and training:
- **Incorporate training into each board meeting.** Another effective strategy is to provide some training to board directors during the regularly scheduled board meetings. This can be an opportunity to present new information that the board will need to address an emerging issue in the coming year. Sometimes it can take the form of a brief presentation by an outside resource person. It can also be an opportunity to discuss an article on topic of interest to the board that was previously distributed for their review. When training is provided in this manner, it's important that it be short, focused and well prepared.
- **Mini seminars.** Short presentation and discussion sessions organized around a special topic of interest to the charter school board. Some of the topics can come from the Foremost Critical Issues Worksheet mentioned in the previous paragraph. These sessions can be scheduled as part of the regular school board meetings or they can be held at other times.
- **Study groups.** Study groups can consist of a small number of board directors sometimes involving staff and outside experts. Their task is to become well-informed a particular subject area or issue and then sure that knowledge with the board is a whole.
- **Committee rotation.** Another effective way of providing education and training to board directors is by giving them an opportunity to serve on a different committee. This serves the dual function of providing an opportunity for new learning and by bringing a fresh perspective to the work of each committee.
- **Publications and conferences.** Another effective strategy for meeting the education training needs of board directors of the charter school is to provide access to books, articles and magazines on relevant topics. The resource chapter in this guidebook includes information on some of the best publications available from organizations such as the National Association of Independent Schools, the Association of Governing Boards, the National Association of School Boards, the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations, the Charter Schools Development Center (CA), the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, and others. In addition to printed materials, all of these groups have excellent Websites, audio and videotapes, CD ROM programs, and other resources. All these organizations also offer a number of excellent training conferences. Across the

country, statewide charter school resource centers as well as university based school reform technical assistance centers are also source of excellent training. Check the Website of the Charter Friends National Network for information about state and national contacts.

- **Peer education.** Another excellent way for board directors to learn is by sharing stories with each other. This can be done informally over coffee or meals. It can take place during conferences and meetings and provide an opportunity to compare notes with board directors of other charter schools.
- **Direct communication with the charter schools key constituents -- students and families.** Chait, et al point out that in the past, face-to-face communication with constituents was viewed as inappropriate for board directors. The fear was that such direct conversation might lapse into micromanaging and meddling, resulting in confusion about the distinctions between governance and management. If properly structured the benefits of such contacts far outweigh the potential drawbacks. Especially for charter school board directors that have been recruited from the outside community, an opportunity to speak with parents and students, for example, can increase their understanding of the issues facing the charter school and can also deepen their commitment to board.

Involvement of Past and Current Board Directors in Orientation and Training

No matter what orientation and training formats you employ, consider utilizing past and current board directors as training resources. Here are some suggestions for involving them¹⁶:

- **Orientation training.** Past and current board directors bring experience that will help the new board director learn faster. Bring past and current board directors in to present part of the orientation, or have the current and new members get together with you to talk about their responsibilities and commitments to the board. Make sure you prepare board directors on the topics they'll cover, so consistent and accurate information is given to the newcomers.
- **Mentoring.** Mentoring is a key element in orientation. Match up a skilled, reliable board director with a new one. Then the current member can show the newcomer the ropes of your board procedures and be available to answer basic questions.
- **Orientation retreat.** Let board veterans and new members come together at an annual orientation retreat. The orientation retreat serves as a good refresher for current board directors about your charter school's mission, educational programs and services, charter obligations, long-range plan and operations. Plus, all board directors new and current alike - will get to know each other better and feel more comfortable when they attend the first board regular meeting.

¹⁶ Aspen Publishers, Board Member Orientation, 1995.

A Last Bit of Advice

Don't take for granted the board directors, even experienced ones, are working under the same assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of the board and share your philosophy of governance. It will be the case that some members of the charter school board have served on several other boards. They bring differing opinions about what the board should or should not do. They may have a different view about the distinction between management and governance. (Some might not see a distinction at all). Therefore the charter school board must develop clear written policies regarding how it does its governing tasks. The charter school administrator can play a role in helping the board reach and maintain consensus on a range of structural and roles issues related to board governance. These consensus positions must be a central part of a complete board orientation program. And remember, orientation for new board directors is only the first step in a broader board training program that must be ongoing.

Chapter 3: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Sample Board of Directors Handbook Table of Contents [Source: Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)]
- Sample Board Director Orientation Outline (Source: United Way of Minneapolis Area The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits and Carter McNamara, PhD)
- Parliamentary Procedure Overview

Essential Resources for Board Orientation and Training

- Board Member Orientation. Published by Aspen Publishers, Inc. This publication includes a number of sample forms and documents useful in every step of the board orientation process. As an added feature, all of the forms and worksheets in the manual are available on a Macintosh and IBM compatible diskette.
- How Do We Keep Board Members Informed? National Center for Nonprofit Boards. Frequently Asked Questions. Go to: www.ncnb.org

Sample Board of Directors Handbook

[Source: Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)]

ISACS recommends that any or all of the following items be included in a trustee handbook for the benefit, erudition, and enlightenment of one's trustees:

1. School Mission Statement
2. Brief History of the School
3. Directories: Trustee; Faculty; Parent/Student
4. Board Committees: Structure, Charges, Assignments
5. Calendars: School Year; Board and Committee Meetings
6. Budget/Audit
7. Endowment Report
8. Strategic Plan
9. NAIS "Principles of Good Practice" (Especially those on Board, Trustees, Head, Admissions, Hiring, Fund-raising)
10. By-laws
11. Admissions Catalog & Application Package
12. School Placement Profile
13. School Statistics (e.g., Items reported in annual ISACS report)
14. Copy of NAIS' Trustees Handbook and the ISACS Primer for Trustees
15. Minutes (from the last year)
16. Board Policies: Endowment (Investment & Spending Policies); Conflict of Interest; Contagious Diseases (AIDS); Sexual Harassment; Admissions; Financial Aid; Staffing & Personnel; Board Resolutions; etc.
17. Handbooks: Employee & Parent/Student
18. Board Orientation Procedures and Schedule

ISACS would add that the NAIS Handbook for Trustees and the ISACS Primer for Trustees should become a focus point for orientation of new trustees, a process that should include a tour of the school, meeting with the head and development officer, and luncheon with the members of the Board's Committee on Trustees (i.e., Directorship /Nominating Committee). The trustees' handbook is one arrow in the quiver of trustee education, vital to keeping everyone on target.

Author: Patrick F. Bassett, Executive Director, Independent Schools Association of the Central States

Sample Board Director Orientation Outline

Meeting Format

New directors need to feel like they're an integral part of the board as soon as possible. If they don't feel comfortable voicing their opinions, you're all losing valuable input! Information is what will help everybody feel at ease. No matter how well-qualified your new board directors are, it will take some time to get them up-to-speed and feeling comfortable as members of your team. But there are steps you can take to hurry this process along. Conduct an orientation session for all new board directors. Have them meet with staff and executive officers. Spend time going over background material about the organization and bring them up-to-date on the issues facing the board. Allow plenty of time for questions and answers. Try to cover these topics in a new board director briefing:

Introduce Everyone

- Elected Chair
- Executive Officers
- Committee Chairs and Members
- Other Board directors
- Staff
- Guests and Others

Describe the Charter School (Mission!)

- Who we serve
- What we do
- Overview of educational program
- Other

Explain and Discuss

- Meeting attendance requirements--both full board and committee
- Committee assignments and charges
- Board role and relation to administrator/staff
- Other
- Conduct school tour
- Administrative offices and board room

Provide Documents Organized in a Manual

- Mission statement
- Bylaws
- Policy manual
- Minutes of board meetings for the past year
- Annual report
- Audit report
- Current budget
- Current financial report
- Strategic plan

- Goals for the year
- Rosters board directors including addresses and telephone numbers
- List of board officers
- List of committee memberships including chairs
- Annual calendar of activities and meetings
- Copies of the newsletter for the year
- Other

Collect Data at the Meeting

- Addresses
- Telephone--home and office
- Fax number
- E-mail address
- Best time to contact
- Best time for meetings
- Other

These are ways to get board directors comfortable with board responsibilities and meeting participation. Not only do the new directors start contributing right way during the meetings, they also develop a good working relationship with the veteran board directors. Plan this meeting within the first month of the term of office. Waiting until the first or second quarter will only delay your board's effectiveness.

Source:

United Way of Minneapolis Area

The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits

2233 University Avenue West, Suite 360

St. Paul, Minnesota 55114

(612) 647-1216

and Carter McNamara, PhD

Parliamentary Procedure Overview

Use this as a quick reference tool when you need to refresh your parliamentary procedure knowledge.

To do this:	Say this:	Interrupt speaker?	Second required?	Is motion debatable?	Is motion amendable?	What vote is required?
Adjourn meeting before business is completed adjourn.”	“I move that we	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess the meeting	“I move that we recess until”	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Suspend further consideration of an issue	“I move we table it.”	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End debate	“I move the previous question.”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Two-thirds
Study an issue further	“I move we refer this matter to a committee.”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce business (primary motion)	“I move that”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	“I move that this motion be amended by”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Object to procedure or a personal affront	“Point of order.”	Yes	No	No	No	No vote, chair decides
Take up a previously tabled matter from the table”	“I move we take	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Consider an issue out of its scheduled order	“I move we suspend the rules and consider”	No	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds

Chapter 4: Board Decision-Making And Meetings

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the Charter School Board make effective decisions?

Basic Assumptions

The model of charter school board decision-making described in this section of the guidebook is built on the following assumptions and beliefs:

- **The buck stops with the board.** The first assumption, simply put, is that the buck stops with the charter school board. As the board of an independent public school, in many cases also a separately incorporated nonprofit organization, the charter school board is the source of all authority – much of it delegated to others – and has the ultimate responsibility as a result.
- **Distinction between governance and management.** The decision-making model also reflects a clear distinction between governance decision-making and management decision-making. The board of directors focuses on matters of governance and delegates administration and management to the charter school administrator, who in turn delegates to other staff.
- **Distinction between ends and means—the board focuses on the ends.** The distinction between governance and management is further developed by making a distinction between “ends” and “means.” As described in Chapter 1, ends policies and decisions have to do with three things: the charter school’s results or outcomes, the recipients of those results -- the children attending the charter school, and the costs to achieve those results. “Means” refers chiefly to the means used by the charter school staff, with leadership of the administrator, to achieve the ends determined by the board.
- **The board speaks with one voice or not at all.** Board decision-making is always done within meetings of the board. According to John Carver and others, the board exercises its authority only when it acts collectively — “as the board.” Individual board directors cannot make board decisions acting alone or in a small group. Certainly, individual board directors can be delegated authority to act on the board’s behalf. This is different from unilateral, unauthorized action by a board director acting alone.
- **The board has limited time in which to make its major decisions.** The model of board decision-making described here reflects the view that the charter school board major decisions to make and a limited amount of meeting time in which make them and to carry out its other responsibilities. This forces the board to be very selective in the items it includes on its own meeting agendas.

- The board is not a substitute for “everything else.” **The board is the place where governance decisions are made. Other decisions and actions take place elsewhere. In a well-organized charter school, there will be other structures, systems and procedures to provide opportunities for staff, parents, students, and other community members to provide input, make decisions, and take action. Some of these structures will be linked to governing board decision-making. A good example is the strategic planning process. While the final decision to formally adopt the strategic plan is made by the board, the strategic planning process must include extensive involvement of all constituencies of the charter school. At the same time, parent input in decision-making will occur at all levels of the charter school. For example, the Y. W. C.A. Global Career Academy Charter School in Milwaukee, has designed 12 mechanisms for parent involvement and decision-making. (This framework is included in the Tools Section of Chapter 8.) One of these participation mechanisms is direct parent representation on the charter school board. Most of the other parent involvement occurs on an ongoing basis and is not directly connected to the decision-making that occurs at the board level. The intent, however, is to make the “voice of the customer” so pervasive that it impacts all charter school decision-making.**
- **Clarity about roles and responsibilities between the board and administrator.** Finally the decision-making model reflects clarity and agreement about roles and responsibilities of the board and the charter school administrator. This theme will be more fully developed in Chapter 7 which addresses board – staff relations.

Board Decision-Making Model

Charter School Board Governance Framework Chart

It is helpful to refer back to the Charter School Governance Framework Chart in the Tools Section of Chapter 1. The decision-making model reflects John Carver’s distinction between “ends” and “means.” In this view, the charter school board places primary focus on “ends” – mission, vision, key results to be achieved by the charter school. The board will also place priority on major actions and decisions that support the “ends” such as monitoring school progress toward meeting the student achievement and other objectives agreed to in the charter contract, budget approval, school-wide policies, strategic planning, and charter school administrator performance review.

One of the reasons this ends/means distinction is helpful is because of the limited amount of formal meeting time is usually available for board decision-making. As was pointed out earlier, a board that meets monthly for two hours has only 24 hours in which to make a number of major decisions and still have time to address other unforeseen major issues and challenges.

As conveyed in the governance framework chart in the Tools Section of Chapter 1, these broader governance decisions create the space or playing field for board committees, charter school staff led by the administrator, and non-board volunteers to plan and implement actions in their respective areas of responsibility. People have autonomy within the boundaries created by board

decision-making in the major areas noted above. The board does not micro-manage or meddle in decision-making that is best done by those responsible for the development and delivery of educational programs and support services. Whenever possible, the board will effectively delegate implementation responsibility with clear instructions and/or suggestions to its own committees and the charter school administrator, so that the board as a whole can continue to maintain a focus on areas of major policy and decision-making.

Elements Of Effective Decision-Making

Eugene Smoley, author of Effective School Boards,¹⁷ identifies four elements of effective school board decision-making:

- **The board accesses and uses relevant information.** Relevant information comes from many sources, including district staff and community; it is focused on several board concerns: resolving immediate crises and strengthening longer-term educational results; it is accurate, balanced and presented as an efficient guide for action.
- **The board discusses issues deliberately.** Deliberate discussions leading to board decisions are systematic, objective and open; board directors frame issues, consider information in context, and give the time necessary to avoid forcing decisions prematurely. They put aside personal differences, like hidden agendas, and consider without prejudice the merits of the particular situation or issue, and are honest and forthright in their exchange of viewpoints.
- **The board considers alternative actions.** Consideration all the alternative actions indicates that the discussion reflects different points of view, hears all sides, and assesses the positive and negative consequences of various choices.
- **The board works toward consensus.** Board directors try to find areas of commonality, tolerate ambiguity and recognize the need for compromise in the importance of reaching agreement. When boards work toward consensus, board directors try to find areas of commonality, tolerate ambiguity, and recognize the need for compromise and the importance of reaching agreement.

¹⁷ Smoley, Eugene, Effective School Boards, Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Policy-Making: A Critical Area of Board Decision-Making

Policies are an important set of far-reaching decisions made by the charter school board. Let's begin with a definition of policy. According to Andrew Swanson, author of the Board Sense newsletter, policies are broad precepts or principles designed to influence and control future decisions, directions and actions of the board. Boards focus on broad organizational policies and leave operating policies and procedures to the charter school administration. Through policy-making, the board is able to delegate authority and still retain ultimate responsibility and control. Policies also provide a framework in which other decisions can be made and the work of the board and staff carried out. Policies assure consistency of actions especially in difficult and stressful situations. Policies also minimize "re-deliberation" on matters that the board has previously decided. Finally, policies define the ways the school wishes to work and the board wishes to govern.¹⁸

The Washington State School Directors' Association notes that effective board policies have the following characteristics:

- Reflective of the educational goals of the charter school;
- Written within the scope of the school board's authority;
- Adopted through proper board procedure;
- Respectful of legal and constitutional rights and requirements; and
- Communicated to the persons within the charter school community it will affect.

There is a hierarchy of legal authority within which board policies fit.¹⁹ This hierarchy can be described in the following way:

1. Applicable federal and state laws, including Internal Revenue Service regulations.
2. Charter school contract with the authorized chartering body.
3. Articles of incorporation for the charter school.
4. Bylaws of the charter school.
5. Standing policies of the board of the charter school.
6. Other one time, short-term policies found in the charter school board minutes.
7. Personnel policies and procedures.
8. Administrative decisions made by staff based on, and/or consistent with, the above.

No action or policy decision at any one level within this hierarchy may violate the rules set in the level above it.

¹⁸ Hundley DeKuyper, Mary, Trustee Handbook, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.

¹⁹ Adapted from: Andringa, Robert C. and Engstrom, Ted W., The Nonprofit Board Answer Book, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

How Policy Is Created

The board can effectively develop policy by proceeding through the following sequence:²⁰

- 1. The board first identifies a need for new policy.** The recognition that there is in need for a new role of institutional policy can come from a number of sources: board committees, the chair of the board, the charter school administrator, other staff, parents, students, and community members. Some of the conditions that cause the charter school board to consider development of new policy include the following:
 - Issues are arising which are not adequately/acceptably addressed by current board policies.
 - Changes in operating practice have accumulated over time so that the current policies do not reflect reality.
 - External changes and trends that have an impact on the charter school and the families being served, for example workforce, demographics, have brought new issues forward.
 - The charter school has changed in size, scope, services offered or methods of delivery of services.
 - Recent federal or state laws have created the need for adjustments in policy, e.g., wage and hour laws, equal employment, safety, provisions of the applicable state charter school legislation, etc.
 - Current policy does not adequately reduce ambiguity and insure uniformity of decisions across the charter school.

When such new issues and questions arise, the first question for the board to ask is “What do our current policies say?” If the language of the current policies do not provide guidance, the next question is, “What policy should we adopt to cover this and similar situations in the future?”

- 2. The board then assigns a team to draft new policy.** After it has been determined that a new policy is needed, often it is the charter school administrator who is in the best position to draft policies for board review because he or she is thinking about the school every day and is frequently most aware of what’s needed. However, since setting board policy is ultimately the board’s responsibility, a board-staff team of two can also be effective. In either case, the board needs to clearly communicate its concerns and any preferences regarding how new policy will be approached to the team that will write the policy draft.
- 3. Write a first policy draft.** The writing team then develops a written policy statement that responds to the issue or question at hand. In some cases, the team can use policies that have been drafted by other charter schools. Samples of common policies are included in this chapter’s Tools Section. John Carver, author of *Boards That Make a Difference*, encourages boards to start with broad statements and become more specific only if it will improve the policy. His guidance comes in the following words:

²⁰ Adapted from: Andringa, Robert C. and Engstrom, Ted W., *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

- Decide the largest issue in a given category before smaller issues in that same category.
- Stop at the level where you can accept any reasonable interpretation of the decision just made.²¹

It must be understood that if the policies become too detailed, it is almost certain that the board has moved beyond policy-making and has begun to invade staff administrative prerogatives. The board should keep its policies at the broad governance level, maintaining the distinction between “Ends” and “Means” presented in Chapter 1.

- 4. Ask legal counsel to review the draft policy.** In some cases, depending on the nature of policy questions, once the drafting of policy begins, it may be important to bring the charter school's legal counsel into the picture to review the policy draft. The attorney, who should be familiar with applicable charter school law and regulations, should not write policy but he or she will certainly have many helpful suggestions including how new policies should be adopted in such a way that any previous, related policies can then be continued. By no means, however, is a legal review required of each and every policy draft under consideration by the charter school board.
- 5. Present draft policy to the board for approval.** Once the drafting chain has the policy draft ready for board approval, it is advisable to have a first reading at a board meeting to give the writing team informal feedback. The writing team can then incorporate any suggestions and send scratch that and bring the final policy draft to the next board meeting when the board can formally adopted.
- 6. Continue to review and revise board policies.** Periodically, the board should review its policies to make sure they're still relevant and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

For new charter schools, it is advisable to develop a set of basic policies at the same time. The policy checklist from the National Association of Independent Schools included in the Tools Section of this chapter can be a resource. Also consider some of the sample policies included in the Tools Section. The same steps described above can be used to develop this initial set of basic policies.

Board Policy Manual

As described above, policies constitute some of the most important decisions that the charter school board will make. The board is liable for its own policies in a court of law. Staff members need to be clear exactly what they're supposed implement. And board directors should not have to reinvent similar policies over and over again. Therefore, board policies should be kept

²¹ Carver, John, Boards That Make a Difference, 2nd Ed., Jossey-Bass, 1997.

organized and accessible. For this reason, it is advisable to have a written board policy manual in which all the policies the board adopts are maintained.

This board policy manual is a useful tool that helps the board speak with one voice on critical matters, guiding it and staff until the board chooses to make changes. As such, the policy manual is essential for effective board decision-making.

Tools to Support Effective Board Decision-making

Decision-Making Flowchart

It will be very helpful to have a written description of the decision-making process the board intends to use. In the Tools Selection of this chapter, there is a decision-making flow chart based on the model of board governance described in Chapter 1. This decision-making flowchart reflects the following fundamentals:

- Issues, concerns and policy questions that come before the board of directors can originate from staff, individual board directors, parents, students and the community at large.
- An executive committee or similar group reviews such issues, concerns and policy questions to determine whether or not they should be brought to the full board or, based on current board policies, assigned to the charter school administrator, board committees, or another body to be dealt with. In this way, the executive committee attempts to differentiate between governance matters that deserve the full board’s attention and management matters that can be delegated to staff.
- Items that are referred to the full board are either acted upon by the board or delegated to board committees, or the charter school administrator for action or for the development of recommendations to the board for action at a future board meeting.

This approach reflects clarity about who is responsible for what. It also reflects an understanding of the “ends/means” distinction described in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter. If the board consistently uses this decision flowchart, over time, it will become more effective in using its meeting time for true governance decision-making.

Decision Matrix

Another important tool to support charter school board decision-making is the decision matrix. The purpose of such a matrix is to clearly define the authority and decision-making roles and responsibilities of the board in relation to authority and decision-making roles and responsibilities of other groups and constituencies within the charter school. The final interpretation of such a matrix will rest with the board of directors. While such a written tool will not completely clear up occasional confusion and lack of agreement about who decides what, the

decision matrix will prevent many problems that frequently plagued charter schools from developing. The matrix will save time, increase the impact of people's efforts and help to build stronger relationships among the board, staff, parents, students, and other key constituencies.

One of the finest examples of such a matrix has been developed by the Washington Core Knowledge School, located in Colorado. The school's decision-making matrix is included in the Tools Section of this chapter. The matrix identifies decisions needing to be made in a number of broad categories such as: school goals, curriculum and instruction, personnel, staff development, communication, budget, assessment and evaluation, record-keeping, and school culture. For each of these decision categories, the matrix then specifies:

- The decision to be made;
- Who should decide (which person or group has the final say in a decision area);
- Who should recommend (which person or group will be responsible for recommending a solution);
- Who should be solicited for input (which person or group will be contacted in order to obtain an opinion or information prior to the decision being made. Inputs would be welcomed from anybody, but some need to have their input solicited.);
- Who will be informed (which person or group will be informed of the decision once it is made. The decision maker is responsible for informing those individuals or groups.);
- Which decision making process will be followed (the model identifies five possible decision-making processes that can be used depending on the nature of the decision.)

Taken together, the elements included in this decision making matrix, comprise a system for decision-making that reflects the need to clearly define who does what, reserving ultimate authority for the board, or as it is called in the Washington Core Knowledge School sample, the "Site Based Management Council." At the same time, use of such a decision-making matrix will create many opportunities for input, influence and decision-making throughout the charter school.

To summarize, the benefits of such a matrix include:

- Clear up any confusion about "who does what."
- Ensure that for each task, there is a responsible party.
- Communicate "who does what" so parents or other staff people are immediately referred to the correct party.
- Facilitate additional communication by helping people who need to work together to get to know each other.
- Prevent duplication of effort.

As with many of the tools included in this governance guidebook, the Washington Core Knowledge School decision-making matrix should be reviewed and revised so as to meet the specific needs and requirements of your charter school.

The Role Of The Executive Committee In Facilitating Effective Board Decision Making

Another critical element in effective decision-making is a functioning executive committee. Board committees will be given fuller treatment in Chapter 10. (A sample Executive Committee job description is included in the Tools Section of that chapter as well.) However, our discussion of board decision-making will not be complete with an explanation of the Executive Committee at this point.

In a charter school board, as in most other organizations, the Executive Committee typically consists of the four executive officers of the board: the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Sometimes other members of the board are included as part of the executive committee: for example, chairs of key standing committees or at-large members from the board to assure representation of diverse viewpoints.

The executive committee facilitates effective decision-making by the full board by playing the following three critical roles:

- **Planning the agenda of board meetings.** It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to meet regularly with the Charter School Administrator in advance of board meetings to develop the board meeting agenda. Frequently, development of the board meeting agenda is left up to the charter school administrator. Certainly, the administrator needs to be involved but developing the board meeting agenda is the responsibility of the board leadership. A sample board meeting agenda is included in the Tools Section of this Chapter.
- **Making decisions on behalf of the full board.** Between the regular meetings of the board the executive committee can make decisions that can't wait for the next regular board meeting or on matters that the full board has delegated authority to the executive committee. In both cases, the executive committee receives its authority from the full board and needs to report on its decision-making at the subsequent meeting of the board.
- **Serving as a communication link with other members of the board, especially the committee chairs.** In order to be effective decision-makers, the board must foster communication among its members in between regular meetings. The executive committee plays a vital role to insure that this happens utilizing telephone, fax, email and face-to face meetings.

To facilitate its work, the executive committee should meet on a regular basis. For example, if the board holds its regular meetings on a monthly basis, the executive committee might also meet monthly in between the regular board meetings. The board chair and the charter school administrator should develop an agenda for the executive committee in advance of its meetings. To save time, these agenda pre-planning meetings can often be done by phone and/or email.

When the executive director and board president meet, they should begin by identifying agenda items to be handled by the executive committee. These items are placed on the executive committee's meeting agenda as action items. In placing such items in this category, board

president and executive director are assuming, based on past practice as well as relevant bylaw language and board policy, that such items are appropriate for executive committee decision-making. The next agenda category includes those items that would be appropriate for executive committee discussion and/or referral to the full board as action items or as information items. In this instance, the board president and executive director are making the judgment that the executive committee lacks authority to act directly on such items. Their discussion of such items during the executive committee meeting may lead to recommendations for future action by the board as a whole but the executive committee will stop short of making a decision on its own.

A third category of executive committee meeting agenda items are those items that are offered to executive committee members for their information only; they don't require action by the executive committee or by the board as a whole, but the board chair and administrator consider this information important enough to share with other members of the executive committee and possibly the full board.

By working with an executive committee agenda organized in this manner, the board chair, other members of the executive committee and the administrator will use their meeting time more effectively and efficiently, resulting in decisions on matters that are appropriate for executive committee action. More importantly, they will lay the groundwork for effective decision-making by the board as a whole by reviewing, and if appropriate, making recommendations for board action for items that must be handled by the full board of directors. They will also avoid spending unnecessary time on information items that require no real discussion or board deliberation.

As a result of such a meeting process, the executive committee can then construct an agenda for the full board meeting that places priority on governance-related action items. It can be seen that by taking care of its own work in an effective way, the executive committee facilitates effective decision-making by the board as a whole. An executive committee meeting agenda planning form can be found in the Tools Section of this chapter.

One caveat: Sometimes organizations experience problems when the executive committee is allowed to function as an elite group, presenting “already made” decisions at meeting for the full board’s rubber stamp. These and related problems are preventable if there is a written committee job description for the executive committee that spells out the role of the committee and limitations on its authority. There is a sample executive committee job description in Chapter 10 of this guidebook.

Time Management of Board Meetings

The effectiveness of board decision-making will improve if the following meeting time management practices are used:

- **Written board-meeting agenda with time estimates.** A written agenda for the board meeting should be developed by the executive committee and charter school administrator and distributed to board directors a week before the board meeting date. A

sample agenda is included in the Tools Section of this chapter. The agenda should include estimates for each agenda item.

- **Start on time.** If the board meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m., start at 7 sharp, not at 7:10. Some board directors may have a habit of arriving late, and to make members who arrive on time wait for those who do not is both unfair and inconsiderate. It will also build resentment over time. When board directors know that the charter school board meetings start promptly, they will arrive on time more often. And the reverse is also true – some board directors will quickly get into the habit of arriving late if the board has gotten into the habit of starting late! Be punctual and begin meetings on time, every time.
- **End on time.** Meetings should not only begin on time, but end on time, too. Time limits create a sense of urgency, and board directors will usually react by concentrating on the issues at hand, avoiding idle chatter, etc. Deadlines will encourage the board to be more efficient and effective, especially as the end of the meeting approaches
- **Remind the board of the time.** It is always appropriate for the board chair to point out, when there is a long discussion, that there are a number of other items on the agenda, and the hour is getting late. In fact, most people will expect the chair to do this. Of course, the chair can use discretion in determining when a critical discussion requires more than the allotted time.
- **Track use of board meeting time.** Studies of regular school board meetings have revealed that, in some cases, boards devote as little as 10% of their time on matters related to teaching and student learning. One way of maintaining and increasing the board's focus on matters of real importance is to track actual use of board meeting time. Start with the written meeting agenda that includes time estimates for each item. Make sure that these original time estimates reflect a focus on priority board work as suggested earlier. A board director can be asked to serve as process observer, noting actual time spent on each agenda item. Then at the end of the meeting, as part of a brief evaluation on meeting effectiveness, the chair can ask the observer to report results. The results can be used as the basis for future improvement in the use of board meeting time.

Consent Agendas

To expedite business at a charter school board meeting, the board can approve the use of a consent agenda that includes those items considered to be routine in nature. A consent agenda would appear as part of the regular board meeting agenda. Full information about these items should be provided to the board in advance in the board packet and any questions or concerns can be directed to the makers of the motions and answered prior to the meeting. This allows thorough examination of the routine items without using up precious board meeting time.

Any item which appears on the consent agenda may be removed from the consent agenda by a member of the board. The remaining items will be voted on by a single motion. The approved motion will then be recorded in the minutes, including a listing of all items appearing on the

consent agenda. Use of a consent agenda eliminates the need to vote separately on many of the routine items and resolutions not requiring explanation or board discussion. There is generally one motion to approve all items on the consent agenda, but it takes only the request of any one board director—generally not a formal vote—to remove any item from the consent agenda before the vote. If removed from the consent agenda, the item will be taken up later in the regular agenda. That item is then discussed and voted on separately, after the rest of the consent agenda has been approved.

In all cases, it is assumed there is nothing controversial about these items and therefore no need for discussion. Grouping agenda items like these facilitates the meeting and allows time to be properly spent on issues that do need discussion.

Here are some examples of routine items that can be included in a consent agenda:²²

- Committee and previous board meeting minutes.
- Minor changes in a procedure.
- Routine revisions of policy.
- Updating documents, for example, address change for the charter school.
- Standard contracts that are used regularly (confirmation of using the traditional in-house contract with a new vendor).
- Confirmation of conventional actions that are required in the bylaws (for example, signatory authority for a bank account or acceptance of gifts).

Annual Calendar Of Major Board Decisions

Another tool that can help charter school boards maintain their focus on governance policy and critical emerging issues is an annual calendar of major decisions. To a great degree, the major decisions that a charter school board makes are made on an annual basis. Here are some examples:

- Monitoring student achievement.
- Annual review and update of the charter school strategic plan.
- Setting the annual budget of the school.
- Review of the administrator's performance.
- Setting goals for the following year.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the educational program.
- Election/selection of new members of the board.

Major decisions such as these can be scheduled on an annual basis. In this way other decisions and work can be scheduled in a timely manner. By mapping out major decisions in advance, this can also facilitate decision-making by the board's committees. It can also help the charter school administrator organize his or her priorities. Some of these decisions will be tied to annual and

²² "Boards In Motion: How to Have Better Meetings," Board Member Newsletter, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, Sept. 1999.

strategic planning discussed in the next chapter. A sample calendar of decisions is included in the Tools Section of this chapter.

Organizational Dashboard

Another tool that can be used to increase the effectiveness of board decision-making is the “organizational dashboard.” Chait, Holland and Taylor describe this tool in Improving the Performance of Governing Boards.²³ The dashboard incorporates key success factors of the charter school – the most essential areas of performance. These are the variables that most determine whether the charter school will succeed or fail. Once the critical success factors have been identified, the board and the charter school administrator (and other key staff) can then propose and consider strategic performance indicators – the qualitative and quantitative data that most accurately measure and convey the critical areas of performance. These critical success factors should be linked to the charter school application and contract as well as the charter school strategic plan. By focusing on these indicators, the board can position itself to place its focus on the priority areas of governance.

As the “dashboard” metaphor implies, the board will regularly refer to the organizational dashboard for feedback on how well the school is doing relative to the critical success factors. In this way, corrective action can be taken before – not during or after – a crisis erupts. The latest version of the dashboard will be included in the board packet of information. The review of the dashboard will be a standard part of each regular board meeting. A “most current version” can be maintained on the school’s website, available for board directors anytime.

Picture the critical performance indicators for a charter school displayed as a 1-3 page chart that would enable the board to regularly answer the following questions:

- Are we in compliance with our charter contract?
- How well are our students performing?
- Are we attracting new students to the charter school and retaining students currently enrolled in the charter school?
- How well is our staff performing?
- Are we attracting and retaining skilled, dedicated paid staff and volunteers?
- What is the level of involvement of parents?
- What is our overall financial performance? Is our revenue structure balanced? Are we deploying our funds appropriately and according to the approved budget of the charter school?
- How well are we acquiring the resources we need? How well are we using and managing our resources?

The dashboard can also be a powerful tool for regularly communicating with parents, funders, community supporters, as well as the charter authorizing body.

²³ Chait, Richard, Holland, Thomas, and Taylor, Barbara, Improving the Performance of Governing Boards, Oryz Press, 1996.

Providing The Board The Information It Needs To Make Effective Decisions

The effectiveness of the board's decision making will increase dramatically if critical information is sent in advance of meetings so that board directors can have their ideas and questions well formulated beforehand.

Characteristics of Good Board Information

Consider ways to enhance the quality of board information. Barry S. Bader, a consultant and author specializing in governance, identifies seven guidelines for developing effective board information:

- **Concise**. Is the information communicated as quickly or as briefly as possible?
- **Meaningful**. Is the information presented in relationship to a significant factor, such as a goal set by the board, past performance, or comparative data?
- **Timely**. Is the information relevant to the current agenda?
- **Relevant To Responsibilities**. Does the information help the board or board committee discharge its responsibilities?
- **Best Available**. Is the information the best available indicator of the situation or condition being described? Can better information be provided?
- **Context**. Is it clear why this information is important?
- **Graphic Presentation**. Could the information be presented better graphically than in words?

Board Book Containing The Agenda And Information Packet In Advance Of Board Meetings

An effective way to provide board directors with needed information in a timely manner is through a written board book or board director packet that goes out before board meetings.

The most informative and useful board books include some or all of these features:²⁴

- A cover memo from the board chair and the charter school administrator that outlines significant developments since the previous meeting and previews the goals and key issues for this meeting.
- An updated copy of the organizational dashboard.
- Agendas for all committee meetings and the board meeting that include for each major item a set of discussion questions, a concise statement as to why the matter must come before the board, an essential supporting materials.
- An executive summary of any document in the book longer than a few pages.
- Minutes of the previous meetings of the board and committees.
- A list of the board's current goals and strategic priorities (as a reference for board discussion and decision-making at the coming meeting).
- A copy of the mission statement and a list of principal goals from the strategic plan.

²⁴ Ibid.

- Evaluation forms for board and committee meetings, if the charter school board uses such tools.
- A roster of board directors and staff, with addresses, phone and fax numbers, email addresses and committee assignments.
- Copies of recent news clippings regarding the charter school and/or charter schools generally.
- A school calendar for the coming month.
- Copies of any relevant school newsletters, announcements of upcoming school events, etc.

Communication In Between Board Meetings

In addition to the board book described above, additional information can be provided to board directors in between the regular meetings. In some cases, this information will supplement what has been compiled into the board book. Today, with more board directors having access to the Internet, in addition to printed material, the information needs of the board can be handled by utilizing the school's Website and email.

In addition to information sent from the school to board directors, use of email makes it easier for board directors to communicate to the school, the charter school administrator, and the chair of the board, as well as each other. In the Tools Section of this chapter, see the sample Board Communication Plan.

Chapter 4: Tools You Can Use

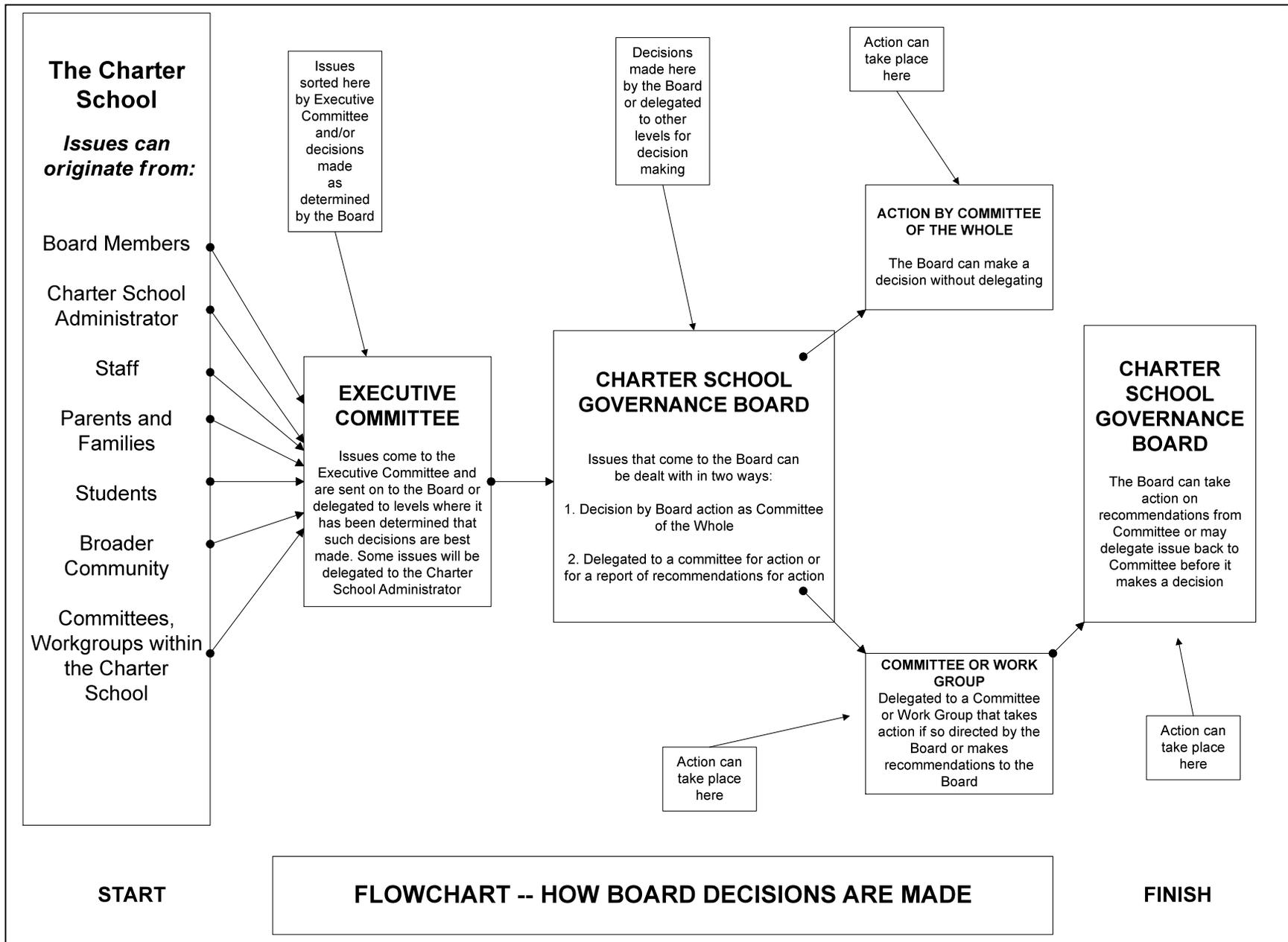
Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Flow Chart: How Board Decisions Are Made (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Executive Committee/Board Meeting Planning Form (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Questions Before Making Sound Decisions (Source: Board Member Orientation Manual by Aspen Publishers)
- Sample Board Meeting Agenda (Source: Trustee Handbook by Mary Hundley DeKuyper) published by National Association of Independent Schools)
- Sample Board Policies in Critical Areas: conflict of interest, enrollment, etc.-- See the following websites: Independent Schools Association of the Central States at www.isacs.org; click on "Monographs", then scroll down and click on "Board of Trustees" and "Business Operations" for sample policies. Also see Minnesota Council of Nonprofits management resources at <http://www.mncn.org/manage.htm#2>. Also see US Charter Schools at www.uscharterschools.org. Also see the Free Management Library of The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits (MAP) at <http://www.mapnp.org/library/boards/boards.htm#anchor1322914>.
- Decision-making Matrix (Source: Washington Core Knowledge School)
- Board Communication Plan (Source: Robert Harris CAE, The Nonprofit Resource Center)
- Policy Development Steps (Washington State School Directors' Association)
- Board Meeting Evaluation Form (Source: Y. W. C.A. of Greater Milwaukee)

- Sample Board Operations Calendar (Source: The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits)

Essential Resources for Board Decision-making and Meetings

- Fletcher, Kathleen, The Policy Sampler, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 2000. Contains a diskette with over 70 policies covering critical areas such as conflict of interest, grievances, sexual harassment, nepotism, confidentiality and more. Comes with printed user guide.
- Gardner, Laurie, Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition, Charter Schools Development Center, 1999. Section 2 includes a good selection of sample policies that can be adapted to meet your charter school's specific needs.
- Smoley, Eugene, Effective School Boards, Jossey-Bass, 1999.



Executive Committee Agenda Planning Form

Date _____

Items for Executive Committee Action/Decision:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Items for Executive Committee discussion and/or referral to full board as action items (with or without recommendation) or as informational items:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Items for Executive Committee information only:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Key items for next board meeting:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions for Making Sound Decisions

(Source: Adapted from: Board Member Orientation Manual by Aspen Publishers)

Directions: Ask yourself these questions when you're faced with a tough board decision. This list will help you think through your decision and the reasons for it.

1. How will the decision affect the charter school?
2. How does this decision relate to our mission statement?
3. What's the potential for legal problems if I vote yes? What if I vote no?
4. Does this decision affect:
 - The children and families we serve? How?
 - The charter school's staff? How?
 - The community? How?
 - The charter school board itself? How?

Is the impact on any of these groups negative? If it is, will the decision benefit significantly more people than it will harm?

5. Have we voted on this matter before? If yes, why are we considering it again? How have conditions changed?
6. Do I have all the information I need to make a sound decision? What questions should I ask before making this decision?
7. If someone asked me to justify why I made this decision, can I explain my decision?

Sample Board Meeting Agenda

(Source: First appeared in The Trustee Handbook, Seventh Edition, by Mary DeKuyper, published by the National Association of Independent Schools. Reprinted with permission.)

Call to Order

(Welcome by the chair, who shares the objectives of the meeting in reviews the agenda)

Consent Agenda Items -- Items Previously Sent To The Board

(As previously described in this chapter, the consent agenda includes items that are approved by consent (without a vote, if there is no objection) or by formal vote. Single items can be taken off calendar in considered separately, it even only one member wishes to do so. Typical items in this calendar are:

- Minutes.
- Routine ratifications.
- Board approval required by the bylaws, such as the approval of banking relations.)

Treasurers Report -- Item Previously Sent To The Board

(This is an opportunity for the treasurer to answer questions on financial reports or bring items for action.)

Charter School Administrators Report -- Item Previously Sent To The Board

(Opportunity for trustees to ask questions on the written report and for the charter school administrator to share any confidential items she/he did not want to put in writing. The administrator can also use time to update board directors on broad educational issues and trends.)

Committee Reports -- Items Previously Sent To The Board

(Begin with committees that have action items that allow time for questions on other committees' reports. Remember, committees do not need to be on every agenda if they have not sent out a report or have action items.)

Issues Discussion/In-depth Board Education -- Items Previously Sent To The Board

(This is the part of the agenda or the board can break up into smaller groups and or have interactive education or training.)

Old (Unfinished) Business

(Items that have been postponed from or not finished from previous meetings are handled here)

New Business

(This is an opportunity for a board director to bring up items that have not been placed on the agenda. In the case of major issues, there likely would not be enough time for a thorough discussion of the item. The board could agree that such an issue would be scheduled for discussion at future board meeting or delegated to the appropriate committee for initial discussion with a report back to the board at a future meeting.)

Evaluation Of The Meeting

(This can be a quick, two-minute appraisal. Board directors answer to questions: "What went well?" and "What did not?" -- Also see board meeting evaluation form in the tools section of this chapter.)

Adjournment

Washington Core Knowledge School Decision-Making Matrix

February 20, 1997

Purpose

The purpose of the WCKS Decision-Making Matrix is to meticulously define the role of each member of the WCKS community. In this overview we are summarizing the themes contained within the matrix, but the final authority resides with the contents of the matrix and its interpretation by the Site-Based Management Team. Each decision area is specified with respect to the following categories:

Who Should Decide -- which person or group has the final say in a decision area.

Who Should Recommend -- which person or group will be responsible for recommending a solution.

Solicit Input From -- which person or group will be contacted in order to obtain an opinion or information prior to the decision being made. Inputs are always welcome from anybody, but some need to have their input solicited.

Who Will Be Informed -- which person or group will be informed of the decision once it is made. The decision-maker is responsible for informing the proper people.

Decision-Making Process -- which of the five possible decision-making processes will be followed.

Summary of the Roles of Various Persons and Groups

SBMC

The Site-Based Management Council is the primary policy-making body in WCKS. It is this group that sets the school's goals, improvement strategies, and calendar, and makes all major site policies. Any authority not mandated by statute or State or District policy either resides with the SBMC or is delegated by the SBMC. In cases of controversy, the SBMC may choose to retain decision-making authority from the groups to whom authority has been delegated. The SBMC consists of Parent Advisory Board (PAB) and the Teacher Advisory Board (TAB).

PAB

The PAB consists of seven parents elected by the parent community. Its primary function is being half of the SBMC, but it also has a special role in mentoring and evaluating the principal. Members of the PAB are to serve as advocates for the parents in disputes with staff members.

TAB

The TAB consists of six teachers plus the principal. Like the PAB, its primary function is as part of the SBMC. The TAB has a unique role in classroom scheduling and making Certified Job Descriptions.

Administration (Principal)

The principal is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school and has the final say in matters of personnel hiring and evaluations, in accordance with PSD policy. The principal works with the faculty on the utilization of textbooks and classroom materials.

Teachers

Teachers decide on their own use of textbooks and classroom supplies, elect the TAB, and are represented on various committees.

Faculty (all school staff)

The staff decides teaching strategies, their own classroom organization, and have input into all major policy decisions.

Parents

Parents elect the PAB, are represented on committees, and have input into all major policy decisions.

Committees

The various committees in the school are responsible for making the final recommendation on their relevant policies or personnel items.

Decision-Making Processes:

Problem -> Decide -> Share

Problem -> Input > Decide -> Share

Problem -> Recommendation -> Input -> Decide -> Share

Problem -> Input -> Recommendation -> Input -> Revisions -> Decide -> Share

Problem -> Recommendation -> Input -> Revisions -> Input -> Revisions -> Decide -> Share

Key to Abbreviations

A = Administration (Principal)

All = All Stakeholders

C = Committee (as listed)

CDE = Colorado Dept. of Education

CKF = Core Knowledge Foundation

F = Faculty (all school staff)

P = Parents

PAB = Parent Advisory Board

PSD = Poudre School District T = Teachers

SAAC = School Accountability Advisory Committee

SBMC = Site Based Management Council

SC = Student Council

S = Student body

TAB = Teacher Advisory Board

Area	Who Should Decide (e.g. who is accountable)	Who Should Recommend	Solicit input from	Who will be informed	Decision making process
<u>School Goals</u>					
1. Determine, Assess and Evaluate School Improvement Plan (School Goals: State mandated & our own)	SBMC	SAAC	All Committees	All	5
2. Strategies to achieve above goals	SBMC	SAAC	All Committees	All	3
3. Committee Structure (mission, vision, goals and reporting, responsibilities)	SBMC	Committees themselves	P, F, S	All	5
<u>Curriculum and Instruction</u>					
4. Determine Academic Standards (State, PSD, WCKS)	SBMC, PSD, CDE	C (Curriculum)	T, C(Assessment)	All	3
5. Textbook Selection	SBMC	C (Curriculum)	T, A, PSD, CKF	All	3
6. Use of selected texts	T,A	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
7. Instructional Materials and Supplies Selection	T,A	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
8. Computing Equipment, Strategy and Selection	SBMC	C (Technology)	PSD, CDE, F	All	5

9. Equipment and Supplies Selection and Storage (location, accessibility and use)	F	n/a	F	F	2
10. Teaching Strategies (i.e. classroom organization, scheduling, lesson planning, etc.)	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
11. Handling of missing assignments	F	n/a	n/a	P, S	1
12. Policy for Process of Student Placement and Transfer	SBMC	TAB	T, P	All	5
Personnel					
13. Teacher Job Description	A	T	F	F	3
14. Staffing Utilization (Certified and Classified)	SMBC	A	F, PAB	All	4
15. Teacher Hiring (includes confidential development recommendations to Administrator)	A	C (Hiring)	Appropriate references	All	3
16. Administration Hiring	PSD	C (Selection - per charter)	Appropriate references	All	See charter
17. Classified Hiring	PSD	C (Selection - per charter)	Appropriate references	All	3
18. Schedule for Specials (i.e. Art, Music, Library, P.E., etc.)	TAB	Specials teachers	F	F	4

19. Administration Job Description and Responsibilities	PSD	PAB	F, P	All	2
20. Administration Evaluation	PSD	PAB	F, P	A	2
21. Certified Job Description and Responsibilities	TAB	A	F, PSD	T	4
22. Certified Evaluation	A	n/a	F, P, S, PSD	Individual	2
23. Classified Job Description and Responsibilities	A	n/a	F, PSD	F	2
24. Classified Evaluation	A	n/a	F, P, S, PSD	Individual	2
Staff Development					
25. Initial and Ongoing Education of the School Philosophy	SBMC	TAB	PAB, F	F	4
26. Utilization of In-Service days (i.e. what is done on scheduled days)	TAB	A	F	All	3
27. WCKS Mentoring Program	TAB	A	F, PAB	F, PAB	3
28. Professional Conferences paid for by WCKS	A	n/a	F	F	2
29. Individual Corrective Action Plan (see #15)	A	n/a	mentor, SBMC as individuals (confidentially)	Individual	2
30. Professional Development Goals	T, A	n/a	T, CDE, PSD	Individual	2

and Plans					
31. Teacher Planning days guidelines	TAB	n/a	T, A	T	2
Communication					
32. Report Card Format and Grading Policy	SBMC	C (Assessment)	T, P, A	All	5
33. Behavioral Standards Policy (Door to Door Code of Conduct)	SBMC	C (Discipline & Decorum)	F, P, S	All	5
34. WCKS School Calendar (includes social events, meetings, etc.)	SBMC	A	All	All	4
35. Process for Scheduling Parent Conferences	TAB	n/a	PAB, F, PSD	All	2
36. School-wide requirements (i.e. Science Fair, ECO week)	SBMC	C(appropriate)	F, PAB	All	4
37. Study Hall Policy	SBMC	A	T, PAB	All	4
38. Weekly Communication. (i.e. Friday notes content, Brochures, Press Releases, Parent Education, Advertisements)	Rob will work on first pass				
39. Curriculum Maps	T	n/a	n/a	A, P, S	1
BUDGET					
40. Annual school-wide budget	SBMC	PAB & TAB	F, PAB	All	4

		Treasurers, A			
41. School-wide budget policy	SBMC	PAB & TAB Treasurers, A	F, PAB	All	5
42. Classroom budget policy (e.g. appropriate use of funds)	SBMC	TAB	F, A, PAB	A	5
43. Facilities planning & capital improvements	SBMC	C (Facilities)	F, PAB, PSD	All	5
44. Fund Raising policy	SBMC	C (Fund Raising)	PAB, SB, F	All	4
45. Grant writing policy (Steve Yeldell writes first pass)	SBMC	C (Grants)	SBMC	All	4
46. Parent contribution policy (i.e. money requests for field trips, class activities, etc.)	SBMC	PAB	F, P	All	4
47. Non-profit foundation (i.e. 501C3)	SBMC	C (Ad hoc)	F, P, PSD	All	4
Assessment and Evaluation					
48. Formal Assessment Plan (includes CO mandated tests, PSD tests and WCKS specific tests)	SBMC	C (Assessment)	T, A, PSD, CDE, C(Curriculum)	All	3
49. Informal Classroom Assessments (i.e. math facts challenges, 1-minute readings, etc.)	T	n/a	n/a	P, S	1

Record Keeping					
50. Inventory of Supplies and Equipment (by classroom)	A	n/a	n/a	F, PSD	1
51. Academic (e.g. cumulative folders, yearly grade books, etc.)	T	n/a	n/a	A, PSD	1
52. Behavioral (i.e. documentation of behavior code offenses, also #33)	A	n/a	n/a	P, S, F	1
53. Agendas for Staff Meetings	1. A	1. n/a	1. F	1. F	1.
School Culture					
54. Professional conferences for parents paid for by school (e.g. CK conference, etc.)	SBMC	A	PAB	Individual	3
55. Student Attendance Policy / Procedure (absences, tardiness, make up policies)	SBMC	A	P, PSD	All	5
56. Field Trip Policy (including funding, types and approval)	SBMC	TAB	F, PAB, PSD	All	4
57. Assembly Guidelines	TAB	A	F, SC, C (appropriate)	All	3
58. Classroom Location	TAB	n/a	C (Facilities), F	F	2
59. Policy for Rewards & Recognition for Students	SBMC	A	PAB, SC, TAB	All	4

60. Policy for Rewards & Recognition for Teachers	SBMC	A	PAB, SC, TAB	All	4
61. Partnership Behavioral Standards	SBMC	C (Discipline & Decorum)	F, P	All	3
62. Student Safety & Security Plan	SBMC	A	F, C (Ad Hoc-Safety), PSD	All	5
63. Lunchroom & Recess Scheduling	TAB	n/a	F	F	2

Policy Development Steps

Here is another policy development model adapted from the Washington State School Directors' Association's Passport to Leadership materials. This model is more elaborate than the one described at the beginning of this chapter and may better suit the needs and preferences of some charter schools in defining their policies.

Step One: Define the Issue or Problem

The process of policy development begins with recognizing the need for written policy. Often a board or charter school administrator faces a decision that would be easier to make if a policy existed. The board is not alone in identifying policy needs. Parents, students, teachers, local community leaders, the charter school administrator, the state or federal government, and education advocacy groups are all sources of policy issues and problems.

Step Two: Gather Necessary Information on the Issue

- Sample policy language and analysis from your state charter school association or state association of school boards
- Experience from other schools
- Education research
- Local input
- State association seminars
- State or federal laws and regulations

Step Three: Secure Recommendations from charter school administrator

Once facts are available, the board listens to recommendations for handling the policy issue. The charter school administrator is often charged with recommending policy action, since he/she is the one responsible for carrying out the policy.

Step Four: Discuss and Debate at the Board Level (include input of affected parties)

- Is the content within the scope of the board's authority?
- Is it consistent with local, state, and federal law? The U.S. and the state's constitution?
- Does it support the charter school's goals or objectives?
- Is it good educational (personnel, business) practice?
- Is it reasonable? (Are any requirements or prohibitions arbitrary, discriminatory or capricious?)
- Does it adequately cover the subject?
- Is it limited to one policy topic?
- Is it consistent with board's existing policies?
- Can it be administered? Is it practical? How much will it cost?

Step Five: Draft Policy

After the board has reached consensus on policy content, the board's policy writer goes to work. This person must be able to write clearly, directly, and succinctly. Pomposity, verbosity, educational jargon, and "legalese" should be avoided unless necessary to meet legal requirements. Policy must be broadly stated with room for adjustment to fit special circumstances.

Step Six: Hold First Reading

Once in writing, the policy draft is placed on the board's agenda for a first reading, giving notice to everyone in the charter school community who may be interested that the board has a specific policy under consideration. At this time the board has the opportunity for preliminary discussion of the proposed policy and, if it chooses, may hold a school community hearing. This is recommended for important or controversial draft policies.

Step Seven: Make Revisions

Revise the policy based on the information gained from the questions, comments and suggestions obtained after the first reading.

Step Eight: Hold Second Reading

The period between the first and second reading allows time for all concerned persons to ask questions, make comments, and offer suggestions for changes and improvements. In some instances, depending on the nature of the policy, a second school community hearing may also be held.

Step Nine: Adopt the Policy**Step Ten: Distribute to the Charter School Community**

Seeing the policies are distributed as widely as possible is one way to ensure implementation.

Step Eleven: Oversee Policy Implementation

Policy oversight is a dynamic process that includes an evaluative component. Oversight is intended to make sure that the policy accomplishes its goal. Policy oversight can provide guidance on whether to continue or modify the policy and to determine future courses of action.

Step Twelve: Policy Evaluation and Revision or Modification

Policies should be reviewed on a regular basis as a part of the board's standard operating procedures. They can become out of date, unclear, or even contrary to the way in which the charter school is operating. When any of this occurs the policy needs modification or elimination. The policy amendment process is the same as the policy adoption process. The board sets policy and the charter school administrator implements the policy and manages the school within the guidelines set forth in board policy. In the absence of policy, the charter school administrator must use his/her own judgment.

Board Communication Plan

(Source: Adapted from Robert C. Harris, CAE, Nonprofit Resource Center, Tallahassee, FL, USA, bob@hmgnet.com)

The Board of Directors depends on information to make the right decisions. Does your charter school have a plan for communicating with your board? Whether you have staff or volunteers preparing for the meetings, a dependable plan to provide critical information in a timely manner will benefit the board. Here is a board communications plan that works well for a charter school holding quarterly meetings. If you hold monthly meetings, then communications will be increased proportionately.

Four weeks before the board meeting:

- Agenda, date and time
- Location of meeting
- Background issues

Two weeks before the meeting at which it will be discussed:

- Proposed annual budget
- Auditors annual report
- Strategic or operating plan

At the meeting in a well-organized folder:

- Agenda
- Financial report
- Minutes
- Committee reports
- Background documents
- Announcements

Within four weeks after the meeting:

- Minutes
- Executive summary or action assignments

Monthly:

- Financial report

Board Meeting Feedback Form

Date: _____

Complete this form before leaving today.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Were the issues discussed substantive?	4	3	2	1
Were the materials provided helpful in understanding/resolving the issues?	4	3	2	1
Was the discussion future oriented?	4	3	2	1
How can our next meeting be more productive?				

Based on today's discussion, what should we discuss in the future?

What was the most valuable contribution the board made TODAY to the long-term welfare of the charter school and the children we serve?

Please write additional comments below:

Sample Board Operations Calendar

The following calendar can be reviewed by an organization to modify according to its needs. The following calendar should be updated yearly and provided to each board director and the charter school administrator.

- NOTE #1: There are certain one-time activities that the board should conduct during the startup of the organization. See this list Startup Activities List at the end of this document.
- NOTE #2: There are also certain activities that recur in each regular board meeting. Regular board meetings might be held once a month, every two months, once every three months, etc.
- NOTE #3: The timing for each of the following activities should be relative to the timing of the beginning of the fiscal year. In the following sample table, the fiscal year begins January 1.

	Regular Board Activity	Approximate Date (see NOTE #3 above)
1.	Fiscal year begins	January (fiscal-year timing is often specified in the Bylaws)
2.	Conduct Board Self-Evaluation (do once a year and in preparation for first board retreat)	March-April (do shortly before evaluating chief executive)
3.	Evaluate Chief Executive (by referencing his or her progress towards last year's goals and his or her job description)	April-May (do shortly after completion of last fiscal year)
4.	Review and update board policies and personnel policies	April-June (do concurrent to board and chief evaluations)
5.	Conduct first board retreat (address board self-evaluation results, team building, begin strategic planning, etc.)	April
6.	Begin recruiting new board directors	April-May (in time for June/July elections)
7.	Conduct strategic planning to produce organizational goals and resources need to reach goals	May-June-July (start planning in time for setting mission, vision, values, issues, goals, strategies, resource needs, funding needs (<i>nonprofit-specific</i>), and time for getting funds before beginning of next fiscal year)
8.	Elect new board directors	June-July (per By-Laws)
9.	Establish chief executive's goals for next year (as produced from strategic planning, charter contract, administrator annual review process)	August (as organizational goals are realized from planning)
10.	Hold annual meeting	July (per By-Laws)

11.	Draft next year's budget (based on resources needed to reach new strategic goals)	July-August-September
12.	Develop fund-raising plan (with primary goals to get funds needed to meet the budget beyond anticipated state and federal school funding)	July-August-September
13.	Conduct second board retreat (address board orientation/training, re-organize or form new committees based on goals from strategic plan, develop work plans, update board operations calendar, review planning status, etc.)	August (in time to orient new board directors soon after they join the board)
14.	Conduct fund-raising plan (primarily to meet fund-raising goals)	August-December

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United Way of Minneapolis Area
 The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits
 2233 University Avenue West, Suite 360
 St. Paul, Minnesota 55114
 (612) 647-1216
 and Carter McNamara, PhD

Chapter 5: The Board Role In Strategic Thinking And Planning

Critical Board Building Challenge: How can the charter school board organize itself in order to function as an effective, future-focused leadership team?

Why Charter School Boards Need To Think And Plan Strategically

Charter school board directors need to think and plan strategically because they are leading in one of the most innovative efforts in American education today. They're not just leaders of innovative public schools; they have an opportunity to be leaders in education reform and change in America at the beginning of the new century.

This leadership imperative reinforces a number of things that have been said in the governance guidebook so far -- the need to focus on critical issues and policy challenges vs. administrative details and programmatic implementation.

In this chapter, we will focus on two areas: the role of the board in strategic planning and need to think strategically outside of the formal strategic planning process.

Role Of The Board In Strategic Planning

The board has a critical role to play in strategic planning. The purpose of strategic planning is to develop a three to five year blueprint for the charter school's future. Because the board of directors assumes a large share of the responsibility for the success of the charter school, it must provide the critical link between the school and the outside environment in which the charter school functions. It must also ensure that the charter school reaches the community it intends to serve, and effectively serves the needs of its students. To fulfill this function, the board should help the charter school administrator to establish a strategic planning process, should participate in the process, and should approve the final strategic plan.

- **Formulating the mission statement.** The board must work with the charter school administrator to formulate, and periodically update, the charter school's mission and decide whether particular programs and services fall within its expressed mission. The mission statement should define why the charter school exists. It should clearly articulate the charter school's main purpose and values, and identify the beneficiaries of its educational programs and services.

A good mission statement articulates the overall goal of the charter school to everyone inside and outside the organization. It is used to guide strategic, long-term planning and helps to keep the school focused during both smooth and turbulent times. The absence of a mission statement, or having one that is unclear, may cause confusion inside the charter school as it faces various challenges, or it may result in inappropriate decisions. For a mission statement to be useful, it should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it reflects the current environment in which the charter school operates and the changing needs of the children and families it serves. This is

particularly important for charter schools because of the uncertain political and economic environments in which they operate.

- **Developing the strategic plan.** The strategic plan charts the direction that the charter school will take over a period of three to five years to achieve its goals and objectives and fulfill its mission. In developing a strategic plan, the board and the staff of the charter school will need to analyze the internal and external environment, identify opportunities or limitations to fulfilling its mission, and consider its internal strengths and weaknesses. This information is critical to developing strategic goals and establishing strategies and programs designed to fulfill the charter school's mission in a period of rapid change.

The board and charter school administrator should work together in developing the strategic planning process and provide guidance and input to the plan. The board can be particularly effective in providing and analyzing information about the external environment, current trends in social policy, or new financial opportunities. Because strategic planning takes time and effort, several sessions will need to be scheduled to complete all the strategic planning steps, including gathering information, discussing current and proposed educational and support programs, projecting the financial resources that would be needed to implement the educational program, prioritizing programs, and finalizing the plan. The board must formally approve the final plan, be committed to it, and support its implementation. For further discussion on developing a mission statement and program strategy, please refer to description of the strategic planning model in the tool section of this chapter.

The following chart provides a picture of some of the complementary roles and responsibilities of board and staff who must work as team in the planning process:

Strategic Planning	
Board Responsibilities	Administrator Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form strategic planning committee. Define process and develop a schedule for completing the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in strategic planning process; devise effective ways to involve other staff and key volunteers in strategic planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the charter school's mission statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the board define the mission statement by soliciting input from other staff and communicating their ideas to the board.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information from the external environment that will help in considering strategic options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and analyze program and service data, and present results to the board.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make strategic decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend strategic options.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve operational plan and budget that reflects strategic decisions. Periodically review operational plan and budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the operational plan and budget for board consideration. Implement the operational plan.

Steps of the Strategic Planning Process

A strategic plan includes five levels:

- Mission
- Vision
- Goals
- Strategies
- Objectives (Annual plans of action).

The main steps of the strategic planning process can be summarized in the following way:

1. ***Gathering and Analyzing Information*** – Strengths and weaknesses of the charter school; needs and service expectations of parents and students and other constituent groups; external changes and trends that will have an impact on the charter school in the future.
2. Determining the most ***critical strategic issues, choices, and challenges facing the charter school*** over the next 3-5 years.
3. Developing a ***shared vision for the charter school's future*** - "If we could have the charter school of our dreams and have the impact we most desire, what would we want it to look like in the Year 2004?" The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for organizational goal setting.
4. Affirming the ***mission or fundamental purpose of the charter school*** - "Why do we exist?" "What are our core values and educational philosophy?"
5. Developing ***goals*** - the major results we want to achieve over the next 3-5 years. Goals focus on outcomes or results and are qualitative in nature.
6. Developing ***strategies*** – the methods and approaches we will use to achieve goals and resolve critical issues.
7. Formulating ***objectives*** - the description of projects and activities carried out on an annual basis to implement selected strategies -- thereby achieving the goals. Objectives are specific, concrete, measurable statements of what will be done generally within a one-year time frame.

In the Tools Section of this chapter, there is a more detailed description of the strategic planning process as well as a set of sample information gathering worksheets and other planning guides corresponding to various steps of the planning process..

Effective Strategic Planning Practice

The strategic planning process is most effective when the following elements are present:

- **Establishment of a strategic planning committee.** If the charter school board is serious about strategic planning (and it needs to be!), it will establish a strategic planning committee. The Tools Section of this Chapter includes a sample description for a board strategic planning committee job description.
- **Thorough and shared understanding of strategic planning.** The term “strategic planning” is sometimes used to describe a range of planning activities. It is important that the process is looked upon in the same way by board, staff and other participants in the charter school strategic planning process.
- **Agreement on outcomes.** While it is true that the expected outcome of most strategic planning processes is a strategic plan document, it is also important to discuss and eventually agree upon other expected outcomes. For example there may be a specific critical issue that the board wants to focus on by means of strategic planning. Typically, planning outcomes will include some or all of the following:
 1. Board leadership and management staff will have a thorough understanding of the critical issues and choices facing ABC, Inc. through the year 2003.
 2. A strategic plan document including a mission statement, strategic vision statement, goals and strategies will be produced. The plan will give special attention to organizational structure that will best support the overall strategic plan. The document will also include a blueprint for strategic alliance building in support of the overall strategic plan.
 3. An evaluation framework consisting of critical success factors for each goal statement and performance measures for strategies selected for first year operational planning will be developed.
 4. The organization's mission and strategic vision will have a day-to-day relevance on management and governance.
 5. There will be enthusiasm and support for the strategic plan at all levels of the organization.
- **Real commitment to the process on the part of leadership.** While there is no one right way to do strategic planning, whatever approach the board chooses will involve time, energy and careful thinking. People will not commit these resources if they are not convinced that the planning process is worth the effort. Sometimes the start of strategic planning process will need to be postponed until leadership within the board, staff and parent body had become convinced of the importance of the process.
- **Involvement of many.** In order to be effective, strategic planning must involve individuals representing all constituencies of the charter school: parents, staff, administration, students, funders and donors, and other key community supporters.
- **Translating the strategic plan into concrete detailed plans of action.** Involvement in strategic planning exercises or a one shot retreat is not sufficient. Strategic planning needs to lead to specific objectives set on an annual basis by staff, the board of directors and the boards committees this helps to ensure that the majority of the board’s time and

energy is in alignment with the mission, vision, and goals and strategies contained in the strategic plan.

- **Relating strategic planning to school accountability planning.** The strategic planning process in a charter school dovetails with what is known as the "accountability planning process." In this process, the school addresses the following questions: What do we want our students to know and be able to do at different levels (what are the "academic standards")? How will we measure student achievement with reference to the standards? How will we align curriculum and instructional practices to meet those standards? What will we do with the information we get? Here are some resources for charter school board leaders wishing to explore this topic and relate it to the overall strategic planning process:
 - Accountability: The Key to Charter School Renewal by Bruno Manno. Go to: www.edreform.com.
 - A Comprehensive, Practical Guide to Holding Charter Schools Accountable. Go to: www.cacharterschools.org.
 - Resources: Accountability, Standards, Assessment, and Using Data. Go to: http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/account.htm

Keeping Your Strategic Plan Visible

Once the strategic plan has been developed, charter school leaders need to take steps ensure that the plan becomes a guiding force for the school – a living strategic plan. Here are some techniques for publicizing your strategic plan and maintaining enthusiastic support for it among key internal and external constituents of the charter school.²⁵

1. Develop a recognizable theme that signifies the plan's essential thrust. This may be graphically represented by a logo or some other visually attractive means. One charter school adopted the theme “No Excuses!”
2. Publicize brief summaries of the plan and how your charter school will use it.
3. Look for opportunities to refer to the strategic plan in meetings, newsletters or news releases.
4. Create a slide or video show summarizing the plan and its proposed implementation.
5. Seek major media coverage when important milestones in the plan are reached. A press conference with graphics and charts summarizing the plan can be effective.
6. Use the strategic plan as a living document at charter school board meetings. Keep it visible and refer to it regularly.

²⁵ Adapted from “Keeping Your Strategic Plan Visible” in Strategic Management, published by United Way of America, date unknown.

7. Use retreats and mini-conferences to continue to build buy-in among other agencies and community groups. Make sure that this is an interactive process, one that **listens** as well as talks.
8. Create a speaker's bureau to take the strategic plan to specific target groups: the county board, the city council, parent groups, the chamber of commerce, community and business leaders, and nonprofit agencies, for example.
9. Create poster-size versions of your mission and strategic vision statement and display them throughout the school – in classrooms and meeting rooms, at the front door, etc.

Strategic Thinking – Not Just During The Strategic Planning Process

In addition to the board's commitment to engage in the formal strategic planning process on a periodic basis, it is vital that the leadership of the board think strategically on an ongoing basis. The next section of this chapter is devoted to describing how to make this happen.

Thinking and Acting Strategically: Encouraging Visionary Board Leadership

The rapid pace of change in America, in local communities and in education requires that charter school boards look and act differently from traditional boards. Some forward thinking charter school boards are already adopting a new approach. They provide a new profile of charter school boards, from which we can all learn useful lessons

The New Profile of Charter School Board Leadership

The new charter school board leaders have the following eight qualities:

1. **They are visionary and future focused**, spending most of their decision-making time looking forward.
2. **They possess an entrepreneurial spirit**, understanding that their organizations operate in a fast changing marketplace seeking products and services to meet emerging customer needs.
3. The new board leaders are **risk takers**, balancing the need to take chances with the traditional stewardship responsibilities of board service.
4. They **are good communicators**, understanding the importance of effective communication at all levels and they organize the board and its committees accordingly.
5. They are **systems thinkers** seeking to understand the root causes and forces that shape the issues and challenges they will face in the boardroom. They look for courses of action that will exert the highest possible leverage as they respond to those issues.
6. In the new board, leaders also look for creative ways to connect their organizations to the world around them, exploring and **imagining new forms of partnership and alliances** that will support their mission and advance in their strategic plan.

7. The new board's leaders also have a **deep appreciation of the strength of diversity**, understanding that diversity helps to assure a higher level of responsiveness to customers and also promotes creativity, innovation and organizational learning.
8. They are committed to **building a learning organization**, realizing that board effectiveness and overall charter school effectiveness will be greatly enhanced if there are systems, practices and structures in place that make it easier rather than harder to learn on an individual and organizational basis.

The above characteristics position charter school board leaders to exert a visionary leadership style. Barriers, however, may get in the way. Examining these barriers is an important step in revitalizing a board or building a powerful board from scratch. Let's look at some of these barriers now.

Barriers to Visionary Board Leadership

There are a number of factors that prevent boards from exercising the kind of visionary leadership described above. Taken together, these factors provide a checklist for assessing your board and identifying areas to target for improvement. Examining these barriers to visionary board leadership can be the first step in revitalizing an existing board or building a powerful charter school board from scratch. Let's look at some of them now:

- **Shortage of time.** In order to play a visionary leadership role, board directors need the time to attend meetings, read materials and maintain contact with each other in between meetings. This puts pressure on the board to do everything it can to organize for maximum effectiveness and avoid wasting time on trivial matters.
- **Avoidance of risk-taking.** In order to be innovative and creative in its decision-making, charter school boards must be willing to take chances, to try new approaches, to take risks. In fact innovation and risk-taking are fundamental premises of the charter school movement. Risk-taking, however, flies in the face of the traditional wisdom about board director stewardship responsibilities. Success in new educational and other programmatic ventures is never guaranteed. Boards need to acknowledge this tension point and discuss it with the charter authorizing body, parents, funders, donors and other key supporters. Board leaders must strike a balance between taking chances and maintaining their traditional stewardship role.
- **Lack of board involvement in strategic planning.** More than any other activity, strategic planning offers boards an opportunity to think about changes and trends that will have significant impact on the charter school and devise strategies to effectively respond to challenges. This opportunity to reflect together on the big questions facing the charter school provides new vision and a sense of future direction as well as the energy to move forward. Some boards are not involved in strategic planning at all. Some are involved but only superficially. When this happens, the board loses an important opportunity to hone and exercise its visionary leadership skills.
- **Lack of knowledge in an increasingly complex world.** The world is much more complex today for most organizations, especially charter schools. Busy board directors

frequently lack a deep understanding of critical changes, trends and developments that challenge fundamental assumptions about how it defines its work and what success looks like. We see this shift most dramatically in the areas of health, education and welfare. Often, this lack of knowledge results in a lack of confidence on the part of the board to act decisively and authoritatively.

- **Micro-management.** Recently the city council of a major American city spent almost an entire meeting deciding what color to paint the new stadium seats. Practically all of us have hair-raising stories about boards that spent untold hours discussing trivial subjects while neglecting major agenda items deserving their more careful deliberation. It is critical that the board focuses its attention on items of critical importance to the charter school. In order to do this, the board must avoid the temptation to micro-manage or meddle in lesser matters or in areas that are more appropriately handled by the charter school staff. As we pointed out in Chapter 1, the average board, meeting monthly for two hours, has approximately 24 hours of meeting time per year to make all of the major decisions as well as address new critical issues that emerge from time to time. It is simply impossible to do an effective job with in those 24 hours of meeting time, even if only a few hours are wasted on trivia. In addition, a habit of board micro-management can adversely affect the morale of staff and the board's own committees as well.
- **Holding on to the old ways.** In their book, *The Accelerating Organization*, authors Maira and Scott-Morgan state that one principle of survival scientists have observed in natural systems is the continuous shedding of operating rules that cease to be relevant because of changing environmental conditions. Organizations, they surmise, "can hold only a small number of rules and operations at anytime so they must have the ability to shed old rules to make room for the new. Shedding becomes more complicated in systems involving human beings, because their sense of self worth is often attached to many old rules."²⁶ This all-too-human tendency to hold on to what we know can prevent boards from considering and pursuing new opportunities that conflict with some of the old rules that persist, even in a charter school.
- **Lack of clarity regarding board-staff roles and relationships.** Sometimes boards assume that it's the job of the charter school administrator to do the visionary thinking. While boards rightly expect the administrator to be visionary and decisive, this doesn't mean that the board sits and waits for direction and inspiration. This lack of clarity can result in boards that don't exercise visionary leadership because they don't think it's their job.
- **Educators didn't have to be visionary in a less-competitive past.** Time was when consumers – for us, students and families - would just walk in the school door on their own -- or so it seemed. Viewing things in this way, traditional public school boards didn't consider marketplace pressures, or for that matter the existence of a competitive marketplace. Today, especially in education, all that has changed. And certainly, charter schools, which have to work hard to recruit and retain students and families, are well aware of these competitive pressures. Adopting the approaches of traditional school

²⁶Maira, Arun and Scott-Morgan, Peter, *The Accelerating Organization*, McGraw-Hill, 1997.

boards won't work for charter schools.

Some of these barriers will be familiar. All can be overcome. Let's look at five strategies that can help your board adopt a visionary leadership style.

Strategies To Foster Visionary Board Leadership

Strategy 1-- Focus on the Ultimate Ends of the Organization

Once again, taking our inspiration from John Carver, author of Boards That Make a Difference, the board and must concentrate on the charter school's ultimate ends rather than the day-to-day means.²⁷ Board directors should focus on the mission, vision, goals and strategies contained in the strategic plan. They should leave daily management to the staff and charter school administrator. This theme is addressed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7 of the Governance Guidebook.

Strategy 2 -- Create a Long-range Plan for the Development of Future Board Leadership

In contrast to the typical short-term recruitment process that focuses narrowly on filling anticipated charter school board vacancies for the current year only, boards need a long-range plan for developing future leadership. (Refer to Chapter 2 for more detail)

Such a long-term plan centers on the following questions: Who will be serving on and leading the board over the next three years? What is our plan to scout board leadership talent for the future? How will we go about fostering and developing future board leadership? Key elements of this approach include:

- Replace the nominations committee with a board development committee. This committee will use the key questions listed above to devise an ongoing process that includes prospecting, recruiting, selecting, orienting and training, and performance assessment of board directors.
- Link board development to your strategic plan. Identify the new skills, knowledge, personal contacts, and other attributes future board directors will need to possess in order for the board to do its part in advancing the strategic plan. Based on this analysis, develop targeted board recruiting priorities.
- Develop a written board director job description that reflects the future needs and expectations of the board.
- Direct the executive committee to design board meeting agendas that focus attention on the ultimate ends and avoid micro-management.
- Conduct an annual evaluation of the board that focuses in part on how well the board is maintaining a focus on the "ultimate ends" questions.
- Develop a just-in-time board orientation program to speed up the learning curve for new

²⁷ Carver, John, Boards That Make a Difference, Jossey-Bass, 1997.

board directors so that they can hit the ground running in their first meeting. Again, it is important to link this advance program of orientation and training to the strategic plan. (Refer to Chapter 3 of the guidebook.)

Strategy 3 -- Develop a Shared Vision of the Organization's Future

The key question for boards is the following: "If we could create the charter school of our dreams that will have the impact we most desire, what would that look like?" The board's answer to this question captures the organization's vision. As mentioned earlier, it is critical that the board be involved in the development of a shared vision, the centerpiece of the strategic plan. Once the board has developed a vision statement, look for ways to live the vision in your organization. For example:

- Use the vision as a framework for board decision-making in every meeting -- not just during the annual planning retreat.
- Share your vision with the wider community. Once you go public, it's hard not to live up to the vision.
- Ask board directors what they think is most exciting and inspiring to them about the wording of the organization's vision statement.
- Use the vision as the basis for regular dialogue on emerging issues and challenges.
- Seek major media coverage when strategic plan milestones are reached and use this as an opportunity to promote your vision both inside and outside of the charter school.

Strategy 4 -- Keep up with the Rapid Pace of Change

Another strategy for nurturing visionary leadership is to help the board keep up with the rapid pace of change. Provide information that helps the board think about these key questions: What external changes and trends will have the greatest impact over the next three to five years on the charter school and the children and families it serves? How can the charter school effectively respond to these changes and trends? How are other schools and youth serving organizations responding to these changes and trends?

Let's remember, however, that busy people will have difficulty finding time to read a lot of material so if you intend to share information with the board, especially in printed form, make sure that it is timely, relevant and well-summarized. Here are some suggestions for helping board directors stay current:

- Schedule time during the regular board meetings for discussion about the impact of key external changes and trends and emerging critical issues.
- Encourage individual board directors to read, listen and look for information about emerging trends and bring this information to the attention of the board.
- Periodically send board directors short readable articles and information about Web sites summarizing relevant future trends.
- Involve the board in ongoing strategic planning as a way to expose them to external trend data.

Strategy 5 -- Stay in Touch with the Changing Needs of Your “Customers”

The fifth strategy for transforming the leadership style of the board is to provide members with information to enable them to stay in touch with the changing needs of children and families served by the charter school – now and in the future.

Key questions include: What do our constituents, primarily children and their families enrolled in the charter school, think of the organization (i.e., What is their perception or image of the charter school?) What are the most important future needs and service expectations of the charter school on the part of our constituents? For new needs and service expectations of the charter school likely to emerge among constituents, what other organizations are positioned to meet these constituent needs? Consider the following activities:

- Create opportunities for board directors to “meet the customer.” For example, the charter school board can schedule an ongoing series of school community forums to provide board directors with face-to-face opportunities to listen to students and parents talk about their emerging needs. This will be particularly important for board directors from the larger community who don’t have children enrolled in the school.
- Tap staff experience and knowledge of students and families to deepen the board's understanding of emerging constituent needs.
- Establish a “marketing and planning information system” to supply the board with data to support its planning and decision-making roles.

Summary

The practices described here all reinforce each other. Here’s how to use them to transform your charter school board:

1. **Characteristics.** Review the seven attributes of visionary leaders. Use these factors as a checklist to assess your board. Identify areas that need improvement. Consider the [Visionary Board Leadership Assessment](#) in the Tools Section of Chapter 12 on Board Assessment.
2. **Barriers.** Scrutinize the seven barriers to visionary board leadership. Some will be familiar. All can be overcome. Begin work now to remove these barriers.
3. **Strategies.** Remember, an effective, visionary board is built on five key strategies that lay the groundwork for board and overall charter school effectiveness in this time of rapid, profound change.

Chapter 5: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Description of Strategic Planning Model (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Strategic Planning Committee Description (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Strategic Planning Information Gathering Worksheets (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Critical Issue Worksheet (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Worksheet: Foremost Critical Issues Facing the Charter School (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Sample Strategic Planning Timetable (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Sample Strategic Planning Timetable (Source: Independent School Association of the Central States)

Essential Resources for Strategic Planning

- Allison, Michael, and Kaye, Jude, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997. (includes floppy disk)
- Barry, Bryan W., *Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations, Revised*, Saint Paul, Minnesota: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1997.
- Bryson, John M., and Alston, Farnum K., *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Planning*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.
- Bryson, John M., *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations, Revised*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.
- Hundley DeKuyper, Mary, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998. (Especially Chapter 4 - "Developing a Shared Vision and Planning Strategically")
- McNamara, Carter, PhD, *Facilitator's Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: The Management Assistance Program, 1997.
- O'Connor, Judith, The Planning Committee: Shaping Your Future, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

Steps Of The Strategic Planning Process

Step 1: Information Gathering And Analysis

***1a -External
Assessment***

***1b - Market
Assessment***

***1c - Internal
Assessment***

Step 2: Identification Of Critical Issues Facing The Charter school

Step 3: Development Of A Strategic Vision Statement That Sets Future Direction For The Charter school

Step 4: Mission Statement Review/Revision

Step 5: Development Of Strategic Goals

Step 6: Development Of Strategies For Each Goal

Step 7: (Formulating Objectives (Annual Operational Planning Based On The Strategic Plan)

STEP 1A EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Purpose of step: To identify and assess changes and trends in the world around the charter school likely to have a significant impact on it over the next 5-10 years. We look at political, economic, technological, social, lifestyle, demographic, competitive, school finance, and broader philanthropic trends. We then determine which changes are opportunities for us (for example, opportunities to grow) and which could be threats to us in some way (trends that can keep us from being successful). Finally we identify implications for selected changes and trends -- ways the charter school might respond to the opportunities and threats we identify. At this early stage of the planning process, saying that something is an implication does not require the charter school to adopt that course of action. (The external assessment is sometimes referred to as “environmental scanning.”)

Example of External Assessment Findings:

Trend	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased interest in supporting school reform and change efforts by foundations serving needs of low-income children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tap this new source of funding for the charter school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased poverty impedes educational achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide family support programs to address needs of low income families
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Proliferation of web-based learning resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase internet access for staff, students and parents.

STEP 1B MARKET ASSESSMENT

Purpose of step: To identify and assess changes in the needs and perceptions of the charter school's markets and constituencies. For the charter school, these include students and their families, donors, volunteers, paid staff, board directors, collaborators, and competitors.

The market assessment attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Who are the charter school's key markets and constituents (students and their families and others)?
2. What are the needs, perceptions, and service expectations of each market?
3. What are the emerging market trends?
4. What are the implications for the charter school -- how should the charter school respond to these changes and trends in its markets?

(Note: Market or stakeholder assessment differs from external assessment. External assessment focuses on broader changes and trends in the charter school's external environment; market assessment focuses on the emerging needs of the charter school key constituencies, chiefly

children and families.)

Examples of Market Assessment Findings:

- 62% of parents of children enrolled in the charter school desire before and after school care for their children.
- Two-thirds of school volunteers say they would be willing to get involved in fund-raising for the charter school but would require training.

STEP 1C INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Purpose of step: To assess internal structure, process and operations of the charter school and based on this assessment, to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. Areas examined include charter school personnel (paid and volunteer), fund-raising, physical facilities, equipment, use of technology, location, financial condition, management, board governance, educational programs/products and services, markets, market position, etc.

Examples of Internal Strengths:

- Dedication of teaching staff.
- Success for All Roots and Wings reading program is enthusiastically supported by staff and parents and appears to be achieving desired outcomes.

Examples of Internal Weaknesses:

- Lack of instructional technology.
- Low level of parent involvement.
- Lack of diversity of teaching staff.

STEP 2 CRITICAL STRATEGIC ISSUES AND CHOICES FACING THE CHARTER SCHOOL

Purpose of step: To identify critical strategic issues facing the charter school. Critical issues are fundamental policy or program concerns that define the most important situations and choices an charter school faces now and in the future. Critical issues can reflect long-standing problems in the charter school, the community served or recent events that are anticipated to have a significant impact on the charter school and/or community served. Critical issues can also reflect major shifts in thinking that challenge "business as usual." The selection of issues is important because it determines range of decisions the charter school's leaders will consider in the future.

In some instances, the charter school is already aware of the critical issues that the strategic planning process must help it address. In most situations, the planning process participants

discern critical strategic issues as they work on the external, market and internal assessments.

In developing the actual wording of the critical issue statements, it's helpful to reflect on the following:

The external changes and trends having the greatest positive and/or negative impact on the charter school . . . Major changes and trends in the needs, perceptions and service expectations of our markets and constituencies . . . Internal strengths and weaknesses of the charter school that will seem to have an impact on our future success . . .

Examples of Critical Issues:

- How can we address barriers to learning that face the predominantly low-income student body of the charter school?
- How can we expand and diversify our revenue base in order to support anticipated growth of the charter school over the next 3 years?
- How can we attract and retain a skilled, dedicated and diverse teaching staff?
- How can we continue to attract and retain students as the traditional district public schools begin to adopt innovative practices of charter schools in the region?

STEP 3 STRATEGIC VISION

Purpose of step: To develop a strategic vision statement. The vision statement describes what we want the charter school to look like in ideal terms in the future - the results we will be achieving and characteristics the charter school will need to possess in order to achieve those results. The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for charter school goal setting.

Through the vision statement, the charter school attempts to respond to the challenges and issues expressed in the form of critical issues.

(PLEASE NOTE: Although the words "mission" and "vision" are used interchangeably, they are distinct in an important way: Mission describes "general purpose"; Vision describes "future direction."

Examples of Vision Statement:

George Washington Carver Elementary School

Our vision for George Washington Carver Elementary School is one where children are educated through a collaborative effort among parents, faculty, staff, students, and the community. Our school environment encourages children to take risks and become creative producers without fear of failure. Through cooperation and a unity of spirit, challenges become opportunities where achievements are recognized and celebrated. The potential of all children to become self-directed lifelong learners permeates the expectations of the Carver family.

Coeur d'Alene High School

Coeur d'Alene High School will forge a new and powerful model of education, ensuring a bright future for its students. Coeur d'Alene High School will be a place where students are motivated to learn with the help of quality instruction and leading-edge technology. Students will graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to compete and excel in an increasingly technology-based world. Families, communities and educators will come together to prepare knowledgeable citizens for the world of tomorrow. Society will be enriched as everyone contributes to his or her own well-being and that of others. Coeur d'Alene High School commits itself to this vision for its future and the future of its students

STEP 4 MISSION

Purpose of step: To develop a charter school mission statement. The mission statement is a broad description of what we do, with/for whom we do it, our distinctive competence, and WHY we do it (our ultimate end).

If a mission statement already exists, the focus of this step is on reviewing it in light of the emerging vision statement and if necessary revising the language. Here are some questions that can aid in the review of an already-existing mission statement:

Questions for a Critical Review of an Existing Mission

1. Is the mission statement clear and on target in today's operating environment?
2. Do you have any specific questions or concerns with respect to the mission statement?
3. Does the mission statement duplicate the mission of any other school? If so, what should we do about it?
4. Considering the answers to these questions, how, if at all, should the mission statement be changed?

Example of Mission Statement:

Mission of EduPreneurship Student Center, Scottsdale, AZ

EdPreneurship is dedicated to providing children with an education that will enable them to be successful in today's complex society. Creating a learning environment that is relevant, active, and product-oriented to ensure our children stay turned on and tuned in is essential to the education process. We believe in practicing the precepts of a Democratic society by students holding themselves accountable for their own actions, thus preparing them to be good citizens.

For more information including other mission statement samples, go to: US Charter Schools Website at http://www.uscharterschools.org/tech_assist/ta_mission.htm.

STEP 5 GOALS

Purpose of step: To develop strategic goal statements consistent with the vision statement. Strategic goals are broad statements of what the charter school hopes to achieve in the next 3 years. Goals focus on outcomes or results and are qualitative in nature. Often goal statements flow from some of the critical issue statements developed earlier in the planning process.

Examples of Goals:

- Forge partnerships with family and youth serving agencies to overcome barriers to learning that face our predominantly low-income student body.
- Expand and diversify the charter school revenue base in order to support anticipated growth.
- Enhance the educational program in order to retain our student body.
- Attract and retain a skilled, dedicated and diverse teaching staff.

STEP 6 STRATEGIES

Purpose of step: To develop strategies for each goal. Strategies are statements of major approach or method for attaining goals and resolving specific issues. Ideas for strategy emerge from the earlier internal, external and market assessments, -- especially the strengths and weaknesses identified in the internal assessment as well as the implications statements developed as part of the market and external assessments. A strategy is judged potentially effective if it does one or more of the following:

1. Exploits environmental opportunities
2. Defends against environmental threats
3. Leverages organizational competencies
4. Corrects organizational shortcomings
5. Offers some basis for future competitive advantage
6. Counteracts forces eroding current competitive position

Examples Of Strategies For Sample Goal:

- Sample Goal 1: Expand and diversify the charter school revenue base in order to support anticipated growth.
 - Strategy 1.1: Generate revenue from special events.
 - Strategy 1.2: Increase funding from public sources.
 - Strategy 1.2: Expand individual giving from major donors.

STEP 7 ANNUAL OBJECTIVES

Purpose of step: To formulate annual objectives consistent with the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. Objectives are specific, concrete, measurable statements of what will be done to achieve a goal generally within a one-year time frame. Objectives include answers to the following questions: Who, will accomplish what, by when. Put another way, objectives should be "SMART" --**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**mbitious but **A**ttainable, **R**elevant (contributing to the school's vision), and **T**ime-based (we'll do X over the next Y years).

Strictly speaking annual objectives are not part of the Strategic Plan of an organization. Objectives are the core of the charter school's Annual Operational Plan that is based on the strategic plan itself. The planning process will also address the costs associated with implementing objectives. This information will be utilized in the development of budgets.

Examples of Objectives For Sample Strategy:

- Sample Goal 1: Expand and diversify the charter school revenue base in order to support anticipated growth.
 - Sample Strategy 1.1: Generate revenue from special events.
 - Sample Objective 1.1.1: The Board will establish a Fund Development Committee consisting of at least 8 board and non-board directors and provide training in special events fund raising by July 1, 2000.
 - Sample Objective 1.1.2: The Fund Development Committee will generate at least \$45,000 from no more than 3 special events by April 1, 2001.

Planning Terminology

MISSION----->
"Forever"

STRATEGIC VISION----->
5 years out

GOALS----->
3-5 years

STRATEGIES----->
1-5 years

OBJECTIVES----->
1 year

MISSION: *Broad description of what we do, with/for whom we do it, our distinctive competence, and WHY we do it.*

STRATEGIC VISION: *Describes what we want the charter school to look like in ideal terms in the future - the results we will be achieving and characteristics the charter school will need to possess in order to achieve those results. The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for organizational goal setting.*

GOALS: *Broad statements of what the charter school hopes to achieve in the next 3-5 years. Goals focus on outcomes or results and are qualitative in nature.*

STRATEGIES: *Statements of major approach or method (the means) for attaining broad goals and resolving specific issues.*

OBJECTIVES: *Specific, concrete, measurable statements of what will be done to achieve a goal generally within a one-year time frame.*

Strategic Planning Committee

General Purpose

The Strategic Planning Committee is commissioned by, and responsible to, the Board of Directors to assume the responsibility for providing leadership to the board in the area of strategic planning and in general helping the board to assure that the strategic plan of the charter school remains current and that satisfactory progress in being made to successfully implement the strategic plan.

Appointments and Composition

1. Appointments of the Chair and members of the Strategic Planning Committee shall be made annually by the President of the Board with the advice and consent of the Board in accordance with the By-laws.
2. The Chair of this Committee shall be a member of the Board of Directors.
3. Members of this committee shall be members of the Board of Directors, subject to the conditions stated in the by-laws. Additional committee members may be appointed and need not be members of the Board of Directors, subject to the conditions stated in the by-laws.

Responsibilities

1. Develops a timeline for the strategic planning process in collaboration with the Charter School Administrator.
2. Oversees the strategic planning process in collaboration with the Charter School Administrator.
3. Provides a written final strategic plan to the board for approval.
4. Develops and submits to the board procedures for connecting the strategic plan to the annual workplans of board committees.
5. Keeps the board informed of organizational and environmental changes and trends that will have an impact on the charter school and the families and community served.
6. Annually submit objectives as part of the planning and budgeting process.
7. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the Board of Directors.
8. Report to the Board of Directors on a regular basis in a manner determined by the Board.

MEMORANDUM

DATE:

TO: Board and Staff Members

FROM: ABC Charter School Planning Committee

RE: Preparation for Strategic Planning Sessions

As you may know, ABC Charter School has decided to engage in a strategic planning process to chart the future course of the organization. Because we want the process to be as inclusive as possible, as a first step we need the benefit of your thinking on a few important questions. **Complete the enclosed worksheets and mail or fax them to the office no later than [date] – Mailing address: FAX # xxx-xxxx.**

Everyone involved with the ABC Charter School has a different set of skills, expertise and familiarity with the operation of the organization and the needs and trends within the community. Please answer the questions based on your knowledge and familiarity with the ABC Charter School and the constituency we serve. All responses will be helpful as we undertake this important process. There are four worksheets to fill out. They are described below:

Part 1: First, we want you to share your current understanding of the mission and values of the organization.

Part 2: Next, we'd like you to think about internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

Part 3: Then, we'd like you to reflect on recent and future external changes and trends likely to have a significant impact on the ABC Charter School over next 5-10 years. Consider organizational, political, economic, technological, social, demographic, technological, and competitive trends. Then identify possible responses to the changes and trends -- ways the ABC Charter School might respond to them. ***Here is an example of a trend and a possible response to it:***

<u>TREND</u>	<u>POSSIBLE RESPONSE</u>
1. Continued increase in use of emerging communication technologies.	1. Develop plans for appropriate use of technology to enhance communication and increase educational program impact.

Part 4: Finally, we'd like you to think about the changing needs of our various constituents/stakeholders and the expectations for quality service they have of the ABC Charter School.

If you have any questions, please call me at 555/555-1212. I look forward to working with you during the next several months.

Your Name (Optional): _____

PART 1: REVIEW OF MISSION & VALUES

INSTRUCTIONS: As we begin the strategic planning process, we want to assess your current understanding of the mission and organizational values of the ABC Charter School. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Responses will be compiled for review as part of the planning process.

1. **MISSION:** The MISSION describes what we do, with/for whom we do it, WHY we do it, and our special competence. MISSION describes general purpose, "why we exist."

As you presently understand it, what do you see as the mission of the ABC Charter School?

2. **ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:** A VALUE is a standard, principle, or quality that is considered worthwhile in and of itself. We seek to express our values by what we do in everyday life. Core organizational values describe how an organization wants to act on a day-to-day basis. Some examples: "Teamwork," "Caring," "Quality service," "Innovation." List the three most important organizational values of the ABC Charter School (what you think the values should be):

1.
2.
3.

PART 2: INTERNAL STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

INSTRUCTIONS: As we begin our planning process, we also need to identify internal strengths and weaknesses of the ABC Charter School Think about the organizational structure, financial management, board and leadership development, facilities and equipment, use of technology, financial stability, office, special programs and services, public relations efforts, community image, etc. Then list the three strengths and three weaknesses you feel are most important to consider in planning for the future of the charter school:

OUR 3 GREATEST STRENGTHS:

1.
2.
3.

OUR 3 MOST CRITICAL WEAKNESSES:

1.
2.
3.

PLEASE NOTE: Don't confuse "external changes and trends" with "strengths and weaknesses." An Internal Strength or Weakness is something over which the Charter School has direct control (location, staff, hours, policies, procedures, etc.). If you can do something about it, it is an internal strength or weakness. If it is not something over which the Charter School has control -- if you can't do something about it -- it is an External Change or Trend (population shifts, the economy, people's value system, competition, employment levels, women returning to the work force, etc.).

PART 3: EXTERNAL CHANGES AND TRENDS

INSTRUCTIONS: In the left column below, list the recent and future external trends and changes that you think will have the greatest impact on the ABC Charter School over the next 5-10 years. In the right column, list possible organizational responses - what the organization could do over the next three to five years to take full advantage of the external changes and trends? Consider actions for programs/services, finances, organizational structure, etc. *(Please refer to the sample trend and organizational response in the cover memo.)*

<u>EXTERNAL CHANGES AND TRENDS THAT WILL HAVE FUTURE IMPACT</u>	<u>HOW ABC CHARTER SCHOOL COULD RESPOND TO SELECTED TRENDS</u>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

PART 4: MARKET ASSESSMENT

INSTRUCTIONS: As part of the preparation for future planning meetings, we also need to analyze the changing needs and service expectations of our constituents and major stakeholders. *Complete these questions to the best of your knowledge:*

What do our constituents think of the ABC Charter School (i.e., What is their perception or image of the ABC Charter School)?

- **Children enrolled in the Charter School:**

- **Parents of Children enrolled in the Charter School:**

- **Donors and Funders:**

- **Charter School Staff:**

- **Charter Authorizing Body:**

What are the most important future needs and service expectations of the ABC Charter School on the part of our constituents?

• **Children enrolled in the Charter School:**

1. _____

2. _____

• **Parents of Children enrolled in the Charter School:**

1. _____

2. _____

• **Donors and Funders:**

1. _____

2. _____

• **Charter School Staff:**

1. _____

2. _____

• **Charter Authorizing Body:**

1. _____

2. _____

For the new needs and service expectations of the ABC Charter

School likely to emerge among key constituents and stakeholders over the next 3-5 years which you identified in the previous section, what other organizations or entities are positioned to meet these constituent needs?

Future Need/service Expectation	Organization or Entity Positioned to Meet This Need in the Future
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

Cover Letter for Mailing to Key Informants

[date]

Dear _____,

The ABC Charter School is currently engaged in a strategic planning process to develop future goals and strategies for the Charter School. In the current planning process, we are attempting to forecast future changes and trends that may affect ABC Charter School and the students/families we serve. Part of this effort is a series of interviews with persons possessing special expertise such as you.

We would like to interview you utilizing the enclosed questions. Please give them some advance thought. You may complete the survey and fax it back anytime before [date]. Our fax number is xxx-xxxx. If we do not hear from you by [date], a member of our planning committee will call you to conduct the survey by phone.

When the survey is completed, we will be happy to share a summary with you. In the meantime, if you have any questions, contact _____, Administrator at xxx-xxxx.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this important effort.

Sincerely,

_____, Chair
Strategic Planning Committee
ABC Charter School

ABC Charter School Strategic Planning Process

Survey Questions

1. What are the changes and trends that will have the greatest impact on the ABC Charter School over the next 5 years? In the left column below, list the 3 most important external changes and trends. In the right column, list possible responses - what we could do over the next three to five years to take full advantage of the external changes and trends?

<u>External Changes and Trends That Will Have Greatest Impact on the ABC Charter School</u>	<u>How We Could Respond to Selected Changes and Trends</u>
1	1
2	2
3	3

2. Based on your knowledge of the ABC Charter School and its programs, what is your perception or image of the organization?

3. In your opinion, what do you think the community's perception of the ABC Charter School is? (i.e., What is their opinion or image of the ABC Charter School)?

4. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that will aid us in our planning effort? Are you aware of any research, market assessments or future trend studies that would be useful to us in our planning efforts?

Critical Issues Worksheet

Critical issues are fundamental policy or program concerns that define the most important situations and choices the Charter School faces now and in the future.

Critical issues can reflect:

- Long-standing problems in the Charter School, children and families served or recent events which are anticipated to have a significant impact on the Charter School and/or people served;
- Impediments that must be overcome in order for the Charter School to meet its goals – i.e., problems to be solved; or,
- Watersheds/major shifts in thinking that can change the direction of an organization or the nature of its environment and challenge business as usual.

Generally these are issues that cannot be resolved through a “quick fix.” The selection of issues is important because it determines the range of decisions and strategies we will consider in the future.

Your Task:

- *Reflect on the following -- Major external changes/ trends having a positive and/or negative impact on the Charter School and the children/families served . . . Critical internal strengths and weaknesses of the Charter School that will have an impact on our future success . . . Major perceptions, needs and service expectations of key constituencies/stakeholders . . .*
- *List what you believe are the 1-3 most critical issues facing the Charter School over the next 3-5 years. Try to word your statements in the form of questions:*

1.
2.
3.

Foremost Strategic Challenges Facing YWGCA during its Startup (Next 1-2 years)

The YWCA Global Career Academy Charter School in Milwaukee, WI used the following process to help the Board of Directors identify critical strategic issues that would be the focus of the board's work during the first year of the charter school's operation. The first step was to brainstorm critical issues and challenges facing the school during its startup phase. The original list was reduced to the six most critical issues. Next, for each of these major issues, board directors were asked to identify appropriate roles for the board to play in addressing each issue.

Following below is a memo that went to the board. On the next page is the worksheet.

Date: January 19, 2000

To: YWGCA Board Directors

From: Marie Crockett, Chief Program Officer, YWCA

Re: Critical Issues Facing the YW Global Career Academy (YWGCA)

Enclosed is a worksheet that we'd like you to complete and return no later than February 1st. Return it by fax to – 555-5555.

The six critical issues listed in the left column were developed from the list of issues that we generated at the last meeting of the board. You will remember that we generated a long list of issues facing the charter school and then sorted them into broad categories. In developing the wording for the “most critical issue” in each category, we used the original issue list as a starting point; in some cases, using verbatim wording and another cases devising new wording in an effort to capture the most pressing issue.

It is our hope that by focusing on these critical issues, we can organize our work for maximum impact in the coming year. Your responses to the worksheet will be collated and the resulting summary will be sent to you in advance of our next meeting scheduled for February 21st.

If you have any questions, please give me a call at 555-5555. I look forward to continuing our important work together!

Foremost Strategic Challenges Facing YWGCA during its Startup (Next 1-2 years)

Foremost strategic issues and challenges that the YWGCA will need to address during the 1-2 year startup period	What roles would be appropriate for the board to play in addressing each issue listed in Column 1?	What resources can the board access to help address this issue?
1. How will the YWGCA achieve and maintain active parental and community involvement?		
2. How will the YWGCA insure that the curriculum achieves the educational results outlined in our contract?		
3. How will the YWGCA attract and retain sufficient enrollment?		
4. How will the YWGCA insure that it has a solid, stable resource base?		
5. How will the YWGCA build its credibility and success as a quality educational option in the City of Milwaukee?		
6. How will the YWGCA attract and retain a skilled, dedicated and diverse staff?		

Sample Strategic Planning Timetable

(Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)

A proposed timetable outlines the specific steps of the planning process. Also included is a reference to the person and/or group responsible for each step. The actual planning calendar will be determined by the ABC Charter School Strategic Planning Committee.

1. PREPARATION FOR PLANNING

- a. **1st FORMAL PLANNING SESSION:** Review the planning process, finalize strategies for information gathering and analysis, make needed adjustments in timetable, and secure agreements. (**Responsible:** Strategic Planning Committee)
- b. Consider expansion of the Strategic Planning Committee. (**Responsible:** Strategic Planning Committee)
- c. Orient the board and staff to the strategic planning process. (**Responsible:** Strategic Planning Committee, Staff, Facilitators)

2. INFORMATION GATHERING AND ASSESSMENT

- a. Gather information for planning process by means of assessment worksheets distributed to board and staff members as well as key informant interviewing. Prepare report summaries: School Assessment Data, Internal Assessment (organizational strengths and weaknesses); External Assessment (national, state and local trends); Market Assessment (current and emerging constituent needs, competitive and collaborative environment). (**Responsible:** Strategic Planning Committee, Staff, Facilitator)

3. SITUATION ANALYSIS

- a. **2nd FORMAL PLANNING SESSION:** Review summaries of internal, external and market assessments; identify critical issues for the future. (**Responsible:** Strategic Planning Committee)
- b. Get feedback on critical issue statements from other stakeholders. (**Responsible:** Strategic Planning Committee, Staff, Facilitator)

4. DEVELOPMENT OF VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

- a. **3rd FORMAL PLANNING SESSION**: All day planning retreat. Develop first draft of a strategic vision statement that sets future direction, and a mission statement that expresses fundamental purpose. (**Responsible**: Strategic Planning Committee)

5. COMPLETION OF FIRST DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

- a. **4th FORMAL PLANNING SESSION**: Review draft vision statement developed at Board retreat, develop first draft goals and strategies. (**Responsible**: Strategic Planning Committee)

6. BOARD, STAKEHOLDER AND STAFF REVIEW OF FIRST DRAFT

- a. Distribute first draft of strategic plan for review by board directors, key stakeholders and staff as appropriate. Solicit reactions and suggested revisions for draft plan. (**Responsible**: Staff and Facilitator)
- b. **5th FORMAL PLANNING SESSION**: Strategic Planning Committee reviews comments and make needed revisions; develops strategic plan evaluation framework for use in development of operational plans. (**Responsible**: Strategic Planning Committee, Staff)

7. BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF STRATEGIC PLAN

- a. **6th FORMAL PLANNING SESSION**: Final board meeting to review/approve strategic plan. (**Responsible**: Strategic Planning Committee)

8. DEVELOPMENT OF YEAR 1 OPERATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- a. **7th FORMAL PLANNING SESSION(S)**: After the board approves the strategic plan, staff and board committees will review evaluation framework for strategic plan and develop operational planning framework. (**Responsible**: Charter School Administrator, Board Committee Leadership, Staff and Facilitator)

Strategic Planning: The ISACS Model

(Source: Patrick F. Bassett, Executive Director,
Independent Schools Association of the Central States)

I. Review of Mission Statement: Institutional Re-centering.

Board assessment/revision of mission statement: ISACS recommends a mission statement in three forms: The one-pager for official publications (Mission/Philosophy/Goals); a pithy three to five-point form for short-hand reference and news reports; and the school motto/slogan version (2-5 words of "what we stand for"). Most schools make the following distinctions, resulting in three separate statements: Mission is "why we exist and whom we serve"; Philosophy is "what we believe" (about kids, about education); Goals are "outcomes, what we hope to achieve."

II. Survey of Constituents: Needs Assessment--"Customer Satisfaction" Inventory."

The "ISACS School Survey" has been developed to serve three functions: school evaluation, marketing, and strategic planning. Follow-up to survey includes focus group (alumni, parents, faculty) S.W.O.T. analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

III. Formation of Strategic Planning Committee.

Key players from trustees, faculty, parents, administration--no more than 7-10 people. Data-gathering (demographics, comparative data reports, survey results, SWOT analysis results, five-year financial projections, campus master-plan report, etc.). Identification of up to 8 planning priorities (e.g., admissions/marketing; governance; development; curriculum/program; facilities; finances; alumni; parents/community; faculty/human resources; diversity; technology; etc. Head prepares "white paper" on administration's thinking on each of the planning priorities.

IV. Strategic Planning Retreat.

Brainstorming: 25-35 people--Board, Strategic Planning Committee, any other key players for 1-2 days. Prior to retreat, results of any preliminary data-gathering are circulated. Retreat, led by a strategic planning consultant or facilitator, focuses on the following:

- Recommitment to mission & philosophy statements
- Analysis of survey results and consultant reports
- Assessment of external and internal factors ("challenges and opportunities") that can impact the school
- Presentation of administration's "white paper" assessments of the planning areas, informed by outside perspectives from the consultant and the participants in the retreat.
- Setting of priority goals.
- Scenario writing: "vision statement" and various possible scenarios to achieve the vision.

V. Scenario Testing: Buy-in.

Sharing of various scenarios with key constituencies to test the waters, see what excites people; scenario-testing events become a vital stage in capital campaign consciousness-raising and involvement of potential donors.

VI. Re-drafting of Strategic Plan/Implementation Schedule.

Fine-tuning. Scenarios refined until one is chosen by Board to be developed into a Strategic Plan with the following components: Goals, Rationale, Methods of Implementation, Timeline, Costs, Responsible Party.

VII. Adoption by Board: Going Public.

Internal and external marketing of the plan to all the constituencies of the school.

VIII. Yearly Goal-Setting for Board & Head.

Evaluation/Updating: At the annual evaluation session of Board and of Head, agreed-upon goals based upon Strategic Planning document are set.

Chapter 6: Legal And Financial Responsibilities Of Charter School Boards

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the charter school board carry out its legal and financial oversight responsibilities?

PLEASE NOTE: All charter school developers and operators face complex legal issues in starting and running their schools. As a relatively new phenomenon, charter schools involve legal requirements and responsibilities which not only differ widely from state to state, but which may also change over time. The importance of checking with your state department of education concerning state laws and regulations cannot be overemphasized. For assistance with general policies and practices related to personnel, visit <http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/personnel/>.

Also check with your state charter school resource center or other technical assistance organization in your state to determine which laws and regulations need to be complied with by your charter school board. Use some caution in making use of the information in this chapter as well as links to web sites and other resources. The materials available here are not presented as a substitute for qualified legal or financial counsel.

Today, charter schools, at the center of school reform efforts in America, are subjected to intense public scrutiny. In addition, powerful forces opposed to charter schools continue to raise questions about the legitimacy of the movement. This makes it even more important for charter school boards to pay special attention to carrying out their legal and financial responsibilities.

Foundation for the Board's Legal and Financial Responsibilities

Board directors of the charter school are the ethical, legal and financial stewards of the school. As such, the board must actively exercise oversight functions in four governance areas. These areas are listed and described in the National Association of Independent Schools' Trustee Handbook²⁸ below. Several of these topics are addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

1. Corporate Law, Internal Policies And Procedures And Contracts With Third Parties.

This area includes:

- The charter school's articles of incorporation filed with the Secretary of State in the state where the school operates. The articles set forth the school's purpose, its legal authority and any limitations to its powers. Changes to the articles need to be filed with the state.
- The bylaws of the charter school which are the procedures by which trustees govern the school and any changes or amendments must be done in accordance with procedures stated in the bylaws. In the Tools Section of Chapter 4, there is a bylaws checklist and sample bylaws.

²⁸ DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.

- Internal institutional policies which are set by the board to assure that the board's own actions as well as the school's operations are conducted appropriately. Chapter 4 of the governance guidebook addresses policy development.
- Contracts between the school and third parties which are binding legal agreements. Boards need to have a policy that explicitly delegates the authority to sign third party contracts to a few individuals. For a charter school, the most important such contract is the charter agreement with the charter authorizing body.

2. Local, State And Federal Laws And Regulations. Every state regulates educational institutions and nonprofit organizations including charter schools. Each locality and state law is unique and so it is critical for the board to be assured that the school is obeying the applicable laws and regulations. Some categories of statutes that may apply to your charter school include:

- Nonprofit corporation law.
- State charter school law.
- Other educational licensing and regulations (e.g., teacher certification requirements, regulations pertaining to serving children with special needs, and required state assessments).
- Charitable solicitation laws.
- State and federal tax exemptions²⁹.
- Health and safety codes.
- Laws and regulations pertaining to the confidentiality of student records.
- Open meeting laws.
- Building codes and zoning restrictions.
- Regulations pertaining to FICA and income tax withholding and the payment of employment taxes.
- State and federal charitable and volunteer immunity statutes including the federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997. While such statutes provide certain protections to individuals who serve as board volunteers, these laws do not provide complete immunity to nonprofit charitable organizations, including charter schools so organized. (The Volunteer Protection Act is addressed in more detail later in this chapter.)
- Anti-discrimination laws.
- Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Employment Retirement Income Security Act.

3. The Charter School's Financial Resources, Facilities And Equipment. This area includes:

- Financial oversight, including approval of annual operating and capital budgets, long-range financial plans, and development of financial policies.

²⁹ Charter schools that are incorporated as nonprofit organizations will typically seek Internal Revenue Service determination as a charitable, tax-exempt organization under 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. This status exempts the school from payment of sales taxes and allows donors to claim a tax deduction for contributions made to the charter school.

- Investment oversight, for example monitoring the investment of the charter school's endowment fund and employee retirement funds
- Physical assets oversight, assuring the well being of all the physical assets of the charter school such as facilities.
- Independent audit of the charter schools finances, conducted annually.
- Fund development and fund-raising, assuring that there are plans in place and that fund-raising and charitable solicitation is done in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. (See Chapter 11 for more information about the board's role in fund-raising.)

4. Risk Management. The charter school board has primary responsibility for the survival of the charter school. The board has a legal duty to conserve and protect the assets of the charter school. Risk management is a way to minimize uncertainty by identifying risks and taking steps to manage them. It involves much more than simply purchasing insurance. The board's role in risk management will be addressed later in this chapter.

Legal Responsibilities of Board Directors

Under well-established principles of nonprofit corporation law, a board director must meet certain standards of conduct and attention in carrying out his or her responsibilities to the organization. Several states have statutes adopting some variation of these duties, which would be used in court to determine whether a board director acted improperly. These standards are usually described as the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obedience.³⁰

- **DUTY OF CARE.** The duty of care describes the level of competence that is expected of a board director, and is commonly expressed as the duty of "care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in a like position and under similar circumstances." This means that a board director owes the duty to exercise reasonable care when he or she makes a decision as a steward of the charter school.

To Exercise the Proper Duty of Care:

- 1. Active Participation.** A board director must actively participate in the management of the organization including attending meetings of the board, evaluating reports, reading minutes, reviewing the performance of the charter school administrator and so on. Persons who do not have the time to participate as required should not agree to be on the board.
- 2. Committees.** The board may establish committees having the authority of the board and may rely on information, opinions or reports of these committees. However, the committees are subject to the direction and control of the board. As a result, board

³⁰ This section draws from a number of sources including: The Legal Obligations of Nonprofit Boards: A Guidebook for Board Members. National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997; Fiduciary Duties Of Directors Of Charitable Organization, A Guide For Board Members, The Office Of Minnesota Attorney General; Minnesota Council for Nonprofits; and All Aboard, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

directors are still responsible for the committees and should periodically scrutinize their work.

3. **Board Actions.** A board director who is present at a meeting when an action is approved by the entire board is presumed to have agreed to the action unless the board director objects to the meeting because it was not lawfully called or convened and doesn't participate in the meeting, or unless the board director votes against the action or the board director is prohibited from voting on the action because of a conflict of interest.
4. **Minutes of Meetings.** Written minutes should be taken at every board meeting. The minutes should accurately reflect the actions taken at the meeting.
5. **Books and Records.** A board director should have general knowledge of the books and records of the charter school as well as its general operation. The charter school's articles, bylaws, accounting records, voting agreements and minutes must be made available to interested parties (for example, parents, charter authorizing body) and board directors who wish to inspect them for a proper purpose.
6. **Accurate Record Keeping.** A board director should not only be familiar with the content of the books and records, but should also assure that the charter school's records and accounts are accurate. This may mean the board director must take steps to require regular audits by an independent certified public accountant if the board has not already decided to do so. At the very least, the board director should be aware of what the financial records disclose and take appropriate action to make sure there are proper internal controls.
7. **Trust Property.** A board director has the duty to protect, preserve, invest and manage the charter school's corporate property and to do so consistent with any donor restrictions and legal requirements. Instituting proper internal controls will aid in the protection of the assets.
8. **Resources.** A board director must assist the organization in obtaining adequate resources. (The fund-raising roles and responsibilities of the board are discussed in Chapter 11.)
9. **Investigations.** A board director has a duty to investigate warnings or reports of officer or employee theft or mismanagement. In some situations a board director may have to report misconduct to the appropriate authorities, such as the police or the Attorney General. Where appropriate, a board director should consult an attorney or other professional for assistance.

Later sections of this chapter address financial oversight and risk management in more detail.

Questions for board self-assessment regarding duty of care:

How well does our board function in its duty of care in terms of the following?

- Regular attendance at board meetings.
- Active participation and discussion in decision-making.
- Good business judgment.
- Financial integrity.
- Accountability to the "owners of the school" -- those who have a stake in the charter school especially students and their families, but also including staff, volunteers, donors, and the wider community served by the school.

- [DUTY OF LOYALTY](#). Traditionally, nonprofit board directors have an absolute duty of complete, undivided loyalty to the organization. The duty of loyalty is a standard of faithfulness; a board director must give undivided allegiance when making decisions affecting the charter school. This means that board directors can never use their position, or the charter school's assets, or information obtained as a member for personal gain for themselves or for any member of their family, but must act in the best interests of the charter school. A board director should put the good of the charter school first and avoid engaging in transactions with the school from which the director will benefit.

To Exercise the Duty of Loyalty:

1. **Conflicts of Interest.** Under certain circumstances, a contract or transaction between a charter school that is a nonprofit corporation and its board directors or an organization in which the board director has a material financial interest is acceptable. However, if the transaction is challenged, the board director will have the burden of establishing that the contract or transaction was fair and reasonable, that there was full disclosure of the conflict and that the contract or transaction was approved by other board directors in good faith. Conflicts of interest are further discussed in a later section of this chapter.
2. **Written Policy.** Boards should establish a written policy on avoiding conflicts of interest. See the Tools Section of this chapter for policy samples.
3. **Loans.** A charter school that is a nonprofit corporation may not lend money to a board director or the board director's family members unless the loan or guarantee may reasonably be expected, in the judgment of the entire board, to benefit the charter school.
4. **Corporate Opportunity.** Directors of business organizations are under a fiduciary obligation not to divert a corporate business opportunity for their personal gain. A board director of a charter school that is a nonprofit corporation is also subject to this duty. This duty means that a board director may not engage in or benefit from a business opportunity that is available to and suitable for the charter school unless the charter school decides not to engage in the business opportunity and conflicts of interest procedures are followed.
5. **Internal Revenue Code.** Other prohibitions relating to the duty of loyalty are specified in the rules of the Internal Revenue Code regarding self-dealing.
6. **Compliance with Governing Documents.** Board directors have a duty to follow the charter school's governing documents (articles of incorporation and bylaws), to carry out the charter school's mission and to assure that funds are used for lawful purposes. Also, board directors must comply with other state and federal laws that relate to the charter school and the way in which it conducts its operations.

Questions For Board Self-Assessment Regarding Duty Of Loyalty:

- What might divided loyalties or conflicts of interest look like for members of your charter school board?
- What policies does your board have for disclosure or dealing with those conflicts?
- Does your board understand the importance of confidentiality in its deliberations?

- Do your board directors trust each other enough to challenge and disagree, asking hard questions before making decisions?
 - When decisions are made, is the loyalty of your board demonstrated by their public support of those decisions, both within the charter school as well as the outside community?
- [DUTY OF OBEDIENCE](#). The duty of obedience requires board directors to be faithful to the charter school's mission. They are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the central goals of the charter school. A basis for this rule lies in the public's trust that the charter school will manage public financing and donated funds to fulfill the charter school's mission.

To Exercise The Duty of Obedience:

1. **State and Federal Statutes.** Board directors should be familiar with a number of state and federal statutes and laws relating to charter schools. Refer to the list earlier in this chapter. Board directors should see to it that their charter school's status with state and federal agencies is protected and that no actions are being taken that would put this status in jeopardy.
2. **Filing Requirements.** Board directors must comply with deadlines for taxation, for filing with the Attorney General, for registering with the Secretary of State's Office, for making social security payments, for income tax withholding, and so on.
3. **Governing Documents.** Board directors should be familiar with their charter school's governing documents and should follow the provisions of those documents. Board directors should be sure proper notice is given for meetings, that regular meetings are held, that board directors are properly appointed and that the charter school's mission is being accomplished.
4. **Outside Help.** Where appropriate, board directors should obtain opinions of legal counsel or accountants.

Questions for board self-assessment regarding duty of obedience:

- Do you know under what laws, regulations and requirements of the charter school functions?
- How are you another board directors protected against legal liability? Is there an indemnification clause in the charter school bylaws? Does the charter school have Directors and Officers insurance coverage? Are you and other board directors aware of their legal obligations?

Financial Oversight by the Board of Directors

The charter school board has the ultimate responsibility for the financial viability of the charter school. In the early stages of a charter school's development, the board may be in charge of formulating financial policies and monitoring all major financial decisions. As the charter school evolves and matures, the board will need to focus more on controlling costs, evaluating the

political and economic environment within which the charter school operates, and deciding how that environment affects the charter school's ability to achieve its goals. This financial oversight function consists of three main responsibilities.

First, the board has to determine the financial goals of the charter school and monitor management's progress in achieving those goals. Second, it needs to establish sound financial policies and monitor whether the charter school's activities adhere to those policies. Third, the board must review the charter school's financial control systems in order to safeguard the resources of the school. In addition, most organizations are required to comply with donor or government regulatory provisions. To comply with these regulations, the board should arrange for a financial audit to be conducted by a licensed independent auditing firm at least annually or as otherwise required. Such audits may be required by the charter school contract.

Monitoring the organization's financial position. While the board's role in helping to increase revenues is critical to the financial well being of the charter school, the board must also develop policies for reducing or controlling the cost of educational programs and related services. Increasing the efficiency of management systems is one way that a charter school can reduce costs while maintaining the quality of the services it provides.

To provide effective financial oversight, boards often create finance committee made up of members with experience in financial management. A sample role description for the Finance Committee is included in the Tools Section of Chapter 10. The members of such a committee should know the proper questions to ask, what information to review, and how to analyze and use the information to make financial decisions. If the charter school also has a number of family social support programs, or programs funded by different revenue sources, the board may need to review each of these programs individually. In any case, all financial information should be reviewed in the context of the educational results achieved during the period under review.

At each board meeting, the board will need to receive certain financial reports that detail the charter school's income, expenses, and any surplus or deficit. The reports should highlight any deviations from the budget, projected revenues, and any actions the charter school administrator is taking to correct those deviations. The board must know how to review and interpret three key financial documents:

- **A cash flow projection worksheet.** This worksheet usually covers a 12-month period and shows all anticipated financial obligations and expected cash revenues based on the existing work plan and budget. This worksheet helps to reveal if there will be any periods when funds will be insufficient to cover expenses. The worksheet should be updated each month to reflect any changes in cash projections.
- **A balance sheet.** This report shows the financial position of the charter school at a particular point in time. It summarizes the school's assets, liabilities (debts or payables), and reserves (equity or fund balance), which the board can use to assess the financial stability of the organization and to see whether its liabilities can be met.

- **An income statement.** Also known as a profit and loss statement, this report presents an analysis of the net income or deficit of the charter school over a defined period of time. The board can use this report to assess the overall financial performance of the charter school by comparing actual income and expenditures with the budget. It can also be used to compare current income and expenditures with those of the previous year. Using this information, the board can advise the charter school administrator to revise budgets or work plans or to take actions to reduce costs and/or seek additional revenue

Capital investments should also be reviewed by the board. Since any capital investments will have long-term financial implications that will affect the operating costs of the charter school, these potential acquisitions should be scrutinized to determine whether they are consistent with the organization's mission and strategic plan, and whether they are financially sound.

Keeping your board well informed. The charter school administrator should make sure that the board, or the board's finance committee, receives the following information on at least a quarterly basis:

- A report of revenue and expenses (income statement) compared to the budget, with explanations of any significant variance;
- A cash flow projection update;
- A balance sheet showing the financial position of the organization at that time;
- A report on the number of students currently enrolled compared with the number projected, and compared with the number in same period of the previous year;
- A report on fund raising activities and results;
- A list of critical issues that might affect the financial stability of the charter school.

Maintaining role clarity. The complementary financial management and oversight roles of the board, Finance Committee and charter school administrator are summarized in the chart below:³¹

³¹ Adapted from Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Governance Reference Guide, 1999.

Board, Committee and Staff Roles in Financial Oversight

Board's Role	Finance Committee's Role	Charter School Administrator's Role
Approves a budget that reflects the charter school's goals and board policies	Revises budget as needed and makes recommendations.	Prepares the budget and presents it to the Finance Committee or full board with backup information.
Approves the format and frequency of financial and programmatic reports.	Recommends format for financial and programmatic summary reports for board approval.	Makes recommendations for financial and programmatic reports to the board; assures reports include information required by charter contract.
Reviews monthly or quarterly financial statements.	Reviews monthly financial statements with charter school administrator, school business manager, and/or CPA.	Monitors income and expenses on a daily basis. Prepares financial and educational program reports that can be compared to the charter school contract, budget and projected activities.
Ensures adequate financial controls are in place and that financial reports are in accordance with accounting practices and applicable provisions of the charter contract.	Reviews accounting and control policies and makes recommendations for changes and improvements.	Raises policy issues and provides information for standard accounting policy decisions. Carries out policies established by the charter school board.
Reviews the audited financial statements, management letter, and senior staff's response.	Reviews the audited financial statements, management letter, and senior staff's response with administrator and auditor.	Provides information and offers recommendations to Finance Committee. If necessary, responds to the audit firm's management letter.
Approves charter school's investment policies and reviews them annually.	Regularly reviews and makes recommendations about investment policies.	Provides additional information and financial analysis if needed.
Is well-informed about the charter school's finances.	Coordinates board training on financial matters. Acts as liaison between full board and charter school administrator on financial matters.	Provides training and information as requested.

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

When the personal or professional concerns of a board director or a staff member affect his or her ability to put the welfare of the charter school before personal benefit, a conflict of interest exists. Charter school board directors are likely to be affiliated with other organizations in their communities, both on a professional and a personal basis, so it is not unusual for actual or potential conflict of interest to arise. When directors are confronted with an actual or apparent conflict of interest, there are reasonable steps that the charter school board can take to preserve its integrity. Board directors need not be disqualified from the board simply due to conflicts of interest. Perhaps the most important step is for board directors to disclose information related to

the possibility of dual interests to others on the board. Minimally, the director needs to inform the board of the important facts and details and must abstain from voting on the transaction. These actions should be recorded in the minutes to document the disclosure. In cases of potential conflict, boards should take extra steps to document that the decisions they make are in the best interests of the charter school. For example, if the board decides to purchase a parcel of property in which an individual board director has an ownership interest, the board should document how this parcel is the best deal for the school when compared with other parcels that were considered.

Daniel L. Kurtz, author of How To Manage Conflicts Of Interest: A Guidebook For Nonprofit Boards, offers the following suggestions for structuring an effective conflict of interest policy:³²

Self-monitoring is the best approach to preventing conflict of interest situations. The charter school board should institute a system of checks and balances to circumvent actual or potential conflict of interest, beginning with well-defined operating policies on all matters that might lead to conflict. Most important, create a carefully written conflict of interest policy based on the needs and circumstances of the organization. Ask each board and staff member to agree in writing to uphold the policy. A conflict of interest policy should be reviewed regularly as part of board self-assessment.

A policy on conflict of interest has three essential elements:

- **Full Disclosure.** Board directors and staff members in decision-making roles should make known their connections with groups doing business with the organization. This information should be provided annually.
- **Board Director Abstention From Discussion And Voting.** Board directors who have an actual or potential conflict of interest should not participate in discussions or vote on matters related in any way to matters involving the area of conflict.
- **Staff Member Abstention From Decision-Making.** Staff members who have an actual or potential conflict should not be substantively involved in decision-making affecting such transactions.

For a sample conflict of interest policy and disclosure form, see the National Center for Nonprofit Boards publication, How to Manage Conflicts of Interest: A Guide for Nonprofit Boards. Also see the Tools Section of this chapter for other sample conflict of interest policies.

³² Kurtz, Daniel L. How To Manage Conflicts Of Interest: A Guidebook For Nonprofit Boards, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1995.

Risk Management

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, risk management is a way to minimize uncertainty by identifying real and potential risks facing the charter school and taking steps to manage them. The structure of the risk management process consists of the following five steps:³³

1. Identifying potential risks. Because risks constantly change, the identification step must be repeated periodically. In addition, to be most effective, risk identification must be integrated into everything the board and charter school does and not considered only in relation to insurance.
2. Analyze the identified risks. Analysis of a risk should include specification of what makes an activity or condition risky for the charter school.
3. Select the most suitable techniques for eliminating or reducing identified risks. The board can choose from among a number of risk management techniques.
4. Implement the selected techniques. The board plays a crucial role here in communicating the importance of risk management to everyone in the charter school from the administrator to the occasional volunteer.
5. Monitor the effectiveness of the techniques and modify them as needed

The National Association of Independent Schools has developed a risk management checklist that can serve as a guide for the charter school board.³⁴ It has been slightly modified:

- Does the charter school have a clear mission statement?
- Is there a crisis management plan in place?
- Does the charter school have adequate insurance? (The charter school contract will generally mandate minimum levels of insurance coverage to be carried by the charter school)
 - General liability insurance.
 - Directors and officers liability insurance.
- Does the board have written policies in the areas of:
 - Blood borne pathogens.
 - Conflict of interest, with forms signed by trustees and administrators acknowledging the policy and identifying potential conflicts.
 - Personnel – hiring, evaluation, termination.
 - Student code of conduct, and discipline procedures.
 - Athletic safety.
 - Use of school bulletin boards.
 - Off-campus trips (and adult supervision of).
 - Utilization of school buildings and grounds by the school community and outsiders.

³³ Babcock, George and Tremper, Charles, *The Nonprofit Boards Role in Risk Management: More Than Buying Insurance*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.

³⁴ DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, *Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards*, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.

- Bids required for contracts for goods and services.
 - Financial management especially checks and balances.
 - Investment policies.
 - Admissions and enrollment.
 - Acceptance of gifts and donations.
- Does the charter school have a system to review policies periodically both internally and with outside legal/professional assistance as needed?
 - Are the bylaws up-to-date and do they comply with all applicable laws and regulations?
 - Does the charter school have a strategic plan that has measurable action plans?
 - Does the charter school have a three to five year financial plan?
 - Does the charter school have bonds for those paid staff and volunteers who handle money?
 - Do publications and all electronic media accurately portray the school, especially its admission policies, programs and facilities?
 - Add others as appropriate.

(Note: Many of the items in this risk management checklist will be mandated by the applicable state charter school legislation, and/or required by the charter school authorizing body in the charter school application, and the charter school contract itself)

Following is a very useful chart listing some of the common risks of operating the charter school. The chart is included in The Nonprofit Board's Role in Risk Management: More Than Buying Insurance by Charles Tremper and George Babcock.³⁵ For each type of risk, the board needs to respond by assessing how the risk is best managed. Risk reduction through training and prudent conduct is generally the most effective strategies. Because insurance may also be needed to protect the charter school and everyone associated in it from risk that cannot be reduced, the list identifies the type of insurance that would usually cover a particular risk. Since policies differ greatly, the charter school should seek the advice of an insurance professional.

³⁵ Babcock, George and Tremper, Charles, The Nonprofit Board's Role in Risk Management: More Than Buying Insurance, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.

Component Of Organization	Sources Of Risk	Type Of Insurance
Board	Self Dealing. Tax Penalties. Executive Decisions. Regulations. Fiduciary Duties.	Directors And Officers (D&O). Association Professional Liability Insurance (APLI)
Services	Common Torts (Negligence). Malpractice.	General Liability (GL). Errors And Omissions (E&O). Professional Liability (Malpractice).
Employees	Injury. Wrongful Termination. Civil Rights.	Workers Compensation. D&O. APLI. Some GL Policies.
Volunteers	Injury.	Volunteer. APLI.
Transportation.	Accidents.	Auto. Non-Owned Auto.
Money.	Theft. Embezzlement.	Property. Bond.
Fund-Raising.	Various.	Specialty Coverages.

Implications Of Volunteer Protection Act Of 1997³⁶

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 removes volunteers from liability if the volunteer committed negligent acts or omissions while acting within the scope of his or her responsibilities. The bill does not protect volunteers if the act or omission was caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer. It does not cover the volunteer when harm was caused by a volunteer operating a motor vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other vehicle for which the state requires the operator or owner to possess a license or maintain insurance. If required by the state, the volunteer must have been properly licensed or certified for the activities in question. The bill preempts any inconsistent state law on this issue, except that the states may provide additional protection from liability relating to volunteers.

The bill allows the states to "opt out" of being covered by this law as long as the state enacts a statute citing the authority of the federal law and declaring the election of the state that the act will not apply. States are also allowed to require nonprofit organizations to adhere to risk management procedures, including mandatory training of volunteers. States may make the organization liable for the acts or omissions of its volunteers to the same extent that organizations are liable for actions or omissions of agents or employees. There are exceptions: The limitation on liability shall not apply to any misconduct that constitutes a crime of violence, constitutes a hate crime, involves a sexual offense, involves misconduct for which the defendant has been found to have violated a federal or state civil rights law, where the defendant was under the influence of intoxicating alcohol or any drug at the time of the misconduct.³⁷

³⁶ This federal legislation was enacted into law June 18, 1997, Public Law 105-19.

³⁷ Independent Schools Association of the Central States, Volunteer Protection Act of 1997: An Analysis, 1997.

Volunteers for organizations exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) are clearly covered by the law. Other nonprofit organizations are mentioned in the law's legislative history. It is important to note that the act does not protect the organizations themselves which still may be held liable for the acts of their volunteers. Moreover, while the law protects a volunteer for personal liability in situations covered by the statute, it does not protect the volunteer from being named as a defendant in a lawsuit. Ultimately, the courts will determine how the law is applied in specific circumstances. Meanwhile, board directors should continue to be covered by a directors and officers (D&O) insurance policy.³⁸

Once again, it is suggested that you check with your state charter school resource center, other technical assistance organization in your state, or qualified legal or financial counsel to assess the liability of volunteers serving on your charter school board.

Special Education³⁹

Legal responsibilities relating to special education deserve the charter school board's focused attention. Even though it is an independent public school, the charter school is not entirely separate and on its own. It needs to comply with applicable federal and state education laws – especially those pertaining to special education.

A long history of exclusion of children with disabilities from a public education made it necessary to provide a means for ensuring the availability of a free and appropriate education, including applicable due process and procedural safeguards. The laws and regulations now in place were designed to protect the children and their parents, and also provide a guide for ensuring that the education is individually designed and appropriate to the needs of each child with a disability.

This has meant that educators must be aware of the law and the many provisions outlined in the law. For many charter school personnel, this is new territory. They must establish a system for educating all students, regardless of disability status, in their school, often without the assistance of a larger, experienced special education department.

Is the charter school legally liable for provision of special education services to children enrolled in the charter school? In some states, charter schools are legally autonomous entities, while in other states they are not. Charter schools need to understand the implications of their legal status, especially how their status relates to issues that might arise for special education.

Members of the charter school board need a solid grounding in what it means to be in compliance with special education laws. The board development committee working closely with the charter school administrator should identify basic elements of special education law that

³⁸ Leifer, Jacqueline C., Glomb, Michael B., The Legal Obligations of Nonprofit Boards: a Guidebook for Board Members, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

³⁹ The information in this section was derived from various sources including interviews with Eileen Ahearn, Project Director, National Association of State Departments of Special Education, Washington, DC and Beth Giovannetti, of School Choice Options in Washington, DC.

need to be referenced in the board orientation and in ongoing training programs for board directors.

The Charter Friends National Network, as part of an ongoing special education initiative, will be providing a state-by-state special education analysis that will be a good source of information for charter school board directors wishing to take a closer look at the special education guidelines and practices in their state. This information will be available on the Charter Friends website at <http://www.charterfriends.org>.

Charter school boards should be aware of general information regarding special education including:

- Charter schools, like regular public schools, must serve students with disabilities.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that dictates what schools must do on behalf of students with disabilities. Other federal laws that outline charter schools responsibility to disabled students include Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Action of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, some states have adopted requirements that go beyond the federal law so it is important that all applicable laws and regulations are considered.
- Charter schools may be their own Local Education Agency (LEA) or part of their district for Special Education purposes. LEA status dictates who is responsible for the provision of programs and services for students with disabilities and how funding flows. This status depends upon the charter law in each state.
- Charter schools receive a small amount of funding from the federal level but the bulk of the funding for special education programs comes from the state level. An understanding by the board of how funding flows in their state is critical.
- Charter schools in some states are creating new ways to serve children with disabilities. For example, in Washington, D.C., a special education consortium is being organized to provide information and assistance to charter schools on special education and to negotiate favorable rates with the providers of special education services. Such approaches may provide ways for your charter school meet its obligations to children with special needs.
- Serving students with disabilities is a critical element of the total education process. It is a legal obligation that, if ignored, could lead to substantial legal liability for charter schools.

According to Cheryl M. Lange, author of Charter Schools And Special Education: A Handbook, some of the issues needing to be addressed by charter schools in the implementation of special education include:

1. What is the philosophy of the school toward students with disabilities?
2. How will staff identify and serve students with special needs?
3. Who is responsible for serving students with disabilities?

4. What steps must charter schools take to ensure that appropriate services are provided to students with low-incidence disabilities?
5. Who pays for the services?
How will transportation needs be met?
6. What personnel certification and licensure issues need to be considered?
7. Can charter schools serve only students with special needs?
8. Can charter schools receive waivers for certain special education requirements?
9. What if the charter school has individualized learning plans for all students: Do they still need to complete an IEP (the individual education plan required by federal special education law)?
10. What if the school is not an appropriate placement for a child with a disability?
11. What if the child's special education needs change after enrollment?

The main message to board directors is that their schools have an obligation to serve students with disabilities. Boards have a responsibility to ensure that schools receive the funding, information and support systems to create special education programs and services. Board directors need a basic knowledge of special education. The board can rely on charter school staff to know the details of the law and what it will take in order for the charter school to be in compliance. However, it is the board's responsibility to ensure that the staff has access to the information and resources necessary for them to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

The following recommendations and suggestions for charter school personnel are offered by Lange⁴⁰:

1. Consider special education and the charter school's philosophical orientation and mission in relationship to staffing, service delivery, inclusion practices, etc. when writing the proposal or planning the school's goals and objectives.
2. Outline special education policies prior to opening the school.
3. Contact state education agency personnel and ask about all aspects of special education, especially the state charter school and special education laws.
4. Determine how special education funding works early in the process of developing the charter school to avoid delays in receipt of funds due to lack of information.
5. Determine who will provide special education services prior to opening the school. For a school already in operation, prompt investigation of this issue is essential.
6. Consider using an outside consultant or hiring a staff person to assist in setting up evaluation teams, procedures, and financial reimbursements.

⁴⁰ Lange, Cheryl M., Charter Schools And Special Education: A Handbook.

7. Be consistent in the delivery of educational services for all students and be innovative in special education also. The laws do not prescribe specific service delivery strategies nor do they preclude new ways of service delivery

Chapter 6: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Conflict of Interest Policy Samples (Multiple Sources: National Association of Independent Schools, Carver Governance Designs Inc., Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits).
- Board Member Annual Disclosure Statement Concerning Possible Conflict Of Interest (Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits).
- Sample Board Confidentiality Policy (Source: Adapted from Board Orientation Manual published by Aspen Publishers).
- Sample Board Liability Questionnaire (Source: Adapted from Board Orientation Manual published by Aspen Publishers).

Essential Resources for Understanding Board Legal and Financial Issues

- Babcock, George and Tremper, Charles, *The Nonprofit Boards Role in Risk Management: More Than Buying Insurance*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.
- Dalsimer, John Paul, *Understanding Nonprofit Financial Statements: A Primer for Board Members*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.
- DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, *Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards*, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.
- Gardner, Laurie, *Charter School Governance Toolkit*, First Edition, Charter Schools Development Center, 1999.
- Herman, Melanie L., and White, Leslie T., *Leaving Nothing to Chance: Achieving Board Accountability through Risk Management*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards and Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1999.
- Johnson, Sandra L., *The Audit Committee: Key to Financial Accountability in Nonprofit Organizations*, The National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1995.
- Kurtz, Daniel L., *How to Manage Conflict of Interest: a Guide for Nonprofit Boards*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1995.
- Lange, Cheryl M., *Charter Schools And Special Education: A Handbook*. Go to: <http://www.uscharterschools.org/cs/usdsp/query/q/112?topic=24&x-title=Resources+on+Special+Education>
- Leifer, Jacqueline C., Glomb, Michael B., *The Legal Obligations of Nonprofit Boards: A Guidebook for Board Members*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.
- *US Charter Schools Website* contains legal issues page and links to other resources and sample documents at http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/legal.htm
- *US Department of Education Website* contains additional information and resources on special education at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA/>.

Sample Conflict of Interest Statements for Board of Directors

Sample #1 (Source: National Association of Independent Schools)⁴¹

Conflict of Interest Statement for Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is appointed/elected to serve (name of school) and its constituencies. The men and women who accept this position are expected to carry out their duties in a manner that inspires and assures the confidence of the school and the broader community.

The trustees shall exercise the utmost good faith in all transactions touching upon their duties to the charter school and its property. In their dealings with and on behalf of the school, they are held to a strict rule of honest and fair dealing between themselves and the school. They shall not use their positions as trustees, or knowledge gained therefrom, so that a conflict might arise between the school's interest and that of any individual trustee.

A conflict of interest arises in any situation in which a trustee (and his or her immediate family) is involved in an activity that could adversely affect his or her judgment with respect to the business of the school or otherwise diminish the interest of the school. When such a conflict arises, the individual with a conflict is expected to disclose in writing the existence of the conflict.

Sample #2 (Source: Carver Governance Design, Inc.)⁴² **2060 Kingdom Drive, Columbus, IN, 47201**

John Carver suggests the following Directors' Code of Conduct that includes information regarding conflict of interest:

Directors' Code of Conduct

The board expects of itself and its members ethical and businesslike conduct. This commitment includes proper use of authority and appropriate decorum in group and individual behavior when acting as directors.

1. Directors must represent unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the ownership. This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to advocacy or interest groups and membership on other boards or staffs. This accountability supersedes the personal interest of any director acting as an individual consumer of this agency's services.

⁴¹ DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.

⁴² Carver Governance Design, Inc., 2060 Kingdom Drive, Columbus, IN, 47201.

2. Directors must avoid any conflict of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility. There must be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any director and the agency except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity and equal access to otherwise “inside” information. Directors must not use their positions to obtain for themselves or for their family members employment within the agency. Should a director be considered for employment, s/he must temporarily withdraw from board deliberation, voting and access to applicable board information.
3. Directors may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the agency except as explicitly set forth in board policies. Directors' interaction with the executive director or with staff must recognize the lack of authority in any individual director or group of directors except as noted above. Directors' interaction with the public, press or other entities must recognize the same limitation and the similar inability of any director or directors to speak for the board. Directors will make no judgments of the executive director or staff performance except as that performance is assessed against explicit board policies by the official process.
4. Directors will deal with outside entities or individuals, with clients and staff and with each other in a manner reflecting fair play, ethics and straightforward communication.

Sample #3 (Source: Management Assistance Project for Nonprofits)⁴³

Conflict of Interest Policy

The Board shall not enter into any contract or transaction with (a) one or more of its directors, (b) a director of a related organization, or (c) an organization in or of which a director of *Organization* is a director, officer, or legal representative, or in some other way has a material financial interest unless:

1. That interest is disclosed or known to the Board of Directors,
2. The Board approves, authorizes or ratifies the action in good faith,
3. The approval is by a majority of directors (not counting the interested director),
4. At a meeting where a quorum is present (not counting the interested director).

The interested director may not be present for discussion to answer questions, but may not advocate for the action to be taken and must leave the room while a vote is taken. The minutes of all actions taken on such matters shall clearly reflect that these requirements have been met.

⁴³ Management Assistance Project for Nonprofits, 2233 University Avenue West, #360, Saint Paul, MN, 612/647-1216.

Board Member Annual Disclosure Statement
Concerning Possible Conflict Of Interest

In order to implement the board conflict of interest policy, board directors of the charter school will annually complete the following form to disclose real and potential conflicts of interest. The completed forms will be reviewed by the Executive Committee, which will attempt or resolve any actual or potential conflicts and, in the absence of resolution, refer the matter to the Board of Directors.

The undersigned person acknowledges receipt of a copy of the Charter School Policy Concerning Conflict of Interest dated ___/___/___. By my signature affixed below I acknowledge my agreement with the spirit and intent of this board policy and I agree to report to the President of the Board of Directors any possible conflicts (other than those stated below) that may develop before completion of the next annual statement.

_____ I am not aware of any conflict of interest.

_____ I have a conflict of interest in the following area(s):

Signed _____

Type or Print Name _____

Date _____

Board Confidentiality Policy

(Source: Adapted from Board Orientation Manual published by Aspen Publishers)

Directions: Read this policy, and then sign at the bottom acknowledging you read, understand and agree to follow it.

No board director at this charter school shall knowingly disclose confidential information gained by reason of information shared at a board meeting. This includes details about:

- Children enrolled and their families
- Property
- Operations
- Personnel
- Policies
- Affairs of the charter school

Board directors shall not use information to advance any personal interest, financial or otherwise.

The charter school shall maintain confidentiality of employee and student records, and no board director shall accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity that might be expected to induce him or her to disclose confidential information acquired by reason of serving this board.

A breach of this policy will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and, in accordance with the provisions of the By-laws, may result in dismissal from the Board.

Board Director's Signature

Date

Board Liability Questionnaire

(Source: Adapted from Board Orientation Manual published by Aspen Publishers)

Directions: Ask yourself these questions to help you decide if a decision your board makes could create potential liability for the charter school. If in doubt, talk to the board chair or charter school administrator, who can contact your board's attorney for guidance.

Does this decision have:

- A financial impact on any people or businesses we deal with? How?
- A physical or mental impact on any of the children and families we serve? How?
- Legal implications for the charter school or the children and families we serve? How?

How could this decision affect our nonprofit?

Can we reduce the risks? How?

Can we avoid the risks? How?

Can we insure the charter school to protect us from the risk(s)?

Is the benefit to the charter school greater than the potential harm if we accept the risks that come with this decision?

Chapter 7: Board-Staff Relations

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the charter school board build and maintain an effective and mutually supportive working relationship with the charter school administrator?

Role Of The Board In Selecting And Supporting The Administrator

In Chapter 1, we identified the selection and support of the charter school administrator among the critical roles and responsibilities of the board. The charter school needs a good leader. Boards are responsible for recruiting and supporting a dynamic administrator who can provide vision and leadership to the charter school.

The administrator acts as the bridge between the board and the staff of the organization. She or he is designated to act on behalf of the board to implement its decisions. The administrator is given the authority to hire, organize, and supervise the staff of the charter school, develop appropriate policies and procedures, and allocate resources within budgetary guidelines. When looking for an administrator, the board must assess the charter school's specific needs, then seek a qualified individual who has the skills and experience to guide the charter school in meeting those needs. The board should also periodically evaluate the performance of the administrator in carrying out the decisions of the board and other assigned responsibilities. We'll discuss this critical activity in more detail below.

What's In A Name? – The Nature Of The Board-Staff Relationship

What's in a name? Understanding what it takes to build an effective board-staff relationship begins with understanding the nature of the position of charter school administrator. Some charter schools have begun to use the title “chief executive” or “administrator” as an expression of their understanding that the responsibilities of managing an independent public charter school go way beyond the traditional roles of school principal. This has far-reaching implications for how the board will structure its working relationship with the charter school administrator.

Common Problems In The Relationship

Common problems in the area of board staff relations include the following:

- Conflicts over who is responsible for what.
- From the perspective of board directors, the perception that the charter school administrator is over-stepping his or her authority or not providing the board with sufficient information.
- From the perspective of the charter school administrator, the perception that the board is not doing enough, or that board is taking action in areas that are the administrator's

responsibilities. This is sometimes referred to as board meddling or micromanagement and has been noted as a major problem for charter schools.

Laying The Foundation For An Effective Relationship

An effective working relationship between the board and charter school administrator is built upon some of the concepts presented earlier in the guidebook. First of all, the board administrator relationship should reflect the distinction between “ends decision-making” by the Board of Directors and the means used by staff to achieve the ends set by the board. Ends decision-making has the effect of creating boundaries with autonomy for the administrator and his or her staff. Such board major decisions including setting the budget, determining the strategic plan, formulating major policy, and interpreting laws and regulations with which the charter school must comply, create the playing field upon which the administrator has authority to act.

The Supervisory Role of the Board of Directors

The board has a supervisory or oversight role to play with respect to the charter school administrator. But this is as far into the organization as the board’s supervisory role should extend. The board hires, supervises, evaluates, compensates, and (if necessary) terminates the charter school administrator. The charter school administrator, in turn, hires, supervises, evaluates, makes compensation decisions within the scales and budget set by the board as provided for by the board-approved annual budget. However, the board is the ultimate employer of the staff in the following sense. It is the board that makes personnel policy. Personnel policy may be recommended by the charter school administrator and/or the personnel committee, but only the board can make the final decisions. The board will also give final approval of wage and salary scales, fringe benefit programs, vacation plans, and so forth. Finally, the board, usually acting through its personnel committee, may occasionally be called upon to function as a grievance committee with respect to an employee who has an unresolved dispute with the charter school administrator and who seeks relief from some higher authority.⁴⁴

Tools For Strengthening The Board/Administrator Relationship

There are a number of tools and practices that can be used to strengthen this relationship. They are each described below.

Effective Hiring or Selection Process for the Charter School Administrator

An effective working relationship between the board and charter school administrator has its roots in the approach used by the board to select the administrator in the first place. It has been said that the most important decision made by a board is the decision to hire the first administrator for the charter school. The administrator is given the authority to hire, organize, and supervise the staff of the organization, develop appropriate internal policies and procedures,

⁴⁴ Swanson, Andrew, Supervising the Director, Nonprofit World Journal, May/June 1989.

and allocate resources within budgetary guidelines. When looking for a new (or first), the board must assess the charter school's specific needs, then seek a qualified individual who has the skills and experience to guide the charter school in meeting those needs.

During the search process for an administrator, the board should clearly communicate to prospective candidates the following:

- How the board defines its roles and responsibilities.
- How the board defines the roles and responsibilities of the charter school administrator.
- How the board views the working relationship between itself and the administrator.

At the same time, there should be an opportunity for prospective candidates to talk about their own view of the board-staff relationship in order to make sure that the philosophy and style of the board and candidate are compatible.

Written Job Descriptions for Board Directors and the Administrator

In Chapter 1, we outlined basic roles and responsibilities of the charter school board. Clarity about these roles and responsibilities helps to lay the foundation for an effective board staff relationship. In Chapter 2, we spoke about the importance of a written job description for board directors. This description strengthens the foundation.

Such a description makes recruitment easier because it clearly communicates roles and expectations to prospective board directors. Beyond recruitment, the written description continues to serve as a guide for board director action and decision-making. The description also serves as a reference point for board director evaluation which we will cover in Chapter 10. For similar reasons, it is essential to have a written position description for the charter school administrator.

Written Administrator Job Description

The board is responsible, and has the authority, for developing the charter school administrator job description. The board first determines the requirements of the position. The board then creates a written position description based on these requirements. In actual practice, the administrator job position may be defined during the charter school application development stage before the board even exists. In this case, the board will review the administrator position description periodically to make sure it continues to accurately reflect board expectations and also meets the needs of the charter school. While there is variation in the specific definition of the charter school administrator responsibilities, in general, the administrator is the chief executive staff person in charge of implementing the policy and goals of the charter school board and overseeing the daily operations of the school. In the tools section of this chapter, there are three sample position descriptions that describe the administrator responsibilities in more detail.

Clear Definition Of How The Relationship Between Board And Administrator Works

Another tool for strengthening the board staff relationship is a written description that shows at a glance the corresponding and complementary roles of each. Building on the earlier distinction between governance and management, the lines of authority between the board and staff can be depicted by means of a three-column chart. In the first column, major areas of organizational decision-making and action are listed. Then, for each of these major areas, the second column lists the specific roles and responsibilities of the board. Finally, the third lists the corresponding specific roles and responsibilities of the administrator. In the Tool Section of this chapter, you can find a sample of this chart. Here is an abbreviated example.

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Board Of Directors</u>	<u>Administrator</u>
Finance and Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves annual budget. • Reviews periodic financial reports (balance sheet, income statement, changes in financial position). • Ensures that proper internal controls are in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares annual budget with input from staff and finance committee • Oversees preparation of periodic financial reports. • Implements proper financial controls.

While such a written chart will go a long way to prevent many problems and conflicts between the board and administrator, it is not a substitute for good communication and common sense.

Communication Plan that Provides Information

According to surveys done by the National Association of Independent Schools, board chairs frequently complain that the administrator does not communicate enough. At the same time, surveys show that administrators often worry that they overwhelm the board chair with too much information. Sometimes, the administrator will withhold negative information but in general, such a policy can lead to misunderstanding or conflicts. If we want to build relationships of trust, we need to adhere to what one administrator calls the “doctrine of no surprises.”

It is also important that the board and administrator talk about how much information is desired, best ways to share this information, and in general how to maintain effective communication with each other. For example, Mark Kushner, principal of Leadership High School in San Francisco, communicates by email with his board chair on a daily basis and meets face-to-face at least once a week.

Involvement of Board and Staff in Strategic Planning

There is probably no other organizational practice that can do more to strengthen the working relationship between the charter school board and the administrator than strategic planning. The process is described in some detail in Chapter 5 of this guidebook. During the process, board directors, the administrator and other staff have the opportunity to discuss in depth the major issues and challenges facing the charter school over the next several years. Together with other key stakeholders, the board and staff define the mission, core values, vision, goals, and strategies

that will make up the overall strategic plan. During the process, there is an opportunity to share differing viewpoints and explore a range of options for future action. As a result, board and staff can emerge from the planning process with a deeper and shared understanding of priorities for the future. Conversely, if the strategic plan is defined by the board or staff working in isolation, differences of opinion are not shared, discussed and resolved, leading to more problems in the future.

Maintain Healthy And Mutually Supportive Relationship Between The Board Chair And Charter School Administrator

In a very real sense, if you want to gauge the organizational health of the charter school board and staff structure, look first at the quality of the working relationship between the president of the board and the charter school administrator. Effective communication is one of the keys to maintaining this vital working relationship. The board president and the administrator need to meet regularly, setting aside ample time so that they can really get into some of current issues facing the charter school and still have enough time left over to check in with each other on progress or lack of it on the current goals and objectives.

The board trustee handbook published by the National Association of Independent Schools, includes a very useful chart that lists differences in the three positions of full board, board chair and administrator. The chart, adapted for inclusion in this guidebook, is helpful in understanding the interplay between the board and administrator.

Full Board	Board Chair	Administrator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate entity; can act only as a group. • Continuous existence as the corporate board though individual membership changes. • Part-time. • Does not supervise the staff • Has ultimate responsibility -- with chair. • Typically not expert in education. • Volunteer. • Focuses on governance, not administrative matters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot officially act alone. • Changes annually in many schools. • Part-time. • Does not supervise the staff • Has ultimate responsibility -- with full board. • Typically not expert in education. • Volunteer. • Focuses on governance, not administrative matters. May discuss some major administrative issues if asked by administrator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual. • Is temporary in the life of the school. Often serves longer than individual board directors. • Full-time. • Supervises other staff directly or through designee. • Has limited, immediate responsibility. • Typically is expert in education. • Salaried. • Focuses on administrative matters. Is involved in governance/policy matters - - advises board; offers recommendations; brings issues to board's attention.

Maintain An Effective Board Recruitment And Orientation Program

Building an effective board and staff relationship can begin early in the board recruitment and orientation process. Here we have an opportunity to describe for prospective board directors, our philosophy and approach to structuring effective board staff relations. This is important for a few reasons. First, there is enough confusion about board staff relations in many schools and other organizations that a new board director will not be clear about the complementary, yet distinct roles that the board and staff play in the charter school. It may also be that a new board director was previously involved in an organization in which it was customary for the board to micromanage. Not knowing anything different, this new board director may assume that this is the role that board directors play in your charter school. The process of educating board directors about their relationship to staff, in particular, the charter school administrator, continues in the board orientation and ongoing training programs.

Maintain Ongoing Clarity Re: Board Policy And Oversight Functions

We can maintain clarity regarding board policy and oversight functions by periodically reviewing and reflecting together on roles and responsibilities. A good way to sort out board and staff roles is to put all the areas of confusion on the table for open discussion. Invite the board along with the charter school administrator to engage in a dialogue about these issues. There are a number of formats available that can be used to create this opportunity for dialogue. See the Tools section of the chapter for a good example.

Evaluating The Charter School Administrator

One responsibility of the board of directors is appraising the work of the charter school's administrator. This evaluation can help to improve the confidence, support, growth and working relationship between the board and the administrator. While this review is sometimes avoided or done poorly, it represents an opportunity to identify challenges in program or performance, provide recognition to the administrator and strengthen the charter school's overall management. This evaluation process can also play a key role in clarifying and strengthening the board staff relationship

The charter school administrator should expect to receive a coherent view of the board's opinion of his or her work on an annual basis. The evaluation process will be more effective with advance planning. At a minimum, the appraisal can take the form of a pre-arranged discussion between the administrator and the board chair, although the evaluation should have a written component as well.

The charter school administrator's performance should be measured in relation to his or her job description, and the evaluation may cover the following activity areas: staff relations; administration; planning; educational program; leadership; fiscal management; external public relations; effectiveness in working with the board to meet the requirements of the charter contract and the overall strategic plan of the charter school; and effectiveness in helping the board achieve its own accountability and level of responsibility. The specifics of the evaluation process should be determined by the personnel committee or a task force of the Board, and the charter school administrator should be informed of the process in advance. An executive committee or the board chair can report the conclusions of the evaluation to the charter school administrator.

The type of evaluation the charter school uses can include any of several elements:

- Written input from all of the individual board directors;
- Written input from peer staff members;
- Self-evaluation;
- Intermittent observation;
- A formal rating system;
- Linkage to measures of student performance;
- An open-ended discussion of career goals and paths; and

- Opportunity for the charter school administrator to respond.

One approach that could work well for some charter schools is for the board chair to circulate a questionnaire to all of the board directors asking specific questions about the charter school administrator's performance during the past year. The questionnaire can use a ranking system (i.e. 1=outstanding, 2=expected, 3=below expectations, 4= not satisfactory) and include space for narrative comments. The Chair can then summarize these responses and communicate them to the administrator, seeking his or her reaction. At that point, the chair and the administrator can set performance objectives for the coming year, and then a report can be made to the full board for review. After that, changes in compensation can also be discussed.⁴⁵

Other charter schools will gladly share copies of their performance review process, procedures and forms with you. Ask colleagues and friends. Don't limit yourself to charter schools; check with other schools - both public and private, other nonprofits and for profits alike. On the Tools Section of this chapter, there are two excellent examples of administrator evaluation tools:

- EXCEL Principal Evaluation Form developed by Leadership for Quality Education, a business-backed school reform organization in Chicago, and Metamorphics, a private sector human resources consulting firm based in Chicago.
- Principal Evaluation Form developed by Jefferson Academy Junior High Charter School.

While we're on the subject of evaluation, there also needs to be an effective evaluation process for the board as well. Chapter 9 on board director motivation and accountability will discuss ways for the board to evaluate individual and collective board performance. We need to approach assessment as a tool to strengthen the performance of board and staff alike.

With so much riding on this critical process, here is a seven-step sequence to utilize in designing the administrator performance review process for your charter school. Adapt it to meet your specific needs:

- **Step 1 - Determine who will be responsible for conducting the performance review process.** Some charter school boards will delegate this responsibility to an executive committee or a personnel committee. There are written job descriptions for both of these committees in the tool section of Chapter 11. In some cases, the board will choose to establish an ad hoc group for this specific purpose. It's generally not advisable for the entire board to handle the performance review. Depending on the size of the board, it can be a bit intimidating for even the most self-assured and courageous charter school administrator to face a large group. Group size can also inhibit the kind of frank and open conversation about performance issues that is one of the hallmarks of an effective performance review process.
- **Step 2 - Development of the performance review process and timetable.** This step and the rest of the sequence is delegated by the board to the appropriate committee as described in step one above. Let's assume that the personal committee is responsible. A

⁴⁵ Assessment of the Chief Executive, National Center for Nonprofit Boards

critical element in the performance review process is a written evaluation survey instrument. There are samples in the tool section of this chapter. The personnel committee will also develop a timetable for the entire process. The performance review process and timetable can be shared with the charter school administrator for input. He or she may also be able to assist the personnel committee in finding resources and sample documents. The board of directors of the charter school receives the performance review process and timetable and then adopts it as the official procedure. The procedure is then implemented in the following way.

- **Step 3 - Set performance expectations for the charter school administrator.** The process begins with the personal committee review of the following four things: the current written job description for the administrator, relevant sections of the charter school educational plan and contract, as well as the charter school strategic plan, and the past performance of the charter school administrator. It is very important to link your performance reviews directly to administrator job descriptions, so a good first step is to update or review this job description. If such a job description is not in place, then developing one should be a high priority of both the board and the administrator. The job description ought to be results oriented and avoid going into detail about how the job is to be done. There is a sample administrator position in the Tools Section of this chapter.
- **Step 4 - Conduct the performance review.** The designated committee then conducts the performance review according to the previously agreed upon timetable. It's important that the rules of the game not be changed in midstream! Earlier, mention was made of the "doctrine of no surprises" with reference to the administrator's role in keeping the board fully informed. This "doctrine" applies equally well to performance assessment of the administrator. The board should ensure that the administrator is getting continuous feedback throughout the year, not just annually in the formal performance review.
- **Step 5 - Develop performance development action plan.** The charter school administrator then develops an action plan based on the results of the performance review. This action plan should identify areas of strength and weakness and strategies for continued professional growth of the administrator. The plan can also identify supportive roles that the board can play.
- **Step 6 - Review the performance review process.** After performance review process has been completed, it is good practice to review the entire process to determine what worked, what didn't work and what changes would strengthen the process in the future.
- **Step 7 - Repeat steps 1 through 6.**

Contracting Out: Other Staffing Models and Implications for Board Governance

Private Management Firms

Today, an increasing number of charter schools are considering contracting for educational management services. To make such contractual relationship work well, charter school boards need to strike an effective balance between fulfilling their public obligations to govern the school responsibly on the one hand, with giving contractors to freedom to handle school operations without micromanagement from the board, on the other. The Charter Friends National Network has published an important guide to help charter school boards build successful partnerships between the charter school and a school management organization. The publication is entitled Charting A Clear Course by Margaret Lin and Bryan C. Hassel. The authors point out that for a charter school board that considers contracting with a management organization, the same central issue remains: how to divide roles and responsibilities between the board itself and those who carry out the organization's day-to-day work. Whether those day-to-day staff are employees of the board or a management organization contracted by the board, it is still important to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of both. In thinking through a contract with a management firm, the board must ensure that the agreement empowers the board to fulfill its responsibilities as described in Chapter 1 of this guidebook. The authors go on to state that:

“Contracts can appropriately empower boards in several ways:

- Direct authority -- by stating clearly that certain responsibilities will be fulfilled by the board.
- Delegation with information -- by stating clearly that the management organization will carry out certain responsibilities and requiring the management company to provide certain kinds of information to the board (on a timetable) so the board knows whether delegated responsibilities are being fulfilled.
- Retained decision-making power -- by setting forth decision-making or sign off procedures that insurer to board had final approval at important junctures (e.g., the setting of the annual budget; significant expenditures; the establishment of annual enrollment procedures; the selection of the principal).

Each of these three options places a tool in the hands of board that enables it -- directly or indirectly -- to fulfill its responsibilities. The primary way in which boards create these tools is by adopting a comprehensive set of policies on a range of important issues. These policies set parameters within which the management company and school staff must work, outline critical decision-making processes, and establish formal lines of communication between the board and management.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Hassel, Bryan and Lin, Margaret, Charting A Clear Course, Charter Friends National Network and Center for Policy Studies, 1999.

Charting A Clear Course includes a valuable chart that provides a sampling of issues that these policies can address. More information about the publication is included in the tools section of this chapter.

Teacher Cooperatives

Another approach sometimes used by charter schools is to contract with a teacher cooperative. One of the best examples is the New Country Charter School in Henderson, Minnesota. The guidelines offered in the Charter Friends National Network publication Charting A Clear Course for structuring a relationship with an educational management organization would also be useful for a charter school board wishing to negotiate an agreement with a teacher cooperative as well.

Conflict Management and Resolution

To a certain degree, conflict in organizations is natural, predictable and can be tapped as a powerful resource for creative thinking and effective decision-making. In the best boards, at the same time there is agreement about the shared mission and vision of the charter school, there will be different perspectives about how to achieve the mission and vision. There are a number of planning, decision-making, and creative thinking tools and techniques that can be used to build, in a positive way on the differing perspectives and viewpoints of board directors. In the last chapter of the governance guidebook, there are a number of outstanding resources that should be considered.

Now, we want to focus on the kinds of conflicts and disagreements that we are all too familiar with. Marion Peters Angelica, in her new book Resolving Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations published by the Amherst Wilder Foundation, notes that role confusion between the executive staff leader and board directors is a major source of conflict in organizations. However, much of this conflict can be avoided between the board and staff of the charter school if roles and responsibilities of the board are clearly defined and some of the tools and practices presented in this chapter are utilized.

Even if this is done however, from time to time conflicts will rise and it is important to respond to them effectively and in a timely manner. There are a number of resources available to charter schools needing to manage and resolve conflicts. This new publication from the Amherst Wilder foundation stands out and we will be drawing on it for ideas.

Angelica identifies a number of typical points around which board conflict arises. The list includes the following:⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Angelica, Marion Peters, Resolving Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations, Amherst Wilder Foundation, 1999.

Common Areas of Board and Staff Conflict

Differences among board directors:

- Personal and communication styles.
- Vision for the organization.
- Personal expectations of the organization.
- Levels of participation in board work.
- Understanding of board directors' roles.
- Amount of loyalty to the administrator and the charter school.

Areas of authority and responsibility divided between the administrator and the board:

- Means of accountability for administrator to the board.
- Degree of autonomy available to the administrator in decision-making and action.
- Amount of information of board needs to feel informed about its work.
- Level policymaking in which the board engages.
- Level of financial responsibility the board undertakes to keep the charter school solvent.

Areas of authority and responsibility between the board chair and the administrator:

- Who serves as spokesperson for the charter school.
- Amount of information the board chair needs.
- Evaluation of administrator performance.

Level of access to the board of directors by line and mid-level staff:

- Budget allocations between programs.
- Personnel issues and grievances.

Differences among staff:

- Management styles.
- Methods of program implementation.
- Allocation of time and resources.
- Personal and communication styles.
- Expectations for participation in decision-making.
- Staff expectations for autonomy.

Conflicts among board directors and conflicts between board and the charter school administrator are among the most common.

Conflict Between Board Directors

In the case of conflict among board directors, it is advisable for the administrator to let the board chair take the lead in resolving such conflicts. Managing the board is the chair's job. A skilled chair will encourage the "warring parties" to resolve their issues away from the boardroom. It is important for the chair to respond quickly as even small conflicts, if left unresolved, will lead to deeper resentments. Angelica recommends the following:

“One of the most frequently used strategies in board conflicts is a private meeting. This is not done to keep the board conflict a secret but for the comfort of both disputing parties and the uninvolved board directors. To conduct a private meeting, the board chair can use shuttle diplomacy, speaking privately with individual board directors. Also, he or she can bring a limited number of disagreeing members together privately for a facilitated discussion outside of the boardroom. This can be especially helpful when a board conflict is among only a few of the board directors. However, the organization’s bylaw language defining a quorum affects the number of members a chair can convene without a meeting becoming an official board meeting. If the number of people in the conflicts constitutes a quorum, it is a formal meeting of board and all members should be invited to attend. If uninvolved members know the meeting topic, they can choose whether to attend, but they should not be excluded.

If the board chair is unwilling or unable to play such a conflict management role, the involvement of another leader must be sought. Sometimes a highly respected past board chair, board director, or other community leader can be a good choice. In any case, the person should have conflict management skills, be well regarded by all parties and be viewed as impartial before the parties and the issues at stake. A last resort is use of a skilled outside mediator.”

Conflict Between The Board And Executive

Angelica identifies three scenarios and offers conflict resolution suggestions for each, adapted here for charter schools.⁴⁸

Type Of Conflict	Typical Scenario	Conflict Resolution Strategies
Conflict between staff and administrator	A staff conflict is brought to the board. The administrator has not been able to resolve it. The administrator decides to bring it to the board's attention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board should step in when efforts to resolve conflict of the staff level have not succeeded. The administrator should outline the nature of the problem and suggest a process that the board might use. If the issue requires confidentiality be sure to maintain same. • The board may decide to delegate the conflict to the personnel committee or executive committee. This approach prevents the conflict from occupying so much of the full boards time that other important matters are neglected by the board. The committee listens to all parties and facilitates development and consideration of potential solutions. The committee may also serve as arbiter developing a solution that it feels is in the best interests of the charter school and the parties in conflict. Depending on authority delegated to the committee by the full board, the decision can be made at the committee level or it may have to be voted on by the full board. • If the committee is unable to resolve conflict, the board can attempt to resolve it at the full board level.
Board and administrator are in direct conflict	The board and charter school administrator have a serious disagreement about a major policy, decision or future direction. In many cases the administrator, as an employee of the board "loses" resulting in resignation or termination by the board. Such conflicts can cause major damage and in some cases put the future of the charter school in jeopardy as parents, staff and community leaders lose confidence in the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid action and professional help are usually called for since neither the administrator nor the board chair can manage a major conflict to which he or she is a party. Suggestions for outside help include a mediator, an organizational consultant with conflict management skills, or the charter school's previous board chair, administrator, or similar leader with conflict management skills. • Given the human dynamics around a serious conflict between the board and the administrator, it is advisable for the board and administrator to discuss in advance of any real crisis, how the help of an outside resource would be tapped in the event of a serious conflict.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

<p>Staff make an end run</p>	<p>In this scenario, a staff person supervised by the administrator has a conflict with the administrator and brings the issue directly to board directors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such an end run can undermine the supervisory relationship between the administrator and other staff of the charter school. Further it can damage the trust relationship between the administrator and a charter school board. New board directors and staff need to be tolled during orientation that the executive director is a point of contact for the Board of Directors. In all cases, the procedure is for staff to inform the executive director of any interactions with board directors. • When a member of the charter school board is approached by a staff person regarding such a conflict situation, the first response should be tell the staff person to bring the matter directly to the administrator and then inform the administrator of the contact. The administrator then talks with the staff person about the board-staff communications policy. • If the end run involves a staff person who is not satisfied with previous attempts to resolve conflict with the administrator, and has contacted the board as a “last resort,” the approach is different. Angelica advises that resolving such a conflict at this point will likely require the assistance of an outside mediator for resolution. The view by the board and administrator of some charter schools will be that the previous decision of the administrator stands and that revisiting that decision could seriously undermine lines of authority within the charter school. It is important that your charter school board decide what the policy will be in such situations.
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Once again, it is important that the board have policies in place to respond to the inevitable conflicts that will arise from time to time. The administrator and the board leadership to be very clear with each other about how to respond to the kinds of situations described above. The outcome is always more positive when such discussions occur before the storm descends.

Should Paid Staff Of The Charter School Serve On The Charter School Board?

The practice in many charter schools as it is in most traditional public schools is for employees of the school to serve on the governance body. The roots of this practice probably include some or all of the following factors:

- A commitment to shared decision-making leading to the conclusion that paid staff have to be included as members of the governing body whether that body is a board of directors as described in this governance guidebook or some other model.
- The view that if staff are not on the governing board then they will be left out of the decision-making within the charter school.
- Borrowing from the traditional governance practices of most public schools that reflect beliefs in shared decision-making, the strong influence of teacher unions on the development of shared decision-making practices, and the blurring of management and governance responsibilities.

- A lack of experience in structuring new school governance models. While charter school developers include some of the most innovative thinkers and practitioners in education today, there has been a lack of knowledge and experience on the part of educators in organization development including structuring effective governance models.

So should paid staff of the charter school serve on the charter school board? There are differing opinions on this important issue and there needs to be a continuing dialogue.

Many believe that the answer to this question is “yes”. As mentioned earlier, the practice in many schools is to include the principal or school administrator alone or with additional members of the teaching staff. Such involvement will afford staff an opportunity for input into decision-making and will help to build a sense of teamwork and unity among board directors and staff.⁴⁹

In the view expressed by Robert C. Andringa and Ted W. Engstrom, authors of Nonprofit Board Answer Book, the answer is “no”. While they are discussing the issue in relation to nonprofits in general, their comments can offer some insight to charter school developers and board leaders. Their views, which run counter to prevailing practices, will, no doubt, provoke controversy.

In general, Andringa and Engstrom state that staff should not serve on the board. They believe that serving as a paid staff member and then filling the role of a volunteer board director of the same organization is, on the face of it, a conflict of interest. Accountability to the community is better served through "a separation of power, checks and balances that comes from distinguishing the role of the board from that of staff." They view as the ideal model, a volunteer board of competent and committed people setting policy and overseeing the work of staff. The board can benefit from the staff's experience and perspectives without putting them on the board. Their position is spelled out in more detail in an excerpt from their book included in the tools section of this chapter.

In either case, it will be important to have board policies in place that manage the real and potential conflicts of interest that may arise. Such policies were discussed in Chapter 6 of this guidebook.

⁴⁹ The point can be made that in a charter school, committed to the empowerment of staff and their involvement in decisions that impact their work with children, there will be woven into the very organizational fabric of the charter school, a rich and extensive system of decision-making practices that involve staff. In this approach, staff decision-making would be linked to the governance decision making of the board in a manner described in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Division of Roles between Board and Administrator
- Board And Staff Roles Worksheet (Source: Nonprofit Board Answer Book)
- Sample Job Descriptions For The Administrator (Source: YWCA Charter School)
- EXCEL Principal Evaluation Form (Source: EXCEL materials were developed by Leadership for Quality Education, a business-backed school reform organization in Chicago, and Metamorphics, a private sector human resources consulting firm based in Chicago)
- Principal Evaluation Form (Source: Jefferson Academy Junior High Charter School)
- Board Staff Time And Attention Graph (Source: National Association of Independent Schools)
- Should Staff Serve on the Board? (Excerpt from: Robert C. Andringa and Ted W. Engstrom, Nonprofit Board Answer Book)

Essential Resources for Building Board-Staff Relations

- Pierson, Jane, and Mintz, Joshua, Assessment of the Chief Executive, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999. (Includes diskette containing assessment tool for annual reviews.)

Division of Roles Between Board and Administrator

(Adapted from “Building and Managing An Effective Board of Directors,
Center for Nonprofit Management in Southern California)

This chart describes the roles and responsibilities of the board and the charter school administrator in critical areas. Review each entry and revise as based on the specific needs and requirements of your charter school. This chart should be reviewed on an annual basis and updated if necessary.

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Board Of Directors</u>	<u>Administrator</u>
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercises fiduciary role to ensure that the charter school is properly managed. The board should have a mechanism to validate information from the administrator. • Maintains legal status; insures the proper paperwork is submitted to governmental agencies. • Reviews financial and business dealings and exercises proper judgment in self-dealing transactions - - avoidance of conflicts of interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must provide information to the board to demonstrate that the charter school is well managed. • Compiles information for annual filing requirements. • Signals to the board if either of the situations is likely to occur.
Finance and Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves annual budget. • Reviews periodic financial reports (balance sheet, income statement, changes in financial position). • Ensures that proper internal controls are in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares annual budget with input from staff and finance committee • Oversees preparation of periodic financial reports. • Implements proper financial controls.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes mission and program direction for the charter school and approves goals and objectives designed to achieve those ends. • Reviews strategic plan and progress. • Assesses compliance/progress in achieving educational and other outcomes agreed to in the charter contract. • Assesses program evaluation plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in establishing mission and program direction for the charter school. Contributes to vision of the charter school; and assists the board in maintaining focus and momentum for the charter school • Develops specific program goals and objectives based on the board specific mission. • Develops reports or oversees staff development of reports to demonstrate program progress.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and adopt written policies • Responsible for reviewing policies periodically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies need for new policies • Responsible for assuring the implementation of policies and for assisting the board in analyzing policy options
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets and reviews personnel policies. • Hires Charter School Administrator and evaluates the administrator's performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements personnel policies. • Recommends changes in personnel policies to the board. • Hires all personnel and evaluates performance of staff members (or delegates to appropriate supervisor).

Resource Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for assuring long-range commitments of resources; establishes a fund development plan and participates in its implementation. Reviews and approves all major grant proposals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct research and maintain information database. Assist in fund development efforts. Develops grants, and other funding applications, plans fund-raising events, enters business ventures to support mission.
Board Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and communicates clear expectations of Board directorship Assures effective participation of Board directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates training and information exchange for members in preparation for selection of Board directors Facilitates effective communication among Board directors
Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines and communicates the role of Board, administrator in making decisions Assures appropriate involvement of board directors in charter school decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes action decisions within parameters set by the board, collaborates both with the other staff and Board in some decisions
Community Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes the charter school to parents and the general public, including serving as an emissary of the charter school to the broader community. Promotes cooperative action with other charter schools including activities and occasions when the charter school should take part in coalitions, shared programs, joint action, etc.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interprets the mission of the charter school to the community through direct involvement, public relations programs, including personal contact, descriptive program literature, and work with the media; works closely with the board for an effective division of labor.
Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approves contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages contracts
Add Others Here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Board and Staff Roles Worksheet

(Source: Robert C. Andringa and Ted W. Engstrom, Nonprofit Board Answer Book, NCNB)

For each issue or task, indicate with the appropriate letter where your board is now and where it should be:

- A. Board initiates and decides on its own (charter school administrator may implement).
- B. Charter school administrator formally recommends and board decides.
- C. Charter school administrator decides and/or acts after consultation with board directors.
- D. Charter school administrator and/or staff act on their own within previous board policies.

Issues And Tasks	Is Now	Should Be
1. Mission statement for organization		
2. Formal annual goals and objectives.		
3. Recruitment of new board directors.		
4. Board and committee structure.		
5. Policy regarding board role and activities.		
6. Hiring and salaries of staff other than charter school administrator.		
7. Changes in bylaws to keep current.		
8. Annual income and expense budget.		
9. Budget amendments as required.		
10. Capital expenditures.		
11. Staff compensation policies.		
12. Other personal policies and practices.		
13. Investment policies.		
14. Arrangements for external audit.		
15. Fund-raising plan and policies.		
16. Adoption of new programs or services.		
17. Termination of current programs or services.		
18. Staff organizational structure.		
19. Organization's insurance program.		
20. Board meeting agendas.		
21. Other:		

YWCA Global Career Academy

Job Description

Position: Managing Administrator

The Managing Administrator will have the oversight of the YWGCA with direct supervision of the fiscal operation, organizational management and employment, including the following three focus areas:

Instruction: Promoting, motivating and maintaining a productive, creative and caring atmosphere in which every student can experience success.

Performance: Fostering an environment where students and staff are challenged to reach their greatest potential.

Evaluation: Securing and compiling data to determine if YWGCA's vision, mission, goals, and outcome objectives are being met.

The Managing Administrator reports directly to the YWCA Chief Program Officer

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Master's degree in education or an equivalent degree from an accredited institution.
2. At least 4 years experience in administration, supervision and classroom teaching experience.
3. Understands the changing and creative environment that leads to academic excellence.
4. A commitment to the ethical standards of personnel practices and willingness to continual professional development.
5. High degree of personal and professional integrity.
6. Positive skill development in interpersonal relationships with adults and children.
7. Experience in fund development and grant writing.
12. Belief in the YWCA's One Imperative: The YWCA, locally and nationally, has adopted the One Imperative of thrusting our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary.
13. Basic understanding of and commitment to total quality management role and techniques.
14. Demonstrated experience in implementing Best Management practices, to include: strategic planning, customer service and staff development.
15. Computer literate in Microsoft Word, Excel and e-mail.
8. Valid driver's license and reliable car.
9. Experience in budget development and financial management.
10. Experience in interpretation of statistical data.
11. Experience in integrated education and child and family support systems.
12. Must possess the following characteristics:
 - a) Like all children
 - b) Enjoy working with all children
 - c) Believe all children can learn
 - d) Innovative creative thinker
 - e) Flexible, adaptive
 - f) Solution oriented problem-solver
 - g) Global, world view

DIRECT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Responsible for every aspect of the Charter school operation and is the primary figure in determining the schools quality and character.
2. Establish and implement the charter school's on-going strategic planning process.
3. Responsible for insuring that the ideas, people, and processes needed to make the charter school the most meaningful entrepreneurship educational experience in the world are in place and operating at world class standards.
4. Establish a school culture based on caring, concern, trust and support for all students enrolled in the charter school.
5. Establish an educational culture based on caring, concern, trust and support for all educators and staff in the charter school.
6. Serve as the head of the charter school's Executive Council.
7. Inspire the educational teams to become immersed in the school's mission and dedicated to its attainment.
8. Responsible for the design and delivery of every student, educator, staff, parent and community educational program carried out by the charter school.
9. Ensure and promote professional development for educators and staff and encourage attendance at workshops and other developmental activities.
10. Responsible for the development of a strong relationship with parents, civic leaders, the media, community organizations, businesses, volunteers, other administrators and the chartering authority.
11. Responsible for reporting and compliance for all government regulatory and funding programs.
12. Participate as team player in all decision-making processes at the charter school.
13. Develop and successfully maintain all the charter school partnerships with the community, other educational and social service agencies, local businesses, foundations, etc.
14. Demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills to develop and maintain frequent rapport with students, staff, parents, community, business and industry partners and administration.
15. Employ effective communication skills with students, parents, and the charter school administration.

COLLABORATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES:**I. In collaboration with the YWCA Chief Program Officer:**

- A. Responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with charter school partners and potential external stakeholders.
- B. Staff the Board of Directors which meets on a regularly scheduled basis.
- C. Setting the standards for quality and character of the school.

II. In collaboration with the YWCA Chief Program Officer and the Executive Council:

Establish alliances with national and local organizations which can help us deliver better programs for internal as well as external stakeholders.

III. In collaboration with YWCA Chiefs Program, Marketing & Development and Planning & Public Policy Officers:

Responsible for all government, foundation, corporate, and individual fund raising and support.

IV. In collaboration with Coordinator of Learning Systems and Planning & Public Policy:

1. Research and develop "benchmarks" by which we can measure the quality of the charter school's educational strategies.
2. Develop benchmarks by which the quality of the entire scope of the services offered by the charter school can be measured.

EXCEL Principal Evaluation Form

The EXCEL Workbook and Form included here were developed in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools principals, board (or local school council) members, administrators and others. The Workbook and Form are one piece of the evaluation and performance planning continuum. As part of the project, participating pilot schools receive training on how to use the Workbook and Form, and individualized consultation from professional human resource consultants. They are also provided access to *PerformancePro*, a state of the art Internet-based application that gives principals a timesaving system to plan and monitor progress, to keep themselves and their schools on course, and to report back to their boards.

What is Good Evaluation?

EXCEL's goal is to increase the quality of educational leadership in Chicago Public Schools by developing and implementing a standards-based process of principal evaluation. By using standards as the basis for evaluation, a principal's job is clarified for the evaluating team. This keeps the focus on specific behaviors that determine school success, and avoids discussions of feelings, impressions and personality. The following guideposts can be helpful to charter and non-charter schools alike, in Chicago or any city:

- **Good evaluations are fair.** Any evaluation process can be misused – but better forms and training can help minimize that possibility. While no evaluation process is liked by everyone, pilot principals and their boards say the EXCEL process is clearly fairer.
- **Good evaluation measures elements that determine successful educational leadership.** EXCEL's standards-based format, with 10 specific key behaviors for each standard, focuses on just those elements. The descriptive workbook guides principals and boards in measuring those elements in principal actions.
- **Good evaluation supports principals' performance.** This evaluation process determines areas for improvement, which helps the principal focus and plan for improvement.
- **Real evaluation improves communication between the principal and board.** This evaluation process provides a platform for sharing information and discussing principal responsibilities in a clear and well-defined way.
- **Good evaluation helps the board better understand the principal's job.** EXCEL helps boards focus on what successful principals do. Principals and board directors drafted this language, continue to refine it, and say that it helps them focus on concrete examples instead of feelings and impressions.
- **Useful evaluation forms are written in straightforward language with clear instructions.** We are working to create a principal evaluation process that is useful to a range of local school boards. We have tried to avoid “education-ese” and designed a simple rating scale.
- **Good evaluation is a year-round activity, not an end-of-the-year “gotcha” or letter of praise.** EXCEL encourages the board and principal to start the school year or contract by reviewing

the evaluation form and agreeing on expectations and priorities, and then checking in on progress regularly throughout the year.

EXCEL is a project of Leadership for Quality Education (LQE) a business-backed school reform organization in Chicago that has worked for the last decade on improving local school governance. LQE has implemented EXCEL with the assistance and expertise of Metamorphics, a private sector human resource consulting firm. Metamorphics created the evaluation workbook and form, designed PerformancePro and then adapted that software specifically the needs of Chicago school principals.

EXCEL is a collaborative effort of the business community, LSCs, the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, and the Chicago Public Schools. EXCEL has received funding from the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, Prince Charitable Trusts, the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Questions on EXCEL should be directed to either John Ayers at Leadership for Quality Education, 312-853-1210 or Mike Zwell at Metamorphics, 312-663-9300.

Principal Evaluation Form

School: _____

Region: _____

LSC Chair: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Principal: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contract Period: _____

Standards Rating Section

After completing the Evaluation Workbook, please write below the final ratings for each of the seven Standards:

- _____ 1. School Leadership
- _____ 2. Parent Involvement and Community Partnerships
- _____ 3. Student-Centered Learning Climate
- _____ 4. Professional Development and Human Resource Management
- _____ 5. Instructional Leadership: Improving Teaching and Learning
- _____ 6. School Management and Daily Operations
- _____ 7. Interpersonal Effectiveness

Reminder: Use the Evaluation Workbook to help you determine a rating for each of the Standards.

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Performance Measures Rating Section

Using the Performance Measures Data Sheet (to be distributed separately), **circle the appropriate rating** for reading test scores, math test scores, attendance rate (elementary & high schools), dropout rate (high schools), and graduation rate (high schools). (Refer to pages 11-12 in the Evaluation Workbook for the criteria that were used to establish the ratings.)

Test Scores Overall Rating

Elementary Schools: ITBS

Reading:	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
Math:	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet

High Schools: TAP

Reading:	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
Math:	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet

Other Measures

Attendance Rate: (elementary and high schools)	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
Dropout Rate: (high schools only)	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
Graduation Rate: (high schools only)	Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet

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FOR SPRING 2000 USE

Evaluation Workbook

Worksheets to complete the Principal Evaluation Form

School: _____

Principal: _____

Region: _____

Signature: _____

LSC Chair: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Contract Period: _____

Date: _____

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EXCEL is a project of Leadership for Quality Education (LQE).
The pilot is a cooperative effort of the business community, the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, Local School Councils, and the Chicago Public Schools.

This principal evaluation process evaluates principals on seven Standards and several performance measures.

The Seven Principal Standards

Each Standard represents one aspect of a principal's job that is important to school success. The Standards were developed from the "Five Essential Supports" and the state Standards for School Leaders, and link to the Chicago Principal and Administrators Association's professional development programs.

This workbook can help you decide the appropriate rating for each Standard. The workbook contains one page for each Standard. Each page includes:

- A **definition** of the Standard.
- Two or three **Categories** under the Standard.
- A set of **Key Behaviors** for each Category that describe actions that demonstrate skill in a Standard.
- A numbered **rating scale** with behavioral descriptions for each rating.

Performance Measures

LSCs will receive a set of school data to use to evaluate performance measures.

Test scores are evaluated by rating three areas:

- Absolute Score
- Average gain over 1 year
- Trend over time

The ratings of these three areas will be added to determine the overall rating ('Exceeds', 'Meets', and 'Does Not Meet'). For further explanation, see the performance measures worksheet at the back of this workbook (pp. 11-12). Note: due to the lack of historical data for 10th grade TAP scores (used to measure gain and trend), high schools will only evaluate absolute scores until this data becomes available.

Attendance rate (elementary and high schools), dropout rate (high schools), and graduation rate (high schools) are evaluated based on the current rate compared to the amount of improvement from the previous year. Look-up tables are available at the back of this workbook to help LSCs determine how the rating was achieved.

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After completing this workbook, please transfer the final ratings for the standards and performance measures to the Principal Evaluation Form (green).

School Leadership

Definition: Leads the school by building high performing teams, responsibly managing work and people, and enlisting others in the school vision.

Instructions

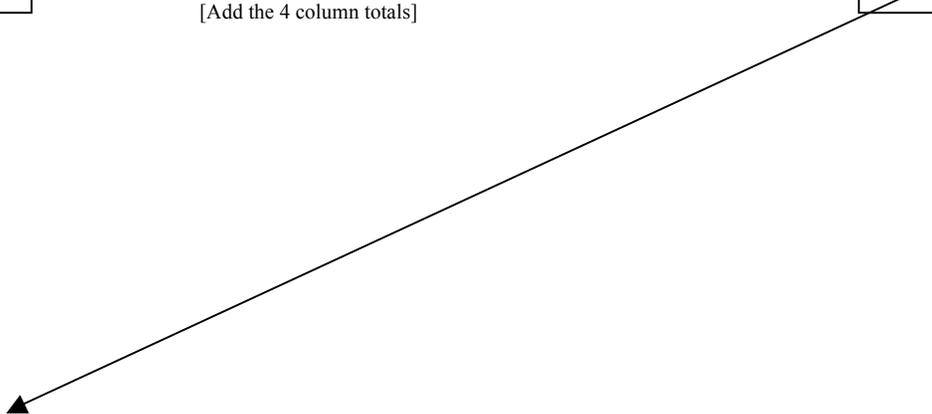
Please rate how frequently the following Key Behaviors are demonstrated, using the rating scale below. Circle the rating number that is most accurate. If you are unable to rate a Key Behavior, please refer to the appendix for sources to help you find more information.

Key Behavior Rating Scale: 1 = Rarely (Almost never) 2 = Occasionally (Every now and then) 3 = Often (Usually) 4 = Most of the time (Almost always)

1	②	3	4	Category: Builds High Performing Teams
1	2	③	4	Encourages and responds to input from team members
1	2	③	4	Works with staff and students to establish and build teams within the school
1	2	③	4	Helps the team set inspiring goals
①	2	3	4	Focuses the team on achieving specific, measurable results
				Category: Coordinates the Work of Others
1	2	3	④	Works in close partnership with the LSC
1	②	3	4	Clearly sets and communicates expectations and timelines
1	2	③	4	Delegates responsibility and tasks well
				Category: Implements the Vision
1	2	③	4	Develops the school vision with stakeholders (for example: LSC, parents,

1	②	3	4	staff, and community members)
1	2	③	4	Identifies where the school is not achieving the vision; creates and implements plans to address problems
1	6	15	4	Communicates and demonstrates a clear personal vision for improving the school
1	6	15	4	Total for Each Column (Add the points in each column)

26 Total of Key Behavior Ratings \div 10 = 2.6 Average Rating
[Add the 4 column totals] [Between 0 and 4.0]



Refer to the rating scale below and **circle** the rating number that equals your **Average Rating**. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for **School Leadership**.

Rating Scale for School Leadership:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of successful school leadership by consistently building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.
▲ 3 Good 2.6	Often demonstrates school leadership, but is sometimes not strong at building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.
▼ 2 Fair	Sometimes shows basic school leadership skills but is often ineffective at building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely leads the school, and is not effective at building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.

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1	2	3	4	Identifies where the school is not achieving its vision; creates and implements plans to address problems
1	2	3	4	
				<i>Total for Each Column (Add all the numbers in each column)</i>

	Total of Key Behavior Ratings ÷ 10 =	=		Average Rating
	[Add the 4 column totals]			[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and **circle** the rating number that equals your **Average Rating**. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for **School Leadership**.

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Rating Scale for School Leadership:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of successful school leadership by consistently building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.
3 Good	Often demonstrates school leadership, but is sometimes not strong at building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.
2 Fair	Sometimes shows basic school leadership skills but is often ineffective at building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely leads the school, and is not effective at building high performing teams, delegating responsibility, and implementing the school vision.

				schools
1	2	3	4	Invites feedback from the community
				<i>Total for Each Column</i>

<input style="width: 50px; height: 30px;" type="text"/>	Total of Key Behavior Ratings ÷ 10 =	=	<input style="width: 50px; height: 30px;" type="text"/>	Average Rating
	[Add the 4 column totals]			[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and circle the rating number that equals your Average Rating. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for Parent Involvement and Community Partnerships.

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Rating Scale for Parent Involvement and Community Partnerships:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of successfully involving parents and creating community partnerships by consistently providing helpful parent programs, making parents and community feel welcome, and establishing relationships with the community.
3 Good	Often involves parents and creates community partnerships, but is sometimes not strong at providing helpful parent programs, making parents and community feel welcome, and/or establishing relationships with the community.
2 Fair	Sometimes involves parents and creates community partnerships, but is often ineffective due to weakness in providing helpful parent programs, making parents and community feel welcome, and/or establishing relationships with the community.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely involves parents and creates community partnerships, and is not effective at providing helpful parent programs and making parents and community feel welcome.

				attendance
1	2	3	4	Implements policies and procedures consistently and responsibly to help ensure an environment that is safe, stable, and conducive to learning
1	2	3	4	Follows school discipline code and security plan
1	2	3	4	Creates a school environment that supports students through crisis and other challenges
				<i>Total for Each Column</i>

	Total of Key Behavior Ratings ÷ 10 =		Average Rating
	[Add the 4 column totals]		[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and circle the rating number that equals your Average Rating. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate.

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Rating Scale for Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of creating a student-centered climate by setting and communicating high academic expectations, creating an atmosphere of respect and caring, and maintaining discipline and order.
3 Good	Often successfully creates a student-centered climate, but is sometimes not strong at setting and communicating high academic expectations, creating an atmosphere of respect and caring, and/or maintaining discipline and order.
2 Fair	Sometimes creates a student-centered climate, but is often ineffective due to an inability to set and communicate high academic expectations, create an atmosphere of respect and caring, and/or maintain discipline and order.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely creates a student-centered learning climate, and is not effective at setting and communicating high academic expectations, creating an atmosphere of respect and caring, and/or maintaining discipline and order.

				<i>Teacher Observation and Instructional Supervision</i>
1	2	3	4	Engages teachers in goal setting to improve classroom practice
1	2	3	4	Regularly reviews and revises expectations of teacher performance
1	2	3	4	Provides constructive feedback to teachers on a regular basis
1	2	3	4	Evaluates teachers and staff based on competence and productivity
				<i>Total for Each Column</i>

	Total of Key Behavior Ratings ÷ 10 =			Average Rating
	[Add the 4 column totals]			[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and **circle** the rating number that equals your **Average Rating**. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for **Professional Development and Human Resources Management**.

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Rating Scale for Professional Development and Human Resources Management:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of promoting professional development and managing teachers and staff by consistently demonstrating a commitment to self-improvement, encouraging others to develop, providing feedback, and reviewing expectations with staff.
3 Good	Often succeeds at promoting professional development and managing teachers and staff, but is sometimes not strong at self-improvement, encouraging others to develop, providing feedback, and/or reviewing expectations with staff.
2 Fair	Sometimes succeeds at promoting professional development and managing teachers and staff by demonstrating a commitment to self-improvement, encouraging others to develop, providing feedback, and/or reviewing expectations with staff.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely succeeds at promoting professional development and managing teachers and staff, and is not effective at developing self or staff.

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				<i>Instruction</i>
1	2	3	4	Monitors instruction across classrooms and the school
1	2	3	4	Supports and promotes innovative teaching methods and encourages teachers to pilot appropriate innovative programs to engage students
1	2	3	4	Provides programs to meet the needs of special education and limited English proficient students
				<i>Total for each column</i>

	Total of Key Behavior Ratings \div 10 =		Average Rating
	[Add the 4 column totals]		[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and circle the rating number that equals your Average Rating. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for Instructional Leadership – Improving Teaching and Learning.

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Rating Scale for Instructional Leadership – Improving Teaching and Learning:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of improving teaching and learning by getting input on curriculum, supporting a variety of teaching methods, and creating learning programs that are appropriate to the students.
3 Good	Often successfully improves teaching and learning, but is sometimes not strong at getting input on curriculum, supporting a variety of teaching methods, and/or creating learning programs that are appropriate to the students.
2 Fair	Sometimes improves teaching and learning, but is often ineffective at getting input on curriculum, supporting a variety of teaching methods, and/or creating learning programs that are appropriate to the students.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely improves teaching and learning, and does little to promote student success.

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				outside sources to enhance school programs
1	2	3	4	Coordinates the budget and resources with the SIPAAA
1	2	3	4	Ensures fiscal policies are followed
1	2	3	4	Provides the LSC with budget reports and financial information on a regular basis
				<i>Total for Each Column</i>

	Total of Key Behavior Ratings ÷ 10 =			Average Rating
	[Add the 4 column totals]			[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and **circle** the rating number that equals your **Average Rating**. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for **School Management & Daily Operations**.

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Rating Scale for School Management & Daily Operations:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of ensuring successful school operation by consistently managing the budget and ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the school.
3 Good	Often succeeds at managing school resources and daily operations, but is sometimes not strong at managing the budget and/or ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the school.
2 Fair	Sometimes succeeds at managing school resources and daily operations effectively but is often ineffective at managing the budget and/or ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the school.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely manages school resources or daily operations effectively, and is not effective at managing the budget and/or ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the school.

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1	2	3	4	Honors confidences and confidential information, within the limits of the law
1	2	3	4	Follows through on promises and commitments
1	2	3	4	Motivates and inspires staff to contribute to the success of the school
				<i>Total for Each Column</i>

$$\boxed{} \text{ Total of Key Behavior Ratings } \div 10 = \boxed{} \text{ Average Rating}$$

[Add the 4 column totals]
[Between 0 and 4.0]

Refer to the rating scale below and **circle** the rating number that equals your **Average Rating**. If your rating is a number like 2.6 that falls between two ratings, read the description of the rating above 2.6 (the rating for a 3) and the description of the rating below 2.6 (the rating for a 2) and circle the rating whose description best fits. (For example, a 2.6 can be changed to either a 2 or a 3). This is the rating for **Interpersonal Effectiveness**.

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Rating Scale for Interpersonal Effectiveness:	
4 Excellent	Has a track record of successfully understanding and interacting with diverse groups by consistently communicating an understanding of other points of view, responding to parent and community concerns, and facilitating collaboration, understanding and respect.
3 Good	Often understands and interacts effectively with diverse groups, but is sometimes not strong at communicating an understanding of other points of view, responding to parent and community concerns, and/or facilitating collaboration, understanding and respect.
2 Fair	Sometimes interacts effectively with groups, but is often ineffective at communicating an understanding of other points of view, responding to parent and community concerns, and facilitating collaboration, understanding and respect.
1 Unsatisfactory	Rarely interacts with diverse groups, and is seldom able to understand other points of view or respond to parent and community concerns.

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Appendix

Additional Sources of Information for Principal Evaluation

Interview Questions

One of the best resources for principal evaluation is the principal. If there are Standards, or Key Behaviors under a specific Standard, that you are unable to rate, ask the principal for specific examples of how s/he demonstrates this on the job.

An example of the type of questions you can ask:

Tell me about a time when you effectively... (insert Key Behavior here).

- *What was your role?*
- *How did you apply your knowledge and experience to the situation?*
- *What were the difficulties you faced and how did you overcome them?*
- *What did you learn from the experience?*
- *Where did you apply that learning?*

Although these questions may sound like an interview, remember that your focus is on specific examples and stories that show how the principal has demonstrated the Key Behavior or Standard.

Additional Sources of Information

If you are looking for additional information on a specific Standard or Key Behavior, the following may be helpful sources:

- Principal's portfolio
- The objectives of the School Improvement Plan (SIPAAA)
- The REO evaluation of the principal
- The Uniform Principal's Performance Contract
- The School Report Card
- Student Discipline and Attendance Records

- Principal Bulletins
- Budget Reports
- School Visitor's Book
- LSC Minutes
- Written messages to the faculty, students, or parents

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Performance Measures Rating Criteria

Elementary Schools

The following two pages explain the performance measures ratings provided on each school's **Performance Measures Data Sheet** (to be distributed separately). Using the numbers provided on the data sheet, circle your school's ratings in each of the categories. Use this information to determine what level of improvement is necessary for your school to increase its rating. The results from the Performance Measures Data Sheet must be transferred to the Evaluation Form (green).

READING ITBS

Absolute Score:

Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
At or above 50% of students at or above national norms	20% - 49.9% of students at or above national norms	Below 20% of students at or above national norms

Average Gains:

Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
More than 1.0 growth over 1 year	1.0 growth over 1 year	Less than 1.0 growth over 1 year

Test Score Trend (4-year Moving Average):

Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
Upward trend (getting better)	Flat trend (staying the same)	Downward trend (getting worse)

MATH ITBS

Absolute Score:

Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
At or above 50% of students at or above national norms	20% - 49.9% of students at or above national norms	Below 20% of students at or above national norms

Average Gains:

Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
More than 1.0 growth over 1 year	1.0 growth over 1 year	Less than 1.0 growth over 1 year

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Test Score Trend:

Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet
Upward trend (getting better)	Flat trend (staying the same)	Downward trend (getting worse)

OVERALL RATING

The overall rating for Reading and the overall rating for Math was calculated by combining the individual ratings in each area (absolute score, gain, and trend). Keep in mind that each of the three separate area ratings carries equal weight.

Ratings for: Absolute Score + Gain + Trend	=	Overall Rating in Reading or Math
A rating of Exceeds in at least 2 of the 3 areas	=	Exceeds
A rating of Meets in at least 2 of the 3 areas	=	Meets
A rating of Does Not Meet in at least 2 of the 3 areas	=	Does Not Meet
A rating of 1 Exceeds, 1 Meets, and 1 Does Not Meet	=	Meets

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Attendance Rate Lookup Table for Elementary Schools

This table shows you how your school's rating on attendance was determined. Using the numbers provided on your **Performance Measures Data Sheet** (to be distributed separately), find your attendance rate in one of the boxes in the top row and the amount of improvement from the previous year in one of the boxes in the left-hand column. Next draw a line down from the attendance rate and across from the improvement until they meet. The word in the corresponding box is your rating on attendance.

	ATTENDANCE RATE					
Amount of Improvement	Below 91%	91% to 91.9%	92% to 92.9%	93% to 93.9%	94% to 94.9%	95% and Above
Greater than 1%	Meets	Meets	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds
0.5% to .99%	Does Not Meet	Meets	Meets	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds
0 to 0.49%	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Meets	Meets	Meets	Exceeds
-0.5% to 0	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Meets	Meets	Exceeds
-1.0% to -0.49%	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Meets	Meets	Exceeds
More than -1%	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Meets	Meets	Meets

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1997 - 1998 Jefferson Academy Junior High Principal Evaluation

Scoring Guide:	
5	Always exceeds expectations
4	Sometimes exceeds expectations
3	Meets expectations
2	Sometimes meets expectations
1	Does not meet expectations
N/O	Not Observed

Evaluator _____

Date _____

Curriculum and Program Guidance						
Ensures that expectations have been established for the use of the Core Knowledge and other curriculum and that staff members are using these standards as the basis for instruction	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Provides staff development that prepares staff to use the Core Knowledge and other curriculum	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Is prepared to articulate Jefferson Junior High's vision for and implementation of the Core Knowledge and other curriculum to both staff and community	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Documents that expectations have been established for and are being met by staff members regarding study, use, and	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

implementation of assessments of student achievement.						
Encourages cooperation, coordination of instruction, and teamwork among staff to support the school's content-based educational philosophy	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Works with staff to ensure that the appropriate amount of homework and extracurricular assignments are given to support the school's philosophy of academic rigor	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Looks for ways to improve the quality of the program	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Works to encourage the development of a well-rounded student through instruction academics, athletics, the arts, and character development	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Seeks methods to meet the academic needs of all students and communicates effectively with staff to see these plans are implemented	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Works with staff to ensure a fair and consistent grading system for and assessment of each student	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates commitment to Jefferson Junior High's vision of success for all students	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Oversees and monitors the special education staff ensuring the integration of the special ed program and compliance with special ed laws	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Comments:						
Integration of Technology						
Has established and monitors a school technology plan	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Allocates adequate budget funds for technology purchases to support the technology plan	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Ensures that provisions for staff development and ongoing technical support accompany technology purchases	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Ensures that the staff integrates technology with instruction and aligns the use of technology with the curriculum	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Develops essential skills in the use of technology and models their importance to the staff	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Communicates the use of technology in the school	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments:

School Environment

Carries out the Discipline Plan as established in the Jefferson Junior High Policies Handbook	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Provides opportunities and functions that encourage school spirit and pride	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Engenders character development in the student	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates a commitment to the school community through participation in school events and functions	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments:

Human Relations / Personnel Management

Evaluates staff in accordance with Jefferson Junior High School Board policy and contract language	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Uses the Evaluation Standards as the basis for the evaluation process adhering to the time table established by the Board of Directors	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Works closely with the Board's Teacher Evaluation Committee in hiring and evaluating staff	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates strong knowledge of Colorado State statutes and Jefferson Junior High School Board policy as they pertain to the responsibilities of school staff and hiring practices	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Builds a safe and cooperative staff environment	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Provides regular performance feedback to staff and motivates them to perform well	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Promotes and empowers personal and professional growth in self and staff	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Delegates responsibilities appropriately and effectively	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Handles staff conflict in a professional and timely manner	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Works well in group problem solving situations	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Includes staff in planning	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Makes himself available to staff to help solve problems	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments:

Job Knowledge

Demonstrates a high level of job knowledge and skills	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates knowledge of human development and learning theories	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates a high level of knowledge in Core Knowledge and other curriculum and the content-based methods of instruction	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates a high level of knowledge for authentic student assessments and understands how to encourage students to reach mastery	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Comments:						

Leadership						
Carries out the vision, mission, and philosophy of Jefferson Junior High as defined in the school Strategic Plan	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Develops long-range plans and sets goals and objectives for Jefferson Junior High in accordance with the guidelines of the Board	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Demonstrates strong leadership qualities	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Inspires respect and trust from the staff and school community	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Models and supports behaviors that reflect creative thinking and effective problem solving	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Takes active and appropriate steps to institute needed change without being prompted, and maintains efforts until resolution or completion	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Comments:						

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Management and Administration

Demonstrates accuracy, thoroughness, and effective use of time	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Analyzes relevant information, makes decisions, delegates responsibility, and provides appropriate support and follow-up	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Uses sound judgment to guide daily work	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Effectively uses a variety of skills and resources to accomplish tasks	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Effectively delegates administrative duties to support staff	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Identifies problems in a timely manner and seeks corrective action	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Manages competing demands	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Oversees and manages operating budget effectively	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments:

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Professional Conduct

Collaborates with colleagues, parents, and community members to fulfill responsibilities related to District and site goals and policies	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Keeps communications with Jefferson County School District open and handles correspondence in a timely manner	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Follows the guidelines established in the Jefferson Junior High Contracts and Policies handbook	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Follows the "Open Meetings" guidelines in regard to the Jefferson Junior High Board	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Displays commitment to professional excellence	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Applies feedback to improve performance	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments:

Communication

Communicates effectively by using a variety of techniques and systems	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Communicates effectively with students, staff, parents, and community members using appropriate communication methods	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Provides consistent and timely communication to parents by way of news letters, memos, or scheduled reports	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Communicates changes to schedules in a timely manner	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Exhibits good listening skills and accepts feedback from Board, staff, and parents	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Communication with the school community exhibits diplomacy and sound judgment	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Advocates for charter school in the public arena whenever possible	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments:

Reporting and Board Relations

Oversees and presents budget and financial reports to Jefferson Junior High Board	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Interacts with and communicates with the Board of Jefferson Junior High in a professional and open manner	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Documents and communicates the goals and progress of Jefferson Junior High to the Board, District, and school community	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Presents proposed program or curriculum changes to the Board for approval prior to implementation of such changes	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Communicates relevant issues to the Board in a timely manner	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Provides articulate, professional, and timely reports to the District	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Considers and adheres to provisions of our charter contract with the District	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
Comments:						

Board Staff Time And Attention Graph

(First appeared in The Trustee Handbook, Seventh Edition, by Mary DeKuyper, published by the National Association of Independent Schools. Reprinted with permission.⁵⁰)

Policies	Time and Attention Graph
<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Strategy • Survival • Leadership 	<p>Board's Decisions</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Administrator's Advice</p>
<p>Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorizations • Finance Policies • Enrollment • Employment Terms 	<p>Shared Decisions: Board and Administrator</p>
<p>Operational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing • Program • Systems 	<p style="text-align: left;">Board's Advice</p> <p>Charter School Administrator's Decisions</p>

Above the diagonal line = allocation of board's time

Below the diagonal line = allocation of administrator's time

⁵⁰ Hundley DeKuyper, Mary, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998

Should Staff Serve on the Board?

(Excerpt from: Robert C. Andringa and Ted W. Engstrom, Nonprofit Board Answer Book, NCNB)

"As the backbone of organizations, the board is accountable for stewardship of the public and community investment in their charitable mission. For-profit corporations routinely put their paid executives on their boards. Nonprofits need to pursue good business practices, but they're not pursuing profits. They're changing lives and providing services. In exchange, they receive contributions and tax benefits. Accountability to our major moral owners suggests a separation of power, a set of checks and balances that comes from distinguishing the role of the board from that of the staff.

In general, the only staff member who might be justified to sit on the board is the chief executive. Some advocate voting rights for the chief executive to reflect a true peer relationship while working with the board. Others believe the chief executive should be a non-voting board member because of the inevitable conflicts of interest.

In our opinion, the ideal model is a volunteer board of competent and committed people setting policy and overseeing the work of staff. As a board, they have one agent to implement policy: the chief executive. In many of the organizations with which we are familiar, however, the chief executive is also a full voting member of the board. The reasons for this practice include:

- The chief executive was a founder who incorporated the organization and helped recruit the first board members.
- The chief executive is, by virtue of age and experience, a true peer among board members and wants to be treated as such.
- A new chief executive insists on board membership as a condition of employment.

Frankly, these are not strong arguments. A founding chief executive should be building a board who could fill the board role independently. The chief executive who does a good job should never feel insecure or looked down upon by board peers just because he or she does not sit on the board.

Consider that the board members are expected to vote their consciences on every action. The chief executive's job is to support the board by implementing its decisions. He or she needs to maintain the confidence and trust of the entire board, building relationships that promote effective interaction. Why put the chief executive in the position of ever having to vote against any board members?

We like the "without vote" clause in the bylaws for chief executives who are given a board seat. Membership on the board should be *ex officio* -- by virtue of position -- not elected. Periodically voting whether or not the chief executive should be a board member is not the best way to signal approval or disapproval of job performance. Even without a vote on the board, most chief executives have far more influence over board decisions than they may realize. ... When handled wisely, this power far exceeds most board member's ability to influence board policy.

How does a no-vote policy for staff affect board members? It encourages them to take their jobs more seriously and prevents automatic deferral to the views of staff, who have greater programmatic experience. They view their chairman as the key leader. They cannot depend on staff to fill both board and staff roles. They learn more easily the distinction between board work and staff work.

We should add our strong feeling that in no way should several paid staff members be members of the board. In addition to the concerns we have already shared, here's another: board membership for some staff but not for others creates divisions. Why should some have authority over their peers in decisions about budget, salaries and benefits, and program priorities (Editor's note: even if such staff serving as board members are recused from voting on such matters, as members of the board one would expect that they would have influence). The board can benefit from the staff's experience and perspectives without putting them on the board."

Chapter 8: Building Strong Parent And Community Relations

(Note: a companion piece to this guidebook is *Charter Schools: Creating Family Friendly Institutions*. Access this online guide at <http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/familyfriendly/>)

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the charter school board maintain strong parent and community relations?

Introduction

Historically, schools have been isolated from the communities that they serve. In recent years, this isolation has begun to break down as schools realize that in order to succeed in educating children, they need to build strong relationships with the parents of their students and they need to be connected to the communities in which their students live.

Building strong relationships with parents and community is another area in which charter school board can play a critical role. This chapter will explore ways for the charter school board to forge strong relationships with parents and the community. While charter schools are making good on their promise to bringing innovation to the classroom, there is a continuing need to be innovative in strengthening their ties to the communities they serve.

This important work begins with the charter school board thinking about those groups to whom it is most accountable. These groups are frequently referred to as stakeholders and for a school they include parents and the broader community that the charter school hopes to benefit. An effective charter school board will look for a variety of ways to link with these stakeholders. In this way, the board can build loyalty and confidence in the charter school's mission and educational program. Linking is a two-way street: the board listens to parents and the community, and it also communicates and reports to them about the charter school.⁵¹

Here are some examples of the board listening to parents and community members:

- Sending a survey to parents to solicit input before a major policy decision.
- Convening a series of parent and community forums, chaired by board directors, to discuss a major challenge facing the charter school.
- Hosting monthly parent coffees to create informal opportunities to meet and hear parent concerns.
- Designing the strategic planning process for the school so that there are ample opportunities for parents and community leaders to participate and help shape priorities for the future.

Here are some examples of board reporting to parents and community members:

⁵¹ Nonprofit Board Answer Book, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

- Conducting a breakfast briefing for civic leaders to describe the charter school's unique educational program and its positive impact on student achievement.
- Writing personalized letters to all major donors that contributed to the new building campaign.
- Including a column written by the board president in the monthly parent newsletter outlining key issues facing the school.
- Organizing the series of personal interviews by board directors with the leaders of youth and family serving agencies in the community in order to explore opportunities for collaborative programs benefiting children enrolled in the charter school and their families.

Promoting Parent and Family Involvement

Involving parents and families in the life of the charter school is critical to the school's success with children. In order to make this a priority, the board should begin by developing a formal policy on parent and family involvement. A sample policy is included in the Tools Section of this chapter. With such a policy in place, the board, in collaboration with the charter school administrator and other staff, develops a formal plan for parent involvement. In some cases such a plan will have already been created as part of the development of the charter school application. In any case, it should describe in some detail, how parents will be involved in the school.

An excellent example is included in the Tools Section of this chapter. It was developed by the YWCA Global Career Academy Charter School in Milwaukee WI. Parent involvement in the charter school will take the following four forms: Active support of their own child's learning, Involvement in school governance and decision-making, Volunteering at the school, Advocacy in support of the charter school, the charter school movement in general, and school improvement overall. It includes a variety of strategies and expresses a deep commitment to making parent involvement a central feature of the charter school design. Review the strategies to determine which might be incorporated into your charter school.

Another valuable resource is the new publication from Charter Friends National Network entitled "Creating Family Friendly Schools." It can be found at (website??)

One of the most important strategies for developing positive board/parent relations involving parents of children enrolled in the charter school as members of the charter school board itself.

Dr. Chenzi Grignano, Director of Charter Schools Project at Duquesne University observes: "Many charter schools have sought to give parents a greater voice in school governance than public schools typically do. Often the charter school's by-laws reserve one or more slots for parents; sometimes one or more board directors, or even the whole board, is elected by the school's parents. Charter schools must be careful to give all parents (not only the parents who

founded the school) a legitimate means of empowerment, but not in such a way that a dissident group can take over the board and undermine the school's mission."⁵²

In addition to board service, parents can also be involved as non-board volunteer members of board committees. In this setting board directors and parent leaders will have an opportunity to build personal relationships. For some parents, committee participation will be a stepping-stone to board service in the future.

Use of Advisory Committees

Another effective strategy for building and maintaining relationships with parents and community members is through the use of advisory groups. Advisory bodies are sometimes called advisory committees, councils or task forces and they can assist both the board and staff of the charter school. The National Center for Nonprofit Boards has prepared a useful guide and some of its suggestions are offered here.⁵³

Specific purposes of advisory groups can include:

- Raising money.
- Serving as advocates for the charter school to the community service.
- Providing feedback to the charter school from the community.
- Reviewing, monitoring, or assessing the educational program as a whole, or specific parts.
- Evaluating the performance of the charter school.
- Providing a means for involving people who are willing to give technical assistance, but have limited time (for example instructional technology experts).
- Gathering input from or serving as a liaison with key constituencies of the charter school.
- Providing an independent, unbiased sounding board.

Some of the common problems encountered in the use of advisory groups include:

- Lack of clarity in purpose, role or scope.
- Ignorance about or lack of commitment to the mission of the charter school.
- Unclear expectations of individual advisory group members.
- Lack of leadership and support from the charter school administrator or key leaders.
- Weak organizational structure.
- Lack of interaction with and feedback from the governing board.
- Under utilizing members of the advisory group.

⁵² Grignano, Chenzi, Guidance for Charter School Operators, Charter Schools Project, Duquesne University, 1999.

⁵³ Axelrod, Nancy R., Creating and Renewing Advisory Boards: Strategies for Success, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.

- Members of the group over stepping their advisory role. (Some groups have learned not to refer to the advisory group as the "advisory board." Advisory group members can soon forget the word "advisory" and begin to view themselves as a policy-making board).
- Lack of orientation and/or continuing education programs.
- Haphazard selection process.

To avoid these and other problems with advisory groups, you can apply some of the same tools and techniques that help create an effective charter school board which have been described in previous chapters of the governance guidebook. Some of these practices include:

- Create a written description that outlines the roles and responsibilities and limitations of the advisory group. The sample description is included in the Tools Section of this chapter.
- Develop a process for recruiting members to serve on the advisory group.
- Offer orientation and training to new members of the advisory group so that they are clear about their roles and have the information needed to be successful in their work.

Here are some ways to develop a productive relationship with between the charter school governing board and an advisory group:

- Invite the chair of the advisory group to serve as a voting or nonvoting member of the charter school board or on a committee of the board.
- Invite the chair and other key members of the advisory committee to participate in strategic planning.
- Plan social activities that allow members of both groups to meet informally and cement personal relationships.
- Give formal recognition to members for their contributions to the success of the charter school.

Linking Parent And Community Involvement To Plans For Student Achievement

While parent and community involvement serves many important purposes in the charter school, it must also be seen as a way to enhance student achievement. The National School Boards Association has developed an important planning tool that links parent and community involvement strategies to the goal of improved student achievement. It's called the Key Work of School Boards and identifies eight areas of the board work: Vision, Standards, Assessment, Accountability, Alignment, Learning Environment, Collaborative Partnerships, and Continuous Improvement. Taken together, these areas of "board work" outline a planning process for raising student achievement. Each key work area includes a brief outline of the key actions for school boards, including issues to cover and questions to ask. These are accompanied by engagement strategies for involving parents and community in the specific area of key work. This framework is part of an extensive website that outlines the role of school boards as they work with their

parents, communities and staff to create and rent a vision for student achievement. Each section of the site includes key actions that the school board can take, strategies to engage families and communities in these actions, resources, as well as an extensive database of actual school practices that demonstrate each key action. This framework will provide charter school boards with an effective tool to link parent immunity involvement to comprehensive plans to raise student achievement. In the Tools Section of this chapter, there is a summary of the planning framework with strategies for parent and community engagement.

Forging Alliances, Partnerships and Collaborations

Strategic alliances and collaborations are other tools that can be used by the charter school to strengthen relations with the community. These alliances can take many forms: public-private partnerships, joint initiatives with other organizations having similar missions, short and long term coalitions, partnerships with community groups that serve the same families being served by the charter school, and contractual agreements with organizations that can enhance the quality of educational services provided by the charter school. These structural options, positioned along a continuum from cooperative agreements to more formal coordinating structures, will vary according to the type of need or issue the charter school is attempting to address.

The phrase "collaborative efforts" has been applied to a range of approaches and solutions to specific problems experienced by nonprofit organizations. Michael Winer-Cyr of the Amherst Wilder Foundation defines collaboration in this way: "Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. This relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals, a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for success, and sharing of resources and rewards."⁵⁴

The Community Collaboration Manual lists a number of benefits of collaboration. Collaborations can help communities:⁵⁵

- Identify gaps in current services and cooperate to fill the gaps;
- Expand available services through cooperative programming and joint fund-raising;
- Mobilize action to effect needed change through collective advocacy;
- Reduce interagency conflicts and tensions by addressing issues of competition;
- Achieve greater visibility with decision-makers, the media, and the larger community;
- Conserve resources by avoiding unnecessary duplication of services
- Share similar concerns while being enriched by diverse perspectives that different members from varied backgrounds bring to the collaboration.

The National Civic League has identified the following keys to successful collaboration:

⁵⁴ Winer-Cye, Michael and Ray, Karen, Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1992.

⁵⁵ The National Assembly, The Community Collaboration Manual. The National Assembly, 1993.

- The participating groups must have a shared vision of the collaboration and what is to be accomplished through the joint effort.
- The participating groups must have a stake in the success of the collaboration.
- The participating groups must focus on including people in the shared decision-making of the collaboration. They must agree that the process of collaborating is as valuable as the results.
- The collaboration must be open to the richness that comes from including members of different cultural, racial, ethnic, and income groups. Such diversity results in new perspectives and creative solutions to problems.
- All participants should contribute resources to the collaboration. Such contribution increases their sense of ownership in the collaboration.
- The collaboration should embrace as many segments of the community as possible, including businesses, grassroots groups, government, youth and service clubs. (Actual participants will reflect the nature of the issue or problem being addressed by the collaboration.)
- The goals of the collaboration should be specified and progress toward the goals should be continuously monitored.

And the authors of the *Nonprofit Board Answer Book* offer the following guidelines to evaluate potential collaborations:⁵⁶

- Will the proposed collaboration further the mission of the charter school?
- Does the charter school and the proposed partner(s) have adequate staff and financial resources to support the collaboration?
- Is it the best way to achieve the desired results?
- Is the added work and coordination time worth it?

Collaboration needs to be viewed as more than just another organizational skill. It should be one of the hallmarks -- one of the distinguishing characteristics -- of charter schools. The lasting value of collaboration and coalition-building will come from the new relationships that form and deepen among the charter school and other organizations as they work together to meet the educational needs of children. For charter schools, this relationship building is the key to long-term effectiveness. As these community relationships grow stronger, the charter school's capacity to meet the educational needs of children will increase dramatically.

The Tools Section of this chapter contains a number of useful resources for building effective partnerships and collaborations. Some of the resources offer general guidelines on developing coalitions, and collaborations. Others are more focused. *Business And Education: a Practical Guide to Creating and Managing a Business/Education Partnership* provides detailed information on how to organize ongoing formal programmatic relationships with corporations and businesses. *Organizing and Managing School Volunteer Programs*, as the title would suggest provides information on developing a formal volunteer program that can provide involvement opportunities for parents and community members alike. *Full-service Schools and Building a Full-service School: a Step-by-step Guide* will be valuable resources for charter schools wishing

⁵⁶ *Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

to organize a network of community services and supports to address the needs that face children and families in low income communities.

Also included in the Tool Section is a resource entitled “Why the Board Should Consider Volunteer Issues” by Susan Ellis, a national expert on volunteer management.

Chapter 8: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Model Parent/Family Involvement Policy (Source: Parent Involvement Policy adopted by the California State Board of Education)
- Sample Contracts with Parents (Source: US Charter Schools website at http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/legal.htm)
- Plan for Parent and Family Involvement (Source: YWCA Global Career Academy Charter School)
- Sample Advisory Committee Description (Source: Creating and Renewing Advisory Boards: Strategies for Success, National Center for Nonprofit Boards)
- Sample Parent Involvement Policy (Source: National PTA and California State Board of Education)
- Why The Board Should Consider Volunteer Issues (Source: Susan J. Ellis, Energize, Inc.)
- Leadership for Student Achievement: A Board of Education Framework (Source: National School Board Association. Go to: www.nsba.org , click on “Key Work of School Boards”).

Essential Resources for Building Strong Parent and Community Relations

- Arsenault, Jane, Forging Nonprofit Alliances, Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Axelrod, Nancy R., Creating and Renewing Advisory Boards: Strategies for Success, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.
- Calfee, Carol, Wittwer, Frank, and Meredith, Mimi, Building a Full-service School: a Step-by-step Guide, Jossey-Bass, 1998. (Includes diskettes with numerous planning forms and worksheets)
- Charter Schools: Creating and Sustaining Family Friendly Institutions. Charter Friends National Network, 2000. (Website: <http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/familyfriendly/>)
- Dryfoos, Joy G. Full-service Schools, Jossey-Bass, 1984.
- National Association of Partners in Education, Inc. Business And Education: a Practical Guide to Creating and Managing a Business/Education Partnerships, 1990.
- National Association of Partners in Education, Inc., Organizing and Managing School Volunteer Programs, 1987.
- PTA Family Involvement Standards, Go to <http://www.pta.org/programs/pfistand.htm#Research>
- Rackham, Neil, Friedman, Lawrence, and, Ruff, Richard, Getting Partnering Right. McGraw-Hill, 1996.
- Stern, Gary J., Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations: Mobilize People for Marketing Success, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1997.
- The National Assembly, The Community Collaboration Manual. The National Assembly, 1993.
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools, 1996.

- Winer, Michael and Ray, Karen, Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1992.

Model Parent/Family Involvement Policy

The Charter School Board recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and family during the entire period the child spends in school. To support the goal of the charter school to educate all students effectively, the schools and parents must work as knowledgeable partners.

Although parents are diverse in culture, language, and needs, they share the school's commitment to the educational success of their children. This school district and the schools within its boundaries, in collaboration with parents, shall establish programs and practices that enhance parent involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families.

To this end, the Board supports the development, implementation, and regular evaluation of a parent involvement program in each school, which will involve parents at all grade levels in a variety of roles. The parent involvement programs will be comprehensive and coordinated in nature. They will include, but not be limited to, the following components of successful parent involvement programs:

- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Responsible parenting is promoted and supported.
- Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Community resources are made available to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning.

The Charter School Board supports professional development opportunities for staff members to enhance understanding of effective parent involvement strategies. The Board also recognizes the importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate conducive to parental participation.

In addition to programs at the school level, the Charter School Board supports the development, implementation, and regular evaluation of a program to involve parents in the decisions and practices of the charter school, using to the degree possible, the components listed above.

Engaging parents is essential to improved student achievement. This school district shall foster and support active parent involvement.

This sample policy is based, in part, on the Parent Involvement Policy adopted by the California State Board of Education.

Plan for Parent and Family Involvement

(Source: YWCA Global Career Academy Charter School)

The guiding principle behind the Plan for Parent and Family Involvement is that parents of charter school students are the primary customers of the school on behalf of their children. While they are not the only people needing to be involved, their involvement has special importance. The YWCA recognizes that parents and other family members know the strengths of their children the best. The Charter School will work closely with parents to develop the most powerful educational experiences possible for their children. The goal at the YWCA Charter School is to have significant parent involvement. It will be the norm -- not the exception. Among the strategies to ensure involvement are the following:

- Incorporate into the position descriptions of educators the responsibility to encourage parent involvement and participation.
- Provide a range of supports to encourage parent involvement.
- Telephones in the classrooms
- Educator as friend of the family.
- Initial and on-going orientation for parents.
- Student performances to attract parents and others into the school.
- Regular "newsletter" to inform parents.
- Parents involved on committees and project teams.
- Set desired performance re: parent involvement and then develop processes to achieve them.
- Newcomer support and Orientation Groups; Buddy system

Parent Involvement in the charter school will take the following forms:

1. Active Support Of Their Own Child's Learning

- Workshops for parents and family members covering methods they can use to assist their children with projects and homework in order for them to become more involved with their child's education; Initiation of computer literacy classes; How to study; How to promote exploration of careers by their children.
- Conflict resolution training will be provided to parents to encourage use of similar techniques at home.
- Tutoring training will be provided to parents and other family members for use in after school program and at home.
- Student Success Facilitator will promote parent involvement in learning of their child.
- Parents will work with staff to devise, implement and modify strategies for children that exhibit inappropriate behaviors.

2. Involvement In School Governance And Decision-Making

- Parents on Board of Directors (see below)
- Parents participating in All-School Forums (see below)
- Parents involved in school improvement project teams
- Parents involved in ongoing focus groups (see below)

3. Volunteering At The School

- The Charter School will hold focus groups of parents to determine ways they want to be involved, barriers to their involvement, strategies to overcome those barriers.
- The Charter School Board of Directors with guidance from the Executive Council and parents will set the standard for parent involvement utilizing flexible definitions of parent involvement built upon the real life work and family schedules of parents. Then the School will commit to doing whatever it takes to achieve that standard avoiding a more punitive approach.
- The Charter will use parents as educators (consider process used by Horizon learning systems).
- The Charter school will have a well-organized volunteer program incorporating best practices in volunteer management developed throughout the country over the last several years. Development and implementation of the school volunteer program will be the responsibility of the Community Resource Coordinator. Parents will be provided with a variety of volunteer opportunities that support the overall goals of the school, the personal learning plan for their child, and at the same time, fit well within their own family, work, and personal schedules.

4. Advocacy In Support Of The Charter School, The Charter School Movement In General, And School Improvement Overall

- Parent will be provided opportunities to assist educating the boarder community about the charter school.
- Parents will be involved in efforts to support and strengthen effective charter school legislation at the state and federal levels.
- Parents will be given training and support that will enable them to play active community organizing and advocacy roles in local educational issues.

The following structures, programs and practices will be in place to promote and support the highest levels of parent involvement in the Charter school:

1. Parents will be represented on the **Board of Directors**, which is the major policy and decision-making body for the Charter school.
2. At least 2 times a year, an **All School Community Forum** will convene to provide all parents, students and community members an opportunity to express their opinions on major policy matters that the Board of Directors and Executive Council will be considering or should be considering in the future. The All School Community Forums will be an opportunity for the Board of Directors and Executive Council to "listen to the customer."

3. A **Parent Resource Center** will be established within the school to link parents and other family members with volunteer opportunities, as a place to cool out, get information, see their children, engage in their own study and learning, make phone calls, etc. The intent is to create an environment so attractive that parents are always in the school. The Charter school will seek input from the Greater Milwaukee Education Trust Parent Empowerment Project for ideas on to set up such a Parent Center.
6. The Charter school will conduct ongoing **Parent and Community Focus Groups** on a regular basis to share customer feedback on school operations and issues/matters brought to their attention by the Board of Directors and Executive Council.
7. **Anonymous Surveys** of parents will be conducted at least twice a year to gather customer feedback on school policy and operations, the effectiveness of the educational program, usefulness and accessibility of health and social services, and in general, to "listen to customer."
8. Parents will also participate in the **Initial Orientation** for new parents during which they will receive detailed information on the student learning outcomes, accountability measures, educational program and philosophy as well as opportunities for volunteer involvement.
9. After family enrolls student in the Charter School, parent(s) and/or legal guardian and the student participate in the **student and family assets inventory process** to identify family and student strengths and assets as well as any challenges, special needs or barriers to student success. This assessment process will be based in part on the Search Institute's Youth Development Assets Model, the New Visions Boost Up Assessment, Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences,
10. Parents will play a central role in the development of the **Personal Learning Plan (PLP)** for their child. As previously described, educators, parents and students will develop a personal learning plan for each student. The foundation of the Plan will be the educational standards and learning outcomes of the Charter School. The Plan will also incorporate the results of the family and student assessment. The plan will specify progress that the student will make in attainment of the learning outcomes appropriate for the students age and grade level, and will also address special needs, challenges and potential barriers to the student's success. Parents and other caring adults in the each student's life will be provided with ideas and resources to support the child's learning. The educators, parents and students will formalize their commitment to the personal learning plan by entering into a **written Family-School Compact for Learning**.
11. Parents will also be involved in **quarterly conferences** to monitor the personal learning plans of their children. On a quarterly basis, the parents, student and educator meet to review student progress based on the Personal Learning Plan developed at the start of the school year. Input from other members of the Student Success Team is utilized. Personal Learning Plan is revised as needed. Other support services are provided as needed and/or requested by student, family, or educator.

12. The staff of the Charter School will receive in-depth formal **training in working effectively with parents**. This training will include general information on the benefits of and barriers to parent involvement, information on awareness of different family backgrounds and lifestyles, techniques for improving two-way communication between home in school, information on ways to involved parents and helping their children learned in school and outside of school, and ways that schools can meet the family social, educational, and social service needs by means of the comprehensive network of health and social services that are and integral part of the overall design and operation of the charter school. Specific skills will include: how to conduct effective conferences, working with parents when a student has a problem, communicating with parents about student progress, and helping parents understand educational goals, strategies and methods of assessment.

13. The Charter school will also link parents to school by utilizing a variety of **technologies to communicate** with parents, families and students after hours. Beginning with basics, telephones will be installed throughout the school facility so that educators and other staff, like professionals in other fields, will have ready access to telephones. The WWW and email will also been utilized as more and more families, regardless of income, are able to access these powerful technologies. The charter school will promote the availability of free Internet access at all of the neighborhood libraries in the city of Milwaukee. In addition to the school Website, parents and families will be provided information and assistance on how to use other Web sites throughout the country that will help them support the educational and social success of their children. Voice mail, audio and video tapes, fax back systems and traditional homework hotline will all be integrated into the communications system that advances the learning goals of the Charter school.

Statement Of Organization And Purpose For The Fund-Raising Advisory Committee Of The Charter School

(Source: Creating and Renewing Advisory Boards: Strategies for Success,
National Center for Nonprofit Boards)

Purpose:

To help the Board of Directors and charter school administrator solicit donations and grants from individuals, corporations and foundations to help meet the budget of the charter school.

Membership:

The number of members of the advisory committee shall be no more than 20. The charter school administrator and the board chair shall serve as members of the advisory committee.

Selection:

During the initial year, members will be elected by the Board of Directors and, thereafter, by the established membership of the advisory committee.

Term of office:

Advisory team members serve a two-year term to ensure continuity in the teams work, terms will be staggered.

Member responsibilities:

Each member of the advisory committee is expected to:

- Attend a minimum of two meetings per year.
- Actively participate in the functioning of the committee, and be available for individual consultation to the chair of the fund development committee.
- Occasionally accompany a board director or staff of the charter school for personal solicitation of selected fund-raising prospects.
- Write or sign letters endorsing the charter school's fund-raising solicitations.

Why The Board Should Consider Volunteer Issues

By Susan J. Ellis, Energize, Inc.

Volunteers are a legitimate subject of concern to a Board of Directors because of the following basic principles:

- 1. Volunteers are a valuable resource for the organization and should be included in any discussion of resource development. If cash is obtained by "fund-raising," volunteers result from "people-raising."** Volunteers do not "save" money but involving them effectively can stretch the budget beyond what it might otherwise cover. Volunteers should therefore be considered as one of the options available to support your organization's efforts
- 2. It is possible and desirable to take a proactive stance in planning for volunteer involvement.** The ways volunteers can help your organization are limited only by your vision for that involvement. The volunteer world is changing and evolving. The organization that can tap into emerging sources of community involvement will find support of many kinds, but it won't be "business as usual" Is your organization poised to take advantage of today's volunteer force? Have you articulated what you want to achieve through volunteers?
- 3. Volunteers are influential agents of the organization.** Volunteers have credibility in the community because they are perceived as supporting an organization without personal vested interest. They therefore can play key roles in public relations, fund-raising, public education, legislative advocacy, and other community outreach functions.
- 4. Volunteers are a source of valuable information for planning and evaluation. Volunteers are "insider/outsideers" - they are familiar with the organization but not fully integrated into its daily activities. They are knowledgeable, but they have a unique perspective. They may also have access to consumer or client opinions in a different way than employees do.**
- 5. Volunteers are your "unsalaried personnel"** The board discusses policies that affect paid personnel, even though implementation is the role of the chief executive: new project areas that require funding, major personnel policies, affirmative action statements, and ethical considerations. In some organizations, volunteers far outnumber employees. Wouldn't the volunteer staff benefit from the same types of guidelines?
- 6. Because volunteers are agents of the organization, their work poses potential risk management questions and insurance needs. Anyone acting on behalf of an organization can put others at risk or can be at risk. Volunteers are not inherently more or less likely to have accidents or make mistakes. However, the board should make sure that the organization has taken all the necessary steps to protect the client, the volunteer, and the paid staff.**

(Source: The Nonprofit Board's Role in Maximizing Volunteer Resources, by Susan Ellis, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997)

**National School Boards Association -- Leadership for
Student Achievement: A Board of Education Framework**

KEY ACTIONS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
Engage in a comprehensive planning process to establish a clear vision of student achievement as top priority of school board, staff, and community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve community in vision setting process through open forums, solicitation of input, and broad-based review. 2. Include community in regular reevaluation and adjustment of vision. 3. Establish a process for on-going community involvement in the planning.
<p>Set clear standards for student performance. <i>Questions to ask about standards:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they related to something external and credible in our community? • Do they deal with what students should know and be able to do at key points in their school career? • Are they disseminated clearly and widely to students, staff, and community? 	<p>Create community forums to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What standards should be set for your students • How your proposed standards relate to state, national, or international norms • What needs your parent, business, and higher education communities identify for students.
<p>Establish an assessment process that measures student achievement at regular intervals. <i>Questions to ask about assessment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it explicitly tied to standards? • Does it assess both knowledge and skill? • Does it use multiple, ongoing measures (not single, high-stakes testing)? • Is there a “range” of achievement targets being assessed that represent what the local educational community feels are important educational outcomes? • Does it measure more than minimum competencies? • Does it provide progress data for every student? • Do we know and understand how the results of the assessments produced will be used? • How will results of assessments be shared with teachers and curriculum developers? • How will it be used to alter instruction to focus on greatest needs? • Does it provide individual teacher-level progress data? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Establish community advisory representation as essential part of assessment development and review process. 5. Assure that assessment program is widely and thoroughly explained to the community at large both through meetings and the media.

KEY ACTIONS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
<p>Establish a strong accountability process.</p> <p><i>Questions to ask:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does our district’s staff evaluation system include data analysis as an essential part of staff evaluation process? 2. Do we tie success to public recognition and lack of success to visible change? 3. Do we review disaggregated data to assess success of all students? 4. Does our district publicly report school- and district-wide data on multiple assessment measures to hold board, superintendent, and principals accountable? 5. Does the superintendent use individual teacher data to hold teachers accountable? 6. Do we provide individual student data to parents in a cumulative format to track progress over time? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include parents and other community members on the team deciding on strategies for publication and dissemination of accountability data. 2. Invite widespread input from community on how data should be disaggregated. 3. Promote widespread review and comment on published data, including disaggregated data. Discipline data, drop-out rates, learning and teaching styles and techniques should also be reviewed. 4. Establish policy and expectation that principals meet with community to review and discuss school data. 5. Establish policies and allow time for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their student’s progress.

KEY ACTIONS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
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<p>Align resources to focus on students’ meeting the standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum questions to ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it congruent with standards (internal and external)? • Is it clearly sequenced/aligned K-12? • Does it provide opportunities and encouragement for individual student acceleration? • Does it provide appropriate opportunities and accommodations for students w/ special needs? • Is it implemented by research-based instructional practices? 2. Staffing questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are staff assignments based on needs of students; resources realigned to assure adequate individual attention to students? • Are staff members assigned only to positions for which they are certified? • Are staff assignments based on accountability data? 3. Learning materials questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is funding adequate for materials needed to implement standards-driven curriculum? • Do materials include software? Hardware? • Do we have an established process for local decision-making about use of materials funds, tied to accountability for results? 4. Technology questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is technology fully integrated with curriculum? • Is it distributed and used equitably, with focus on achieving standards? • Are staff members trained to use technology to enhance instruction? 5. Supplemental services questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are summer school opportunities provided for students who need them? • Are tutoring and remediation offered during the day or after school? • What provisions are made for students who are not meeting standards? • Do we provide programs for gifted students? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish processes for community input on budget formulation, including priority setting and realignments. 2. Include business community review and commentary not only on budget process but also on school district business management practices. 3. Include parents in district curriculum review process. 4. Publish data on school staffing with rationale regarding meeting standards. 5. Provide parents the opportunity to review and comment on learning materials selection process. 6. Encourage school staff to invite parents in at night to learn what materials and technology students are using to meet achievement standards. 7. Budget for resources to support parents who want to help their children with academic work. 8. Encourage community volunteers (not just parents) in schools to help with academic work. 9. Establish business partnerships.
<p>KEY ACTIONS</p>	<p>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES</p>

<p>Create a positive learning environment for student and staff success. <i>Questions to ask:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do we, as a board, model mutual respect and professional behavior standards in Board meetings and in working with superintendent and staff? 2. Are we, as a board, committed to a continuous learning environment? 3. Do we empower staff to meet student needs by providing a policy framework, a clear direction, and adequate resources? 4. Is training focused on staff skills and knowledge to assure that students meet achievement standards? 5. Do we assure decision-making at the level closest to implementation and tied to accountability? 6. How do we give recognition for quality staff performance? 7. Do we have a fair and effective process for evaluation of staff? 8. Have we included in teacher contracts expectations for accountability and adequate rewards for successful performance? 9. Do we have a student learning policy that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is based on mutual respect and support for achievement? • Creates a strong academic oriented program for students? • Increases student opportunities to take challenging courses? • Has clear expectations for a safe learning environment for student success? • Encourages and emphasizes respect for lifelong learning? • Has clear and consistent consequences for those who violate policy? 10. How do we assure that facilities provide adequate, appropriate space for students to learn and for staff members to carry out their work? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include parents, students, staff and community on building level learning improvement teams. 2. Survey graduates, parents and the broader community to gauge satisfaction with school district services and operations. 3. Share the information gathered with staff and community and use the information in the planning and budgeting process. 4. Encourage community groups to recognize outstanding staff and quality performance related to student success in meeting performance standards 5. Encourage community volunteerism in schools, especially to help students learn, and recognize volunteers regularly. 6. Provide opportunities for public comment at Board meetings. 7. Make school facilities available for community use.
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KEY ACTIONS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
<p>Build collaborative relationships with municipalities, political and business communities in your state, and other child-centered organizations, with a focus on developing a consensus for student achievement as a top community priority.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schedule regular meetings with your community’s state legislative delegation to make them aware of your efforts and progress on student success standards. 2. Communicate freely with local elected officials about student achievement issues, activities, and progress. Invite them to be part of recognition efforts. 3. Encourage the superintendent to establish regular communication and collaborative child-centered working relationships with Social Services agencies, with the police department, and with the Juvenile Justice system.
<p>Commit to continuous improvement for student achievement. <i>Questions to ask:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have we included commitment to ongoing training of board directors in the budget and planning process? 2. Do we take advantage of existing training from state association and NSBA, and seek customized training as needed to respond to issues identified in the planning process? 3. Have we established the expectation and provided the resources for the superintendent and staff to collect and analyze data regarding student achievement and make appropriate adjustments to ongoing activities? 4. Do we formally review on a regular basis both summary and individual school data on student achievement? 5. In the yearly budget adoption process, do we use the data on student achievement to set priorities for allocating resources? 6. Do we adjust the strategic plan as necessary, based on the data and community input? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Discuss at Board meetings the development activities that board directors have been involved in and how these activities have increased the Board’s capacity to lead improvements in the district. 5. Assure community involvement in the regular review of data and in making recommendations regarding changes in program. 6. Promote ongoing discussion of student achievement indicators and efforts at meetings of community organizations by having board of education members and appropriate school system staff offer to participate in these meetings. 7. Use these meetings to receive input and reactions to the district’s efforts and success regarding student achievement. 8. Take an active role with the media to discuss successes and planned improvements.

(Source: National School Boards Association, Used with Permission)

Chapter 9: Board Director Motivation And Accountability

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the charter school board foster and maintain a high level of board director motivation and accountability?

Introduction

Earlier chapters of the governance guidebook have offered principles, tools and practices to build the foundations for an effective charter school board. The goal of much of this is to create an environment in which board directors will perform well in the service of the charter school. This chapter focuses on how to maintain and increase that level of commitment and performance. We will look at board director motivation and tools for holding board directors accountable.

Board Director Motivation Model

Motivation of the board director has its roots in the nominations and recruitment process. When interviewing prospective board directors it's important to ask questions that help us understand their interest and motivations in serving as a board director of the charter school. What attracts them to board service? Why our charter school and not another? What do they hope to gain and how do they hope to grow as a board director? How do they want to contribute? What other special gifts and talents will they bring to the board? We need to understand what's important to them because this is the key to understanding their motivation.

A helpful tool is the Board Director/Organization Match. This tool is based on the belief that the act of volunteering is beneficial to the volunteer as well as the organization. This approach is in contrast to the traditional view of volunteering in which the volunteer is thought to "transfer" things of value to organization: time, skill, energy, and commitment to the cause without getting anything of value in return. In this view, the transfer of value is one way -- from the volunteer board director to the organization. Another view is to look at volunteering as a "transaction" -- not a one-way transfer. In the transaction view, volunteering represents a two-way exchange of value. The volunteer still transfers time, skills, knowledge, energy, and commitment. But it doesn't stop there. Board volunteers receive from their board service things of great value: an opportunity to serve an organization they believe in, a chance to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge, an opportunity to be around people that share the same values, an opportunity to make friends for life.

One of the important advantages of this "transaction" view of board volunteering is that it frees charter school board leaders to expect commitment and a high level of performance from board directors because of the belief that the board directors are truly benefiting in important personal ways from being on the board. Of course we still value their volunteer commitment but we understand the relationship is mutually beneficial.

This transaction view of volunteering is illustrated in the board director/organization match diagram below:

Board Director <-----> Charter School	
MOTIVATORS	BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interests/Needs • Personal Values/Beliefs • Personal and Career Goals • Family • Dreams • Skills • Experience • Personal Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter School Mission • Educational Philosophy • Organizational Values/Beliefs • Board Responsibilities • Training Opportunities • Organizational Climate • Challenges • Limitations

The words in the left column represent some of the key motivators at work in a board volunteer - a prospective board director or current one. The words in the right column represent some of the key elements and benefits of the board director volunteer position. Effective recruitment, retention and ongoing motivation of a board director are based on making a match between the two columns. Imagine the prospective board director being able to mentally connect words in the two columns. If some of the key personal interests and needs of the volunteer can be met through board service, we have a match. If the personal values and beliefs of the individual are in alignment with the core organizational values and beliefs of the charter school, we have a match. If some of the personal or career goals of the volunteer can be advanced through the training available to board directors, we have a match. If the challenges of board service provide opportunities for personal growth as the volunteer defines it, we have a match. And if we have a match, we have the basis for building a lasting, productive, mutually beneficial relationship with the board director.

In order for the prospective board director to discover to manage between their needs, interests, values and beliefs and the requirements and challenges of board service, it is important that they receive a full and complete picture of their roles and responsibilities during the orientation process.

Recognition of Board Directors

Recognition is the act of acknowledging the contributions and value that individuals bring to an organization. The key to effective volunteer recognition is creating a solid match between the needs, interests values and beliefs of the individual board director and the challenges, requirements and benefits of board director service. Finding that match was described at the beginning of this chapter. Board directors need to be doing things that are most suitable to his/her motivations and talents.

Here are some guidelines for extending recognition to charter school board directors. By the way, the same principles apply to extending meaningful recognition to direct service volunteers, paid staff and students -- in fact anyone that supports the good work of the charter school.

- **Recognition for everyone.** The first is that every current board director needs to receive recognition in some form. Even if they are not among the strongest members of the board, if they meet the minimal requirements, the organization needs to show some appreciation.
- **Appropriate to performance.** Having said that everyone gets recognition in some form, effective recognition needs to be appropriate to performance. The board director who is just getting by, contributing the absolute minimum, doesn't get the type of recognition that one of the star performers needs and deserves. And in spite of protestations to the contrary, most people take note if the recognition they receive is out of proportion to their contributions. Not that the purpose of serving on the board is to receive accolades, but if someone is truly committed and expresses the commitment in stellar board service, that person will be thrilled that others take notice.
- **Formal and informal.** Recognition can be formal or informal and can be given many times during the board director's involvement with the charter school board. Recognition can be given to board directors in formal ways, for example with certificates, end of service plaque, or an annual breakfast. Recognition can also be extended in informal ways, for example with a short note or email, or sincere personal thanks at the end of a meeting or event. Many acts of recognition can be spontaneous and personal and are not costly. Recognition is most effective when it is provided in a variety of ways. In the case of formal recognition, awards should not be automatic. They should not only recognize years of board service but should be based on the impact of the board directors' work. Consider a yearly award or honor to a board director who exemplifies the very best attributes of effective charter school board leadership
- **Perceived as fair.** In the case of the formal recognition activities, it is important that the process of determining who receives what type of recognition be perceived as fair. If the view were that only friends of the administrator or board president get a special award, recognition would be discredited. Use clear criteria for awards so that people feel that rewards are fair and deserved. Also be clear about who makes the selection. And avoid the "one big award approach." The best recognition events highlight the accomplishments of a number of board directors
- **Meaningful and comfortably received.** Whenever form of recognition is used, it should be meaningful to the board directors receiving it and it should be in the form that is comfortably received. For example, a board director who happens to be uncomfortable in very large groups would probably not prefer recognition in front of a large crowd.
- **Before peers.** For many of us, some of the most meaningful recognition has been private, spontaneous and from the heart. At the same time, it is important for recognition to sometimes be extended to board directors in front of their peers -- the rest of a board. "Public" recognition also serves to reinforce the theme that board service is valued and appreciated.

- **Make it fun.** Extending recognition is serious business. At the same time there's no reason why it can be offered in ways that are fun and enjoyable. For example, in one organization, at the conclusion of the strategic planning process, the Board of Directors gave members of strategic planning committee T-shirts with the organization's logo on the front and on the back, the words "We survived the strategic planning process!" Committee members loved it.

Recognition As A Motivational Strategy

Often, we tend to look at recognition as a way to thank people for something they did in the past. Recognition of board directors -- another volunteers -- is one of the most powerful motivational strategies leaders have to encourage commitment and high-performance in the future. And it needs to be viewed this way by the board president and the charter school administrator. Extending recognition can be time-consuming and may not seem worth the effort. Wrong. The best leaders -- the ones we remember -- are the ones that notice are accomplishments and thanked us, publicly and privately, for them. Recognition is an ongoing, integral part of the work of leaders, not just an event at the end of the year.

Other Motivational Strategies

- Involve board directors in areas where they feel they can use their skills and knowledge and add real value. It is especially important to involve new board directors in the work of the board right away. Otherwise we risk losing them.
- Make board meetings interesting and engaging. Focus discussion on critical issues and challenges and provide for in depth discussion leading to action.
- Make training opportunities available to board directors to increase their skills and knowledge.
- Provide for the social needs of board directors. Maintain a warm inviting atmosphere. Encourage diversity of viewpoints.
- Help board directors feel connected to the charter school as a whole. While we don't want them to be tempted to micromanage, we also don't want them to feel isolated from where the real action is.

Accountability and Reporting Tools

Tools for Individual Accountability

Written Board Director Position Description

Board director accountability has its roots in the nominations and recruitment process described in Chapter 2. It is here that the Board of Directors determines what its expectations are for board directors -- both current and new. The centerpiece of the nominations and recruitment process is the written board director job description that lays out how board directors are expected to perform. In their contacts with the board development committee, prospective board directors are given a full picture of what they will be expected to do if elected or selected to serve on the board. This written board director position description lays the groundwork for the other accountability and reporting tools described in this chapter.

Annual Board Self-Evaluation Process

Another key practice in building an effective board is the establishment of a process for annual self-evaluation of the board. A well-planned recruitment process and an effective committee structure lay the groundwork for improved board performance. However, every so often the board as a whole needs to step back and look at itself. A process for board self-evaluation will help to maintain a high level of performance. It happens informally when directors get together and talk about individual and board concerns. But a formal process is also necessary. Notice that we are speaking of "self evaluation" of the board. In order to maximize board director commitment to the process, it is important that they are actors in the assessment process, rather than the passive recipients of someone else's evaluation of their performance.

An effective board self-evaluation process includes the following features:

- **Agreement about individual board director performance.** As suggested earlier, the foundation of an effective self-evaluation process is the written board director position description described in Chapter 2. This description is a foundation document and needs to be reviewed by the board on an annual basis. In addition to expectations listed in the job description, other criteria that can serve as reference points for evaluation can include:
 - Study and preparation for meetings;
 - Willingness to make constructive comments during meetings;
 - Contribution of special expertise;
 - Representation of the charter school in the broader community.⁵⁷
- **Annual process.** An effective process for self-evaluation of the board will be conducted on a regular, yearly basis. A good time is midway into the board year. By then, board directors have had an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment and enough time remains to take corrective action if necessary.
- **Two-way Communication.** In order to have board director support for the process, the evaluation will need to be viewed as a vehicle for two-way communication to provide feedback on performance to individual board directors and also to solicit feedback from individual board directors on the performance of a board as a whole and the level of support that they receive from their leaders as well as staff. A thorough evaluation would cover two areas: individual board director performance and a look at board and committee operations as a whole. Each board director should first be asked to assess their performance as a board director in critical areas such as input into policy and decision-making, committee participation, and fund-raising. Board directors should also be asked if there are any factors that have helped or hindered their performance. Finally they should be asked what they would need to maintain or increase their level of commitment.

⁵⁷ Andringa, Robert and Engstrom, Ted, Nonprofit Board Answer Book, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

- **Follow-through.** An effective evaluation process will also lead to concrete plans for corrective action including a commitment on the part of the board to follow through so that the results of evaluation process lead to measurable improvements in board performance.
- **Board director accountability.** The results of this assessment can then used by the President and Executive Committee to determine which board directors deserve positive feedback for acceptable performance and which board directors, because of inadequate performance, need to be reminded of their responsibilities. And finally, an effective evaluation process will relate directly to the overall board recruitment and nominations process. For example, a board director who has not followed through on commitments is unlikely to be asked by the board development committee to run for a second term even though the bylaws may allow for this.

Ongoing Individual Accountability Contacts

The importance of the annual self-evaluation process notwithstanding, board directors need to be held accountable by leadership on an ongoing basis. For example, if a member is absent from a board meeting and did not call in advance, it is important -- especially with new board directors - - for a personal contact to be made soon thereafter. (Telephone or email is the fast and easy way.) All too often, nothing happens when board directors fail to show up. The unintended message is "no big deal." But it is a big deal -- it's one of the basic expectations. Board directors can't be effective decision-makers if they're not in the room. If the message received is that it's apparently not a problem if "I don't show up and don't call in advance," it becomes too easy for members to lax about meeting attendance in the future. And then what might otherwise be an isolated absence becomes a pattern. If the contact is made right away, it can have the tone of a friendlier reminder: "We really missed you at the last meeting board meeting. It's important that you attend regular board meetings. It's something we stressed in the orientation and you first came on the board. We value your input. Is there anything we can do?" And most of the time, the board director will appreciate this show of interest.

The same approach -- immediate response -- is even more important when the performance problem is more serious. Board directors who give in regularly to the temptation to micromanage or meddle, the board director who doesn't carry out other critical board responsibilities, the board director who constantly dominates discussion, and any other behaviors that run counter to the board's agreed-upon norms for meeting or individual board director conduct. And remember, usually the problem behavior doesn't get better; it usually gets worse leading to an even greater intervention down the road.

And by the way, the responsibility for making these kinds of personal contacts is the responsibility of board leadership, the chair or one of the other officers. It is not the responsibility of the charter school administrator, though frequently the task is passed off to him

or her. Holding each other accountable as board directors is clearly a board responsibility -- not a staff responsibility.

Personal Goal-Setting By Board Directors

Another tool for personal accountability of board directors is setting specific annual goals on an individual basis. These annual individual goals would be in addition to the expectations included in the board director position description described in Chapter 2. The board can use a relatively informal approach or a more structured approach. An example of the more formal approach would be for the president of the board or the board development committee to send a letter and goal setting form to each board director at the beginning of the school year. Individual board directors would set personal goals that will make them more valuable board directors and then at the end of the year conduct a self-assessment to gauge their progress. Individual goals can be developed by the individual board director on their own or they can be in response to a set of suggested goal statements. For example:

- Identify at least three new donor prospects (individual, business or local foundation) for the charter school annual fund-raising campaign.
- Host, organize or participate in an event to promote the charter school in the community.
- Teach a class or make a special presentation to class.
- Through my business, neighborhood or professional contacts, recruit at least one new student to attend charter school next year.⁵⁸

Ongoing Board Leadership Development

Efforts to strengthen board director motivation and accountability will be further enhanced by concrete plans for leadership development of individual board directors.

The failure to take steps to nurture the continuing development of board leaders is a major weakness of many boards including those of charter schools. There needs to be a plan for strengthening the leadership skills of current board directors because the failure to do this makes the board to dependent on a small number of its members. This is a special challenge to new charter schools many of which are already dependent on the founding group of leaders. Lack of a healthy rate of turnover in board leadership can concentrate too much power in the same people.

This need to develop future leadership is a major challenge, not just in individual charter schools, but for the national charter school movement as well.

⁵⁸ Chait, Richard, Holland, Thomas, and Taylor, Barbara, Improving the Performance of Governing Boards, Oryx Press, 1996.

Because solid leadership is so important, the effective, future focused board will have a plan for continuing leadership development. This kind of plan is sometimes referred to as leadership succession planning. This practice, like many others described in the governance guidebook, has its roots in the nominations and recruitment process described in detail in Chapter 2 of the guidebook. The board as a whole, and the board development committee in particular, needs to reflect on the following questions:

- Who will be leading the charter school board in the future?
- What is our plan to identify new leadership?
- What is our plan to develop new leaders and prepared them to serve now and in the future?

The answers to these questions lead to a concrete plan for leadership development. Most charter schools have three to five year contracts. Therefore there should be three to five year plans for board leadership development the goal of which is to develop 5 to 10 board leaders ready, as the needs arise, to chair the board and to chair committees and workgroups as well. If this seems like an impossibly unrealistic goal, think of it as something attainable within an ongoing, multi-year commitment to board leadership development.

The board development committee, as part of its responsibility, should assess current board leadership on a systematic basis. Then, in collaboration with the chair of the board and the charter school administrator, provide committee and project assignments, committee rotations and educational opportunities to prepare leaders for greater responsibility in the future.⁵⁹ Refer back to Chapter 3 on board director orientation and training for other ideas about offering educational opportunities to board directors.

Some boards will also assign mentors to aspiring board leaders as an additional support to their skill development.

In the Tools Section of this chapter, there is a guide for board leadership succession planning. The tool can be modified as needed. Also think about ways that the individual board director self-assessment, described elsewhere in this chapter, can be linked to the leadership development plan for each board director.

⁵⁹ IBID.

Chapter 9: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Board Self-evaluation Questionnaire (Source: Jefferson Academy Charter School).
- Individual Board director Self-Review Form (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training).
- Board Leadership Succession Process.

Essential Resources for Board Director Motivation and Accountability

- Wolfe, Rebecca Luhn, Systematic Succession Planning, Crisp Publications, 1996.

Jefferson Academy Charter School

Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

1. Has the Board and each individual member maintained and promoted a commitment to fundamental, traditional educational delivery system and to the Core Knowledge and Open Court curriculums?

Less Adherence

⁶⁰More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

2. Has the Board and each individual member participated actively in the overall direction and policies of the school, including demonstrating a commitment to be independently knowledgeable about school matters without undue reliance on staff?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

3. Has the Board or any individual member violated policy by attempting to become involved in the day-to-day management of the school?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

4. Has the Board and each individual member demonstrated a commitment to fostering relationships with staff, parents, and the community, including maintaining a communication link to the community, promoting JA's uniqueness as a school, and promoting a traditional educational philosophy?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

5. Has the Board held the administration accountable financially?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

6. Has each board director attended the required number of PTO meetings to show support and encouragement?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

7. Has each Board director attended the yearly Board retreat (or had an excused absence) where the goals of the Board are defined, and where the Board evaluates itself?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

8. Has each Board director participated in Board Visit Day (or had an excused absence)?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

9. Has the Board or any individual member violated the Open Meetings Law, (CRS 24-6-401, et seq.)?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

10. Has the Board or any individual member violated the confidentiality provisions of Colorado law by discussing personnel matters, individual students, or negotiations?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

11. Have the Board directors demonstrated a professional demeanor at all Board meetings and in all communications with other Board directors, staff, and parents?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

12. Have board directors taken part in discussions critical of other board directors or staff without directing the speaker to the board director or staff member involved?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

13. Have Board directors spoken negatively about staff or other Board directors in public?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

14. Has any Board director missed two or more Board meetings without prior approval from at least two other Board directors?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

15. Has any Board director abused his or her authority as a Board director while acting as a parent or a volunteer?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

16. In the event that the Board or any individual member needs to address problems revealed by this self-evaluation, is there a tangible, specific action plan in place to address the problems?

Less Adherence

More Adherence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Comments:

Individual Board Director Self-Review Form

Your name: _____

Part 1 Are you satisfied with your performance as a board director in the following areas: (check spaces that apply below)

	Very good	Adequate	Needs work
• Attendance at board meetings	_____	_____	_____
• Input in policy development and decision-making	_____	_____	_____
• Fund-raising	_____	_____	_____
• Community outreach	_____	_____	_____
• Other _____	_____	_____	_____

Part 2 What factors contributed to your performance or lack of performance in the areas above: (Please be specific.)

Part 3 Here's what I would need from the charter school to maintain/increase my level of board commitment:

Part 4 Do you have any other comments or suggestions that will help the board increase its effectiveness?

Please return your completed form to the board president at (insert address, email, or fax number).

Board Leadership Succession Process

(Adapted from Systematic Succession Planning by Rebecca Luhn Wolfe)

1. Identify key board and committee leadership positions and when they will be vacant.
2. Review board leader position descriptions and update if necessary (include descriptions for board officers and committee chairs in particular).
3. For each key leadership position, identify at least two potential candidates for leadership succession.
4. Develop a plan for leadership development and succession in collaboration with the candidates.

Guidelines for Leadership Development Plans

Step 1 -- Know and identify the key board/committee leadership positions for which you will develop the individual.

Step 2 -- Identify the skills and knowledge the individual must acquire with reference to those board/committee leadership positions. Develop learning objectives.

Step 3 -- Design a board leadership development plan to achieve the learning objectives. The plan should specify activities, timeframe, resources needed, who will assess progress, etc.

Step 4 -- Execute the plan and follow-through with regular reviews and monitoring.

Step 5 -- Evaluate the result and document progress or gaps. Discuss need for additional steps with the future successor.

Leadership development methods:

- Public training events and conference (see list of resources in last chapter of guidebook)
- Onsite continuing education
- Mentoring
- In-house training
- Self study programs
- Intergroup leadership development involving board directors from other charter schools
- Committee job/task rotation
- On the job orientation and training
- Personalized individual coaching
- Video and audio tapes
- Websites

Preparing for Board Leadership Succession

The following form can be used as a guide for preparing a written plan for board leader development. The form should be filled out by the board president in consultation with the individual leader and the charter school administrator. Changes should be made as needed.

Board leader's name:

Current leadership position on the board:

Time in this position:

Key future board leadership position to prepare for:

Other future board leadership positions that could be considered:

The board director's personal and professional goals that can be met through future board and committee leadership service:

Leadership Development Objectives	Methods Of Development	Resources Needed

Person(s) who will serve as mentor/coach to board directors:

Chapter 10: The Board at Work: Effective Committees

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the board develop and maintain a committee structure that enhances its overall effectiveness?

Introduction

Effective committees are, in a word, indispensable. They do the bulk of the work of the charter school board, thereby freeing the full board for attention to matters like responding to emerging critical issues, strategic planning, major policy development and long range financial planning.

An effective committee structure plays the following crucial roles:

- Helps to increase the involvement of board directors because it gives them an opportunity to use their skills and experience.
- Provides a training ground for future leaders -- both for individuals who are currently board directors as well as non-board directors who may be asked to serve on the board in the future.
- Increases the visibility and outreach of the charter school by including non-board directors in committee membership.
- Provides a means for information to flow from the parents, students, community, and charter school staff to the board.
- Gives board directors the chance to discuss emerging issues in some depth.

Board committees operate at the board level, not the staff level. John Carver, author of Boards That Make a Difference, insists that the purpose of board committees is not to help the staff to do its work, but rather to help the board get the work of governance done. Sometimes boards will create committees that are designed to advise the staff, but this arrangement can blur the distinction between board and staff rolls. These committees should be limited or, better still, not created at all. It is important to remember, however, that in some charter schools committees may be involved in day-to-day operations, at least initially⁶¹. Boards in the earliest stages of charter school development, when there is no staff, clearly must take on what would be staff work in a more fully developed charter school. Once the charter school is beyond its pre-organizing stage, it is important that the boards committees begin to relinquish such involvement in day-to-day operations.

Types of Committees

In general, there are two types of committees: standing and ad hoc. Standing committees are permanent committees, established in the organization's bylaws that relate to the ongoing governance of the charter school. Ad hoc, or special, committees have limited responsibilities and are created for specific purposes; for example a search committee that manages the search

⁶¹ Hirzy, Ellen Cochran, Nonprofit Board Committees, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1993.

process and recommends a candidate for the charter school administrator position. Ad hoc committees should be instituted for a specific purpose and disbanded when the need for them no longer exists. Ad hoc committees are further discussed later under this chapter under the heading “Use of Task Forces and Work Groups.”

The Committee Structure

In general, the number of committees should be kept to a minimum. The committee structure should be of a sufficient number to enable the board to carry out its governance roles and responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. Too many committees can create a cumbersome structure and in some cases, can invite micromanagement on the part of the board.

For many charter schools, the standing committee structure will include some or all of the following committees: executive, finance and budget, accountability, board development, and fund-raising. The Executive Committee deserves special attention.

The Executive Committee. A critical element in board effectiveness is a functioning executive committee. Generally the executive committee consists of the four executive officers of the Board: the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Sometimes other members of the board are included as part of the executive committee: for example chairs of the standing committees or at-large members from the board to assure representation of diverse viewpoints.

It is important to make sure that the use of an executive committee doesn’t create an “inner board” consisting of executive committee members, and an “outer board” consisting of those without as much influence and information. Such a development can result in the board not operating together as an effective team. The most positive roles an executive committee can play are to oversee goal setting and agenda development and to serve as a preliminary sounding board for the chair of the board and the charter school administrator. However, the executive committee should not become a substitute for discussion of important matters by the entire board.

For this reason, it is important that the bylaws specify limits on the power of the executive committee if your charter school board chooses to have one. Each school must decide how much authority to grant its executive committee. There is no one's size fits all rule, except the full port must decide what is best for the charter school. Often the executive committee is not permitted to do one or more of the following:

- Amend the articles or bylaws;
- Dissolve the nonprofit corporation (if the school is a separately incorporated nonprofit organization);
- Dismiss or elect new board directors or officers;
- Hire or fire a charter school administrator;
- Enter into or alter major contracts such as the charter contract;
- Sue another entity;
- Change a board approved budget; and

- Adopt or eliminate major programs or services

At its best, the executive committee plays three critical roles: planning the agenda of board meetings, making decisions on behalf of the full board, and serving as a communication link with other members of the board, especially the committee chairs. These roles are described more fully in Chapter 4 of the governance guidebook.

As important as the executive committee is, it's only one part of the total committee structure. You can't begin to talk about an effective board without talking about committees of the board. They do the bulk of the work of the charter school, thereby freeing the full board for attention to matters like long-range financial planning and policy development.

An effective committee structure helps to increase the involvement of board directors because it gives them an opportunity to use their skills and experience. They provide a training ground for future leaders -- both for individuals who are currently board directors as well as non-board directors who may be asked to serve on the board in the future. They increase the visibility and outreach of the charter school by including non-board directors in committee membership. Committees provide a means for information to flow from the community, clients, and line staff to the board. Committees also give members the chance to freely and discuss issues in an informal setting. Finally, committees serve as excellent problem-solving and decision-making groups because of their small size.

Effective Board Committees: The Basics

Why Committees Don't Work

Typically committees don't work well for many of the same reasons boards don't function effectively: the lack of long-term agendas, reliance on poor or incomplete information, and the failure to distinguish between board level and operational issues. Therefore committees can benefit from many of the same approaches that make board meetings more effective: an overview by the committee chair at the beginning of each meeting, a strategic focus for discussions, prioritized agendas, annual calendar of committee meetings and major decisions, consent agendas, and evaluation of committee meetings.⁶² Refer to Chapter 4 on board decision-making and effective meetings for other ideas to increase the effectiveness of committees.

Elements Of Committee Effectiveness

There are at least six elements of committee effectiveness:

- **Written Committee Description.** First, there should be a written description of what is expected of each committee to guide the chair and members. The description should summarize the purpose of the committee, its composition and selection procedure, and the specific duties of the committee. There are several sample committee descriptions in the Tool Section of this chapter.
- **An effective committee chair.** The next element is an effective chairperson. In general, the committee chair should be a board director. This helps to assure that the leadership of the committee is "in sync" with that of the board as a whole. In seeking an effective chair, we're looking for two things: content knowledge and experience relevant to the work of the committee as well as proven leadership and people skills that will be essential if the committee is to work effectively. Of the two, the most important is leadership and people skills. Additional content knowledge is more easily acquired by a committee chair than the ability to lead others.

You want a good leader of people and process, someone who feels confident in guiding committee members to accomplish the task in a timely manner. The role of committee chair requires extra work, time for communication with staff, a willingness to resolve conflicts among members, and a commitment to keep the board chair informed at all times⁶³.

⁶² Chait, Richard, Holland, Thomas, and Taylor, Barbara, *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards*, Oryx Press, 1996.

⁶³ Andringa, Robert C., and Engstrom, Ted W., *Nonprofit Board Answer Book*, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.

There are also some personal characteristics of the effective committee chair that also need to be considered:

- Has confidence in other committee members;
- Wants to release the potential energy of the group;
- Is willing to relinquish some of the chair's formal authority if the job requires it; and
- Is more interested in the committee's success than in his or her own feeling of personal importance.

The good chair is one who can work with people, who can stimulate them rather than brow beat them and can help the group use all the abilities and experiences its members possess and new skills that they develop as they work together.⁶⁴

Depending on the size of the charter school, the committee chair will be responsible for preparing agendas for the meetings, assigning responsibilities to committee members and doing some of the follow-up to make sure assigned work is being done by members. In some instances, charter school staff may be assigned to assist the committee chair but this is not always the case. For a more detailed listing of committee chairperson responsibilities, see the Chairperson Job Description in the tool section of this chapter.⁶⁵

- **Members thoughtfully appointed.** The next element of committee effectiveness is members who have been thoughtfully appointed. Each standing committee is generally composed of a core of five to eight members. They can be a mix of board and non-board directors and should be recruited with the following question in mind: What tasks are the committee responsible for and who among our members and supporters possess the skills and experience needed to complete those tasks? As is the case with other forms of volunteer recruitment, every effort should be made to match the needs and requirements of the committee and the skills, knowledge and interests of prospective committee members. In many cases, prospective board directors, as part of the recruitment process, will be given information about the board committee structure with suggestions on where they might best fit. For example, a prospective board director who has much skill and experience in fund-raising would most likely be asked to serve on the fund development committee. In the end however, regardless of the preferences of board leaders, the individual board directors should be able to select the committee assignment that they feel will best meet their needs, while at the same time, meeting the needs of the charter school. See the Tools Section of this chapter for a sample Committee Preference Form.
- **Accountability to the board.** The next element of committee effectiveness is clear accountability to the board of directors. This begins with the written committee description that describes what the board expects from the committee. There should also be an effort to link the committee description with relevant strategic plan language. Using the fund development committee as an example, the committee description would reflect a major goal and supporting strategies that address the issue of charter school funding. Under the umbrella of the funding goal and strategies, committee leadership

⁶⁴ O'Connell, Brian, Operating Effective Committees, Independent Sector, 1988.

⁶⁵ Hirzy, Ellen Cochran, Nonprofit Board Committees, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1993.

would develop an annual fund-raising strategy and supporting work plan in line with the funding strategic goal. This work plan would contain objectives incorporating measurable outcomes, and these measurable outcomes would be the basis for regular reporting of the committee to the board as a whole. An example of a committee reporting form, “Annual Board Committee Report” that reflects this approach can be found in the Tools Section of this Chapter. Regardless of the approach used, it is important that the charter school board clearly communicate to all of its committees what kind of reporting it expects and with what frequency.

- **Well-run meetings.** The last element of committee effectiveness is well run meetings. In a sense, if a committee reflects the first five indicators of effectiveness -- a clear description of its work, a chair that knows how to lead, a solid match between the interests, skills and experience of individual members on the one hand, and the needs and requirements of the committee on the other, a good mix of board and non-board directors, and direct accountability to the board --we will have the makings of excellent committee meetings. It will still be important to provide for meeting space that matches the needs of the group, a written meeting agenda and any necessary information mailed out to members in advance of the meeting.

In addition, the charter school, as part of the overall board education and training program, should also be prepared to provide training to committee members to help them sharpen their skills.

Additional Practices to Enhance Committee Effectiveness

Evaluating Committee Meetings

At the end of each committee meeting, the chair can ask for written or oral comments about the session. In some organizations, this is a feature of every meeting and is referred to as the "check out." A relatively small investment of time can produce continuous improvements in the work of the board's committees. Immediate feedback from members can be solicited on how well the meeting achieved its purposes, if members stayed on task, and if there is anything that can be done to improve effectiveness of future committee meetings. In the Tools Section of this chapter, there are two examples of written committee meeting evaluation forms.

Annual Committee Calendar Of Major Decisions And Meetings

In Chapter 4, an annual board calendar of major decisions and meetings was suggested. The same practice will increase the effectiveness of the board's committees as well. The committee calendar should also be tied into the overall annual board calendar so that efforts are unified and coordinated for maximum impact. Scheduling regular meetings of the committee in advance will also help busy people plan far enough in advance to assure good attendance. In the Tools Section of this chapter, there is a Sample Annual Board and Committee Calendar.

Use Of Task Forces And Work Groups

In some instances, the board can replace or supplement standing committees by use of project and issue specific task forces or workgroups. Task forces and workgroups, similar to ad hoc committees, can be used when there is an important, time sensitive assignment that needs to be completed but doesn't require an ongoing standing committee. Task forces can be used to conduct a search for a new charter school administrator, making recommendations on major policy, exploring a major new strategic alliance, planning a capital fund-raising campaign, and other high-priority projects. As with standing committees, it is important that task forces and special workgroups focus on board level projects, and not as a substitute for staff workgroups. At the same time, depending on the work assigned, task forces and special workgroups can include staff, students, parents, and other community leaders in addition to members of the board itself. In general, all of the tools and practices that help standing committees perform effectively, will be useful to task forces and workgroups

Additional Suggestions

Committee effectiveness can also be enhanced through the following practices:

- Schedule an orientation for new committee members for the same reason new board directors need an orientation before their first board meeting.
- Make sure that committee members receive an agenda in advance of meetings and have all of the information they will need to complete their work.
- Make sure that the chair provides regular and appropriate recognition to active committee members. The chair should also seek out unproductive committee members to find out what is getting in a way of performance and then devising strategies to overcome those barriers.
- Spell out for the committee chairman exactly what the board's expectations are for committee report.
- Encourage the chair to involve committee members in developing the annual committee plan of work and make sure that the committee plans are in alignment with the overall strategic plan of the charter school

Chapter 10: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Sample Committee Descriptions (The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Sample Committee Descriptions from ISACS and/or Mosaica Academy Charter School
- Committee Meeting Evaluation Form (Fast Feedback, Chait, page 30)
- Committee Chair Job Description and Committee Member Job Description (Source: Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD)
- Committee Preference Form (can be used with prospective during recruitment and annually with current board directors.)
- Annual Board Committee Report
- Sample Annual Board and Committee Calendar

Essential Resources For Effective Committees

- Hirzy, Ellen Cochran, Nonprofit Board Committees, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1993. The National Center for Nonprofit Boards also publishes booklets on individual committees including Audit, Executive, Nominating, Finance, Fund Development and Planning.
- The National Center for Nonprofit Boards also publishes a series of booklets on specific committees including the executive, nominating, planning, audit committees, and others. Go to www.ncnb.org and click on publications/bookstore link.
- For addition committee description samples, go to the website of the Mosaica Charter School at www.macsbensalem.org/comm.htm. Also visit the website of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) at <http://www.isacs.org/monographs/bordchrg.html>. Additional sample committee descriptions can be found at the website of the Washington Core Knowledge School at <http://www.psd.k12.co.us/schools/traut/Charter.html> , then scroll down to Section 7 Committees.

Executive Committee

General Purpose

The executive committee is commissioned by and responsible to the board of directors to function on behalf of the board of directors in matters of emergency and in interim periods between regularly scheduled board meetings. The executive committee shall have and exercise the authority of the board of directors provided that such authority shall not operate to circumvent the responsibility and authority vested in the board of directors by the by-laws, and any action taken is to be ratified by the board of directors at its first subsequent meeting.

Appointments and Composition

1. The executive committee shall be composed of the president, vice-President, secretary, and treasurer of the board and one at-large member.
2. The chair of the executive committee shall be the president of the board of directors.
3. The president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and one at-large member shall be elected in accordance with procedures set forth in the by-laws of the charter school.

Responsibilities

1. Meet to draw up an agenda for meetings of the full board of directors.
2. Make decisions on behalf of the full board as needed which cannot wait for the full board or on matters delegated to the Executive Committee by the board of directors.
3. Maintain effective communication with the committees of the charter school board.
4. Coordinate the annual planning and budget process of the charter school in conjunction with the finance committee and the charter school administrator.
5. Respond to the call of the board president or charter school administrator for emergency meetings to deal with special problems between regular board meetings.
6. Annually submit objectives as part of the planning and budgeting process.
7. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the board of directors.
8. Report to the board of directors at regular meetings of the board in a manner determined by the board.

Finance Committee

General Purpose

The finance committee is commissioned by and responsible to the board of Directors. It has the responsibility for working with the charter school administrator to create the upcoming fiscal year budget; presenting budget recommendations to the board; monitor implementation of the approved budget on a regular basis and recommend proposed budget revisions; recommend to the board appropriate policies for the management of the charter school's assets. The finance committee shall be assisted by the charter school administrator.

Appointments and Composition

1. The members of the finance committee shall be the treasurer of the board who shall serve as chair, the president who shall serve as an ex-officio member, together with other directors appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the board in accordance with the by-laws.

Responsibilities

1. Prepare an annual budget for the charter school in collaboration with the charter school administrator.
2. Also in collaboration with the charter school administrator, develop and annually revise a three-year financial forecast and develop long-range financial plans based on the forecast.
2. Review all grant proposals and when necessary, recommend action by the board.
3. Review all non-budgeted expenditures over a set dollar amount to be determined by the Board of Directors and recommend action to the board.
4. Annually submit objectives as part of the planning and budgeting process.
5. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the board of directors.
6. Arrange for an annual audit with submission of same to the board.
7. Report to the board of directors at regular meetings of the board in a manner determined by the board.

Personnel Committee

General Purpose

The personnel committee is commissioned by, and responsible to, the board of directors to assume the responsibility for advising it on matters pertaining to personnel administration and staffing. This responsibility shall, in no way, interfere with the authority of the charter school administrator to hire, supervise and, in accordance with the personnel policies, terminate, the remaining staff of the charter school. The board of directors hires the charter school administrator.

Appointments and Composition

1. Appointments of the chair and members of the personnel committee shall be made annually by the president of the board with the advice and consent of the Board in accordance with the by-laws.
2. The chair of this committee shall be a member of the board of directors.
3. Other members of this committee shall be members of the board of directors, subject to the conditions stated in the by-laws.

Responsibilities

1. Provide overall policy guidance for personnel matters in the charter school.
2. Submit, for final approval, recommendations on personnel policy matters to the Executive committee of the board of directors.
3. Provide policy recommendations to the board of directors in the areas of training, employee benefits, employee relations, legal issues relating to employees, recruitment, interviewing, selection procedures, and the like.
4. Annually review the performance of the Charter School Administrator according to the procedures outlined in the Personnel Policies of the organization. (The Charter School Administrator, in turn, is responsible for the annual performance review of other staff.)
5. Annually submit objectives as part of the planning and budgeting process.
6. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the board of directors.
7. Report to the board of directors on a regular basis in a manner determined by the Board.

Board Development Committee

General Purpose

The board development committee is commissioned by and responsible to the board of directors to assume the primary responsibility for matters pertaining to board of director's recruitment, nominations, orientation, training, and evaluation in accordance with the by-laws of the charter school as well as established policies and practices approved by the board of directors.

Appointments and Composition

1. Appointments of the chair and members of the board development committee shall be made annually by the President of the Board with the advice and consent of the Board in accordance with the By-laws.
2. The chair of this committee shall be a member of the board of directors.
3. Other members of this committee shall be members of the board of directors, subject to the conditions stated in the by-laws.

Responsibilities

1. Study the current composition of the board of directors to determine current skills and experience; Identify skills and experience needed on the board.
2. Recruit members to serve as members of the board and develop a slate of directors for consideration by the membership at the annual meeting in accordance with selection/election procedures outlined in the by-laws. Review annually the procedures for board recruitment.
3. Develop an orientation and training plan for new board directors and assist in the planning of the annual board retreat.
4. Assist the executive committee in an annual board self-evaluation.
5. Annually submit objectives as part of the planning and budgeting process.
6. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the board of directors.
7. Report to the board of directors at regular meetings of the board in a manner determined by the board.

Resource Development Committee

General Purpose

The resource development committee is commissioned by and responsible to the board of directors to assume the primary responsibility for raising non-grant funds to meet the budget of the charter school. The board of directors, in consultation with the resource development committee, finance committee and charter school administrator, will determine the fund-raising goal for the resource development committee.

Appointments and Composition

1. Appointments of the chair and members of the resource development committee shall be made annually by the president of the board with the advice and consent of the board in accordance with the by-laws.
2. The chair of this committee shall be a member of the board of directors.
3. Members of this committee shall be members of the board of directors, subject to the conditions stated in the by-laws. Additional committee members may be appointed and need not be members of the board of directors, subject to the conditions stated in the by-laws.

Responsibilities

1. Develop an annual fund-raising plan that will generate the funds needed to meet the non-public and non-grant fund-raising goal.
2. Develop the necessary sub-committee systems to successfully carry out the fund-raising events and activities that are part of the annual fund-raising plan; supervise the functions of the sub-committees; develop a plan for involving board directors in the non-grant resource development activities of the charter school.
3. Investigate new resource development projects, activities, and ideas for possible use in the future.
4. Annually submit objectives as part of the planning and budgeting process.
5. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the board of directors.
6. Report to the board of directors at regular meetings of the board in a manner determined by the board.

Committee Chair Job Description

1. Is a member of the board.
2. Sets tone for the committee work
3. Ensures that members have the information needed to do their jobs.
4. Oversees the logistics of committee's operations.
5. Reports to the board's chair.
6. Reports to the full board on committee's decisions/recommendations.
7. Works closely with the charter school administrator and other staff as agreed to by the administrator.
8. Assigns work to the committee members, sets the agenda and runs the meetings, and ensures distribution of meeting minutes.
9. Initiates and leads the committee's annual evaluation.

Committee Member Job Description

1. Regularly attends regular committee meetings and important related meetings.
2. Makes serious commitment to participate actively in committee work.
3. Volunteers for and willingly accepts assignments and completes them thoroughly and on time.
4. Stays informed about committee matters, prepares themselves well for meetings, and reviews and comments on minutes and reports.
5. Gets to know other committee members and builds a collegial working relationship that contributes to consensus.
6. Is an active participant in the committee's annual evaluation and planning efforts.
7. Participates in fund raising for the organization.

(Source: The Management Assistance Program based in St. Paul, MN and Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD.)

Board Committee Assignments

Please review the committee structure as outlined in the Board Procedures Manual. The board development committee will be reviewing board directors' interest as it pertains to committee assignments and determining appointments to committee positions.

As an aid in this process, we are asking that you complete the form on the following page. After reviewing each committee's general purpose, composition and responsibilities, please select three (3) committees that you would be willing to serve on. You will only be expected to serve on one (1) committee unless you indicate otherwise.

Committees are the important driving force in accomplishing our goals. We are in need of strong committee chairs. The charter school will always assist committee chairs in the development of agendas and distribution of information.

Once committee assignments are in place, we will work together on development of our master calendar for the establishment of all meeting dates for the coming year.

Please complete the form and return to our office no later than _____.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Board Committee Preference Form

Name: _____

Please list three (3) committees in order of preference that you would be willing to serve on. We will keep committee assignments to a maximum of one (1), unless you specify otherwise.

WILLING TO CHAIR

Committee Selections

YES

NO

FIRST
PREFERENCE _____

SECOND
PREFERENCE _____

THIRD
PREFERENCE _____

DO YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR NON-BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

1. _____
NAME COMMITTEE

ORGANIZATION/COMPANY

ADDRESS TELEPHONE #

2. _____
NAME COMMITTEE

ORGANIZATION/COMPANY

ADDRESS TELEPHONE #

Other Comments or Suggestions:

Annual Board Committee Report

Instead of asking board committees only for monthly written reports or having only verbal reports at board meetings, consider asking committee chairs to write an "Annual Report" at the end of each year describing their committees' activities and decisions. These reports can be included with the board minutes in the charter school's formal, permanent records. Here is a simple format that committees can use for an "Annual Report of the Committee":

Annual Report from Board Committee: _____ (NAME)_____

A summary report on the committee's work this last year, with recommendations to the staff and the full board covering the following points.

1. Committee Name:
2. Period of time this report covers:
3. Committee chair:
4. Committee members:
5. The main objectives for the committee during this past year:
6. Summary of major accomplishments during the last year and current activities:
7. List of activities in progress and upcoming events/discussions:
8. Recommendations to the charter school administrator regarding committee effectiveness:
9. Recommendations to the board of directors regarding committee effectiveness:
10. Other comments/suggestions especially with regard to committee operations, structure and relations with the board as a whole:

Sample Annual Board and Committee Calendar

Meeting	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Board of Directors						6/8 8:00 am
Executive Committee			Quarterly Committee Report Due		5/4 8:30 am	Quarterly Committee Report Due
Finance Committee			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Personnel Committee			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Board Development Committee			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Resource Devel. Comm.			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Strategic Plan. Comm.			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Monthly Parent Mtg	1/14 9:00 am	2/18 9:00 am	3/18 9:00 am	4/15 9:00 am	5/20 9:00 am	6/17 9:00 am

Sample Annual Board and Committee Calendar

Meeting	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Board of Directors		8/10 8:00 am		10/2 8:00 am Approve budget		12/14 8:00 am
Executive Committee	7/13 8:00 am		9/14 8:00 am. Quarterly Committee Report Due		11/9 8:00 am	Submit annual committee report
Finance Committee	Begin work on budget with Exec.		Begin draft budget proposal to Executive Committee. Quarterly Committee Report Due	Bring budget to board for approval		Submit annual committee report
Personnel Committee	Perform ED review and salary recommen- dations for 2000		Reviews personnel policies; recommen- dations as needed. Quarterly Committee Report Due			Submit annual committee report
Board Development Committee			Nomination/ recruitment process activated Quarterly Committee Report Due	Recruitment and orientation as needed	Recruitment and orientation as needed	Recruitment and orientation as needed Submit annual committee report
Resource Devel. Comm.			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Submit annual committee report
Strategic Plan. Comm.			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Submit annual committee report
Parent Mtg.	7/15 9:00 am	8/19 9:00 am	9/16 9:00 am	10/21 9:00 am	11/18 9:00 am	12/16 9:00 am

Chapter 11: Board Role In Fund-raising

Critical Board Building Challenge: How can the charter school board play an effective role in fund-raising?

Why Charter Schools Need To Engage In Fund-raising

Plain and simple, many charter schools cannot meet their budgets by relying only on the per pupil allocation of public school financing. Though charter school financing mechanisms differ from state to state, many charter schools receive less than 100% of the per pupil revenues that go to other public schools. And in almost all states, charter schools receive no funding for their school buildings -- they must pay lease or loan costs out of funding intended for classroom instruction. As a result, per pupil revenues may not fully cover the cost of educating students, offering salaries and benefits that will attract and retain skilled, dedicated educators, or providing all of the other services expected of schools today.

This is even more important in schools serving children that come from low-income families. The charter school, either on its own or through collaborative efforts with youth serving agencies, must provide a range of support services to children and their families in order to overcome barriers that impede learning.

In addition, the danger of relying so heavily on public funding is that it makes the charter school's survival even more precarious. It is always better for a school, for that matter any organization, to have a diversified funding base that includes, in addition to public dollars, annual campaign dollars, endowment income, special event income, grants, bequests and other planned gifts as well as in-kind donations of goods and services. Think of a one-legged stool and one with seven legs. Which one of these stools would give you the most secure seat?"⁶⁶

Other sources of funds must be tapped and among these, board driven fund-raising is one of the most important. This chapter will examine the role of the board in charter school fund-raising. New charter school boards, inexperienced in fund raising, will see this chapter as a fund-raising starter kit. Other boards can use the information to help fine-tune or create new ideas for fund-raising programs already in place.

In no way, however, does this chapter cover everything there is to know about raising funds for your charter school. The Tools Section includes a list of resources you can use to delve further into this important topic area. The purpose here is to provide - as simply and as clearly as possible - some sound fund-raising guidelines for charter school boards to build on.

⁶⁶ DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.

The Role of the Board in Fund-raising

Fund-raising ... it's not just for staff. The foundation of the board's role in fund-raising is the board's responsibility to assure that there are sufficient resources to operate school. This responsibility is included in the list of eight key board responsibilities set forth in Chapter 1 of this guidebook. Some of this responsibility is delegated to the charter school administrator but, in the end, it is the board that is responsible.

Few board directors, however, see themselves serving as fundraisers. In fact, some perceive fund raising as personally distasteful. Others are actually fearful or unsure of their ability to raise funds and see it as someone else's duty. The bottom line: board directors are critical to the fund raising success of the charter school. At the same time, effective fund-raising requires a team effort of board and staff working closely together. Milwaukee-based MGT Cornerstones, consultants to nonprofit organizations, has developed the following list of complementary board and staff fund-raising roles. This list is not meant to be a rigid definition of roles. There will be variations based on the specific needs and preferences of charter schools.

Roles Of The Board Of Directors:

To ensure that all necessary resources are available to accomplish the mission and goals of the organization.

- Affirm the mission, goals and objectives.
- Approve the budget.
- Accept responsibility for implementing fund-raising plans.
- Assist in identifying sources.
- Ascertain the most appropriate strategy for a source.
- Appropriate personal funds.
- Attend meetings with funding sources.
- Approach personal contacts.
- Arrange special events.
- Appear at public affairs and represent the organization.
- Attract resourceful people.
- Acknowledge donations of time and money.
- Ask for the grant or contribution.

Role Of The Staff:

To provide the support system and activities to ensure that private fund-raising goals can be met.

- Draft goals and objectives.

- Prepare budgets.
- Identify prospects.
- Research potential donors.
- Develop comprehensive income plans.
- Package organizational activities as fund-raising projects.
- Write proposals.
- Produce promotional materials.
- Prepare grant applications.
- Contact funding sources.
- Provide back-up support for special events.
- Solicit community support.
- Implement fund-raising activities.
- Report to the fund development committee and funding sources.
- Compile statistics.
- Maintain accurate and thorough records.
- Prepare board of directors to meet with current and potential funders.
- Schedule board of directors to attend public events.
- Thank donors privately and publicly as appropriate.

Fund-raising Principles for Board Directors

The following principles and fund-raising checklist for board directors are excerpted from a publication of the National Center for Nonprofit Boards entitled Fund Raising and the Nonprofit Board Member, by Fisher Howe. He strongly recommends that every board director fully understand, accept and give full attention to the following five principles:

Principle #1: The board is ultimately responsible for attracting funding resources to ensure the financial viability of the charter school and its educational and support programs.

An effective board director understands that the responsibility for fund raising is inescapable. To meet this responsibility, the board may find it useful to appoint a financial development committee (described below) to bring focus and force to the board's own efforts and to work with the staff.

Board directors, however, cannot turn over the entire fund-raising task to the committee, any more than they could do so to staff or to an outside consultant. Indeed, formulating the fund-raising program, making recommendations, drafting proposals, preparing brochures, composing correspondence, keeping the list and records - these tasks are principally staff functions. But the board is still responsible for making sure the job is done, and done well.

Principle #2: Asking for and giving money are natural processes and need not be viewed as something to be avoided.

People give money because they want to. You are inviting willing cooperation. In a very real sense, when you ask an individual, foundation or company to support a highly reputable organization like your charter school, you are offering the potential donor an opportunity to do something that can give pleasure and be rewarding - an opportunity that the donor, without feeling imposed upon, can accept or decline. At the same time, all requests for contributions or grants should be couched in terms of considering. In that form, the asking cannot hurt either the asker or the giver.

People may not give unless they are asked. Equally important, people don't give large donations unless they are asked to consider large donations. They may not give the suggested amount, but they certainly would not give at that level unless they had been asked to consider it. And their ultimate contribution will almost surely be greater for having been asked to consider giving a larger amount.

People give money to people. Never underestimate the personal equation in asking and giving. The personal touch, the person-to-person relationship, underlies most philanthropy.

People give money to success, not to distress. Everyone likes a winner. In other words, contributors give to opportunities, not to institutions because they need money. Therefore, whenever raising funds, board directors should point to your school's achievements and successes, and not simply the need for funds.

In short, asking for money is not something to be seen as unpleasant. You are not pressuring or invading someone's personal domain when you ask for support for your charter school. You should not think of it as an unpleasant task. Instead, you should think of asking someone to make a contribution as giving them an opportunity to make a difference in your community.

Principle #3: Board directors should help in preparing the "case," which is the rationale for supporting the charter school, and to be able to explain the case persuasively to prospective donors.

The case is critically important to successful fund raising. Although staff play a major part in formulating the case, board directors should be involved in the process. The case is too important to leave to others.

Whereas the mission statement is an internal document defining the purpose, programs, plans and priorities of the charter school, the case looks at the charter school from the perspective of the supporter: it presents the reasons why the donor/prospect would want to contribute. It articulates the underlying concept of why people should support the charter school. It is the prospectus for investment for all donor prospects.

As a result, the case for support must be based first and foremost on community needs and the mission of the charter school, what is missing and what is the focus on the problem. Only then

should the case describe what the charter school is doing to solve the problem, and for how long it has been doing so. There is more information about developing the case below.

Principle #4: Every board director can do something useful to support the fund-raising effort, employing his or her own skills and interests.

Board directors can assist significantly in fund raising, first by giving themselves. A personal financial commitment underlies each board director's resolve to support the charter school.

Second, board directors should help prepare for actual solicitation. Here are some examples of ways board directors can help:

- **CULTIVATION.** Cultivation might consist of inviting a prospect/donor to events and social gatherings of your charter school or arranging for an opportunity to discuss the charter school's mission and case for support. Who better than a board director to carry out such cultivation activities.
- **MAJOR GIFTS.** When asking for a large contribution, it is critical to select the right person to do the asking and to request the right amount, for the right reasons, in the right way. No one is in a better position than a board director to get these "rights" in order and to assist in the selection and evaluation of prospects to ensure the ultimate success of the solicitation.
- **CORPORATE/FOUNDATION GIVING.** Such giving often depends on personal contact. Not only must corporate prospects be selected and evaluated through research, but a board director's introduction to the appropriate company or foundation officer may become the key to success.
- **PERSONAL NOTES.** For individuals, foundations and corporation, a personal note from a board director in support of a request, or in acknowledgment of a gift, can cement a relationship and increase the chances of the first contribution and others to follow.
- **MAILING LISTS.** Board directors are a key source of new names and likely prospects for the mailing list. They can supply names from their personal and business address books, their clubs, and their churches. Board directors receiving appeals and invitations from other charter schools can pass on to staff the names of other community leaders who are potential donors.
- **ANNUAL APPEALS.** Experience shows again and again that if a personal note accompanies or is even written on the formal letter of request, the chance of a positive response increases greatly. Something as simple as, "I do hope you will (again) consider helping our charter school that does such fine work in the community," written to a friend or contact, is not so much pressuring someone as it is supporting the work of a quality charter school.

Principle #5: Motivation of board directors is the most critical and the most difficult task of all. Indifference will not raise money. Board directors and staff need to be enthusiastic about the purpose of the charter school and show eagerness to be involved.

Many effective boards believe that the board development committee, the group that selects new members, is the most important of all its committees. The board chairperson should be actively involved in the recruitment process. Your school's development staff (if you have any) should be involved with the board development committee. The development staff can assist the committee in identifying community leaders for the committee to review, providing background information on the prospective board directors, as well as providing follow-up and support for new members and alternates.

New board directors should be selected, in part, based on their ability to move people to action, to communicate persuasively and to strengthen the confidence of followers. Also, involvement is a core element of motivation. Your charter school administrator should approach each board director with a clear idea of what is needed and expected and ask for support on specific tasks.

A fund development committee can help focus attention on fund raising and give even the most reluctant board director an opportunity to help in the fund-raising effort.

In short, as each board director comes to realize that fund raising is indeed his or her responsibility, that the natural process of giving and asking does not present life-threatening peril and that a board director can do many different things to support the fund-raising effort, he or she will become more active and committed. Many will find that they enjoy the challenge of raising funds to support their charter school.

Fund Raising Checklist For Board directors:

1. Do I understand the plans and programs for fund raising?
2. Do I fully understand and endorse the "fund-raising case" which explains someone should contribute? Can I articulate the case with confidence?
3. Do I personally contribute to the fullest measure within my means?
4. Do I continually offer my additions to the mailing list?
5. Do I assist staff in identifying and evaluating prospects - individuals, corporations and foundations?
6. Do I share in cultivating key prospects?
7. Do I make introductions for others to make a solicitation visit?
8. Do I accompany others in solicitation visits?
9. Do I write follow-up and acknowledgment letters?
10. Do I write personal notes on annual appeal letters?
11. Am I prepared to make a solicitation myself?
12. Do I do what I say I will do?

Creating a Strong Fund Development Committee

Regardless of what fund-raising activities your charter school decides to employ in its annual campaign, it should start by establishing a strong, active fund development or fund-raising committee. This should be a standing committee of the board and there should be a written committee description as discussed in Chapter 11 of this guidebook. A sample description is included in the Tools Section of this chapter.

The first step toward creating a strong fund development committee is for the board (or board chair, depending on the applicable by-law provisions) to appoint a committee chair. The chair sets the pace, defines the attitudes and provides the leadership necessary for planning, organizing and building the necessary volunteer team for conducting successful fund-raising campaigns.

Under the leadership of the chair, the fund development committee is responsible for the following:

- Soliciting current board directors. The goal of every fund development committee is to get 100 percent board participation.
- Recruiting fund-raising volunteers, and developing and implementing a program for orienting and soliciting funds from volunteers.
- Developing written plans, estimated budgets, and dollar goals for fund-raising programs to be reviewed and ratified by the charter school's board. These plans, reflecting a period of at least three years, should be reviewed semi-annually for appropriate payoffs and cost/benefit adjustments.
- Developing and conducting annual personal solicitation programs on behalf of the board to major donors, corporations and foundations who have been identified as potential supporters of the charter school.
- Organizing and conducting special event fund-raising programs.
- Assisting in development and maintenance of donor records and reporting procedures.
- Evaluating fund-raising successes at least once a year, and making appropriate recommendations to the board for maximizing results.

Training to Support The Board's Fund-raising Role

Many board directors don't want to raise money because they don't know how. This reluctance can be countered by simply asking them if they would be willing to try if the charter school offers them support and training. Often this will increase their confidence to get involved.

In many communities there are organizations that provide fund-raising training to board directors as well as staff of organizations. A good source of such support is the local chapter of the National Society for Fund-raising Executives (NSFRE). To locate a chapter near your charter school, check the Website at www.nsfre.com.

Think about ways you can integrate the fund-raising training into the program of board orientation and ongoing education described earlier in Chapter 3 of the governance guidebook. Especially for new board directors, this has the additional benefit of reinforcing the message that board directors of the charter school are expected to help raise funds. Also consider incorporating the fund-raising training in the annual board retreat described in Chapter 13.

Creating A Fund Development Plan

Another critical element in fund-raising effectiveness is a written fund development plan that sets goals for the charter school's income, typically over a three-to five-year span. The financial development plan should incorporate specific objectives and action steps that will help the charter school acquire and effectively use the financial resources it needs.

Fund development planning also requires enthusiastic support - and cooperation - from your charter school's board of directors, management and paid and volunteer staff.

As part of the planning process, the fund development committee and charter school administrator should consider the school's:

- **Strengths** - A strong board? Reliable sources of revenue? Fund-raising efforts that have proven successful in the past?
- **Weaknesses** - Future large-scale expenditures (i.e. more facility space, computers)? Better community awareness programs? Need for a greater variety of funding sources? Need for clearer lines of authority within the charter school?
- **Opportunities** - Possible new funding sources? New programs to serve students and families?
- **Challenges** - Similar schools and other organizations serving children that are competing for the same funding sources?

In drafting the fund development plan all the research, analysis and discussions of possibilities come together in a document that will guide the charter school for several years. The fund development plan should:

- Include a brief overview that describes the students, families and community served, providing relevant demographic data and anticipated changes that are revealed in the school's needs assessment and marketing data.
- Establish fund development goals and set realistic objectives and timetables for meeting those goals, including specific dollar amounts expected to be raised to fund specific school programs and activities.
- Include a list of financial development challenges. Example: "To diversify the charter school's fund-raising sources so that by fiscal year 2001-2002 no more than 75 percent of the Charter school's funds for operating expenses come from public sources."
- Include realistic projections of total income and expenses for the next three to five years which for most charter schools will coincide with the life of the charter contract.

The fund development plan should be as detailed as necessary to give the charter school a clear, accurate and honest picture of its financial future. Done properly, a good fund development plan will help the charter school take advantage of strengths, shore up weaknesses, open up opportunities and diffuse threats to the charter school's financial well-being.

It is extremely important that the fund development plan also include a case statement that clearly and concisely articulates the need for public support of the charter school.

Developing The Fund-raising Case

An important responsibility of the board's fund development committee is to create a fund-raising case statement. A strong case statement is critically important to the success of the charter school's fund raising efforts. The case looks at the charter school from the perspective of the supporter. It sets forth the reasons why the donor/prospect should want to contribute to your charter school. It interprets and explains the mission of the organization. It is the prospectus for investment. The case essentially answers the questions why, what, who, and how:

- Why does the charter school exist -- what is the mission; why is your charter school essential to meeting specific education needs of the community?
- What does the charter school do to meet those needs? What is innovative about the approach?
- Who is the charter school? Who are its leaders and representatives?
- How well and how long has it served its constituency and the community?

When drafting the case statement, include the following:

- State the needs the charter school is trying to address. Note that these are not the charter school's needs, but the needs of students and their families. Include a statement of the problems, the scope or the number of people being affected, how wide a geographic area is affected and likely consequences if no action is taken.
- Explain the services that the charter school provides to respond to these needs. State specifically what the school does and how its actions address the needs. Explain the financial requirements of the services provided and the resources necessary to maintain them.
- Document the charter school's ability to provide the educational and related services. Discuss the charter school's mission, history (be brief), current educational programs, achievement and recognition in the community. Describe capacity to provide leadership and staffing. Include an abbreviated financial statement to indicate the ability to manage funds.
- State the dollar requirements of the charter school. State where the school intends to seek support and list support already received. Include testimonials or list gift amounts already received from influential people. (Be sure you get their permission first.)
- Describe the specific benefits to students and families.
- Ask for a gift. Explain how a gift can be made and how it will support the charter school, resulting in benefits to people. Indicate how the donor will be recognized.

Use the following checklist to evaluate your case statement:

- Is the case clear, concise, and understandable?
- Is the problem compelling?
- Is the focus on people, not institutions?
- Is there a sense of urgency?
- Does the case have emotional as well as rational appeal?
- Does the case communicate optimism and hope for the future?
- Does it ask the donor's support?

With a realistic fund-raising plan in hand that looks three to five years ahead, and a strong case statement that clearly describes why your charter school is worth supporting, the board has taken the first major steps toward successful fund raising.

Types Of Fund-Raising Activities

The charter school fund development committee and the board of directors drive the fund-raising activities of the school. A variety of these activities may go into making up a successful annual campaign, including friends membership drives, direct mail solicitation, major gift-giving, special events, solicitation of corporations and foundations and more.

Here, we will touch briefly on several types of these fund-raising activities:

Membership or Friends Drives

Charter schools should consider development of a friend's membership program. Through such an effort, community supporters of the charter school have a way to contribute funds. Prospective friends come from the extended family members of children enrolled in the school, and others who support efforts to improve education in the community. Friends can be solicited for small annual contributions through any of the annual events sponsored by the charter school. With proper cultivation, some friends can be approached in the future for larger donations.

In addition to raising funds, friend membership drives also help raise the profile of the charter school in the community. However, unless your "friends" membership drive is extremely successful and raises lots of money, it should be considered only one small component of your annual campaign.

Fund-raising Letter Appeals

A good fund-raising appeal letter should:

- Be timely, taking advantage of any windows of opportunity. Letters that can be tied to a special cause or event are generally stronger and more successful.
- Discuss education issues and unique contribution of the charter school. The letter should show in a compelling way why immediate support is necessary to address educational issues that the charter school is uniquely equipped to solve.
- State how the charter school will address educational concerns of the community
- Ask for a contribution. Too often, letters simply describe the problem or the need for support but fail to communicate a clear, urgent "ask." The ask is doubly effective when it is specifically tied to the donor's comfort level, that is, the dollar range of the donor's previous gift. This technique speaks loudly and clearly for good record keeping.

- Explain clearly how to make the gift and how it will be used.
- Finally, thank them in advance for the support you anticipate.

Major Gifts

A major gift is one that is extraordinary in relation to the usual size of gifts to your charter school. Gifts of this size are usually requested by personal face-to-face solicitation. How large is a "large" contribution? That depends on your circumstances: for one charter school, it might be \$5,000; another charter school might consider \$250 a major gift.

What is key here is that a major gift is usually not the result of direct mail solicitation, a special event or friends membership drive. Rather, a major gift comes at the end of a process of research – finding out who in your community is capable of making a major contribution, what motivates them to give, and what would inspire them to give to your charter school; cultivation – building a personal relationship between the prospective major donors and your school; and solicitation – making the "ask."

This is an area of fund raising in which having board directors who are active, well-know, well-connected, and well-respected in your community makes all the difference - for it is they who are usually the most successful when it comes to soliciting major gifts. And this is because they have personal relationships with potential major donors.

Special Events

Special events can be as diverse and creative as the charter schools that sponsor them. A word of caution when it comes to sponsoring special events, however: they are time consuming to organize, labor intensive, usually expensive to put on and often do not bring in enough money to justify the effort. They may be justifiable if that meet other important objectives: for example, increase awareness of the charter school in the community or provide opportunities for students to be involved in fund-raising

Corporations And Foundations

Soliciting corporations and foundations should be a major component of your annual fund-raising activities. Volunteer Centers should use every opportunity to work with and build relationships with corporations and foundations. These contacts will lead to grants, in-kind donations, pro bono work, employee volunteerism, potential board directors, other contacts and prestige within the business community.

Product Sales

We have all seen the bumper sticker that reads "It will be a great day when the Pentagon needs to hold a candy sale to raise funds." It will also be a great day when parents and students don't have to sell candy bars to help meet the budget of their school. It has been a common practice for product sales of candy, plants, holiday wrap, and more to serve as the mainstay of school fund-raising. Some schools have begun to abandon product sales for more productive fund-raising activities. In one school, parents refused to sell candy any longer and instead organized a Read-a-Thon in which students, for numbers of books they committed to read, solicited pledges from neighbors, friends and family members. The event raised significantly more money than the product sales, required far fewer volunteer hours to complete (with the exception of the reading time by students), with the added benefit of promoting reading. In another school, the fund-raising committee canceled a product sale and organized, in its place, a phone-a-thon in which committee members called parents and friends to request charitable donations. Again, the activity raised more money and required fewer volunteer hours.

Levels of Board Involvement in Fund-raising

As the charter school grows and develops, the board's involvement in developing resources also changes. There are several stages of organizational evolution with distinct roles to be played by board of directors and staff members, which change as the charter school's fund-raising efforts become increasingly sophisticated. Management Cornerstones has developed the following model to describe the development of board involvement in fund-raising:

LEVEL I -- Getting started

- Emphasis on local fund-raising, particularly on small special events.
- Everybody helps a little with fund-raising.
- Every board director makes a personal contribution commensurate with ability.

LEVEL II -- Covering the Basics

- Emphasis on raising funds through grants.
- The charter school administrator plays a key role as the staff person primarily responsible for writing proposals and making all or most of the contacts with donors.
- The board participates in fund-raising by sponsoring larger special events and attending some meetings with foundations and corporations.

LEVEL III -- Diversifying the Income Base

- Emphasis shifts from grants funding overall operations to project-specific funding; Operations are funded by special events, subscriptions or memberships, and an individual donor base.
- The charter school administrator is still the primary development staff, but receives support from other staff in writing proposals and researching new sources.

- The board makes personal contributions, conducts a major special event, and solicits their colleagues and friends.

LEVEL IV -- Maintaining a Wide Range of Donors

- Emphasis is spread over a variety of methods increasing fiscal stability with a combination of fund-raising and financing strategies.
- The charter school administrator solicits funds, with school development staff handling all research, writing, and record keeping systems.
- The board solicits their own contacts, as well as networks of contacts, and continues to sponsor a major special event.
- Honorary and auxiliary boards may be formed to assist with fund-raising. A special committee may be created to conduct a specific fund-raising campaign, e.g., capital or endowment campaign.

An approximate breakdown of typical involvement by board and staff in the different types of potential fund-raising activities from various sources follows:⁶⁷

Funding Source	Board Time Involved	Staff Time Involved
Government	5%	95%
Foundations	25%	75%
Corporations	50%	50%
Bequests	75%	25%
Local community	50%	50%
Special events	80%	20%
Funding Source	Board Time Involved	Staff Time Involved
Individuals		
Board directors	100%	0%
General public		
• Direct mail	2%	98%
• Annual givers	50%	50%
• Major donors	80%	20%
Members/subscribers	2%	98%

⁶⁷ Developed by Management Cornerstones, Milwaukee WI, 1988.

Chapter 11: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Sample Fund-raising Committee Description (Source: National Association of Independent Schools)
- Sample Resource Development Committee (See Tools Section in Chapter 10)
- School Endowment: Sample Policy Statement (See the following website: Independent Schools Association of the Central States at www.isacs.org; click on “Monographs”, then scroll down and click on “Business Operations” for sample school endowment policies.)

Essential Resources for Board Involvement in Fund-raising

- Boschee, Jerr, Merging Money and Mission: A Board Member’s Guide to Social Entrepreneurship, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1998.
- Brinckerhoff, Peter C., Financial Empowerment: More Money for Mission, John Wiley and Sons, 1996.
- DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998. Especially Chapter 5.
- Foundation Center (Website: <http://fdncenter.org/>)
- Howe, Fisher, Fund Raising and the Nonprofit Board, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1998.
- Klein, Kim, Grassroots Fundraising Journal, Chardon Press. (Don’t let the title fool you. Kim Klein is one of the best fund-raising trainers and consultants in the country. The bi-monthly journal has withstood the test of time. An excellent resource for charter schools needing to diversify their revenue base. Website: www.chardonpress.com.)
- National Association of Fund Raising Executives. Go to: www.nsfre.org.
- Scanlon, Eugene A., Corporate and Foundation Fund Raising, Aspen Publishers, 1997.
- Thorton, Grant, Planned Giving: A Board Member’s Perspective, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999.

Fund Development Committee Job Description

First appeared in The Trustee Handbook, Seventh Edition, by Mary DeKuyper, published by the National Association of Independent Schools. Reprinted with permission.⁶⁸)

Responsibilities: The primary role of the development committee shall be to advise the board and staff of the school on all matters pertaining to fund development and to oversee and coordinate the ongoing fund development efforts of the school. The specific committee responsibilities shall be to:

- Establish development goals and organizational structures.
- Approve the annual fund development plan (including the case statement, calendar, budget, goals, etc.) and inform the board. The board will approve the goal as part of the annual school budget process.
- Identify ways board directors can be involved in the raising of funds and match individual board directors with the activities that match his or her skills and interests.
- Identify and assist with the recruitment of volunteers (including parents and alumni) for the various fund-raising activities.
- Assist in the identification of major donors.
- Make contact with solicit major donors when a committee member is the right person to make such a contact.
- Advise on the school's community relations and communications plan as it relates to fund development activities for the year.
- Monitor the progress of the annual campaign and keep the board informed.
- Coordinate with the capital campaign committee, if the school is undertaking such a campaign.
- Establish and implement a system of recognition for board and other volunteers who are active in fund-raising.

Committee Members and Staff: Development committee members should be people who:

- Are committed givers to the school and believe in the mission of the school.
- Are skilled in fund-raising or willing to learn the skills to do the job.
- Are highly regarded by the school community.
- Willing to give the necessary time.
- The size of the committee depends on the number of tasks to be accomplished, but not so large that the chair spends all his/her time facilitating meetings and other logistics. 7 to 10 members is the average.
- The committee should be staffed by the school development director or the school administrator or her/his designee if there is no development director.
- The development committee should meet at least quarterly. There will be times when the committee may need to increase the regular frequency of these meetings to monthly or even weekly. In addition, members should also be on call for individual assignments.

⁶⁸ DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.

Chapter 12: Board Self-Assessment

Critical Board Building Challenge: How does the charter school board continuously enhance its effectiveness?

Introduction

Board self-assessment refers to a set of practices used to examine board performance against standards that define good performance. Board assessment is not unlike school assessment. Like school assessment, it needs to be viewed as part of commitment to continuous improvement of the board's performance.

The board plays an essential role in governing the charter school. At the same time, evaluating the performance of governing boards is not a common practice -- certainly not as common as assessment of the charter school administrator. Because so much is riding on the effectiveness of the board in carrying out its roles and responsibilities, it is important that the board spends time looking at its own performance in order to improve it. Board directors, even though they are volunteers, want their time and skills to be used well; they do not want them wasted. With the goal of board assessment as improvement, not judgment, boards will find great value in examining their performance, and charter school will benefit greatly as well.

According to Richard P. Chait, Thomas P. Holland, and Barbara E. Taylor in Improving the Performance of Governing Boards, "Assessment offers a practical means--an 'excuse' or catalyst--to initiate and sustain attention to board performance, to stimulate self-reflection, and to track changes over time."

This activity is called "board self-assessment" because it is an activity limited to board directors and because the board makes the decision to conduct it. While the administrator serves at the pleasure of the board and his or her performance typically is evaluated by the board, it is up to the board itself to determine whether and how to examine its own performance. Board self-assessment can take a variety of forms. Sometimes boards will choose to use outside consultants to facilitate the process. As expected, there is no one right way to do it, but a good process will produce answers to many of the following questions:

1. Who will be responsible for initiating and conducting the board assessment activities?
2. Are there written policies defining the scope of board performance assessment and how it will be conducted?
3. How often will the assessment be conducted?
4. Will an outside facilitator be used to help conduct the assessment?
5. What key issues will the process focus on, and how will information be gathered?
6. Will the assessment be based on standards of board effectiveness?
7. Will the performance of the board and administrator be assessed simultaneously?
8. Will the board assessment give special attention to the performance of the board chair in addition to individual board directors?
9. What are the criteria for individual trustee assessment?

10. How will the results of the board self-assessment be used?
11. Based on past experience, should the board self-assessment process be changed in any way?

In general, an effective board self-assessment process has the following characteristics:

- It has the enthusiastic support board leadership.
- The assessment is based on a set of standards or best practices that characterize effective board performance.
- The assessment is a formal process in that it is conducted on a regular, agreed-upon basis and a written assessment tool that all board directors complete is the centerpiece of the process.
- Finally, there is a plan to use the results of the assessment to set goals for board improvement and the plan is implemented.

On the question of how often boards should engage in self-assessment, Larry Slesinger, author of Self-assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards, has the following observation to share:

“Board self-assessment is too comprehensive of a process to be carried out every year. Every two or three years is usually sufficient for a stable board. Performance assessment can be particularly useful just before the board engages in strategic planning or prepares for a major campaign, after a major crisis, or when a certain complacency has settled in the board and an invigorating impulse would be welcome.”⁶⁹

The work of implementing the plans that result from board self-assessment however is ongoing.

Leadership Support For The Continuous Improvement Effort

An effective board self-assessment begins with the visible support of the board own leaders. This is, after all, the board’s assessment process. Board directors need to be reminded of the purpose and the importance of the assessment to the board's continuing development. Each board director must be urged to give the necessary time to completing the self-assessment questionnaire and returning it to the board president in a timely manner. Board leadership must also be committed to taking the necessary steps to incorporate the results of the assessment into an improvement plan and to make sure this plan is implemented and monitored.

Indicators of Board Effectiveness

As mentioned earlier, a good assessment process is based on a set of standards or best practices that characterize effective board performance. There are several examples of board governance

⁶⁹ Slesinger, Larry, Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards. National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999.

standards that can be used as the foundation for the charter school board's program of self-assessment. Two such examples are included in the Tool Section of this chapter.

- The first is "Governance: Best Practices" developed by the Minnesota Council for Nonprofits. The Minnesota council is a statewide association of nonprofit organizations and has developed an excellent resource that can be used by the boards of charter schools to plan their self-assessment.
- The second set of standards is "Principles of Good Practice for Member Schools" developed by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). This document includes standards of performance of the board as a whole as well as standards of performance for individual board directors. Again, this is an excellent resource for developing a board self-assessment tool.

Assessment Tools With Goal Setting And Follow Through

The charter school board can develop its own written self-assessment tool can use standards document such as the ones refer to above. Another approach is to use off-the-shelf board assessment instruments. There are a number to choose from and they are described here.

- **Board Self-assessment Questionnaire.** This assessment tool is included in Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance, by Eugene R. Smoley.⁷⁰ This self-assessment is also available online at the Web site of the National School Boards Association (www.nsba.org).
- **Self-Assessment For Nonprofit Governing Boards.** This assessment tool is available from the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (www.ncnb.org).⁷¹ The first part of this assessment examines performance of the board as a whole and is built around a list of 11 key board responsibilities. The second part focuses on individual board director performance.
- **Charter School Board Of Directors Self-Assessment Template.** This assessment is available from the Charter School Development Center and included in its publication Charter School Governance Toolkit, 1st Edition (www.cacharterschools.org).⁷² This assessment reflects basic rules and responsibilities of the board as well as a number of explicit references to items like compliance with state and federal laws, instruction and assessment, and terms of the school's charter contract.

⁷⁰ Smoley, Eugene R., Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance, Jossey-Bass, 1999.

⁷¹ Slesinger, Larry, Self-assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, Revised, 1999.

⁷² Charter School Governance Toolkit, published by Charter Schools Development Center, 1999.

- **Board Development Assessment Tool.** This assessment is available from the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations.⁷³ This assessment tool is included in the Tools Section of this chapter. The instrument is part of the learner packet for the Institute’s award-winning video conference training program on board development. It includes sections on internal procedures, import operational matters and financial management responsibilities. It also includes a sample work plan for implementing the results of a board self-assessment.
- **Visionary Board Leadership Assessment.** This assessment was developed by the Center for Public Skills Training. This assessment tool is included in the Tools Section of this chapter. In keeping with the theme of the charter school board as strategic thinkers and planners, this Assessment focuses on competencies and characteristics that delineate the profile of an effective, future-focused board as described in Chapter 5 of the Governance Guidebook.

Use of Retreats

Properly planned and facilitated, retreats can be a valuable tool for board improvement. Away from the more focused, detailed agenda of a regular board meeting, a retreat session creates opportunities for deeper dialogue, team building and forging commitments to concrete plans that translate the results of the boards self-assessment into improved board performance in the future. While retreats can serve various specific purposes, they typically produce some combination of the following:

- Strengthen poor performance by reviewing governance procedures and the role of the board;
- Assess the board’s contributions to the charter school and identifying ways the board can add greater value in the future;
- Establish priorities for the board and develop an action plan to achieve results based on those priorities;
- Increase the sense of team spirit and strengthen working relationships among board directors and in between board and staff;
- Determine the next steps in board improvement.⁷⁴

According to Peter C. Brinckerhoff, the effectiveness of board retreats will greatly increase if the retreat planners incorporate the following:

- Identify outcomes for the retreat. Be sure there is consensus among board directors about what these outcomes should be. A retreat outcome can include a plan for identifying key findings from the board assessment and developing a plan for

⁷³ Lewis, Andrew, Board Development Assessment Tool, The Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations, 1999.

⁷⁴ Chait, Richard P., Holland, Thomas P. and Taylor, Barbara E., Improving the Performance of Governing Boards, Oryx Press, 1996.

corrective action or resolving a major critical issue that surfaced during the board assessment. The desired outcomes should drive the development of the retreat agenda.

- Consider use of an outside facilitator. The charter school board chair or the administrator of the school may be a gifted and experienced facilitator, but titles can get in the way of effective interaction. More importantly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to play the role of facilitator and retreat participant at the same time. One of these roles will suffer.
- Break up the work sessions. Structure the retreat agenda so that participants spend some time in small working groups as well as full group presentations and discussions. And though the board is there to think and work, don't wear people out. Give people breaks, and you will get more out of them.
- Document the various discussions. Ask the facilitator to write the key points on a flip chart while a scribe takes down all the details. Develop and distribute a report to all retreat participants.
- Stick to the issues at hand. If you're having a retreat to discuss specific findings of the self-assessment, set a rule at the beginning of the retreat that you will not allow discussion of current events unless they have a connection to the issues at hand.
- Encourage everyone to participate. The worst thing that can happen at a retreat is for someone to say nothing. Work with your facilitator to make sure that everyone is politely but firmly forced to add something to the discussion.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Brinckerhoff, Peter C., writing in *Association Management*, American Society of Association Executives.

Additional Tools for Board Assessment and Improvement

In the Tools Section of this chapter, there are two additional tools that will help your charter school board embark upon this journey of continuous improvement:

- The first, adapted from work by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, is a matrix that describes board improvement over time in seven critical performance areas: board composition, board development process, board meeting attendance, committee structure with objectives, board diversity, board participation in school events, and board giving. Board improvement in each of these areas is described as it involves through four stages: developing, operational, advancing, and excelling.
- The second tool is a sample listing of recommendations for board improvement that might result from a self-assessment process or the board planning session held as part of the charter school development process. There are references to chapters and specific pages in the governance guidebook. While it is offered as a sample, many charter schools might consider this as a starting point for designing a board development plan.

Chapter 12: Tools You Can Use

Samples Of Foundation Documents

- Best Practices: Governance (Source: Minnesota Council for Nonprofits)
- Principles of Good Practice for Member Schools (Source: National Association of Independent Schools)
- Board Governance Indicators Assessment (Source: United Way of Minneapolis Area)
- Board Development Assessment Tool (Source: The Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations).
- Visionary Board Leadership Assessment (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)
- Exit Interview with Departing Board directors (Source: Aspen Publishers)
- A Framework for Continuous Improvement of Charter School Board Effectiveness (Source: Adapted from Boys and Girls Clubs of America)
- Sample Recommendations for Board Improvement (Source: The Center for Public Skills Training)

Essential Resources for Board Self-Assessment

- Board Tune-ups. The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) has prepared a collection of 13 assessment tools for the periodic tune-up of your charter school board. Topics include: Board Bylaws, Committees, Board Evaluation, Policies, Board Recruitment, Board Structure/Meeting Pattern, Contract for Administrator, Endowment Policies, Enrollment Contract, Enrollment Policies, Faculty Contracts, Administrator Evaluation, and Long-range Planning. The approach suggested is to compare the "best practices" ISACS version to your school board's version of policies and practices. All of the documents cited are available for free by downloading from the ISACS website: Go to www.isacs.org then click on *Monographs*, scroll down to *Board of Trustees*, and choose the appropriate monograph title. Alternatively, school board chairs can order from ISACS the tune-up package of all the monographs for a charge of \$25.00, payable to ISACS.
- Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition, Charter Schools Development Center, 1999. Section 4 includes a "Charter School Board of Directors Self Assessment Template." (www.cacharterschools.org)
- Hughes, Sandra, To Go Forward, Retreat, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999. Includes many practical suggestions and ideas for planning and conducting successful board retreats.
- Slesinger, Larry H., Self-assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.
- Smoley, Eugene R., Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance, Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Szanton, Peter, Board Assessment of the Organization, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1992.
- The Board Self-assessment Questionnaire. This online self-assessment tool is available on Web site of the National School Boards Association at

www.nsba.org/smoley/quiz.cfm. The tool was designed by Eugene Smoley, author of *Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance*.

- The Management Center Online Assessment Tool <http://www.tmcenter.org/toolintro.html>

BEST PRACTICES: GOVERNANCE

[Source: Minnesota Council for Nonprofits (MCN)]

Elected or appointed, volunteer boards of directors who are committed to the organization's mission and leadership govern nonprofits. A nonprofit board determines the mission, strategic direction, and future programming of the organization. A nonprofit board ensures and nurtures adequate human and financial resources and actively monitors and evaluates the organization's executive director/CEO, as well as service and financial results. Nonprofit board members approve and systematically implement policies to ensure achievement of the mission of the organization and to prevent perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest.

A. Board Responsibilities

1. The board should engage in ongoing planning activities as necessary to determine the mission of the organization and its strategic direction, to define specific goals and objectives related to the mission, and to evaluate the success of the organization's services toward achieving the mission.
2. The board should approve the policies for the effective, efficient, and cost-effective operation of the organization.
3. The board should annually approve the organization's budget and assess the organization's financial performance in relation to the budget at least four times per year.
4. The board is responsible for the financial health of the organization and should actively participate in the fund-raising process through members' financial support and active seeking of the support of others. As part of the annual budget process, the board should review the percentage of the organization's resources spent on program, administration, and fund-raising, with a goal of at least 70% of revenue used for programs.
5. The board should hire, set the compensation for, and annually evaluate the performance of the executive director/CEO.
6. If the organization employs staff, the board should annually review its overall compensation structure, using industry-based surveys of salaries and benefits. The board should ensure that a livable hourly compensation is paid to all employees, whether full- or part-time. The board should ensure that sufficient funds are allocated to contribute to full-time, permanent employees' medical insurance and retirement plans. The board should establish policies, when appropriate, on employee benefits, vacation, and sick leave.
7. The board should approve written policies and procedures governing the work and actions of its employees and volunteers. These policies and procedures should address the following: working conditions; evaluation and grievance procedures; confidentiality of employee, volunteer, client, and organization records and information; and employee and volunteer growth and development.
8. The board should ensure that an internal review of the organization's compliance with known existing legal, regulatory, and financial reporting requirements is conducted annually and that a summary of the results of the review is provided to the entire board.
9. The board should periodically assess the need for insurance coverage in light of the nature and extent of the organization's activities and its financial capacity. A decision to

forego general liability insurance coverage or Directors and Officers liability insurance coverage should be made only by the board of directors.

B. Board Composition

1. The board members should be personally committed to the mission of the organization, willing to volunteer sufficient time and resources to help achieve the mission of the organization, and understand and fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities.
2. No more than one employee of the organization should serve as a voting member of the board of directors and staff should not serve as chair or treasurer of the Board.
3. To allow for significant deliberation and diversity, the majority of the board should be made up of at least seven persons unrelated to each other or staff.
4. The organization's bylaws should determine term limits that establish individual terms of no more than three years, allow individuals to serve no more than three consecutive terms, and require at least one year intervening before eligibility for re-election after serving the maximum number of consecutive terms.
5. Board membership should reflect the diversity of the organization's constituencies.
6. Board members (who are not employees) should not receive compensation for their board service, other than reimbursement for expenses directly related to board duties.
7. The board nomination process should be announced to the organization's public, so that interested persons or community members can nominate themselves or others.

C. Conduct of the Board

1. The board should be responsible for its own operations, including the education, training, and development of board members; annual evaluation of its own performance; and, when appropriate, the selection of new board members. There should be written job descriptions for board members, officers, committees, and committee members.
2. The board should have written expectations for board members, including expectations for full board participation in fund-raising activities, committee service, and service activities.
3. The board should meet as frequently as needed to adequately conduct the business of the organization. At a minimum, the board should meet four times a year with a quorum present.
4. The board should have written policies that address attendance and participation of board members at board meetings including a process to address noncompliance.
5. Written meeting minutes should reflect the actions of the board, including reports of authorized board committees. The board should permanently retain the minutes, distribute them to board and committee members, and make them available for public review.

D. Conflict of Interest

1. The board should establish conflict of interest policies regarding board, staff, volunteers, contractors, and organizational partners or allies and adhere to these policies in all dealings. The policies should include an obligation of each board member to disclose all material facts and relationships and refrain from voting on any matter when there is a conflict of interest.

National Association Of Independent Schools (NAIS) Principles of Good Practice for Member Schools, 1999

Board Of Trustees

1. The board prepares a clear statement of the school's mission and objectives.
2. The board reviews and maintains bylaws, and establishes policies and plans consistent with the mission.
3. The board is accountable for the financial well-being of the school, including capital assets, operating budgets, fund-raising, and endowments.
4. The board selects, supports, and nurtures the head.
5. The board, or committee of the board, conducts a written annual evaluation of the performance of the head and works with the head to establish goals for the following year.
6. The board evaluates itself annually and establishes goals for the following year.
7. The board keeps full and accurate records of its meetings, committees, and policies.
8. The board works to ensure all its members are actively involved in the work of the board and its committees.
9. The composition of the board reflects a balance of expertise and perspectives needed to achieve the mission of the school.
10. The board develops itself through new trustee orientation, ongoing education, and leadership succession planning.
11. The board assures compliance with applicable laws and regulations and minimizes exposure to legal action.

School Board Members as Individuals

The following principles of good practice are set forth to provide a common perspective on the responsibilities of individual members of independent school boards.

1. A trustee actively supports and promotes the school's mission.
2. A trustee is knowledgeable about the school's mission and goals as well as current operations and issues.
3. A trustee attends meetings well prepared and participates fully in all matters.
4. The board sets policy; the administration implements policy. An individual trustee does not become involved in specific management, personnel, or curricular issues.
5. A trustee accepts and supports board decisions and respects board confidentiality.
6. A trustee guards against conflict of interest, whether business-related or personal. The trustee takes care to separate the interests of the school from the specific needs of a particular child or constituency.
7. A trustee has the responsibility to support the school and its head and to demonstrate that support within the community.
8. Authority is vested in the board as a whole. A trustee who learns of an issue has the obligations to bring it to the head of school, or to the board chair, and must not deal with the situation individually.
9. A trustee contributes to the development program of the school, including financial support and active involvement in annual and capital giving.
10. Each trustee, as well as the treasurer and finance committee, has fiduciary responsibility to the school for sound financial management.

Board Governance Indicators Assessment

Use this form to assess your board of directors. Use the ratings in the last three columns to develop a plan for board improvement

Rating	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A
E	1. The roles of the Board and the Administrator are defined and respected, with the Administrator delegated as the manager of the charter school's operations and the board focused on policy and planning			
R	2. The Administrator is recruited, selected, and employed by the board of directors. The board provide clearly written expectations and qualifications for the position, as well as reasonable compensation.			
R	3. The board of directors acts as a governing trustees of the charter school on behalf of the community at large and contributors while carrying out the charter school's mission and goals. To fully meet this goal, the board of directors must actively participate in the planning process as outlined in planning sections of this checklist.			
R	4. The board's nominating process ensures that the board remains appropriately diverse with respect to gender, ethnicity, culture, economic status, disabilities, and skills and/or expertise.			
E	5. The board directors receive regular training and information about their responsibilities.			
E	6. New board directors are oriented to the charter school, including the charter school's mission, bylaws, policies, and programs, as well as their roles and responsibilities as board directors.			
A	7. Board organization is documented with a description of the board and board committee responsibilities.			
A	8. Each board has a board operations manual.			
E	9. If the charter school has any related party transactions between board directors or their family, they are disclosed to the board of directors, the Internal Revenue Service and the auditor.			
E	10. The charter school has at least the minimum number of members on the board of directors as required by their bylaws or state statute.			
Rating	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A

R	11. If the charter school has adopted bylaws, they conform to state statute and have been reviewed by legal counsel.			
R	12. The bylaws should include: a) how and when notices for board meetings are made; b) how members are elected/appointed by the board; c) what the terms of office are for officers/members; d) how board directors are rotated; e) how ineffective board directors are removed from the board; f) a stated number of board directors to make up a quorum which is required for all policy decisions.			
R	13. The board of directors reviews the bylaws.			
A	14. The board has a process for handling urgent matters between meetings.			
E	15. Board directors serve without payment unless the agency has a policy identifying reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses.			
R	16. The charter school maintains a conflict-of-interest policy and all board directors and executive staff review and/or sign to acknowledge and comply with the policy.			
R	17. The board has an annual calendar of meetings. The board also has an attendance policy such that a quorum of the charter school's board meets at least quarterly. (Organizations are not required by law to open their meetings to the public.)			
A	18. Meetings have written agendas and materials relating to significant decisions are given to the board in advance of the meeting.			
A	19. The board has a written policy prohibiting employees and members of employees' immediate families from serving as board chair or treasurer.			
Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities				

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United Way of Minneapolis Area
 The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits
 2233 University Avenue West, Suite 360
 St. Paul, Minnesota 55114
 (612) 647-1216
 and Carter McNamara, PhD

Nonprofit Organizational Assessment Tool

By: Andrew Lewis*
University of Wisconsin - Extension
Vice President, Program Development
The Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations

This section of the *Nonprofit Organizational Assessment Tool* can help guide a group discussion about an organization's board governance. This group discussion ideally should include board directors, staff, volunteers, and service recipients, but could be used as a self-assessment tool by anyone associated with a nonprofit organization.

Review the assessment form on pages 2-8. First, check the indicators that have been completed or accomplished. Next, indicate the amount of improvement that you think is needed for that indicator (None or Not Applicable, Some, or much improvement needed). There are no right or wrong answers. It is your perception of the organization. If used with a group, each individual should complete the assessment tool. After allowing adequate time, compare responses and discuss any areas where there were different perceptions. As a final step, identify the top 2-3 priorities where there was a high level of consensus on an indicator needing "much" improvement. If you are doing this as a group, have each individual select their top three priorities and then tally the "votes" for the group to identify the top three. Begin developing an action plan that would address these issues. After successfully implementing your action plans that address your top priorities, revisit your assessment tool and begin developing action plans for the other indicators that need attention.

This particular section of the assessment tool focuses on the board governance process and concepts presented during the educational programs produced by the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations. The complete *Nonprofit Organizational Assessment Tool* includes eight sections based on the content presented in the eight programs that make up the curriculum of the "Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership and Management" educational series.

***Learning Institute faculty contributor for this section: Carol E. Weisman, Board Builders Inc., St. Louis, Missouri**

Board Governance Assessment Tool**

Internal Procedures

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None/N.A.	Some	Much
1. The organization has a clear sense of who they are and has spent time thinking about the kinds of people they want on their board.				
2. The organization has completed a formal review of its current board profile and has identified deficiencies (i.e. by using an instrument such as the board profile worksheet).				
3. The organization has identified individuals that have the characteristics that are lacking on the board and have developed a recruitment strategy.				
4. The organization has a nominating committee in place.				
5. Have there been any major changes in the mission of the organization that might require a change in the make-up of the board?				
6. The organization and governing board have spent time talking about the advantages of having a diverse board.				
7. The organization cooperates with other nonprofits in the community in the development and maintenance of a board bank.				
8. Potential board directors are recruited from within the organization (volunteers, past employees, members etc.) as well as outside the organization.				

Internal Procedures (Continued...)

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
		None/N.A.	Some	Much
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
9. The board chair and staff (if any) have developed "tools" that keep board meetings interesting, fun and productive. Meetings are evaluated for productivity at least occasionally.				
10. Board directors serve without payment unless the agency has a policy identifying reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses.				
11. Board directors are accessible to stakeholders and to staff (volunteer and paid).				
12. The Board plays an active role in developing and reviewing a strategic plan for the organization.				

Operational Procedures

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
		None/N.A.	Some	Much
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
1. The roles of the board are clearly stated and communicated. Board directors commit to those responsibilities by signing a board commitment letter.				
2. Board meetings are well attended.				
3. When a board director misses a board meeting without announcing a reason, another board director or the director of the organization calls them.				
4. Potential board directors are interviewed before they are asked to serve.				

Operational Procedures (Continued...)

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None/N.A.	Some	Much
5. The board directors receive orientation, regular training, and information about their responsibilities. Orientation includes information on the organization's mission, bylaws, policies, practices, programs, as well as their governance roles and responsibilities as board directors.				
6. The board has a nominating process that ensures that the board remains appropriately diverse with respect to ethnicity, gender, economic status, culture, disabilities, age, skills and/or expertise.				
7. Each Board has a board operations manual that summarizes responsibilities (including job descriptions for officers) and operation procedures. This manual includes a copy of the organization's bylaws.				
8. The number of current board directors is consistent with what is required in the bylaws or state statutes.				
9. The board reviews the bylaws on at least an annual basis. Bylaws should clearly state the organization's purpose, service area, defined members, defined board of directors, specific meeting guidelines, defined officers, defined committees, guidelines for amending bylaws, guidelines for dissolution of the organization, guidelines for financial and legal procedures.				

Operational Procedures (Continued...)

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None/N.A.	Some	Much
10. The board has developed an annual meeting calendar with tasks that routinely need to be done at specific board meetings...i.e. review bylaws in November, Prepare for Audit in August, Nomination Committee prepares slate of nominations in July etc.				
11. The board has a policy and procedure for handling urgent matters between regularly scheduled meetings.				
12. The organization maintains a conflict-of-interest policy and all board directors and staff review and sign to acknowledge and comply with the policy (Could be part of the Board Commitment letter).				
13. The board has a written policy prohibiting employees and members of their immediate families from serving as board chair or treasurer.				
14. All Board meetings have written agendas and materials that are given to the board in advance of the meetings. Board reports/minutes are recorded and action taken on the minutes of all meetings.				

Fiscal Management

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None/N.A.	Some	Much
1. Board directors have made a strong individual financial commitment to the organization.				
2. The board takes the leadership role in fund-raising and financial management.				
3. The board oversees the annual audit and uses it to strengthen the organization's financial policies.				
4. The board is doing a good job of insuring that the organization is fulfilling its regulatory and financial requirements.				
5. The board prepares a budget (based on a recommendation from the executive director if one exists) which allocates funds to the major priorities identified in the strategic plan of the organization.				
6. A financial plan has been developed to ensure financial stability for 3-5 years and is consistent with the organizations strategic plan.				
7. The board involves individuals most knowledgeable about programs/activities in preparing the budget.				
8. The board understands the annual budget.				
9. The board reviews monthly reports of expenditures and revenues.				

Fiscal Management (Continued...)

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
		None/N.A.	Some	Much
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
10. The board compares actual revenues and expenditures to budgeted revenues and expenditures on a monthly basis.				
11. Adjustments to the budget during the year are made based on actual or anticipated changes. The board approves all adjustments/revisions to the budget.				
12. The current budget information is used as a base for future budgeting.				

Action Plans:

Use the following format to begin formulating an action plan that would improve your organizations performance relative to a specific indicator listed above.

Indicator: *The organization has completed a formal review of its current board profile and has identified deficiencies (i.e. by using an instrument such as the board profile worksheet).*

Task	Time Line	Who	Will Do What	Evaluation Measure
Task #1	Next board meeting...30 days	Jill (chair)	Will add review of the board profile to the next board agenda. Copies of Carol Weisman's board profile worksheet will be mailed to board directors with the next month's meeting agenda. Board directors are asked to complete the profile and return it prior to the next meeting.	Agenda item is added to the agenda and mailed to board directors. Number of board directors that completed the profile worksheet for themselves. The summary profile is completed and shared at the meeting.
Task #2	Next board meeting	The entire board of directors and executive director.	Review the board profile as it was summarized.	Number of board directors participating in the process.
Task #3	Next board meeting	Jill	Leads a discussion, which begins to identify important skill deficiencies in the current board. Asks the board to come to the next meeting with a list of people that have the skills identified.	Consensus is developed on deficiencies.
Task #4	60 days	Jill	The board reviews a list of potential board candidates that have the skills identified in the last meeting.	Number of potential candidates.
Task #5	90 days	Bob, Nomination Committee Chair	The nomination committee takes the list of names generated by the board and prepares a recruitment strategy.	Persons with the skills identified by the board are successfully recruited to serve on the board.

* Part of an 8-part series of assessment tools that address critical management issues within nonprofit organizations. This tool was developed by the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations and is based in part on two existing tools:

- *Community Organizational Assessment Tool*, Bright, Robert D., University of Wisconsin Extension 1995 (Adapted from Citizens Involvement Training Program., University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- *Checklist of Nonprofit Indicators*, United Way of Minneapolis Area, 1998.

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Building A Visionary Board of Directors

Visionary Board Leadership Assessment

Introduction:

One of the most reliable ways the board can strengthen its performance as a governing body is to periodically assess its own performance. In keeping with the theme of the charter school board as strategic thinkers and planners, the Assessment that follows this page focuses on competencies and characteristics which, when taken together, delineate the profile of an effective board of the future as described in Chapter 5 of the Governance Guidebook. The results of the assessment will be used to develop action plans to strengthen the visionary leadership capacity of your board.

Based on experiences with successful assessment, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards offers the following suggestions for use of a tool like the Visionary Board Leadership Assessment:

- ◆ Give all board directors and the Administrator an opportunity to discuss the value of a self-assessment and to commit to the process. After discussion, adopt a formal resolution to conduct the assessment and utilize the results to strengthen the board's visionary leadership capacity.
- ◆ After adopting the resolution, designate a group to oversee the self-assessment process. The board can delegate this responsibility to the Executive Committee. In either case, the responsible group should be fully committed to the Assessment process.
- ◆ Distribute the Assessment to all board directors. Specify the date for return of the assessment forms. Compile the results.
- ◆ Schedule a special meeting of the board or a retreat session to review the results of the Assessment.
- ◆ Conduct the review session. Strive for consensus on 3-5 areas for improvement based on the assessment results. Identify specific plans of action to address the areas targeted for attention. Assign responsibility for implementation and agree on follow-up procedures the board will take to assure accountability.

Visionary Board Leadership Assessment

INTRODUCTION: This Board Visionary Leadership Assessment contains a list of 23 statements describing the characteristics and competencies of an effective board of the future. Rate the degree to which your board reflects each statement by circling the appropriate number in the rating scale to the right of the statement. "0" means your board is completely lacking in this quality; "5" means that your board strongly reflects the characteristic or competency.

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The board is a team of involved and committed individuals. There is clear understanding of the board's responsibility for leading and guiding the charter school into the future in contrast to a passive caretaker mentality. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The relationship between the Administrator and the board is one of mutual trust and respect. The board feels fully informed. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The board focuses on general policy and long-range goals. It is intimately involved in any basic changes in mission and vision. It monitors finances and reviews and approves the annual budget and plans. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The board delegates the day-to-day management of the charter school to the Administrator. That individual is the only staff member reporting directly to the board. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The position of the Board President is considered a post of responsibility to be occupied by an individual fully dedicated to the mission of the charter school and prepared to devote the required time and attention to the task while working closely with the Administrator. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. There exists a clearly articulated mission that serves as the focal point of commitment for board and staff and as the guidepost by which the charter school judges its success and evaluates the need for adjustments in course over time. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7. The board is actively and regularly involved in a strategic planning process that helps it consider how the charter school should meet new opportunities and challenges.	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. The board keeps abreast of changes in the industry, field, or profession. The board discusses trends and forces that drive current and future changes in the charter school's marketplace.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. There is within the board a spirit of responsible risk-taking. Members understand that even after careful analysis, the decision to act - to try something new - comes with some risk.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. The board takes into account the charter school's vision, long-term goals and strategies as it considers issues, makes decisions and creates policy.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. The charter school's vision and strategies are continually reviewed and updated, based on changes in the business environment and customers' needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. The board can rapidly respond to changing conditions. There is a sense of where the action of our times is and how to impact it.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. The board has a bias in favor of forward thinking. The board thrusts the majority of its thinking into the future with the understanding that strategic leadership demands the long-term viewpoint.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. The board is able to separate large issues from small ones. The board has a common way to discern the big items that should be the focus of its attention.	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. The board provides new board directors with a thorough orientation that includes board director responsibilities, program and administrative information so that new members are able to perform at the outset of their term of service.	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. The board is concerned with the character						

and diversity of its membership, its size and its self-renewal. It is responsive to changing circumstances and reflects these changes in ways that will best help the charter school achieve its mission. It is aware of its need for "new blood" not only as a source for new ideas, but as a means of renewing itself and of involving the optimal number of volunteers.	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. The board has a long-term plan for identifying and training people to become future board directors.	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. The board is effective in relating to its diverse constituencies within the broader community. The board is involved in building and maintaining relationships with government, business, and other not-for-profit youth and family serving agencies so that the charter school can leverage its resources - both monetary and human - for the benefit of its customers.	0	1	2	3	4	5
19. In approaching problems and issues, the board displays a propensity to think in terms of systems, root causes and relationships among parts rather than surface events and parts in isolation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20. Innovation is encouraged in an environment of open, uninhibited communication among board directors in which new and especially unconventional ideas receive a supportive hearing.	0	1	2	3	4	5
21. The board is committed to the pursuit of service quality. In support of this commitment, the board relies on measurable outcomes as the centerpiece of an accountability system to assess the positive impact of the charter school's programs on children and the broader community.	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. The board operates from a marketing						

orientation, viewing the charter school's clients and constituents as customers who choose to utilize the charter school's programs and services and their continued patronage is never a given in today's competitive marketplace.	0	1	2	3	4	5
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23. The board maintains effective communications with its members through a variety of means - phone, fax, mail, on-line, and face-to-face contact.	0	1	2	3	4	5
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Sources: The following resources were used in the development of the Board Visionary Leadership Assessment:

Boards that Make a Difference by John Carver; Managing for Profit in the Nonprofit World by Paul B. Firstenberg; Self-Assessment for the Nonprofit Governing Boards by Larry H. Slesinger; Learning Organization Practices Profile by Michael O'Brien; Profiles in Nonprofit Excellence by INDEPENDENT SECTOR; and Katie Burnham, Executive Director of the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations.

Exit Interview Questions For Board Directors

Instructions: At the end of their term of board service, conduct an exit interview with board directors. The ideas and feedback received will be a valuable resource for board improvement efforts.

- Why did you originally agree to serve on the board?
- Was your understanding about the requirements of serving consistent with your actual board experience?
- What suggestions would you make for improving the way the board operates?
- What are your feelings about leaving the board?
- What did you like best (and least) about serving on the board?
- What advice would you offer to incoming board directors?
- If you could do the job over again what would you do differently?

A Framework for Continuous Improvement of Charter School Board Effectiveness

Board Effectiveness Indicator	Developing	Operational	Advancing	Excelling
Board Composition	The board has few, if any, active community leaders who can influence community decisions and finances. There is little board involvement that fulfills the charter schools needs.	The board has some recognized community leaders who influence community decisions and finances. There is a moderate level of board involvement in the charter school. Board directors sometimes use contacts they have to benefit the charter school.	The board consists mainly of community leaders who influence decisions and finances and who are involved in meeting most of the charter schools needs.	The board consists of community leaders who influence decisions and finances and who are actively involved in meeting the charter schools needs. They do not hesitate to use the contacts they have to benefit the charter school.
Board Development Process	Board directors are randomly recruited.	There is a formal process for identifying and recruiting board directors not necessarily based on the specific goals and objectives and needs of the charter school board.	The charter school board has and utilizes a formal process for the identification, recruitment, selection, and orientation of board directors based on its goals, objectives and needs.	The charter school utilizes a formal, ongoing board development process, which includes a dedication, recruitment, selection, orientation, ongoing evaluation and performance recording, and recognition of board directors.
Board Meeting Attendance	Charter school board meetings are not held on a regular basis; attendance is less than 50 percent; the agenda is dominated by problems and crises, preventing the board from dealing with substantive policy issues.	There are regular board meetings attended by not less than 50 percent of the members; strong domination by one or two members; agenda mostly consists of reports; few substantive decisions are made.	The board is regular meetings with not less than 70 percent attendance and with the clear focus on policy issues and decisions.	The board has regular, duly constituted meetings with not less than 80 percent attendance, active participation and a clear focus on policy issues and decisions
Committee Structure With Objectives	The board has no functioning committees.	There are appointed committees that occasionally meet to consider some matters pertinent to their responsibilities. Attendance by most of the committee at such meetings is generally poor.	The board has organized, functioning committees which make informed recommendations for board action. Attendance is better than 50 percent.	The board has organized, functioning committees with defined objectives consistent with the charter schools goals, objectives and needs and which makes informed recommendations for board action.
Board Diversity.	The board is not diverse in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup, and other critical factors.	The board has some diversity in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup and other critical factors, and has an informal plan to expand this diversity.	The board has some diversity in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup and other critical factors, and a formal plan is underway to expand this diversity.	The board is diverse in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup and other critical factors, and has a continuing action plan to maintain it.
Board Participation In School Events	There is little or no participation by board directors in charter school events.	There is board participation in some charter school events.	There is board representation/ participation in most charter school events.	There is board representation/participation in all charter school events
Board Giving	Fewer than 50 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to help meet the charter schools financial goals.	Not less than 50 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to help meet the charter schools financial goals.	Not less than 75 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to help meet the charter schools financial goals.	Not less than 90 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to meet the charter schools financial goals.

Adapted from Stages of Organizational Effectiveness -- Board Of Directors, Boys and Girls Clubs of America

Sample Board Improvement Plan: **Recommendations for Action**

The following list of recommendations reflects some of the key board building tools and techniques described in the Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board Guidebook. For each recommendation, there is a page reference to the tool(s) mentioned in the recommendation.

1. **Recommendation:** Establish well-written job descriptions for board directors, committee chairs and members, and staff that outline roles, responsibilities and authority of each. A listing of major board responsibilities is on **Page 16-17**. Sample job descriptions for board directors, committee chairs and members, and staff are on **Pages 57-60 and 276** respectively. A chart showing complementary roles and responsibilities of the board and charter school administrator is on **pages 192-3**.
2. **Recommendation:** Establish a board development committee. A sample job description for a board development committee is on **Page 274**.
3. **Recommendation:** Committees of the board will submit an annual report to the board of directors utilizing the format on **Page 279**.
4. **Recommendations in the areas of Board and Committee Recruitment, Selection and Development:**
 - Define/outline board and committee recruitment and development process. Develop a formalized plan for committee and board selection.
 - Identify constituencies for board: city, County, state governmental entities, other diverse categories.
 - Proactively maintain diversity/representation of board.
 - Regularly examine board and committee membership to make sure it is reflective of the charter school community.

A process for board and committee recruitment and supporting forms that addresses these recommendations is on **Pages 34-64**.

5. **Recommendation:** Create a board manual (this could be a Website also) that will include bylaws, mission and vision, board structure, membership, and bios, committee structure, membership and bios, annual program, quarterly reviews, meeting minutes. A sample table of contents for the board of directors Manual is on **Pages 75**.
6. **Recommendation:** Formalize the decision-making process between committees and the board of directors. Utilize the Board and Committee Decision Flow Chart on **Page 95** and the Executive Committee Planning Form on **Page 96**.

7. **Recommendation:** Conduct an Individual Board director Self-Evaluation on an annual basis. A copy of the form is on **Page 260**.
8. **Recommendation:** Conduct an Exit Interview with departing Board directors. A copy of the Exit Interview is on **Page 325**.
9. **Recommendation:** Develop a leadership succession plan for the board of directors. A process for board and committee leadership succession follows on **Pages 261-2**.
10. **Recommendation:** Compile an annual board and committee calendar to coordinate meetings and work plans. A sample board and committee calendar is on **Pages 280-281**.
11. **Recommendation:** Utilize a board meeting feedback form after each board meeting to maintain a focus on priority governance matters. A sample feedback form to be used at the end of each board meeting is on **Page 112**.

Chapter 13

Resources for Board Building

Critical Board Building Challenge: Where can charter school boards find the resources needed to continuously enhance their effectiveness?

This chapter includes a selected list of organizations, publications, Web sites and other resources that will be of great use to charter school leaders wishing to develop an effective governing board. Each entry will be a source of useful, proven tools, techniques and practices.

Two board development resources stand out though and are highly recommended. The first is a publication – the Trustee Handbook, 7th Edition, available from the National Association of Independent Schools. The second is the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, which publishes the most extensive collection of high quality books and monographs on all aspects of board development. These two resources have been referenced throughout the governance guidebook. More information on them is provided below

Also refer to the Tools Section of each chapter for references that are relevant to specific topics addressed in the governance guidebook.

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

The Association (AGB) is a national organization providing university and college presidents, board chairs and individual trustees of both public and private institutions with the resources they need to enhance their effectiveness. A number of their resources are available to nonmembers. A good place to start is the "frequently asked questions" page at www.agb.org/zrc6.cfm. There are links to a variety of resources. Go to: www.agb.org.

One Dupont Circle
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 296-8400
Fax: (202) 223-7053

Board Cafe

Board Cafe is a free monthly email newsletter about board issues and governance from the Support Center for Nonprofit Management, in partnership with the Volunteer Consulting Group of New York. The BOARD CAFE is one component of Board Match Plus+, the Support Center's collaborative venture with the Volunteer Center of San Francisco to strengthen the ability of individuals to serve on nonprofit boards. To subscribe send an e-mail message to msimpson@supportcenter.org and in the body of the message type SUBSCRIBE BOARD CAFE.

Carver Governance Design

John Carver is probably the best known and most controversial writer, speaker and trainer on the subject of board governance. His model is called Policy Governance. Many organizations, including charter schools, will not be ready to adopt the model entirely. Still his work will be very useful to the board that wants to govern more, manage less and meddle not at all. He is the author of three books (to be cited in the Tools Section of Chapter 1), 13 monographs (the Carver Guide series), videos, and audiotapes. Go to: <http://www.carvergovernance.com>.

Carver Governance Design, Inc.
P.O. Box 13007
Atlanta, Georgia 30324-0007 USA
Phone: (404) 728-9444
Fax:(404) 728-0060

Charter School Development Center

The Center, one of the best known sources of technical assistance to charter schools, maintains a website, offers training, produces a number of high quality publications, and provides a number of downloadable sample documents, policy papers, and planning tools. Among its publications, the Center offers the Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition. Go to: www.cacharterschools.org

California State University
Institute for Education Reform
6000 J Street, Foley Hall, Room 317,
Sacramento, CA 95819-6018
Phone: (916) 278-6069
Fax: (916) 278-4094

Free Management Library

This online resource was developed, and is maintained, by Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD. Hosted by The Management Assistance Program based in St. Paul, MN. The site includes extensive resources and links in the area board development that will be very helpful. Go to: <http://www.mapnp.org/library>

2233 University Avenue West, Suite 360
St. Paul, Minnesota 55114
Phone: (651) 647-1216

Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations

The Learning Institute is a collaboration of Society For Nonprofit Organizations and the University of Wisconsin-Extension. The Learning Institute is the producer of the award-winning "[Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership and Management](#)" satellite educational series which includes a program on board development as well as other topics that will be of use to board leaders of charter schools. Go to: www.uwex.edu/li

6314 Odana Road, Suite 1
Madison WI 53719-1141
Phone: (608) 274-2192 or (800) 214-8326
Fax: (608) 274-9978

Independent Schools Association of the Central States

The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) is a membership organization of over 200 independent schools from throughout the 15 states of the Midwest region. It provides a range of programs and services to its members. Its Web site contains a "Monographs" section that includes an excellent collection of tools and sample documents for school boards. Go to <http://www.isacs.org>

1400 Maple Avenue
Downer's Grove, IL 60515
Phone: (630) 971-3581
Fax: (630) 971-3584

Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

One of the oldest state associations of nonprofits, the Minnesota Council has a well-organized Web site with a number of resources in the area of board development including a collection of sample documents. Go to: www.mncn.org

2700 University Ave. W. #250
St. Paul, MN 55114
Phone: (612) 642-1904
Fax: (612) 642-1517

National Council of Nonprofit Associations

In most states, there are state councils or associations of nonprofit organizations. All of these organizations provide training, technical assistance and in some cases referrals to consultants in a board range of topic areas including board development. For the association in your state, go to http://www.ncna.org/ncna_statemembers.htm

1900 L Street, NW, Suite 605
Washington, DC 20036-5024
Phone: (202) 467-6262 ("467-NCNA")
Fax: (202) 467-6261

National Center for Nonprofit Boards

The National Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB) is the pre-eminent resource for board development. It is dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of nonprofit by strengthening their boards of directors. NCNB offers the most complete collection of resources on every aspect of board development. The online bookstore offers over 100 booklets, books, videotapes, and audiotapes. Also of special note, is their newsletter entitled "Board Member." Go to: www.ncnb.org. The website also includes an excellent "Frequently Asked Questions About

Board Governance" page at www.ncnb.org/askncnb/faq.htm. If you have additional governance questions, you can email NCNB or call the numbers below.

1828 L Street, NW,
Suite 900,
Washington, DC 20036-5104
Phone 202-452-6262 / 800-883-6262
Fax 202-452-6299

National Association of Independent Schools

This organization represents over 1100 independent schools in the United States and abroad offering a number of high quality publications that will be of great use to charter school boards. One of the best is:

- **Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, 7th Edition** This guide to effective governance focuses on the greatly changed nature and increased responsibilities of independent school trusteeship in recent years, with emphasis on the duties of boards and the responsibilities of individual trustees. Includes annotated principles of good practice, resources, and case studies.

1620 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-5605
Phone: (202) 973-9700
Fax: (202) 973-9790
www.nais-schools.org

National School Boards Association

This national organization provides publications, research, training, and other resources that will be of value to charter school boards. Among the many resources available at on charge on their website, two stand out:

- The "Education Leadership Toolkit: Change and Technology in America's Schools" is a website designed to put the latest research, case studies, tools and approaches for successful education technology integration at the tips of school board directors' fingertips. Go to: <http://www.nsba.org/sbot/toolkit/index.html>. You can join the School Board of Tomorrow E-mail Group, an automated e-mail exchange among school board directors from around the country. Ask questions, offer advice, share stories and learn from those of others. Go to: <http://www.nsba.org/sbot/sbotreg2.html>.
- The "Key Work of School Boards" is a planning tool that links parent and community involvement strategies to the goal of improved student achievement. This resource is described in more detail in Chapter 8. Go to: <http://www.nsba.org/keywork>.

National School Boards Association
168 Drake Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: (703) 838-6722
Fax: (703) 683-7590

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

NWREL has published the “Charter Starters Leadership Training Academy Workbook 1999.” Module 4 addresses the topics of Management and Governance. It’s available as a PDF file. Go to: <http://www.nwrel.org/charter/Workbook99/module4.pdf>

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 SW Main, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: (503) 275-9500

The Nonprofit Zone

The Nonprofit Zone provides free tools and resources to help organizations work more effectively. The Website contains good links to board development resources. Go to: <http://www.nonprofitzone.com/board.htm>

U.S. Charter Schools Website

This Website continues to be one of the most valuable resources for charter schools in all stages of development. Go to the resource directory, then management resources and click on governance and take it from there. Go to <http://www.uscharterschools.org>. Of special interest to charter school developers and board directors is an ongoing discussion group on the topic of charter school governance at http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ia/features.htm.