
NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook

“Good governance is a key to great charter schools.”

Joseph H. Reich, Chairman, Board of Directors
New York City Center for Charter School Excellence

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Much of the information in this Charter School Governance and Board Development Guidebook was taken from *Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board Guidebook*, written by Frank Martinelli and published by the Charter Friends National Network (www.charterfriends.org). The complete 350-page edition of the Guidebook can be found online at www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance. The guidebook will be updated periodically to include best practices in governance in New York City.

Introduction

Charter schools were originally established to provide an alternative to ineffective and underperforming public schools, especially in underprivileged urban areas. They have grown to become an innovative and increasingly popular option in public education and have helped inject several new ideas into the New York public school system, as well as nationwide.

Charter schools are public schools with substantial freedom from state and local regulations. Instead, they operate by the terms of a five-year "charter" or performance contract to meet specific goals for academic performance. However, the school's charter can be revoked if agreed-upon academic results are not attained.

The Importance of Charter School Boards

Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools are governed by a not-for-profit board of directors, with legal responsibility to ensure that the school operates efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the school's charter, mission, vision and contracted performance goals.

Like most nonprofits, charter schools need a board of directors to help them become a fiscally sound, thriving and continually improving school that will be around for the long term.

Creating an initial board of directors is an important step in establishing the direction and future success of a charter school. And as the governance structure and list of board members must be included in the charter school application process, the initial school board must be determined well before the school is scheduled to open.

This **NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook**, prepared by the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence, builds upon the best practices of nonprofit, charter and private school governance training and resources to provide helpful information to create and sustain an effective charter school board.

About the NYC Center for Charter School Excellence

The Center is an independent, not-for-profit organization, launched in 2004 as a partnership between New York City and the philanthropic community, with generous support from The Robertson Foundation, the Robin Hood Foundation, The Pumpkin Foundation and The Clark Foundation.

The mission of the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence is to stimulate the supply of high quality charter schools and support ongoing student excellence in all NYC charter schools, impacting the effectiveness of public education. As an independent nonprofit, the Charter Center is an advocate, bridge and catalyst for the achievement of academic and operational success and sustainability of all NYC charter schools for each young person.

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Chapter 1: Building the Foundation for an Effective Governing Board

A. Key Responsibilities of the Board

Charter schools are required by law to have a governing board to ensure that its operations continue to focus on serving its students and achieving the academic performance goals of its charter.

While many decisions can be delegated to the school's management, the board has final say in all policy, financial and operational decisions and for setting the overall direction of the school. Therefore, the charter school board is one of the most critical elements in the school's success.

The primary responsibilities of the board include:

- **Provide oversight functions.** The board's ability to remain objective, and not be directly involved in the school's operational activities, is critical to its effectiveness in guiding the charter school.
- **Promote the charter school's mission.** The board should be comprised of individuals who support and promote the charter school's mission and educational philosophy.
- **Lead planning and policymaking.** The board must initiate the strategic planning process and develop policies and procedures consistent with the education laws of New York State.
- **Raise funds.** Board members should be proactive in building a group of private and business financial supporters who regularly donate money to the school and provide other resources to help implement the school's educational program.
- **Achieve charter requirements.** The board is responsible for ensuring that school's programs and operation comply with the terms of its charter, and that the school:
 - Is financially solvent
 - Complies with statutory and regulatory requirements'
 - Has competent professional staff
 - Has a successful academic program, as measured by internal and external assessments

B. Legal Requirements of the Board

Establishing and operating a charter school involves many legal details, such as the school's charter, not-for-profit and tax status, compliance with federal laws, church-state and other legal issues. Some schools hire a staff attorney or keep legal representation on a long-term retainer. Whatever approach to legal counsel is taken, it is important to consult with an attorney before adopting *any* legally enforceable policies of a charter school.

Following are the primary legal requirements of the charter school board:

- **Operations.** The board has final authority for policy and operational decisions of the charter school. [Charter Schools Act § 2853(1)(g)].
- **Decision-making.** The board can delegate decision-making authority to officers and employees of the school in accordance with the provisions of the charter. [Charter Schools Act § 2853(1)(g)].
- **Liability of Other Entities.** The charter entity, board of regent, local school district and the state are not liable for the debts, financial obligations and civil liabilities of the charter school or the corporate entity operating a charter school. [Charter Schools Act § 2853(1)(h)].
- **Inspections.** The board of regents and charter entity can visit, inspect and examine the school records of each school it approves to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and charter provisions. [Charter Schools Act § 2853(a)].
- **Open Meetings.** Under the New York State Open Meetings Law, charter schools board meetings are to be open to the general public. Only in limited “executive sessions” may a charter school’s business be transacted in closed-door discussions.
- **Fiscal Competency and Independence.** Under the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the school’s audit committee members must be members of the board, not the school’s management team, and cannot be compensated (directly or indirectly) for service on the audit committee.

In addition, there should be at least one “financial expert” on the audit committee with the competency to understand financial statements, evaluate auditing bids, and make sound financial decisions. (**Source:** 2003 BoardSource and INDEPENDENT SECTOR).

C. Board Development Stages and Accountability

As the charter school evolves from an idea to an approved operating entity, the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders must evolve, as well. However, charter school founders, who have spent months planning and developing the school, often feel as though they should continue to run everything themselves.

Once a charter school has been approved, it is important to clarify and firmly establish the roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures of all stakeholders involved, especially the board. This process will take time and patience.

Stage 1: The Founding Board

Charter school founding boards tend to be small and homogenous, comprised of individuals committed to the school's mission. Founding boards oversee the development of the school's charter, application and accountability plan. Often the operational style is somewhat informal.

Founding boards that lead the organization are willing to do whatever it takes to get the school up and running and develop a strong sense of ownership in the school's success. Founding boards selected by the school's leader tend to play a more passive, supportive role.

Stage 2: The Governing Board

Charter school governing boards accept the responsibility of overseeing the fulfillment of the charter school's accountability plan and for ensuring the school has the resources it needs to operate successfully.

Governing boards share more of the responsibility with the school leader, work more through committees and task forces than the board acting as a whole, and outreach to other groups, including parents, for more diverse points of view.

Stage 3: The Sustaining Board

As the charter school grows, fundraising becomes a major role for the board as they secure the funds needed for the school to continue operations. The board works to attract new members with the capacity or access to key funders and donors, sometimes adding them as patrons or advisory committees, rather than board members. Sustaining boards also take on a certain prestige as the school develops a reputation of success and stability.

Due to its expanded size, most sustaining boards delegate responsibility for governance to a smaller executive committee that meets regularly to review the school's organizational activities, well-being and financial stability. The executive committee makes managerial decisions between board meetings and reports its findings to the board for approval.

Source: BoardSource (formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards).

D. Defining the School Governance Structure

Every board must develop its governance structure, policies and procedures to be consistent with the vision, mission, goals and governance philosophy of the charter school leaders, as well as applicable laws and the requirements of the charter authorizing entity.

Recommended Best Practice

The Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota conducted a national review of 30 charter schools from nine states and found the following key elements for successful governance structures among schools with improved achievement in testing and other assessments:

- Adopt a structure that stays true to the school's mission, goals, and objectives.
- Design a structure that reflects the state charter law.
- Use some form of shared decision-making.
- Create committees to address specific issues such as curriculum and staff development.
- Document which decisions are made by whom (governing board, school leader, committee).
- Involve a variety of people in the governing board or in committees/councils.
- Use board training seminars, conferences and/or retreats.
- Select board members who share the school's mission statement.
- Focus on generating a vision and plan for school improvement.
- Have a relatively simple organization without multiple levels of bureaucracy.
- Be flexible to adapt to changing situations.
- Consider the students' needs at all times.

1. The Leadership Role of the Board Chair

The board chair ensures that the board fulfills its governance responsibilities and works with the school leader to achieve the mission of the charter school. It is a challenging role that requires collaboration, people skills and a lot of patience.

The following steps can help the board chair prevent the board from “micromanaging” the school’s leader and staff, and minimize conflicts within the board itself:

- Have clearly written and approved procedures for evaluating the school leader.
- Have regular board training sessions that include an overview of the roles of the school leader and the board.
- Meet with the school leader to discuss how to work together as a team.
- Have the school board and leader mutually develop agendas for board meetings.
- Consult with the school leader for appointments or recommendations for various board committee chairs.
- Have clear written guidelines about the roles of staff as it relates to board support.
- Develop the frequency and nature of meetings to be held between the school leader and the board chair, and share the highlights of these meetings with the entire board.
- Ensure all board members understand the roles of the board, the chair and committees.
- Maintain an open communication policy to ensure that important information is never concealed by and from the board chair, the school’s leader or the entire board.
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge the key people involved

Source: Robin Hood Foundation

2. The Role of the Executive Committee

The executive committee facilitates effective decision-making by the board. Comprised of a subset of board members (usually the chair and officers), the executive committee is responsible for:

- Planning board meeting agendas
- Making decisions on behalf of the full board
- Serving as a communication link with other board members.

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3. The Roles of Board Committees

The board may authorize members to serve on a subcommittee or to act as an official board representative on matters of school business or policy. However, no opinion, decision or commitment can be made by a board representative or subcommittee without the board's authorization.

The chart below lists the key roles of the various board committees:

Committee	Key Responsibilities
Board of Directors	Conducts the affairs of the school, subject to applicable education law, not for profit corporation law and the school's charter and bylaws.
Executive Committee	Facilitates effective decision-making by all board members.
Finance Committee	Coordinates the board's financial oversight responsibilities.
Personnel Committee	Evaluates the school leader and oversees employee grievance procedures.
Board Development Committee	Recruits new board members and oversees ongoing training of existing board members.
Resource Development Committee	Plans and implements the school's fundraising programs.
Facilities Committee	Assesses the charter school's short and long-term facilities needs and presents a long range facility plan to the board.
Strategic Planning Committee	Develops a 3-5 year blueprint for the school's future.

Source: *SmartStart Guide™ Charter Schools Board Governance, First Edition*. December 2003,.

E. Distinction Between Governance and Management

Although they are related, a clear distinction must be made between "governance" and "management" responsibilities for a charter school:

- **Governance** deals with major policy-making decisions or setting the overall direction of the school.
- **Management** deals with the allocation and deployment of the school's resources on a daily basis to achieve the school's goals.

Often a charter school's governance structure is influenced by the previous experience "learned" in the traditional public school system. The following steps can help charter schools avoid mixing board governance functions with management functions, such as parent/community involvement strategies and teacher empowerment:

- **Time Management.** Boards must be structured to use their time well as key decisions often require a quick turnaround and board meeting time is a limited resource.
- **Procedures.** Boards should have established procedures that focus on making major governance decisions (such as budget approval or performance reviews) and leave administrative matters to the school's staff.
- **Micro-Management.** The board should not micro-manage or meddle in decision-making that is best done by those responsible for the school's educational programs and support services on a daily basis.
- **Delegation.** In order to keep its focus on the big picture, the board should delegate responsibility to its committees or the charter school leader. In so doing, the board creates the space and autonomy for the school leader, the charter school staff, board committees and volunteers to better plan and implement actions in their respective areas of responsibility.

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Recommended Best Practice

This chart from the *Massachusetts Charter Schools Trustees Guide* by Marci Cornell-Feist compares the governance and administrative roles of the board of directors and the school leader.

Division of Governance and Administrative Roles

Responsibility	Board of Directors	School leader
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercises fiduciary role to ensure the charter school is properly managed. Maintains legal status; ensures paperwork is submitted to governmental agencies Review financial & business dealings; exercises proper judgment to avoid conflict of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information to the board to demonstrate that the school is well managed. Compiles information for annual filing requirements Alerts board if conflict of interest situation is likely to occur
Finance and Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approves annual budget Review periodic financial reports (balance sheet, income statement) Ensure proper internal controls are in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares annual budget Oversees preparation of periodic financial statements Implements proper financial controls
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes mission and program direction; approves goals/objectives to meet those ends Reviews strategic plan and progress Assesses compliance/progress in achieving educational outcomes agreed to in charter Assesses program evaluation plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in establishing mission and program direction. Assists board in keep focus and momentum Develops specific program goals & objectives based on the board's specific mission Develops/oversees progress reports
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops and adopts written policies Responsible for reviewing policies periodically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies need for new policies Assures implementation of policies and assists in analyzing policy options
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets and reviews personnel policies Hires school leader and evaluates their performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements personnel policies Recommends changes to personnel policies Hires staff and evaluates performance
Resource Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assures long-range commitment of resources Establishes/implements fund development plan Reviews/approves all major grant proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts research and maintain database Assists in fund development efforts Develops grant and other funding applications, plans fundraising events
Board Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and communicates expectations of board membership Assures effective board participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates training and info exchange in preparation for board selection Facilitates effective communication among board
Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines and communicates board's role Assures appropriate board involvement in decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes action decisions within parameters set by the board
Community Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes school to parents and the public Serves as emissary to broader community Promotes activities with other charter schools, such as coalitions, shared programs, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interprets the charter school mission to the community via direct involvement, PR, personal contact, working with the media, etc. Works closely with the board for an effective division of labor

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Contracts

- Approves contracts

- Manages contracts

F. Clarity and Agreement About Who Does What

For effective governance, the charter school board and management should be in agreement about their roles and responsibilities. This requires clear and detailed descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the board and its committees, officers, and staff.

Recommended Best Practice

The following list of basic board roles and responsibilities, developed by BoardSouce, can be a guide for defining the specific governance functions of charter school boards:

- 1. Determine the charter school's mission and purpose.** It is the board's responsibility to create and periodically review the mission statement, which articulates the school's goals, means and primary constituents served. Each board member should fully understand and support the mission statement.
- 2. Select the charter school leader.** Boards must reach consensus on the charter school leader's job description and undertake a careful search process to find the most qualified individual for the position.
- 3. Support the charter school leader and review performance.** The board should ensure that the charter school leader has the moral and professional support needed to further the goals of the charter school and establish a periodic performance evaluation schedule, in partnership with the school leader.
- 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 secure the resources for the charter school to fulfill its mission. The board should work with the charter school leader and development staff to raise funds from the community.
- 6. Manage resources effectively.** In order to remain accountable to its constituencies and to safeguard its tax-exempt status, the board must approve the annual budget and ensure 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 school's mission, and monitor their effectiveness.
- 8. Enhance the charter school's public image.** The board is a charter school's primary link to the community. Clearly articulating the school's mission, accomplishments and goals to the public, as well as garnering support from important members of the community, are important elements of a successful public relations strategy.
- 9. Assess its own performance.** The board should evaluate, on a regular basis, its performance in fulfilling responsibilities, using resources and achieving the school's mission. By evaluating its performance, the board can recognize its achievements and reach consensus on which areas need to be improved.

G. Expectations and Written Job Description

The board chair should define expectations of board members on such issues as attendance at meetings and school events, personal contributions, fundraising activities and communications with staff and among board members.

Once the expectations are discussed, a written job description should be drafted and agreement signed by each board member.

Recommended Best Practice

For the charter school governing board to operate successfully, each member must understand and accept the specific duties and responsibilities that come with being part of the board. A written job description clarifies responsibilities and, in very clear language, sets forth the expectations of the board.

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. Active participation in the fundraising activities for the school
4. Willingness to attend an annual board planning or education event held on an evening or weekend
5. Sufficient preparation on key actions the board is expected to discuss and/or enact at board meetings

The written job description, which should be periodically reviewed and updated, is critical for recruiting board members. Anyone contemplating a serious volunteer commitment 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 membership in order to make it easy for recruits to say “yes.” New board members could, in fact, resign if actual time commitments and requirements are different from what they were told to expect.

The sample written job description on the next page lists several board expectations and can serve as a starting point for tailoring a description to match your school’s needs.

Sample Board Member Agreement

(Source: Robin Hood Foundation)

I, _____ understand that as a member of the Board of Directors of _____, I have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that the school does the best work possible in pursuit of its goals. I believe in the purpose and the mission of the school, and I will act responsibly and prudently as its steward. As part of my responsibilities as a board member:

1. I will interpret the school's work and values to the community, represent the school, and act as a spokesperson.
2. I will attend at least 75% of board meetings, committee meetings and special events.
3. I will make a personal financial contribution at a level that is meaningful to me.
4. I will actively participate in one or more fundraising activities.
5. I will act in the best interests of the school, and excuse myself from discussions and votes where I have a conflict of interest.
6. I will stay informed about what's going on in the school. I will ask questions and request information. I will participate in and take responsibility for making decisions on issues, policies and other board matters.
7. I will work in good faith with staff and other board members as partners towards achievement of our goals.
8. If I don't fulfill these commitments to the school, I will expect the board chair to call me and discuss my responsibilities with me.

In turn, the organization will be responsible to me in several ways:

1. I will be sent, without request, quarterly financial reports and an update of the school's activities that allow me to meet the "prudent person" section of the law.
2. I will be offered opportunities to discuss with the school leader and the board chair the school's programs, goals, activities and status and can request such opportunities.
3. The school will help me perform my duties by keeping me informed about issues in the field in which we are working, and by offering me opportunities for professional development as a board member.
4. Board members and staff will respond in a straightforward way to questions that I feel are necessary to carry out my fiscal, legal and moral responsibilities to this school. Board members and staff will work in good faith with me towards achievement of our goals.
5. If the school does not fulfill its commitments to me, I can call on the board chair and school leader to discuss these responsibilities.

Signed:

Member, Board of Directors

Date

Chair, Board of Directors

Date

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NOTE: Have the Board Chair and new board members sign two copies of this Agreement. Return one copy to the Board Chair and keep the other for reference.

Chapter 2: Role of the Board in Academic Excellence

Although every component of a charter school is important, the core focus of the school is improving student learning and achievement. Board members have the fundamental responsibility for being informed for planning, policy decision-making and setting strategic direction.

A successful school board should be able to determine the effectiveness of the school's educational program—even from the school's beginning. This may seem a daunting task for a volunteer board, many of whose members will not be experts in K-12 education.

While the task is not easy, with some training, thought and care, a charter school board can provide the necessary oversight and guidance for which it was created.

A. Good Governance in Academic Excellence

The board represents a vital public trust, which demands extreme care in the selection and continuing education of its members. Accordingly, board members should possess the following qualities in order to practice good governance in academic excellence:

- Commitment to public education
- Record of public or community service
- Knowledge of complex organizations and academic institutions
- Demonstrated collaborative leadership
- Willingness and availability for constructive engagement
- Commitment to be open-minded, non-partisan and decisive

B. The Role of the Board and School Leader

It is easy for school boards to confuse governance with management in the oversight of the academic program. The board focus should be on results rather than implementation.

Each year the board should work with the School Leader to set high but attainable goals for the academic program. A system must then be put in place for the School Leader to report on the progress toward the stated goals.

It is the School Leader's responsibility to keep the board informed about student achievement. Because board members will need to assist the School Leader in translating academic goals and results to all of the school's important stakeholders—parents, students and funders—the goals and reporting mechanisms should be clear, straightforward and as free from jargon as possible.

Ultimately, it is the Instructional Leader's responsibility to develop and implement the instructional program of the school. However, it is the board's responsibility to understand what the interim academic assessments and student outcomes are as a result of the instructional program.

The success or failure of the school depends on how well students perform in meeting and exceeding the academic requirements of both New York State and of the school's specific operating charter.

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Comparison of Roles: Board vs. School Leader

The following chart compares the roles of the board and the School Leader for developing and sustaining academic excellence in the charter school.

Board of Directors	School Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establishes the mission and program direction for the charter schoolApproves goals and objectives designed to achieve those ends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participates in establishing mission and program direction for the charter school.Contributes to the charter school's vision and assists the board in maintaining focus and momentum for the school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviews and approves Accountability and Implementation Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implements program goals and objectives based on the board's specific targets.Provides board performance data on specific targets.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviews performance data and identifies academic areas that need corrective action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develops and implements corrective action plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assess compliance/progress in achieving educational and other outcomes agreed to in the charter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develops reports to demonstrate program progress.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates the performance of the School Leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates the performance of the instructional staff.

C. Charter School Accountability Plan

1. Purpose and Duration:

A charter school Accountability Plan should provide the information needed to measure and track the school's progress toward its goals, make program adjustments when needed and report to parents, the community and the chartering authority on performance and progress.

The Accountability Plan lists the goals (outcomes) and performance levels that the school will be held accountable for attaining. However, it is important to recognize that the performance of charter schools also will be compared by the public and the media to that of traditional public schools and with other public charter schools. The design of the Accountability Plan should therefore prepare for this inevitable comparison.

Although the Accountability Plan should provide information needed to assure strong performance and continuous improvement over the foreseeable future of the school, it should place a particular emphasis on documenting performance and progress over a five-year period from receipt of the charter.

2. Organizing Framework:

An Accountability Plan needs an organizing framework. The example below includes the areas in which a charter school is expected to be accountable, although these same concerns can be organized into a different set of categories.

a. Is the educational program a success?

- Is there evidence of significantly improved or persistently strong student performance?
- Is the school making satisfactory progress in meeting both its academic and non-academic goals?

b. Is the school a viable organization?

- Are the distinctive programs of the school fully implemented and operating as intended?
- Do teachers and other staff have the training and resources they need, and are they performing effectively?
- Is the school maintaining effective leadership by its board, competent management of its operations and responsible use of the public funds under its stewardship?

c. Is the school in compliance with the rules under which it operates?

- Is the school meeting the requirements of applicable laws and regulations?
- Is the school meeting the terms of the charter agreement and faithfully implementing the plans contained in the application?

3. Essential Elements:

There is no single best way to design an Accountability Plan and each school has its own goals and priorities. However, in order to be conceptually sound and useful, there are certain essential elements that should be incorporated into its design. These elements relate to one another in ways that are generally understood, but not always agreed upon in the technical fields of evaluation and assessment.

These essential elements, and the information that should be included in the development of each element, are described below:

a. A statement of challenging, measurable, attainable goals.

An Accountability Plan should contain:

- Goals that are a natural outgrowth of the mission of the school.
- Goals that focus on outcomes that are measurable, or that are accompanied by objectives that specify measurable outcomes for each goal.
- One or more goals that are related to each of the categories in the framework.
- Student performance goals that are linked to a well-defined set of academic standards that specify both content and performance.
- Non-academic goals for the school related to indicators such as student attendance, graduation rates, types and frequency of disciplinary incidents (e.g., suspensions, expulsions), parent participation, etc.

b. A statement of student academic content and performance standards.

An Accountability Plan should:

- Be keyed to a comprehensive statement of academic standards that specifies what students should know and be able to do for each subject or content area and for each grade, age, or other grouping level.
- Contain standards that are challenging, clear and measurable as they represent the foundation on which the school's academic program is based.
- Include a set of standards that a school has developed or adopted from an existing standards-based instructional program in order to assess academic content and performance assessment.

c. A set of performance indicators that specify what will be measured.

An Accountability Plan should contain:

- At least one indicator specified for each goal, with multiple indicators for some goals.
- Indicators that are aligned with goals and provide a reasonable basis upon which to judge the degree to which the goal has been met.

d. Annual and long-term performance targets (benchmarks).

An Accountability Plan should contain:

- Provisions for establishing baseline performance levels for each goal and its indicator (s).
- One-year and five-year performance targets, as well as annual intermediate benchmarks for each performance indicator.

e. Measurement tools that provide the information needed to judge performance.

An Accountability Plan should contain:

- A method for measuring student performance that provides credible evidence of academic progress.
- A system for using assessment tools annually to produce longitudinal data over the term of the charter.
- A design that employs multiple tools for assessing student performance, including any required district-wide assessments, norm referenced tests, criterion referenced tests, authentic or performance assessments such as student portfolios, tests that measure the mastery of academic standards, etc.
- A schedule for administering assessment instruments and gathering other data.
- A plan for analyzing and presenting data results in technically sound, understandable and useful forms.

f. Strategies to support program improvement and continuous system renewal.

An Accountability Plan should contain:

- Strategies for using accountability information to strengthen school performance.
- Procedures for assuring that accountability information is available and regularly considered in the school's management, board policymaking process, teacher professional development programs and program/management adjustments to improve the future performance of a particular program and of the charter school.

g. Procedures for reporting progress and for gauging customer satisfaction.

An Accountability Plan should contain:

- A system to obtain the views of students, parents, teachers and the community on how well the school is performing and how the school can be improved.
- Strategies for providing timely, credible, understandable and useful information to students, parents, teachers and the community on an annual basis.
- Plans that offer an opportunity for constituencies to raise questions and get answers to the reported information.

Recommended Best Practice:

- Accountability starts with each board member knowing what's in the school's charter and Accountability Plan
- Review and agree on an Accountability Plan that will be used to guide the board's oversight decisions.
- Identify accountability targets that will be discussed at every board meeting.

D. Data Collection and Results

Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) increases the pressure on states, districts and schools to collect, analyze and report data in timely and meaningful ways. Under the federal law, states must report annually on student performance by race, income, gender, English proficiency, migrant status and special needs. Schools also must track the professional qualifications of teachers, including the percentage of classes taught by those who are not certified in the subjects they teach.

Annual report cards required by law provide parents, educators and policymakers with more information about how schools and students are performing than ever before. Through the NCLB, most of the data on student performance and teacher quality is public information and the School Leader should provide this information to board members.

Student Performance Indicators

Board members can better understand student performance by learning about the strengths and weaknesses of the school's learning environment. The following information can reveal gaps in performance and identify students who need the most help:

1. Proficiency on state achievement test

NCLB requires all public school students to be tested annually in reading and math for grades three through eight. High school students must be tested at least once in these two subjects. Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, New York State must also give science tests at least once in elementary, middle and high school.

Typically, the following four categories are used to describe how students perform on tests:

- Advanced
- Proficient (meeting the standard, the minimum expectation for all children to achieve)
- Basic (below standard)
- Below Basic (far below standard)

As many lower performing schools have small percentages of students in the top categories, it is often more meaningful to analyze trends in the bottom categories. Moving large percentages of students from Below Basic to Basic is a positive first step.

2. Proficiency on national norm- referenced tests

Many schools also give national standardized tests, which are different from state achievement tests. Instead of measuring whether students meet a given standard in each subject, these tests compare groups of students in the school to a similar group of students from around the country who also took this test. This is called a norming group, hence the name ‘norm-referenced tests.’

Common norm-referenced tests are the Stanford Achievement Test (or SAT-9), the California Test of Basic Skills and the TerraNova. Scores tend to be reported in percentile ranks — i.e., the percentage of students above average (the 50th percentile) and the percentage below average. For instance, if students score in the 45th percentile, they have performed better than 45 percent of other students who took the test, but worse than 55 percent.

3. Proficiency on National Assessment of Educational Progress

All states are required to participate every other year in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for reading and math (grades four and eight). This program provides a benchmark to compare the scores in each state.

For more than 30 years, NAEP has provided information on what American students know and can do in academic subjects such as reading, math, science and social studies. The congressionally-mandated project is so widely respected that it is nicknamed “the nation’s report card.”

4. Grades

Looking at grades and test performance together can help identify differences in grading standards. In some schools, academic standards have slipped much lower than in other schools, making an “A” in one school worth less than an “A” in another school. And in many schools, state tests and classroom grades are not aligned, so it’s not unusual for students with high grade point averages to score at Basic or below on the state tests.

5. SAT or ACT scores (high school only)

SAT and ACT scores are used by colleges and universities to compare students’ academic skills with those of students from around the nation. Many colleges require students to meet specific performance levels on these tests for admittance, such as scoring 1200 on the SAT or 30 on the ACT.

E. A Culture of Commitment – The Learning Environment

A charter school committed to academic excellence will have high expectations, provide support for all students, offer a rich and rigorous curriculum, have safe facilities and proactively engage parents in the life of the school.

Board members can develop a better understanding of student performance by learning the strengths and weaknesses of the school's learning environment.

When assessing the school's performance, consider the following elements:

- The number of hours or days spent on instruction
- Attendance and retention rates
- Student and parent engagement
- Communications around learning activities
- Use of support and special services to English Language Learners and students with special needs

F. Policy, Planning and Oversight

As stated in the Charter Schools Act, "...The Board of Trustees of the charter school shall have final authority for policy and operational decisions of the school." (Education Law § 2853 (1)(f))

While such decisions can be delegated to school management and staff, the board always has the final say and is responsible for policy determinations. Therefore, it is important for the board to clearly define and understand its role in the policy, planning and general oversight of the school.

It is also important for the school board to think strategically—i.e., to plan ahead, to complete routine tasks so there *is* time to plan ahead, and to think long-term. Some charter school boards create an "Academic Committee" whose role is to evaluate academic performance, report findings and make recommendations to the full board.

1. Role of the Academic Committee in Board Governance

The Academic Committee helps ensure the academic quality and credibility of the charter school as an academic institution and supports the School Leader in the maintenance, promotion and improvement of the academic standards set forth in the charter.

The primary responsibilities of the Academic Committee include:

- Advising the board on the core values and activities of scholarship that define the school's core activities of teaching and learning.
- Recommending to the board the adoption of academic policies consistent with the school's vision, mission and strategic plan.
- Adopting procedures of board-approved academic policies.
- Protecting and enhancing the quality of the charter school's academic programs at all levels.
- Advising the board on the academic aspects of the overall strategic direction of the school.
- Working in conjunction with the School Leader to monitor and advance the quality of all academic activities.

2. Key Elements for Effective Charter School Oversight

The following is a list of the key elements that a charter school board should incorporate in their strategic short-and long-term planning for overseeing the academic performance of the school:

1. Understand the Charter School **Accountability Plan** set by the school's charter. Agree on a minimum core measure of 75% proficiency on state standardized tests.
2. Annually approve a **strategic plan** that incorporates all elements of accountability, with a focus on monitoring the academic plan.
3. Approve **clear measurements and goals** for student academic performance and achievement, including absolute test scores/proficiency, year-over-year improvement and comparative position to the local school district. These measurements and goals should be set for five years and reviewed and approved annually. Student report cards should align with the school's goals.
4. Approve **plans for interim assessments**, including norm-referenced tests. These plans should encompass the timing of interim assessments (e.g. every six weeks) and how they are used by teachers and school leadership to modify instruction and individual student education plans. Assessments should address student skills, knowledge and abilities and be aligned to the 28 New York State learning standards.
5. Document the "**results dashboard**" of all measurements and review them annually and at every board meeting. The "results dashboard" should include state and city academic standardized tests, interim student achievement assessments, student performance, attendance, teacher performance data, professional development, financials and other key operating indicators. If academic results are the "bottom line," it makes sense for most of a typical board meeting to be spent discussing plans and progress in maximizing the bottom line.
6. Conduct an **academic evaluation audit** annually and convey the findings and recommendations to the board.
7. Identify areas where **best practices** or **corrective actions** should be demonstrated and/or developed, with clear reporting timelines. Insist that programs identified as models for effective practices have achieved *proven results with those practices*.
8. Establish a **personnel performance review** process with the School Leader or Instructional Leader and set up a timeline for reviews (quarterly, semi-annually and annual evaluation).
9. Confirm the existence of a **culture of commitment** that reinforces the academic goals, shared values and beliefs.
10. Ensure the safe and accurate **record keeping** of all results, including student information required for charter renewal.

G. Developing the Board’s Knowledge of Student Achievement

Charter school boards have the ultimate authority and responsibility for ensuring that their school meets and exceeds all the academic criteria required by state law and by the specifics of the school’s operating charter.

As such, board members should know the assessment systems and procedures the charter school has in place, or plans to implement, to accurately measure and document academic achievement.

Recommended Best Practice

Systems of Accountability:

1. Ensure that mechanisms are in place to demonstrate alignment of the school’s curriculum, standards and assessments to state requirements and school goals.
2. Understand that the school’s curriculum needs to be adapted, supplemented and revised constantly to ensure alignment with the state’s performance standards.
3. Know how the school’s mission and culture support high achievement.
4. Identify indicators to objectively measure student performance and academic achievement.
5. Take ownership of the school’s Accountability Plan.

Assessment Procedures:

1. Know which internal and external assessments are being used, how often and what they say about the students’ performance.
2. Agree on how student achievement will be tracked.
3. Understand how the school’s structure supports assessment activities.

Using and Communicating Results

1. Expect the School Leader to use information from internal and external assessments to improve teaching and learning in the school.
2. Understand how this information impacts the school’s budgeting process.
3. Determine how the school shares and communicates assessment data to students, parents, authorizing entity, supporters and the media.

Chapter 3: Identifying and Recruiting Board Members

A. Elements of an Effective Recruitment Process (Steps 1 – 9)

It is important to have an effective board recruitment and nomination process in place. Often governance problems can be traced to random and inconsistent methods used to recruit, select and orient board members. By failing to establish an active board recruitment process, the nominating committee often relies on whomever is available from a closed circle of friends and supporters.

Short-term recruitment focuses on filling anticipated board vacancies for the current year. In contrast, long-range board recruitment emphasizes the importance of finding the right board members for the long-term viability of the school and for developing future board leadership.

Recommended Best Practice

- **Establish a year-round recruitment committee.** Board recruitment should be viewed as a year-round committee function instead of an ad hoc nominations process. Many schools have established board development committees (as opposed to nominating committees) to reflect the expanded role of prospecting, recruiting, orienting, training and evaluating board members.
- **Link recruitment to the strategic plan.** It is important to match board recruitment and development activities with the requirements of the school's strategic plan. The board development committee reviews the school's mission, vision, goals and strategies to determine new skills, knowledge, personal contacts and other attributes that future board members will need to advance the strategic plan.
- **Profile the current board.** Create a profile in www.boardnetusa.org of the current board, focusing on needed expertise, knowledge, skills, experience and relevant demographic factors. By reviewing the board's strengths and weaknesses, the gap between the skills and knowledge needed and what the current board members currently possess can be identified. Based on this analysis, the board development committee can set clear recruiting priorities for future board recruitment.

Sample Board Member Recruiting Timetable

The following recruitment process enables the board to assess its leadership needs and establish an organized procedure to identify, contact and secure commitments from the best qualified candidates to fill those needs.

Step 1. Establish a board development committee

Board recruitment is an ongoing activity that requires an active committee to guide the process. The board must establish a committee to oversee board recruitment and nominations, if not mandated by its bylaws. Increasingly, organizations are calling this the “board development committee” to reflect the critical responsibilities of this group.

Step 2. Prepare for active board member recruitment

An effective board recruitment process begins with a review of the charter school’s bylaws, contract, strategic plan and job description.

- **Charter school bylaws** identify who is eligible to serve on the board and explains requirements to include a parents, community members and others.
- **Charter school contract** explains the terms for governance and the specific roles and responsibilities of the charter school board.
- **Strategic plan** can impact the board recruitment; for example, charter school may want to the board to be more diverse or to strengthen its relationship with key segments of the outside community.
- **Job descriptions** (see sample in previous section) clearly detail the responsibilities and expectations of board member performance.

Step 3. Develop a profile of the current board

Develop a profile of the current board using a matrix based on key criteria including age, race, ethnicity, specific skills, community contacts, parent of children enrolled in the school, etc. The board development committee then creates a set of priorities to guide recruitment efforts for review and approval by the school board.

Step 4. Determine strategies to build board diversity

Before selecting prospective board members to contact, develop an effective plan for achieving and maintaining board diversity, incorporating the following criteria:

- Diversity factors (race, ethnicity, age, sex, occupation, etc.).
- Root causes of barriers to achieving diversity and strategies to overcome them.
- Strategies to recruit from key constituencies.
- Cultural diversity training and activities.
- Avoiding “tokenism” where one person represents the entire community.
- Measurable diversity targets and accountability for achieving them.
- Monitoring progress.

Step 5. Develop an initial list of prospective board members

Prepare and rank the list of candidates who best fit the established recruiting priorities. It is important to "cast a wide net" and consider a number of potential board recruits greater than the number of projected vacancies. Candidates may be identified by board members, friends or through www.boardnetusa.org.

Step 6. Contact the top prospects

The initial contact is to send printed materials to the prospect, including a personalized letter, job description, material about the charter school and a response form. (A sample board recruitment letter is on the following page). This mailing is followed by personal calls from the board development committee to answer questions and determine the prospect's level of interest in the board.

Prospective board members also can be asked to visit the school to observe it in action, talk with the school leader and other staff, and attend a board meeting to see how it conducts business.

Step 7. Schedule and conduct orientation with interested board candidates

The board chair and school leader should attend orientation sessions to show prospects the importance of the position they are being asked to consider. A sample orientation session should include:

- Overview of the mission, vision and educational goals of the charter school.
- Overview of the roles and responsibilities of the board.
- Detailed job description and expectations of the individual board member (committee work, meeting attendance, community outreach, fundraising, 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.

Candidates who wish to continue the process are asked to complete a questionnaire of personal background information. A sample questionnaire is included in this section.

Recommended Best Practice

Resist the temptation to excuse some candidates from attending the orientation sessions.

It is critical that all prospects get the same information and have the opportunity to ask questions before they 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 prospects insist they don't have the time to attend the orientation, or fail to show up with no phone call, it should raise questions about their level of commitment. You need responsible people to serve on your board.

Sample Board Invitation Letter

DATE

Dear [name]:

In April of this year, we will be appointing new members 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 that 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 200X.

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 on the children 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 (name of 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 member 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 members is to participate in the development of policy and major decision-making at board meetings held at least eight times a year. Another key responsibility is to be active on an ongoing basis through committee work 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 me or the Charter School leader, (name), at 555-5555.

Sincerely,

(Name), President
Charter School Board of Directors

Sample 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 (please attach a resume):

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

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

Other volunteer commitments:

Please list two references:

For Board Development Committee Use Only

_____ Nominee has had a personal meeting with the board development committee chair, board chair, charter school leader or other board member. 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:

Step 8. Evaluation.

The board development committee reviews all the candidates who participated in the orientation. In evaluating the prospects, the committee should check the recruiting priorities set earlier in the process and ask the following questions:

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

Step 9. Selection/Appointment Of New Board Members.

The final selection/appointment 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 selection authority to the charter school board itself, then the board development committee can prepare a slate of candidates who match the recruiting priorities set at the beginning of the process. However, the board has the option to ask the board development committee to submit the names of all individuals identified in the recruitment process and then select a number of candidates to fill the vacant positions.

B. Where to Find Potential Board Members in New York City

Filling board vacancies through informal networking by the same small group of people may not provide the new blood and broader perspective that a charter school needs to grow and succeed.

However, some boards may be reluctant to reach out to new members because they distrust newcomers or have insufficient resources or procedures for effective recruiting.

Conversely, potential candidates may feel inhibited about joining a board because they don't think of themselves as "board material", feel awkward about offering their services to a board that hasn't asked them to join, or are simply unaware of the board recruitment process.

Following are a number of sources from which to find potential board candidates:

- **Get references from your ideal candidates.** Take 20 well-connected people who probably wouldn't join the board to lunch, tell them what you're looking for in board members and ask them for referrals. When contacting your leads, mention the person who recommended them for your board as an introduction.
- **Place an announcement in the neighborhood or college alumni newsletter.** Announce that you're looking for a few talented and conscientious volunteer board members to help guide the school into the future. Ask if potential candidates are able to contribute one evening a month and have skills or contacts in finance, publicity or special event fundraising.
- **Pull from your current volunteers.** Ask the school leader if there are two or three volunteers who would make good board members. Active volunteers bring a demonstrated commitment and an intimate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Network with prominent local community organizations.** Suggest to the board chair or executive director of prominent local community organizations that you recommend "retiring" board members to strengthen ties between your two organizations.
- **Expand your recruiting parameters.** Tap into sources with individuals who want to serve a worthwhile cause but aren't sure how to go about it. These can include:
 - Local colleges
 - Professional associations
 - Alumni groups
 - Local corporations
 - Civic associations
 - Arts councils
 - Local business groups
 - Service clubs
 - Philanthropies
- **Use online board matching services.** A few of the more popular websites include:
 - **boardnetUSA.** Connects nonprofit boards and prospective board members and provides a platform for a national network of communities working locally to enhance nonprofit board governance. www.boardnetUSA.org.
 - **Volunteer Consulting Group (VCG).** Assists nonprofits to define their board recruitment objectives and conducts a targeted search for business, professional and community leaders with the desired expertise, perspective and resources. Fees are on a sliding scale. Call (212) 447-1236 or visit www.vcg.org

Source: *Four Cool Ideas for Recruiting New Board Members* by Jan Masoaka, 6/9/98.

Chapter 4: Board Member Orientation and Training

The next critical step is to provide board members the information they need to perform their role and responsibilities effectively. The board development committee, working closely with the board chair and the charter school leader, should develop and implement a formal board orientation program for new members.

The orientation process actually begins during the board recruitment and nominations phase described in Chapter 2. Throughout the orientation process, a written board manual will be an indispensable resource and is described further in this section.

In addition, the board development committee should be responsible for planning ongoing and annual training programs for the entire board, and more specialized training to strengthen the skills of those being groomed for future leadership positions within the board.

Board orientation and training must be provided in a timely manner to have maximum value and impact. Increasingly, potential board members are given official board information—such as the school's mission, vision, major goals and strategies—during the recruitment process to speed up the learning curve. Once the candidate becomes an official board member, additional training is provided to ensure they are well-prepared to participate in their first board meeting.

A. Determining Board Orientation and Training Needs

During the recruitment process, each new board member should have received an overview of the charter school's mission and strategic plan, contract, financial data, educational program, bylaws and other background information.

They should also have received a list of expectations for board members including the number of meetings, committee assignments, length of term, estimated time commitment required and a list of current board members and other key volunteers. Providing this information in advance can greatly streamline the initial orientation session.

An effective way to learn what new board members really need from orientation and training is to poll members after six months by asking: *"What do you know now that you wish you had known when you first joined the board?"*

Another approach is to simply ask new board members to identify areas where orientation would be most helpful. After a board development committee has been established, the committee can design a checklist to identify the orientation and training needs of board members.

The National Center for Nonprofit boards recommends the checklist on the following page to assess the orientation needs for new board members:

Sample Board Orientation Checklist

Educational programs:

- What is the charter school's mission?
- How does the school's current educational program 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 on a regular basis?

Financial status:

- Is the financial health 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 members receive financial reports?

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?

Board structure:

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

Individual board members' responsibilities:

- What are the ways that board members are expected to contribute/serve?
- 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 fundraising?
- Will I be expected to make a specific annual financial contribution?
- What role, if any, will I play in soliciting donors?

Board's relationship to the staff:

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

B. Initial & Ongoing Orientation

It's helpful to hold the initial orientation at the school itself, preferably on a regular school day. Allow sufficient time for discussions and questions. Below is a sample orientation schedule:

Sample Orientation Program

9:00 am – 10:00 am

- Welcome by school principal and board president
- Overview of school history, charter contract and future challenges
- Board responsibilities, committee structure and board meetings
- Discussion: How new board members' skills/connections can be used to serve the school

10:00 am – Noon

- Class observation by new board members

Noon – 1:00 pm

- Lunch

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

- Meeting with school faculty/staff

Source: Leadership High School, San Francisco, CA.

Committee Involvement

With most schools, committee involvement is a board member requirement. Before their first “official” board meeting, schedule time with the new board member to discuss options joining a committee. There should be a solid match between the interests, skills and preferences of the new board member and the requirements of the committee they join.

Recommended Best Practice

At the new members' first board meeting, introduce them to all current members and staff to make them feel welcome and a part of the “team.” Consider assigning a mentor to work with them for the first several months to facilitate their transition and contribution to the board.

Early Service Orientation Checklist (first three months)

- Check regularly with new board members and their mentor to answer questions and help them become acquainted with the school and their responsibilities.
- Make sure that new members are involved in their chosen committee and gear orientation to the work of that specific committee.
- Continue to provide written background materials in response to questions.

Ongoing Orientation Checklist (for all board members):

- Consult with the committee chair and staff to obtain full involvement of new board members.
- Continue to provide assistance so the board can carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- Provide opportunities for board members to attend special workshops related to their assignments and interests.
- Provide special leadership training to current and prospective officers.
- Look for opportunities to expand the responsibilities of board members.
- Rotate committee assignments to help satisfy the interests and needs of each board member and provide opportunities for continuous leadership development for the charter school.

C. The Board Orientation and Training Manual

The Board Orientation and Training Manual is an indispensable tool for both current and new board members. The contents may differ among charter schools but generally include the following:

- Bylaws
- Articles of incorporation
- Charter school contract
- Current budget/financial condition
- Long range financial plans
- Last audited financial statements
- Investment and banking procedures
- Strategic plan
- Board structure and policies
- List of board members and affiliations
- Board members' responsibilities
- List of committees
- Committee responsibilities
- Minutes for the previous year
- Charter school mission and vision
- Educational philosophy
- Educational programs
- Curriculum
- Assessment methods
- Learning outcomes for students
- Instructional methods/strategies
- School leader job description
- Staffing structure
- Organizational chart
- School leader performance review procedures
- Sample school newsletter/brochure
- Press articles on the school
- Decision-making methods

Recommended Best Practice

Provide the manual in a three ring binder to help board members organize and update the materials they will continue to receive while serving on the board.

Some charter schools also post this information on the school website for downloading.

D. Strategies for Board Orientation

In their book, *Improving The Performance Of Governing Boards*, authors Richard Chait, Thomas Holland and Barbara Taylor list a number of strategies for board orientation and training:

- **New board member orientation program.** Develop a curriculum to address the basic knowledge that every board member needs, including:
 - The mission and history of the charter school
 - The school's unique characteristics
 - The political, economic and demographic environment in which the school operates
 - Competitive trends/changes that can impact the school and the children it serves
 - Financial information
 - Detailed information about the educational program

Recommended Best Practice

Don't spend too much time on a detailed review of the board's bylaws or the organizational chart. Instead, focus on providing information that will help board members address the major decisions and policy questions facing the charter school.

Conduct the orientation individually or in small groups. Increasingly, parts of the orientation program are provided by audio and videotapes available on the charter school website and through other electronic means. As more people gain access to the Internet, this method will represent a powerful, time-efficient and cost-effective tool for training and orienting members of the charter school board.

- **Ongoing board education and training.** Link ongoing board education and training to the critical strategic issues facing the charter school. Ask board members what they need to know to be actively involved in board activities.
- **Incorporate training into each board meeting.** Training during the regularly scheduled meetings—often using an outside presenter—provide an opportunity to present new information that the board will need to discuss pertinent issues. This type of training is most effective if the sessions are short, focused and well prepared.
- **Mini seminars.** Short presentation and discussion sessions on a specific topic can be scheduled as part of the regular board meetings or they can be held at other times.
- **Study groups.** Study groups can consist of a small number of board members or involve staff and outside experts. Their task is to become well-informed in a particular subject area and share that knowledge with the entire board.
- **Committee rotation.** Allowing board members to serve on different committees provides an opportunity for new learning and to bring a fresh perspective to each committee.

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- **Peer education.** Board members can learn a lot by sharing stories, either informally over coffee or during conferences and meetings, and provides an excellent opportunity to compare notes with board members of other charter schools.
- **Publications and conferences.** The following are among several organizations that provide books, articles, magazines, audio and videotapes, CD ROMs, websites, training conferences and other resources on relevant charter school topics:
 - National Association of Independent Schools (www.nais.org)
 - Association of Governing Boards (www.agb.org)
 - National Association of School Boards (www.nsba.org)
 - Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations (www.snpo.org/li/index.php)
 - Charter Schools Development Center (CA) (www.cacharterschools.org)
 - Charter Friends National Network (www.charterfriends.org)
- **Direct communication with students and families.** An opportunity for board members, especially those recruited from outside the community, to speak with parents and students can increase their understanding of the issues facing the charter school and can deepen their commitment to board.

E. Resources for Board Orientation and Training

Board orientation and training provides the knowledge needed by board members to effectively carry out their roles. The particular training topics and training methods selected depend on the nature and needs of the school. However, the following guidelines and sample agenda, taken from MAP for Nonprofits, may prove useful in developing a customized training program.

- **Timing.** Conduct board training once a year, whether or not there are new board members. A review of the "basics" can benefit even highly experienced board members and helps to ensure that members are all "working from the same script".
- **Who should be involved.** Ideally, the school should have a board development committee whose chair helps to prepare the training and collect feedback from board. At minimum, the board chair should be involved.
- **Selecting topics and materials.** The board self-evaluation provides a good idea of what topics the training should focus on. Training materials can include information about the school's educational programs, strategic plan, charter and the board member manual..
- **Member preparation.** Provide the training agenda, board manual and other information at least two weeks before the meeting, so members have sufficient time to review the materials and prepare questions.

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Sample Agenda for Board Training Session

(Written by Carter McNamara, MBA, Ph.D.)

Topic	Conducted by	Description	Duration
Welcome	Board chair	Welcome participants.	
Review of agenda*	Board chair	Review topics for discussion	
Introduction of participants	All	Each person introduces themselves	
Overview of organization*	School leader	Review mission, history, programs and introduces key staff	
Orientation to board manual*	Board chair	Describe contents and use of board manual	
Roles and responsibilities of governing board*	Board chair	Review overview of roles, role of school leader and comparison of roles of board and staff	
Overview of board structure	Board chair	Review listing of current officers, committees and committee chairs	
Overview of board operations*	Board chair	Review key points from bylaws and board policies, board operations calendar, sample committee work plans and sample meeting agenda and minutes	
Review of strategic plan*	Board chair	Review format of plan, highlights from the plan and key points about status of implementation of the plan	
Administrative activities	Board chair	Set the schedule for next year's board meetings, refine board operations calendar, update the list of board members, etc	
Next steps	Board chair	Remind of upcoming activities and events	
Meeting evaluation	Board chair	Distribute, collect and analyze evaluation forms	

* Provide time for an open discussion and to address questions from participants.

Chapter 5: The Board's Role in Strategic Thinking and Planning

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the board's decision-making should focus on governance issues rather than administrative issues. Major governance issues include meeting student achievement goals, budget approval, school-wide policies, strategic planning, performance review of the charter school leader and other charter contract objectives.

This distinction is helpful because of the limited amount of formal meeting time available for board decision-making. For example, a board that meets monthly for two hours has only 24 hours in an entire year to make major decisions and address unforeseen issues and challenges.

These broader governance decisions create the framework for board committees, school staff and non-board volunteers to plan and implement actions in their respective areas of responsibility. Whenever possible, the board should effectively delegate responsibility with clear instructions to its own committees and the charter school leader, so that the board as a whole can continue to maintain a focus on areas of major policy and decision-making.

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

- **The buck stops with the board.** The charter school board is the source of all authority and has ultimate responsibility. There are other structures for staff, parents, students and the community to provide input and take action.
- **Make a clear distinction between governance and management.** The board focuses on matters of governance and delegates management to the charter school leader, who in turn delegates to other staff.
- **The board speaks with one voice or not at all.** The board exercises its authority only when it acts collectively — “as the board.” Individual board members cannot make board decisions acting alone or in a small group.
- **The board has limited time to make its decisions.** This factor forces the board to be very selective in the items it includes on its meeting agendas.

Charter school boards need to think and plan strategically because they are not just leaders of innovative public schools—they are at the forefront of education reform and change in America.

This chapter focuses on the role of the board in strategic planning and the need to think strategically outside of the formal strategic planning process.

A. The New Profile of Charter School Board Leadership

Charter school board leaders possess the following eight qualities:

1. **Visionary.** They incorporate future goals and challenges in their decision-making.
2. **Entrepreneurial.** They seek the services to meet emerging constituencies' needs in a fast changing environment.
3. **Risk takers.** They balance the need to take chances with traditional board responsibilities.
4. **Good communicators.** They understand the importance of effective communication at all levels and organize the board and its committees accordingly.
5. **Systems thinkers.** They seek the root causes of the challenges they face and look the most effective courses of action in response to those issues.
6. **Seek new partnerships and alliances.** They explore new forms of partnerships and alliances that support their mission and advance their strategic plan.
7. **Support diversity.** They have a deep appreciation of the strength of diversity, how it helps ensure a higher level of responsiveness and promotes creativity, innovation and learning.
8. **Continual development.** They establish systems, practices and structures to encourage learning and skill enhancement on an individual and organizational basis.

B. Barriers to Visionary Board Leadership

Examining these barriers to visionary leadership can be the first step in revitalizing an existing board or building a powerful charter school board from scratch:

- **Shortage of time.** Board members need the time to attend meetings, read materials and maintain contact with each other and must avoid wasting time on trivial matters.
- **Avoid risk-taking.** Innovation and risk-taking are fundamentals of the charter school movement. Board leaders must strike a balance between taking chances and maintaining their traditional leadership role.
- **Lack of board involvement in strategic planning.** Boards lose an important opportunity to hone their visionary leadership skills if they are minimally involved in strategic planning.
- **Lack of knowledge in an increasingly complex world.** Often, this results in a lack of confidence on the part of the board to act decisively and authoritatively.
- **Micro-management.** Board meeting time is too limited to waste micro-managing or meddling in areas best handled by school staff. Also, board micro-management can adversely affect the morale of staff and the board's own committees.
- **Holding on to old ways.** Doing what is known can prevent boards from responding to the changing educational environment and not pursue new opportunities that conflict with the old rules.
- **Lack of role clarity.** Some boards don't exercise visionary leadership because they assume visionary thinking is the job of the charter school leader.
- **Educators didn't have to be visionary in the past.** Charter schools have to work hard to recruit and retain students and families and traditional approaches won't work.

C. Strategies to Foster Visionary Board Leadership

The following five strategies can help charter school boards adopt a visionary leadership style:

- **Strategy 1-- Focus on the school's ultimate goals**
Board members should focus on the mission, vision, goals and governance strategies of the strategic plan and leave daily management to the staff and charter school leader.
- **Strategy 2 -- Develop a shared vision of the school's future**
It is critical that the board be involved in developing the school's vision and use that vision as a framework for decision-making, as the basis for dialogue on emerging challenges and as a way to promote the school to the wider community.
- **Strategy 3 -- Create a long-range plan to develop future board leaders**
Key elements for a long range board development plan include 1) establishing a board development committee; 2) identifying the skills future board members will need; 3) developing a written board job description; 4) developing an effective orientation program and 5) evaluating each year the board's success in achieving its goals.
- **Strategy 4 -- Keep up with the rapid changes**
Provide board members with information on the changes that will have the greatest impact on the charter school and the communities it serves and develop plans to respond to these changes. This information should be timely, relevant and well-summarized. Board members should be encouraged to find and share this information with fellow board members and to become involved in ongoing strategic planning to expose them to external trend data.
- **Strategy 5 -- Stay in touch with the changing needs of the school's "customers"**
Provide board members with information on the school's image in the community, competing organization and the future needs and service expectations of the children and families they serve. Boards can schedule a series of school community forums so that board members can talk to students and parents about their emerging needs.

In addition, boards can tap into the staff's knowledge of students and families and establish a "marketing and planning information system" to supply the board with data to support its planning and decision-making roles.

D. Role of the Board in Strategic Planning and Positioning

Charter school board directors need to think and plan strategically because they are not just leaders of innovative public schools—they are at the forefront of education reform and change in America. This leadership imperative reinforces the need to focus on critical issues and policy challenges vs. the school's administrative details and programmatic implementation and to think strategically outside of the formal strategic planning process.

The purpose of strategic planning is to develop a three-to-five year governance blueprint for the charter school's future and the board plays a critical role in this endeavor. Knowing the bottom line on academic and organizational performance is vital to setting annual governance objectives. The board assumes a large share of the responsibility for the success of the charter school, and provides the critical link between the school and the outside environment in which the school functions.

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Timing

Strategic plans should be developed at three critical stages of the school:

1. **Strategic Charter Implementation plan**
 - Based on Charter approval (5 years)
 - Governance Objectives (6-12 months ahead)
2. **Strategic Charter Growth Plan**
 - Based on year 1 & 2 of operations. (3 years)
 - Governance Objectives (Develop prior to 3 year opening)
3. **Strategic Charter Renewal Plan**
 - Based on year 3 & 4 of operations (5 years)
 - Governance Objectives (Develop prior to renewal year)

Essential Elements

Strategic plans should include these elements:

1. Mission/ Vision/ Culture (Charter)
2. Academics accountability plan (Charter)
3. Annual Governance Objectives
4. Management Structure
5. Facilities
6. Fundraising Plan
7. Financial Plan

The board 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 School Leader establish a strategic planning process, participate in the process, and approve the final strategic plan.

E. Developing the Strategic Plan and Mission Statement

The strategic plan charts the direction that the charter school will take over a period of three-to-five years to achieve its goals, fulfill its mission and ensure that the school effectively meets the needs of its students and the community it intends to serve.

During the strategic planning process, the board and School Leader should work together to analyze the internal and external environment, identify opportunities or limitations to fulfilling the school's mission and consider the school's internal strengths and weaknesses. The board can be particularly effective in providing and analyzing information about the external environment, current trends in social policy or new financial opportunities. The board has final approval of the strategic plan.

Strategic planning takes time and effort, and several sessions should be scheduled annually to gather information, prioritize current and proposed educational programs, project the financial resources needed and finalize the plan.

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Developing the Mission Statement

The board must also work the School Leader to develop and periodically update the school's **mission statement** and decide whether particular programs and services fall within its parameters. The mission statement should define why the charter school exists, clearly articulate the school's main purpose and values, and identify the beneficiaries of its educational programs and services.

A good mission statement clearly explains 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 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.

Defining Roles in the Strategic Development Process

The following chart provides an idea of the roles and responsibilities of the board and the school leader, who must work as team in the strategic planning process:

Board Responsibilities	School Leader 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 school's mission statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help the board define the mission statement by soliciting input from other staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide external information 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 and periodically review operational plan and budget that reflects strategic decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the operational plan and budget for board consideration. Implement the operational plan.

F. Steps of the Strategic Planning Process

The main steps of the strategic planning process can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Gather and analyze information.** Include the strengths and weaknesses of the charter school; the needs and service expectations of parents, 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.** Identify the choices and challenges facing the charter school over the next three to five years.
- 3. Develop a shared vision for the charter school's future.** The strategic vision statement provides direction and inspiration for organizational goal setting and answers the question: *"If we could have the charter school of our dreams and have the impact we most desire, what would we want the school to look like in the Year X?"*
- 4. Affirm the school's mission or fundamental purpose.** Determine the answers to the questions: *"Why do we exist?"* and *"What are our core values and educational philosophy?"*
- 5. Develop annual goals .** Determine the major results to be achieved over the next three to five years. Focus goals on outcomes or results that are qualitative and quantitative in nature.
- 6. Develop strategies.** Determine the methods and approaches to achieve goals and resolve critical issues.
- 7. Form objectives.** Describe the projects carried out on an annual basis to implement selected strategies and thereby achieve goals. Objectives are specific, concrete, measurable statements of what will be done generally within a one-year time frame.

G. Effective Strategic Planning Practices

The strategic planning process is most effective if it includes the following elements:

- **Shared understanding of strategic planning.** The strategic plan should be viewed in the same way by board, staff and other participants in the charter school strategic planning process.
- **Establish a strategic planning committee.** This committee oversees the development and implementation of the strategic plan. A sample strategic planning committee description is on the following page.
- **Agree on the outcomes.** It is important to discuss and agree upon expected outcomes of the strategic plan, including the school's goals, mission, organizational structure, alliances, and evaluation framework.
- **Leadership's commitment to the process.** Board members will commit the time and energy required if they are convinced that the strategic planning process is worth the effort.
- **Involvement of the many.** In order to be effective, strategic planning must involve all charter school constituencies: parents, staff, administration, students, funders, donors and other key community supporters.
- **Translating the strategic plan into detailed action plans.** Strategic planning should result in specific objectives set on an annual basis to ensure that all participants' time and efforts align with the mission, vision, and goals and strategies contained in the strategic plan.
- **Relating strategic planning to school accountability planning.** The strategic planning process should address the following accountability questions:
 - What are the school's academic standards?
 - How will we measure student achievement with reference to these standards?
 - How will we align curriculum and instructional practices to meet those standards?
 - What will we do with the information we get?

The following resources provide insight and guidance on this topic:

- *Accountability: The Key to Charter School Renewal* by Bruno Manno. www.edreform.com
- *A Comprehensive, Practical Guide to Holding Charter Schools Accountable.* www.cacharterschools.org
- *Resources: Accountability, Standards, Assessment and Using Data.* www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/account.htm

Sample Strategic Planning Committee Description

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 helping the board to assure that the charter school strategic plan remains current, and that satisfactory progress is 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 bylaws.
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, subject to the conditions stated in the bylaws. Additional committee members may be appointed and need not be members of the board of directors, subject to the conditions stated in the bylaws.

Responsibilities

1. Develop a timeline for the strategic planning process in collaboration with the charter school leader.
2. Oversee the strategic planning process in collaboration with the charter school leader.
3. Provide a written final strategic plan to the board for approval.
4. Develop and submit to the board procedures for connecting the strategic plan to the annual work plans of board committees.
5. Keep 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.

H. Converting the Charter to a Strategic Plan

In order to convert the school's charter to an actionable strategic plan, the board should look at the "big picture" and consider issues within the context of the school's future and present challenges.

For example, a board that has developed long-range financial plans is better equipped to raise the outside funds needed to hire additional staff or finance a permanent building. Some charter schools even engage outside educational advisors to do an in-depth business plan focusing on finance and management issues for the school's long term stability.

According to a case study of San Francisco's Leadership High School conducted by the Policy Support & Studies Program at WestEd (an educational research and development organization with support from the US Department of Education), the following criteria, as described in the school's charter, should be included when developing school's strategic plan:

1. The school's mission
2. Setting realistic student and parent expectations and managing them appropriately
3. Current and future staffing plans
4. Personnel hiring policy (including staff experience/credentials)
5. Ongoing leadership and professional development training for board members

Source: www.uscharterschools.org/cs/r/view/uscs_rs/1722

Recommended Best Practice

A board's strategic planning capabilities will benefit by having members with a broad range of expertise including strategic planning, finance, legal, real estate and marketing. Experience working with mid-size organizations is vital.

Another successful strategy is to require board members to participate in one of the board's standing committees, such as fundraising, board development, nominations and community/public relations. This ongoing participation helps expand the strategic thinking and planning skills of all board members and establishes a specific working culture within the board that extends beyond the leadership skills of just one or two members.

Chapter 6: The Board’s Role in Effective Decision-Making

A. Elements of Effective Decision-Making

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

- 1. The board accesses and uses relevant information.** Relevant information comes from many sources, including district staff and the community. It is accurate, balanced and presented as an efficient guide for action, and it is focused on several board concerns, such as resolving immediate crises and strengthening longer-term educational results.
- 2. The board discusses issues deliberately.** Board discussions are systematic, objective and open. Board members consider the information in context and give the time necessary to avoid forcing decisions prematurely. Boards put aside personal differences and hidden agendas and consider the merits of a particular situation or issue without prejudice. Board members are honest and forthright in their exchange of viewpoints.
- 3. The board considers alternative actions.** This practice shows that the board has discussed different points of view, heard from all sides and assessed the positive and negative consequences of various choices.
- 4. The board works toward consensus.** Board members try to find areas of commonality, tolerate differences and recognize the need for compromise in reaching agreement.

B. Decision-Matrix

The purpose of the decision matrix is to clearly define the authority, responsibilities and decision-making roles of the board in relation to other school constituencies, although the final interpretation rests with the board. A written decision matrix can provide the following benefits:

- Save time by clarifying “who does what.”
- Increase the impact of people’s efforts.
- Help build stronger relationships among the board, staff, parents and other constituencies.
- Ensure that parents and school staff are referred to the correct party.
- Ensure there is a responsible party for each task.
- Prevent duplication of effort.

Recommended Best Practice

The decision matrix on the following pages, developed by the Washington Core Knowledge School in Colorado, analyzes the decision-making process—who makes the decision, who is solicited for input, who needs to be informed of the decision—in several categories:

This matrix clearly defines roles, with ultimate authority for the board, while creating opportunities for input, influence and decision-making throughout the charter school.

Sample Decision-Matrix

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
 SAAC = School Accountability Advisory Committee

SBMC = Site Based Mgmt Council
 SC = Student Council
 S = Student body
 TAB = Teacher Advisory Board
 T = Teachers

Decision-Making Method

1. Problem -> Decide -> Share
2. Problem -> Input > Decide -> Share
3. Problem -> Recommendation -> Input -> Decide -> Share
4. Problem -> Input -> Recommendation -> Input -> Revisions -> Decide -> Share
5. Problem -> Recommendation -> Input -> Revisions -> Input -> Revisions -> Decide -> Share

<u>Area</u>	Who Will Decide	Who Will Recommend	Solicit input from	Who will be informed	Decision making process
<u>School Goals</u>					
1. Determine & Evaluate School Improvement Plan (State-mandated& our own school Goals)	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 & Supply Selection	T,A	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
8. Computer Equipment: Strategy & 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 (scheduling, classroom organization, lesson plan, etc.)	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	1

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11. Handling of missing assignments	F	n/a	n/a	P, S	1
12. Policy for Student Placement & Transfer	SBMC	TAB	T, P	All	5

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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 development recommendations to School leader)	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 & 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	TAB	A	F	All	3
27. WCKS Mentoring Program	TAB	A	F, PAB	F, PAB	3
28. Professional Conferences paid by WCKS	A	n/a	F	F	2
29. Individual Corrective Action Plan	A	n/a	mentor, SBMC	Individual	2
30. Professional Development Goals/Plans	T, A	n/a	T, CDE, PSD	Individual	2

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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.	Rob				
39. Curriculum Maps	T	n/a	n/a	A, P, S	1
Budget					
40. Annual school-wide budget	SBMC	PAB, TAB, A	F, PAB	All	4
41. School-wide budget policy	SBMC	PAB, TAB, A	F, PAB	All	5
42. Classroom budget policy	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	SBMC	C (Grants)	SBMC	All	4
46. Parent contribution policy (money requests for field trips, 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

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49. Informal Classroom Assessments (i.e. math facts challenges)	T	n/a	n/a	P, S	1
Record Keeping					
50. Inventory of Supplies and Equipment	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 (CK conference, etc.)	SBMC	A	PAB	Individual	3
55. Student Attendance Policy / Procedure	SBMC	A	P, PSD	All	5
56. Field Trip Policy (i.e. funding, approval)	SBMC	TAB	F,PAB,PSD	All	4
57. Assembly Guidelines	TAB	A	F, SC, C	All	3
58. Classroom Location	TAB	n/a	F, C (Facilities)	F	2
59. Rewards & Recognition for Students	SBMC	A	PAB,SC,TAB	All	4
60. 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	PSD,F,C (Ad Hoc Safety),	All	5
63. Lunchroom & Recess Scheduling	TAB	n/a	F	F	2

C. The Executive Committee's Role in Effective Board Decision-Making

In a charter school board, the executive committee typically consists of the president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Sometimes other board members, such as chairs of key standing committees or at-large members, are included to assure representation of diverse viewpoints.

The executive committee facilitates effective decision-making by playing these three critical roles:

- 1. Planning the board meeting agenda.** Although developing the board meeting agenda is the responsibility of board leadership, the executive committee should meet with the school leader to discuss it in advance.
- 2. Making decisions on behalf of the full board.** The executive committee can make decisions that can't wait for the next regular board meeting and on matters for which the board has delegated them the authority. In both cases, the executive committee needs to report its decision at the next board meeting.
- 3. Serving as a communication link with other board members.** In order to be effective decision-makers, the board must foster communication among its members outside of regular meetings. The executive committee plays a vital role by contacting other board members via phone, fax, email and in-person meetings.

Recommended Best Practice

The executive committee should meet on a regular basis, preferably between regular board meetings. The board chair and the school leader should develop an agenda for the executive committee in advance of its meetings and identify agenda items to be handled, discussed and/or referred to the full board for action or as information items. 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.

An organized agenda will result in an effective use of the executive committee's time for decision-making. More importantly, it lays the groundwork for effective decision-making by the board as a whole by avoiding time spent on information items that require no lengthy discussion or board deliberation.

The executive committee can construct an agenda for the full board meeting for governance-related action items. By working efficiently, the executive committee facilitates effective decision-making by the board as a whole.

However, some schools experience problems when the executive committee is allowed to function as an elite group, presenting "already made" decisions at meetings for the full board's rubber stamp. This problem can be prevented if there is a written job description for the executive committee that spells out their role and authority limitations. There is a sample executive committee job description on the following page.

Sample Executive Committee Job Description

(The Center for Public Skills Training)

General Purpose

The executive committee is commissioned by and responsible to the board of directors to function on their behalf 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 leader.
5. Respond to the call of the board president or charter school leader 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.

D. Time Management of Board Meetings

The following meeting time management practices will help increase the effectiveness of board decision-making:

- **Include time estimates on board-meeting agendas.** A written agenda should be developed by the executive committee and charter school leader and be distributed to the board a week before the meeting. The agenda should include time estimates for each agenda item.
- **Start on time.** Be punctual and begin meetings on time, every time. Board members will arrive on time if they know that board meetings start promptly. To make members wait for late arrivals is both unfair and inconsiderate and will build resentment over time.
- **End on time.** Meetings should end on time, too. Time limits create a sense of urgency to that board members will concentrate on the issues at hand and avoid idle chatter. Deadlines will encourage the board to be more efficient, especially as the end of the meeting approaches.
- **Remind the board of time limits.** During a long discussion, the board chair is obliged to move the meeting along if there are other items to discuss. 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.** A board member can serve as process observer, noting the actual time spent on each agenda item. At the end of the meeting, as part of a brief evaluation on meeting effectiveness, the observer can report the results to improve future board meeting time.

E. Annual Calendar of Major Board Decisions

Each board member, as well as the charter school leader, should be provided an annual calendar of major board decisions. The calendar should be updated at least yearly or on an as-needed basis to accommodate changes.

The calendar should include one-time activities conducted during the school startup, as well as activities that recur at each regular board meeting. The timing for each activity should be relative to the timing of the beginning of the school's fiscal year, which may not always begin on January 1.

A sample board calendar is on the following page:

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Sample Board Annual Calendar

(Written by Carter McNamara, MBA, Ph. D.)

	Regular Board Activity	Approximate Date)
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 school leader)
3.	Evaluate School leader (reference progress towards last year's goals and 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 school leader evaluations)
5.	Conduct first board retreat (address board self-evaluation results, team building, begin strategic planning, etc.)	April
6.	Begin recruiting new board members	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 and time for getting funds before beginning of next fiscal year)
8.	Elect new board members	June-July (per bylaws)
9.	Establish school leader's goals for next year (as produced from strategic planning, charter contract, school leader annual review process)	August (as organizational goals are realized from planning)
10.	Hold annual meeting	July (per bylaws)
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 members soon after they join the board)
14.	Conduct fund-raising plan (primarily to meet fundraising goals)	August-December

F. Developing a Board Book Prior to Board Meetings

An effective way to provide board members with needed information in a timely manner is through a written board “book” that goes out before meetings. The most informative and useful board books include the following features:

- A cover memo from the board chair and the school leader that outlines significant developments since the previous meeting and previews the goals and key issues for the upcoming meeting.
- Agendas for all committee meetings and the board meeting, including a set of discussion questions, a concise statement as to why the matter must come before the board and 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.
- Evaluation forms for board and committee meetings.
- A roster of board members 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 in general.
- A school calendar for the coming month.
- Copies of any relevant school newsletters, announcements of upcoming school events, etc.

G. Communication Between Board Meetings

Additional information can be provided to board members between regular meetings to supplement what has been compiled in the board book. This information can be distributed via email, posted on the school’s website or distributed as printed materials. The use of email makes it faster and easier for the board to communicate to the school leader and among fellow board members.

H. Public Meetings

State law require that every meeting of a public body—which includes a charter school’s board of directors—must be open to the general public. Only in limited instances may a charter school’s business be transacted in “executive sessions” where closed door discussions can occur

Any time a quorum of the school’s board of directors, its committees or subcommittees, has an “official” meeting to discuss public business, the meeting must be open to the public, whether or not there is an intent to take action.

Source: New York State Assembly - Consolidated Laws. See also the New York State’s Open Meeting Law at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?cl=94&a=10>

I. Notice Requirements

If a school board meeting is scheduled at least one week in advance, notice of its time and place must be given to the news media and be conspicuously posted in one or more designated public locations at least 72 hours before the meeting.

For meetings scheduled less than one week in advance, notice of the time and place of the meeting must be given to the news media, to the extent practicable, and must be conspicuously posted in one or more designated public locations at a reasonable time before the meeting.

Recommended Best Practice

What is considered “reasonable” notice for meetings scheduled less than a week in advance will depend on the individual circumstances of any given situation. To be safe, it is best to provide notice of an impending meeting as soon as possible after the decision to hold that meeting has been made. Public notice of the meeting does not have to describe the business to be transacted.

Notice of the meeting to the news media may be provided orally or in writing. However, if oral notice is provided, proper records of that fact should be kept.

The local municipal clerk’s office is a good place to publicly post the notice of the meeting. Additional “high-traffic” sites include a centrally-used post office, a community hall and the school itself. In all instances, the purpose is to provide reasonable access of the notice to as many affected and interested people as possible.

Source: *New York Charter Resource Center, Resource Guide – March, 2004.*

Chapter 7: Legal and Financial Responsibilities

Charter schools are at the center of school reform efforts in America and are therefore subject to intense public scrutiny. In addition, forces opposed to charter schools continue to raise questions about the legitimacy of the movement. These factors make it important for charter school boards to pay special attention to their legal and financial responsibilities.

This section draws from several 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.
- *All Aboard*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Note: This information is not presented as a substitute for qualified legal or financial counsel.

A. Legal Responsibilities of Board Members

There is no particular act that defines the legal obligations of voluntary associations such as charter schools. However, charter school board members should meet certain standards of conduct in carrying out their responsibilities. These standards can be used in court to determine whether a board member has acted improperly.

These standards of conduct are usually described as the duty of care, the duty of loyalty and the duty of obedience.

Duty of Care

The Duty of Care means that a board member must exercise reasonable care when making a decision as a steward of the charter school and involves:

1. **Active participation.** Board members must attend board meetings, evaluate reports and review the performance of the charter school leader. Those 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 and rely on the information they provide. However, board members are responsible for the committees and should periodically scrutinize their work.
3. **Board actions.** A board member is presumed to have agreed to the action of the board unless: 1) the member doesn't participate as the meeting was not lawfully called or convened; 2) the member voted against the action or 3) the member is prohibited from voting on the action because of a conflict of interest.
4. **Meeting minutes.** Written minutes should be taken at every board meeting and accurately reflect the actions taken at the meeting.

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5. **Books and records.** A board member should have general knowledge of the books, records and general operation of the charter school. The charter school's articles, bylaws, accounting records, voting agreements and minutes must be made available to interested parties (for example, parents, charter authorizers) and board members who wish to inspect them for a proper purpose.
6. **Accurate record keeping.** At the very least, the board member should be aware of the school's financial records and take appropriate action to ensure they are accurate and that there are proper internal controls. The board member must also take steps to require regular audits by an independent certified public accountant, if the board has not already decided to do so.
7. **Protecting property.** A board member has the duty to protect, preserve, invest and manage the charter school's corporate property, consistent with any donor restrictions and legal requirements. Instituting proper internal controls will aid in the protection of the assets.
8. **Resources.** A board member must assist the organization in obtaining adequate resources. (The fundraising role of the board is discussed in Chapter 10.)
9. **Investigations.** A board member has a duty to investigate warnings or reports of officer or employee theft or mismanagement and report misconduct to the appropriate authorities, such as the police or the attorney general. Where appropriate, a board member should consult an attorney or other professional for assistance.

Questions for board self-assessment regarding duty of care:

How well does the 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 those with a stake in the school, especially students and families, staff, volunteers, donors and the community served by the school.

Duty of Loyalty

Duty of Loyalty means a board member will put the good of the charter school first and avoid engaging in transactions with the school from which the member will benefit and involves:

- 1. Conflicts of interest.** Under certain circumstances, a transaction between a board member and an organization in which a member has a material financial interest, is acceptable. However, if challenged, the board member must establish that the transaction was fair and reasonable, that there was full disclosure of the conflict and that the transaction was approved by other board members in good faith.
- 2. Written policy.** Boards should establish a written policy on avoiding conflicts of interest.
- 3. Loans.** A charter school may not lend money to a board member unless the loan may reasonably be expected, in the judgment of the entire board, to benefit the charter school.
- 4. Corporate opportunity.** Board members may not engage in or benefit from a business opportunity that is available to the charter school unless the school decides not to engage in the 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 members 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 members 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 are potential divided loyalties or conflicts of interest for board members?
- What policies does the board have for disclosure or dealing with those conflicts?
- Does the board understand the importance of confidentiality in its deliberations?
- Do board members trust each other enough to challenge and disagree, asking hard questions before making decisions?
- When decisions are made, is the loyalty of the board demonstrated by their public support of those decisions, both within the charter school and the outside community?

Duty of Obedience

Duty of Obedience means that board members are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the school's mission and involves:

- 1. State and federal statutes.** Board members should be familiar with state and federal statutes and laws relating to charter schools. Board members should ensure 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 members 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 and for income tax withholding.
- 3. Governing documents.** Board members should be familiar with and follow the provisions of the charter school's governing documents. Board members should ensure proper notice is given for meetings, that regular meetings are held, that board members are properly appointed and that the charter school's mission is being accomplished.
- 4. Outside help.** Where appropriate, board members should obtain the opinions of legal counsel or accountants.

Questions for board self-assessment regarding Duty of Obedience:

- Under what laws, regulations and requirements does the charter school function?
- Are board members protected against legal liability?
- Is there an indemnification clause in the charter school bylaws?
- Does the charter school have Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance coverage?
- Are board members aware of their legal obligations?

B. Financial Oversight by the Board of Directors

The board has the ultimate responsibility for the charter school's financial viability. In the early stages of development, the board may be in charge of formulating financial policies and monitoring all major financial decisions. As the school evolves and matures, the board will need to focus more on controlling costs, evaluating the local political and economic environment and deciding how that environment affects the charter school's ability to achieve its goals.

This financial oversight function consists of three main responsibilities.

1. The board must determine the financial goals of the charter school and monitor management's progress in achieving those goals.
2. The board needs to establish sound financial policies and monitor whether the charter school's activities adhere to those policies.
3. The board must review the charter school's financial control systems in order to safeguard the resources of the school.

In order to comply with donor or government grants, 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.

C. Monitoring the School's Financial Position

While the board's role in increasing revenues is critical to the school's financial well being, 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 a finance committee comprised of members with experience in financial management. Committee members should know the proper questions to ask, what information to review and how to analyze and use the information to make financial decisions. The board may also need to review all family social support programs, or programs funded by different revenue sources that are affiliated with the school. In any case, all financial information should be reviewed in the context of the educational results achieved during the period under review.

At each meeting, the board should 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 school leader 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 shows 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 leader to revise budgets or work plans or to take actions to reduce costs and/or seek additional revenue.

The board should also review capital investments as this will have long-term financial implications that will affect the school's operating costs. Potential acquisitions should be scrutinized to determine whether they are consistent with the school's mission and strategic plan, and whether they are financially sound.

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Keeping your board well informed

The charter school leader should ensure that the board, or the board's finance committee, receives the following information on at least a quarterly basis:

- A quarterly report of updated annual revenue and expenses (income statement) compared to the first annual 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 the 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 financial management and oversight roles of the board, finance committee and charter school leader are summarized in the chart below, adapted from the *Governance Reference Guide*, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 1999.

Board's Role	Finance Committee's Role	Charter School Leader'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 reports to the board; assures reports include data required by charter contract.
Reviews monthly or quarterly financial statements.	Reviews monthly financial statements with charter school leader, school business manager, and/or CPA.	Monitors income and expenses on a daily basis. Prepares financial and educational program reports as related to the school's contract, budget and projected activities.
Ensures adequate financial controls are in place and that financial reports are in line with accounting practices and 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 school leader and auditor.	Provides information and advice to the 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. Is liaison between the board and school leader on financial matters.	Provides training and information as requested.

D. Avoiding Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when the personal or professional concerns of board members affect their ability to put the welfare of the charter school before personal benefit. Board members are likely to have personal and professional affiliations with other organizations in their communities, so it is not unusual for actual or potential conflicts of interest to arise.

When confronted with an apparent conflict of interest, there are reasonable steps that the board can take to preserve its integrity. Daniel L. Kurtz, author of *How To Manage Conflicts Of Interest: A Guidebook For Nonprofit Boards*, offers the following suggestions:

- 1. Full disclosure.** Board members in decision-making roles should make known their connections with groups doing business with the school. Minimally, members should inform the board of important details and record their disclosure in the meeting minutes.
- 2. Documenting decisions.** Board members need not be disqualified simply due to conflicts of interest, but they should document that the decision they make are in the best interests of the school. For example, a board member with an ownership interest in property the school wishes to purchase must document how this property is the best deal for the school.
- 3. Abstention from discussion and voting.** Board and staff members 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.
- 4. Self-monitoring.** A carefully written conflict of interest policy, signed by each board member, should be developed during board formation and be reviewed annually as part of the board's self-assessment. A sample conflict of interest policy is on the following page

E. Record Keeping

A charter school has the obligation to provide to parents, upon request, a list of the types and locations of education records collected, maintained or used by the school. (34 CFR § 300.565).

A charter school also has the obligation to maintain a list, available for public inspection, of the names and positions of school employees who might reasonably be expected to have access to any student records at some point during the school year. (34 CFR 300.572(d)).

However, this list will differ appreciably from a list of individuals who actually do have access to an individual student's record..

Source: State University of New York, Charter Schools Institute.

F. Minutes

Minutes must be taken at all open meetings and consist of a record of all motions, proposals and resolutions voted upon, and the vote tally. Minutes also must be taken at executive sessions of any action taken by formal vote, and consist of a summary of such action, the date, and the vote tally.

The minutes of an open meeting must be available to the public within two weeks from the date of the meeting. Minutes of an executive session must be available within one week from the date of the executive session.

Sample Conflict of Interest Statements

Sample #1 (*Source: Carver Governance Design, Inc.*)

The board expects of 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. Board members 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 board member acting as an individual consumer of the school's services.
2. Board members 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 board member and the school except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity and equal access to otherwise "inside" information. Board members must not use their positions to obtain for themselves or for their family members employment within the school. Should a board member be considered for employment, s/he must temporarily withdraw from board deliberation, voting and access to applicable board information.
3. Board members may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the school except as explicitly set forth in board policies. Board members' interaction with the school leader or with staff must recognize the lack of authority in any individual board member or group of members except as noted above. Board members' interaction with the public, press or other entities must recognize the same limitation and the similar inability of any board member or members to speak for the board. Board members will make no judgments of the school leader or staff performance except as that performance is assessed against explicit board policies by the official process.
4. Board members 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 #2 (*Source: Management Assistance Project for Nonprofits*)

The board shall not enter into any contract or transaction with (a) one or more of its members, (b) a director of a related organization, or (c) an organization of which a board member 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 members (not counting the interested member).
4. At a meeting where a quorum is present (not counting the interested member).

The interested member may 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.

G. Risk Management

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 risk management process consists of the following five steps:

1. **Identifying potential risks.** As risks change constantly, the identification step must be repeated. To be most effective, risk identification must be integrated into everything the board does and not considered only in relation to insurance.
2. **Analyze the identified risks.** Specify what makes an activity risky for the charter school.
3. **Select the most suitable techniques.** The board can choose from a number of risk management techniques to eliminate or reduce identified risks.
4. **Implement the selected techniques.** The board plays a crucial role in communicating the importance of risk management to everyone in the charter school.
5. **Monitor effectiveness.** These techniques should be modified as needed.

Common Risks

Most charter school boards purchase Directors and Officers Liability Insurance (D&O) which provides financial protection for the board members in the event they are sued in conjunction with performing their duties as they relate to the charter school.

Below is a chart that lists some of the common risks and the type of insurance that covers each risk. The board needs to assess how each risk is best managed. Risk reduction through training and prudent conduct is generally the most effective strategy. As policies differ greatly, the school should seek the advice of an insurance professional.

Component	Sources Of Risk	Type Of Insurance
Board	Self dealing. Tax penalties. Executive decisions. Regulations. Fiduciary duties.	Directors & Officers (D&O). Association Professional Liability Insurance (APLI)
Services	Common torts (negligence). Malpractice.	General Liability (GL). Errors & Omissions (E&O). Professional Liability (malpractice).
Employees	Injury. Wrongful termination. Civil rights.	Workers Comp. D&O. APLI. Some GL.
Volunteers	Injury.	Volunteer. APLI.
Transportation.	Accidents.	Auto. Non-owned auto.
Money.	Theft. Embezzlement.	Property. Bond.
Fund-Raising.	Various.	Specialty coverages.

Source: George Babcock and Charles Tremper, *The Nonprofit Board's Role in Risk Management: More Than Buying Insurance.*

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Risk Management Checklist

The National Association of Independent Schools has developed a risk management checklist, based on the *Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards* by Mary Hundley DeKuyper. Note that many of the items in this checklist will be mandated by state charter school legislation, in the charter school application by the authorizing body, and in the charter school contract itself:

- 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)
 - 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 board members and school leaders 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)
 - Use of school buildings and grounds by the school community and outsiders
 - 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 paid staff and volunteers who handle money?
- Do publications and all electronic media accurately portray the school, especially its admission policies, programs and facilities?

Chapter 8: Board-Staff Relations

A. Role of the Board in Selecting and Supporting the School Leader

The school leader is the liaison between the school’s board and its staff and acts on behalf of the board to implement its decisions. The school leader 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.

It is the responsibility of the board to recruit and support a competent school leader who can provide the necessary vision and leadership. When looking for an school leader, the board must assess the charter school's specific needs and seek a qualified individual who has the skills and experience to meet those needs.

The board should also periodically evaluate the performance of the school leader in carrying out the decisions of the board and other assigned responsibilities.

Laying the foundation for an effective relationship

An effective board-school leader relationship should reflect the distinction between “ends decision-making” by the board and the means used by staff to achieve those ends. Major board decisions include setting the budget, determining the strategic plan, formulating major policy, and interpreting laws and regulations with which the charter school must comply. These decisions create the managerial areas in which the school leader has the authority to act.

The following chart, adapted from the *Board Trustee Handbook* of the National Association of Independent Schools, compares the different roles of the board, board chair and school leader.

Full Board	Board Chair	School leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate entity; can act only as a group. • Continuous existence though individual members change. • Part-time. • Does not supervise the staff. • Has ultimate responsibility with the chair. • May not be education experts. • Volunteer. • Focuses on governance, not administrative matters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot officially act alone. • Can change annually. • Part-time. • Does not supervise the staff. • Has ultimate responsibility with the full board. • May not be an education expert. • Volunteer. • Focuses on governance matters. May discuss some major administrative issues if asked by school leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual. • Temporary but often serves longer than board directors. • Full-time. • Supervises other staff directly or through designee. • Has limited responsibility. • Often is an education expert. • Salaried. • Focuses on administrative matters but can recommend on governance matters and bring issues to the board’s attention.

B. The Supervisory Role of the Board

The board's "supervisory" role begins and ends with the charter school leader. The board hires, supervises, evaluates, compensates and (if necessary) terminates the charter school leader. In turn, the charter school leader hires, supervises, evaluates and makes compensation decisions for school staff within the budget set by the board in the annual budget.

Although the school leader can make personnel recommendations, only the board can make the final decisions. The board will also give final approval to wage and salary scales, fringe benefit programs, vacation plans and so forth. Finally, the board can be called upon to function as a grievance committee with respect to an employee who has an unresolved dispute with the charter school leader and seeks relief from some higher authority.

Source: *Supervising the Director* by Andrew Swanson, Nonprofit World Journal, May/June 1989.

Tools for strengthening the board-school leader relationship

The following practices can be used to strengthen the relationship between the school board and the school leader:

- **Effective hiring or selection process.** Hiring the school's leader is one of the most important board decisions. When looking for a new (or first) school leader, 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.
- **Written job descriptions for board members and the school leader.** For an effective board-staff relationship, roles and responsibilities should be clarified. This also will make recruitment easier as it clearly explains roles and expectations to prospective board members and school leaders.
- **Clear definition of the relationship between the board and school leader.** A more detailed example is found in Chapter 1, but the chart below provides an overview of the division of key responsibilities:

Board Of Directors	School Leader
<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 the preparation of periodic financial reports.● Implements proper financial controls.

C. Effective Communication Plan

Surveys by the National Association of Independent Schools indicate that boards don't think the school leader communicates enough and, conversely, school leaders worry that they overwhelm the board with too much information. Sometimes the school leader will withhold negative information, which can lead to misunderstanding or conflict. To build relationships of trust, boards and school leaders need to adhere to the "doctrine of no surprises."

It is also important that the board and school leader talk about how much information is desired, the best ways to share this information and how to maintain effective communication with each other. For example, the school leader can communicate by email with the board chair on a daily basis and meet in-person once a week.

The following procedures can increase the effectiveness of communications between the school's board and school leader.

- **Involve the school leader in strategic planning.** During the strategic planning process, the board and the school leader should discuss the major issues facing the charter school over the next several years and explore a range of options for future action. Conversely, if the strategic plan is defined in isolation, differences of opinion are not discussed and resolved, which can lead to problems down the road.
- **Maintain a mutually supportive relationship.** The board and the school leader should meet regularly to discuss the issues facing the charter school and the progress in meeting current goals and objectives.
- **Explain roles during board recruitment and orientation.** The relationship of the board to the school leader should be thoroughly explained during recruiting and orientation. It may be that a new member was involved in an organization where the board micromanaged and may assume that this is the role the board plays in the charter school.
- **Maintain clarity about board policy and oversight functions.** Periodically review the definition of the roles of the board and school leader to ensure there is agreement and make adjustments, if necessary.
- **Evaluate the charter school leader's performance.** This evaluation can play a key role in clarifying and strengthening the working relationship between the board and the school leader and offers an opportunity to identify challenges, provide recognition to the school leader and strengthen the charter school's overall management.

D. Contracting Out: Private Management Firms and Implications for Board Governance

An increasing number of charter schools contract for educational management services with private management firms. For these contractual relationships to work effectively, charter school boards must strike a balance between fulfilling their public obligations to govern the school responsibly and giving contractors the freedom to handle school operations without board micromanagement.

The Charter Friends National Network has published a helpful guide, *Charting A Clear Course* by Margaret Lin and Bryan C. Hassel, to help charter school boards build successful partnerships with private management firms. The authors point out that, as with the school's school leader, the charter school board must figure out how to divide the roles and responsibilities between the board itself and those who carry out the school's day-to-day management, whether they are employees of the school or a management organization contracted by the board.

The following three contract options with outside management firms will enable the board to fulfill its responsibilities.

- 1. Direct authority.** Clearly state that certain responsibilities will be fulfilled by the board.
- 2. Delegation with information.** Clearly state that the management organization will carry out certain responsibilities and require the management company to provide certain kinds of information to the board (on a timetable) so the board can determine whether delegated responsibilities are being fulfilled.
- 3. Retained decision-making power.** Clearly set forth decision-making or sign-off procedures that insure the board has final approval at important junctures (e.g., setting the annual budget, establishing annual enrollment procedures or the selecting the principal).

The board should also adopt policies on important issues that 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.

Another approach is to contract with a teacher cooperative, such as the New Country Charter School in Henderson, Minnesota. The same board governance implications and procedures would apply as with a private management firm.

Chapter 9: Motivation and Accountability

This chapter provides ideas and tools to foster and maintain a high level of motivation and accountability for board members—one of the most critical challenges in building an effective charter school board.

A. **Motivating Board Members**

Discovering a potential board member's motivation has its roots in the nominations and recruitment process. When interviewing prospective board members, it's important to ask questions that reveal their interest and motivations in serving the charter school:

- What attracts them to board service?
- Why choose our charter school and not another?
- What do they hope to gain and how do they hope to grow as a board member?
- How do they want to contribute?
- What other special gifts and talents will they bring to the board?

It's essential to know what's important to the candidate to understand their motivation to serve.

Recommended Best Practice

Recognizing board members for their efforts is a powerful and effective motivational strategy to encourage ongoing commitment and high-performance. The best leaders—the ones we remember—are the ones who notice our accomplishments and thank 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 successful motivational strategies include:

- Involve board members where they can use their skills and knowledge and add real value.
- Involve new board members in the work of the board right away.
- Make board meetings interesting and engaging. Focus the agenda on critical issues and challenges and provide for in-depth discussion leading to action.
- Provide training opportunities to board members to increase their skills and knowledge.
- Provide for the social needs of board members. Maintain a warm inviting atmosphere and encourage a diversity of viewpoints.
- Help board members feel connected to the charter school as a whole, so they don't feel isolated from where the real action is.

B. Accountability and Reporting Tools

While motivation is a key factor in the success of a charter school board, accountability is what provides the basis for continual performance assessment and improvement. The following accountability tools can help boards in identifying performance strengths (and weaknesses) so that appropriate action plans can be developed.

1. Develop a written job description

The written job description, given to candidates during recruitment, gives prospective board members a full picture of what they will be expected to do if elected or selected to serve on the board. See Chapter 2 for a sample board member job description.

2. Annual board self-evaluation process

An effective self-evaluation process can lead to measurable improvements in board performance. Board self-evaluation should be held regularly, with forms to capture feedback and serve as a basis for discussion. A good time is midway in the board year, so there is still time to take corrective action.

An effective evaluation process will influence the board recruitment and nominations process. For example, a board member who has not followed through on commitments is unlikely to be asked to run for a second term, even though the bylaws may allow for this.

Source: *Nonprofit Board Answer Book* by Robert Andringa and Ted Engstrom.

3. Ongoing individual accountability

Holding board members accountable is the responsibility of the board—**not** the charter school leader, though frequently they are given the task. Board members can't be effective decision-makers if they're not present to give their opinion or vote on matters. If board members miss a meeting with no advance notice, they must be contacted right away by the board or committee chair, although the tone can be that of a friendly reminder. Otherwise, what might be an isolated incident can become a pattern,

An immediate response is even more important when the performance problem is more serious, such as board members who micromanage, fail to carry out critical board responsibilities, constantly dominate discussions and behave counter to the board's agreed-upon norms for conduct. If untended, the problem behavior usually gets worse and requires an even greater intervention down the road.

C. Personal Goal-Setting

Another effective accountability tool is to have board members set individual goals on an annual basis. One method is to have each board member fill out a personal goal-setting form at the beginning of the school year and then conduct a self-assessment at year-end to gauge their progress. A sample personal goal-setting review form is on the following page

A suggested set of personal goals can include:

- 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 the board.
- Through business, neighborhood or professional contacts, recruit at least one new student to attend the charter school next year.

Source: *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards* by Richard Chait, Thomas Holland and Barbara Taylor.

D. Ongoing Leadership Development

An effective, future-focused board should have an ongoing, multi-year commitment to continuing leadership development. The failure to nurture board leaders can leave charter schools too dependent on a small number of board members, which can lead to stagnation and board member burnout.

As most charter schools have three-to-five year contracts, there should be corresponding three-to-five year plans for board leadership development. The goal is to have from five to ten board leaders ready, as the needs arise, to chair the board, committees, task forces and workgroups.

One of the responsibilities of the board development committee is to assess the current board leadership on a systematic basis. Then, in collaboration with the board chair and the school leader, provide project assignments, committee rotations and educational opportunities to prepare leaders for greater responsibility in the future.

Some boards also assign mentors to aspiring board leaders to further support their development.

Leadership development goes hand-in-hand with leadership succession and has its roots in the nominations and recruitment process described in Chapter 2. The board as a whole, and the board development committee in particular, needs to ask the following questions when selecting potential board members:

- Who do we want to lead the charter school board in the future?
- What is our plan to identify new leadership?
- What is our plan to develop and prepare new leaders to serve now and in the future?

Personal Goal-Setting Review Form

(From The Center for Public Skills Training)

Part 1: Are you satisfied with your performance in the following areas?

	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: What do you need from the board to maintain/increase your level of commitment?

Part 4 Do you have any other comments or suggestions that will help the board increase its effectiveness?

Return your completed form to the NAME, board President, at (address, email, or fax).

Chapter 10: The Board at Work – Effective Committees

A. Effective Board Committees: The Basics

Effective committees are indispensable as they do the bulk of the work of the charter school board. An effective committee structure plays the following crucial roles:

- **Increases the involvement** of the board members by providing an opportunity to use their skills and experience.
- **Provides a training ground** for future leaders for both current board members and non-board members who may be asked to serve on the board in the future.
- **Enhances the visibility** and outreach of the charter school by including non-board members in committee membership.
- **Channels information** from the parents, students, community and school staff to the board.
- **Provides a forum** for board members to discuss emerging issues in-depth.

Board committees must 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 do its work, but rather to help the board do its job of governance. Some boards create committees to advise the staff, but this arrangement can blur the distinction between board and staff roles. These committees should be limited or, better still, not created at all.

However, as author Ellen Cochran Hirzy points out in *Nonprofit Board Committees*, in the earliest stages of charter school development, when there is no staff, boards clearly must take on what would be considered staff work in a more fully developed charter school. Once the school is beyond its pre-organizing stage, the board committees should relinquish their involvement in day-to-day operations.

When committees don't work well, it's for many of the same reasons that 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
- Evaluation of committee meetings

B. Elements of Committee Effectiveness

There are five key elements to maximize committee effectiveness:

1. **Written committee description.** Descriptions should summarize what is expected of each committee, its purpose, composition, selection procedure and the specific duties.
2. **An effective committee chair.** The committee chair should be a board member to ensure that the committee is in sync with the board as a whole. Look for someone with proven leadership skills, content knowledge and experience relevant to the work of the committee. In addition, the committee chair should be someone who works well with people, is willing to resolve conflicts among members, has confidence in other committee members and is dedicated to the committee's success rather than their own feeling of personal importance.

The committee chair typically is responsible for preparing meeting agendas, assigning responsibilities and following-up to make sure assigned work is being done. In some instances, charter school staff may be assigned to assist the committee chair.

3. **Members are thoughtfully appointed.** Each standing committee is generally comprised of a core of five to eight members and can be a mix of board and non-board members. Every effort should be made to match the needs and requirements of the committee with the skills, knowledge and interests of prospective committee members.
4. **Accountability to the board.** There should be an effort to link the committee description with relevant language and goals in the strategic plan.
5. **Well-run meetings.** It will be important to provide 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.

Recommended Best Practice

Committee effectiveness can be enhanced further through the following practices:

- Schedule an orientation for new committee members.
- Make sure that committee members receive an agenda in advance of meetings and have all the information they will need to complete their work.
- Ensure the chair provides regular recognition to active committee members.
- Have the committee chair seek out unproductive committee members to find out what is getting in the way of performance and devise strategies to overcome those barriers.
- Spell out for the committee chair the specific expectations for the committee report.
- Encourage the chair to involve committee members in developing the annual committee plan of work, which should align with the overall strategic plan of the charter school.

C. Annual Committee Calendar of Major Decisions and Meetings

An annual calendar of major decisions and meetings will increase the effectiveness of the board's committees. 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 committee meetings will also help members plan far enough in advance to assure good attendance.

On the following page is a sample annual board committee calendar:

D. Use of Task Forces and Work Groups

Task forces and workgroups operate like ad hoc committees and can be used most effectively for important, time-sensitive assignments that don't require a standing committee. Task forces and workgroups are often used to supplement standing committees for issue-specific tasks.

Task forces can be used to conduct a search for a new charter school leader, make recommendations on major policies, explore a new strategic alliance, plan a capital fundraising 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 are not used as a substitute for staff. However, 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 the tools and practices that help standing committees perform effectively are useful to task forces and workgroups.

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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 Develop. Committee			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Resource Development. Committee			Quarterly Committee Report Due			Quarterly Committee Report Due
Strategic Plan Committee			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
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 Comm Report Due		11/9 8:00 am	Submit annual committee report
Finance Committee	Begin work on budget with Exec. Committee		Begin draft budget to Exec. Comm. Quarterly Comm Report Due	Bring budget to board for approval		Submit annual committee report
Personnel Committee	Perform Admin. evaluation and salary review -		Review personnel policies;. Quarterly Comm Report Due			Submit annual committee report
Board Development Committee			Nomin/ recruit process Quarterly Comm Report Due	Recruitment and orientation as needed	Recruitment and orientation as needed	Recruitment and orientation Submit annual comm. report
Resource Devel. Comm.			Quarterly Commit. Report Due			Submit annual committee report
Strategic Plan. Comm.			Quarterly Commit Report Due			Submit annual committee report
Parent Meeting	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: The Board's Role in Fundraising

A. Why NYC Charter Schools Need to Engage in Fundraising

Most charter schools receive less than 100% of the per pupil public school funding allotted to the student's school district. In New York City, charter schools receive approximately 80% of what public school districts actually spend on a per pupil basis.

As a result, a school's per pupil revenues may not fully cover the cost of educating students, allow schools to offer the salaries and benefits to attract and retain skilled and dedicated educators, or provide the other services expected of schools today.

This lack of funding particularly affects charter schools that serve children from low-income families as the school, either on its own or by collaborating with youth-serving agencies, must provide the support services needed to overcome the impediments to learning.

As author Mary Hundley DeKuyper points out in *Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards*, relying too much on public funding can threaten the charter school's survival. Therefore, it is better for a school to have a diversified funding base that includes annual campaign dollars, endowment income, special event income, grants, bequests and other planned gifts and in-kind donations of goods and services.

Board-driven fundraising is one of the most important sources for additional school funding. This chapter will examine the role of the board in charter school fundraising and offers fundraising guidelines for charter school boards to build on.

B. The Board's Fundraising Responsibilities

One of the primary responsibilities of an effective charter school board, beyond governance issues, is to ensure the fiscal viability of the school. The board should establish policies to ensure that fundraising is a paramount priority of the school and take the steps needed to grow the school's donor base.

The board should also lead the effort to reach out to the community to ensure the school has the diversity of resources needed to operate successfully into the future.

An effective charter school board will have members who provide their "time, talent or treasure" in support of the school. Each member should make a financial contribution, however nominal. In addition, substantial donations of in-kind professional services (legal, accounting, marketing expertise) should be considered and encouraged.

The board must understand and approve the school's overall fundraising policy. For example, what percentage of the overall budget will be dedicated to raising money? (Nationally, an average of 20 cents on the dollar is restricted to fundraising.)

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Charter school board members must adhere to certain principles to effectively communicate to the general population what it is that makes their school so special, and why someone should become associated with the school. Thus, it is important for every board member to accept the following criteria as a responsibility for serving on the board:

- Attend board meetings (typically four times a year)
- Read board and school material
- Attend at least one school function
- Work collaboratively with the school leader

Milwaukee-based MGT Cornerstones, consultants to nonprofit organizations, has developed the following list of board and staff fund-raising roles that can serve as a guide for developing a school fundraising program:

<u>Board of Directors</u>	<u>School Staff</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affirm the school's mission, goals and objectives.• Approve the school's budget.• Accept responsibility for implementing fundraising plans.• Assist in identifying funding sources.• Ascertain the most appropriate strategy for a source.• Appropriate personal funds.• Attend meetings with funding sources.• Approach personal contacts for funding contributions.• Attend special events.• Represent the school at public affairs and events.• Attract resourceful people.• Acknowledge contributors for their donations of time and money.• Ask for the grant or contribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft goals and objectives.• Prepare budgets.• Identify prospects.• Research potential donors.• Develop income plans.• Package organizational activities as fundraising projects.• Write proposals and grant applications.• Produce promotional materials.• Contact funding sources.• Provide support for special events.• Solicit community support.• Implement fundraising activities.• Report to the fund development committee and funding sources.• Compile statistics.• Maintain accurate and thorough records.• Prepare the board to meet with current and potential funders.• Schedule the board for public events.• Thank donors privately and publicly.

C. Creating a Strong Fund Development Committee

It is essential to establish upfront a strong and active fundraising committee to advise the board on annual fund development matters and to oversee and coordinate the ongoing fundraising efforts of the school. Committees are comprised of an average seven to ten members and should meet at least quarterly, or more as needed.

Committee responsibilities include:

- Establish development goals and organizational structures.
- Develop and get board approval for the annual fund development plan.
- Involve board members in fundraising activities that match their skills and interests.
- Identify and assist in recruiting fundraising volunteers (including parents and alumni).
- Assist in the identification of major donors.
- Make contact with major donors if a committee member is the right person to do so.
- Advise on the school's communications plan as it relates to fundraising.
- Monitor the progress of the annual campaign and keep the board informed.
- Establish a system of recognition for active board and other fundraising volunteers.

Committee members should be:

- Committed givers to the school and believers in the school's mission.
- Skilled in fundraising or willing to learn the skills to do the job.
- Highly regarded by the school community.
- Willing to give the necessary time.

Fundraising Committee chair should:

- Provide leadership to plan, organize and build the volunteer fundraising campaign team.
- Solicit current board members, with a goal of 100% board participation.
- Recruit fundraising volunteers.
- Develop and implement a program for orienting and soliciting funds from volunteers.
- Develop written plans, budgets and goals for fundraising programs, to be reviewed and ratified by the charter school's board. These plans should be for at least a three-year period and should be reviewed semi-annually.
- Develop and conduct annual personal solicitation programs with major donors, corporations and foundations who have been identified as potential school supporters.
- Organize and conduct special event fundraising programs.
- Assist in the development and maintenance of donor records and reporting procedures.
- Evaluate fundraising successes at least once a year and make appropriate recommendations to the board to maximize results.

D. Creating a Fund Development Plan

Another critical element in fundraising effectiveness is a written fund development plan that sets goals for the charter school's income, typically over a three-to-five year period. The financial development plan should incorporate specific objectives and actions that will help the charter school acquire and effectively use the financial resources it needs.

The fundraising committee and school leader should do an initial SWOT analysis when putting together their fund development plan.

- **Strengths:** Strength of the board, reliable sources of revenue and fundraising efforts that have proven successful in the past.
- **Weaknesses:** Future large-scale expenditures (i.e. more facility space, computers), lack of community awareness, too few funding sources or the need for clearer lines of authority within the charter school.
- **Opportunities:** Possible new funding sources or new programs to serve students and families.
- **Threats:** Similar schools and other organizations serving children that are competing for the same funding sources.

The fund development plan combines all the research, analysis and discussions to guide the charter school for several years and should:

- Include a brief overview of the students, families and community served, with relevant demographic data and anticipated changes from the school's needs assessment and marketing data.
- Establish fund development goals and set realistic objectives and timetables for meeting those goals, including 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 2005-2006 no more than 75% of the 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 will coincide with the life of the charter contract for most charter schools.
- Include a concise statement that articulates the need for public support of the charter school.

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 its strengths, shore up its weaknesses, open up opportunities and diffuse threats to the charter school's financial well-being.

E. Alternative Board Funding Structure

Many charter schools form a special “Friends” category of contributors who voluntarily donate their funds or in-kind service to support the school. Friends typically come from the community in which the charter school is located, but can also include supportive individuals and institutions from other areas of the city.

The following guidelines should be made clear to ensure a well-run and effective Friends program:

1. Friends supplement with funds, materials, equipment and services what cannot be provided by the school budget. Friends decide how to spend their money after conferring with the school leader and the school board.
2. Fundraising by Friends is done with the knowledge of the board and in coordination with the school leader.
3. Friends may become future board members, and past board members can become Friends, but an individual cannot be both a Friend and a board member simultaneously.
4. Friends are kept informed of the school’s plans, progress and challenges by the board chair.
5. A Friends liaison should be appointed to attend the school’s board meetings and be prepared to report on Friends issues and activities.
6. Friends should recognize that they do not take on a policy-making role for the school, but at the same time their opinions are valued by the board.
7. Friends should support all board decisions.
8. Individually and collectively, Friends use their influence to help the school obtain desired financial support and represent the school’s point of view to legislators and the media.

Source: Friends of Libraries USA.

Chapter 12: Board Self-Assessment

The success of a charter school depends greatly on the effectiveness of the board to carry out its roles and responsibilities. Therefore, board self-assessment is vital in determining how well the board is performing, and the steps that can be taken for continual improvement.

Board self-assessment refers to a set of practices used to examine and evaluate performance against a set of defined standards. It is up to the board itself to determine when, how—or if—it will examine its own performance.

In general, an effective board self-assessment process will:

- Have the enthusiastic support of board leadership.
- Be based on standards or best practices that characterize effective board performance.
- Be a formal process conducted on a regular, agreed-upon basis, including a written assessment tool that is completed by all board members.
- Include an assessment implementation plan to set goals for board improvement.

Recommended Best Practice

Board self-assessment can take a variety of forms, including the use of an outside consultant to facilitate the process. Whatever method is selected, a good self-assessment process should answer the following questions:

1. Who will be responsible for initiating and conducting the board assessment activities?
Will an outside facilitator be used?
2. Are there written policies defining the scope of board performance assessment?
3. How and how often will the self-assessment be conducted?
4. What key issues will the process focus on?
5. How will the information be gathered?
6. Will the assessment be based on specific standards of board effectiveness?
7. Will the performance of the board and school leader be assessed simultaneously?
8. Will the assessment give special attention to the board chair or individual members?
9. What are the criteria for individual board member 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?

According to Larry Slesinger, author of *Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards*, board self-assessment is too comprehensive a process to be carried out every year, but instead should be conducted every two or three years. It is most helpful just before a strategic planning initiative, after a major crisis, or if members feel a “complacency” has settled in. However, the work of implementing the plans that result from board self-assessment is ongoing.

If the goal is seen as improvement, not judgment, then both the board and the charter school will benefit greatly from the board’s self-assessment.

A. Indicators of Board Effectiveness

A good self-assessment process is based on a set of standards or best practices that characterize effective board performance. There are several examples of board governance standards that can be used as the foundation for the charter school board's program of self-assessment.

- **Board self-assessment questionnaire.** Included in *Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance*, by Eugene R. Smoley and available online at www.nsba.org/smoley/quiz.cfm.
- **Self-assessment for nonprofit governing boards.** Available from the National Center for Nonprofit Boards at www.ncnb.org.
- **Charter school board of members self-assessment template.** Included in the *Charter School Governance Toolkit, 1st Edition* and available online at www.cacharterschools.org.
- **Board development assessment tool.** Available from the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations at www.snpo.org/li/index.php.
- **Visionary board leadership assessment.** Developed by the Center for Public Skills Training at www.createthefuture.com/useful_resources.htm

In addition, a board can develop its own self-assessment tools. We've included two examples on the following pages. The first was developed by the Minnesota Council for Nonprofits and the second by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

B. Leadership Support for Continuous Improvement

An effective board self-assessment begins with the visible support of the board's leaders. Board members should be reminded of the purpose and the importance of the self-assessment process to the board's continuing development.

Board leadership must also be committed to take the necessary steps to incorporate the results of the assessment into an improvement plan and ensure this plan is implemented and monitored.

Board Governance Indicators Assessment

(Minnesota Council for Nonprofits)

Use this form to assess your board of directors. Use the ratings in the last three columns to develop a plan for board improvement.

Ratings Indicators:
E – Essential R = Recommended A = Additional to strengthen organizational activities

Rating	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A
E	1. The roles of the board and the school leader are defined and respected, with the school leader delegated as the manager of the charter school's operations and the board focused on policy and planning			
R	2. The school leader 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 members receive regular training and information about their responsibilities.			
E	6. New board members 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 members.			
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 members 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.			
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 members are rotated; e) how ineffective board members are removed from the board; f) a stated number of board members to make up a quorum which is required for all policy decisions.			

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Rating	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A
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 members 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 members and administrative 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.			
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.			

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 Carter McNamara, PhD

Board Governance Assessment Tool

(National Association of Independent Schools)

Internal Procedures


Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None/N.A.	Some	Much
1. The school 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 school has completed a formal review of its current board profile and has identified deficiencies.				
3. The school has identified individuals that have the characteristics that are lacking on the board and have developed a recruitment strategy.				
4. The school has a nominating committee in place.				
5. There are major changes in the mission of the school that might require a change in the make-up of the board.				
6. The school and governing board have spent time talking about the advantages of having a diverse board.				
7. The school cooperates with other nonprofits in the community in the development and maintenance of a board bank.				
8. Potential board members are recruited from within the school (volunteers, past employees, members etc.) as well as outside the school.				
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 members serve without payment unless the agency has a policy identifying reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses.				
11. Board members are accessible to stakeholders and to staff (volunteer and paid).				
12. The board plays an active role in developing/reviewing a strategic plan for the school.				

Operational Procedures


Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None/N.A.	Some	Much
1. The roles of the board are clearly stated and communicated. Board members commit to those responsibilities by signing a board commitment letter.				
2. Board meetings are well attended.				
3. When a board member misses a board meeting without giving a reason, another board member calls them.				
4. Potential board members are interviewed before they are asked to serve.				
5. The board members receive orientation, regular training and information about their responsibilities. Orientation includes information on the school's mission, bylaws, policies, practices, programs, as well as their governance roles and responsibilities as board members.				
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.				

NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook

Operational Procedures - continued

Indicator	Done?	Needs Improvement ?		
		None/N.A.	Some	Much
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 school'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 school'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 school, guidelines for financial and legal procedures.				
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 school maintains a conflict-of-interest policy and all board members review and sign to acknowledge and comply with the policy.				
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 ?		
		None/N.A.	Some	Much
1. Board members have made an individual financial commitment to the school.				
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 school's financial policies.				
4. The board is doing a good job of insuring that the school is fulfilling its regulatory and financial requirements.				
5. The board prepares a budget which allocates funds to the major priorities identified in the strategic plan of the school.				
6. A financial plan has been developed to ensure financial stability for 3-5 years and is consistent with the schools 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.				
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 budget adjustments				
12. The current budget information is used as a base for future budgeting.				

C. Use of Retreats

If properly planned and facilitated, retreats can be a valuable tool for boards to implement the findings of the self-assessment process. Board members, once they are removed from the pressure and routine of regular meetings, can share a deeper dialogue, team building and a renewed commitment to the action plans developed in response to the board's self-assessment process.

In regard to board self-assessment, retreats can be used to:

- Strengthen poor performance by reviewing governance procedures and the role of the board.
- Assess the board's contributions to the charter school and identify ways the board can add greater value.
- Establish priorities and develop an action plan to achieve results based on these priorities.
- Increase the sense of team spirit and strengthen working relationships among board members and between the board and staff.
- Determine the next steps in board improvement.

Recommended Best Practice

According to management author Peter C. Brinckerhoff, incorporating the following practices will increase the effectiveness of a retreat in regards to board self-assessment:

- **Identify outcomes for the retreat.** The desired outcomes should drive the development of the retreat agenda. Be sure there is consensus among board members about what these outcomes should be.
 - **Consider using an outside facilitator.** Titles can sometimes get in the way of effective interaction. Also, it is difficult to be both the facilitator and a retreat participant. One of these roles will suffer.
 - **Break up the work sessions.** Structure the retreat agenda so that participants spend a combination of time in small working groups, full group presentations and discussions. Be sure to provide breaks so as not to exhaust participants and you'll 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. Distribute the report to all retreat attendees.
 - **Stick to the issues.** Set a rule at the beginning of the retreat that you will not allow the discussion of other events unless they have a connection to the issues at-hand.
 - **Encourage everyone to participate.** Work with your facilitator to ensure that everyone is politely but firmly encouraged to contribute to the discussion.

Chart: The Relationship Between the Board and the School Leader

(Trustee Handbook, 8th edition, National Association of Independent Schools)

From the beginning of service and throughout their tenure, the Charter School Board Director is responsible for shaping the school’s strategy, setting instructional and operational goals, maximizing the use of resources and assuring the timely evaluation of the work of the board and school. A well functioning relationship between the Board and School Leader is marked by mutual respect; frequent, open communication; and candor. The chart below is a template to be used to guide the Board as they develop or strengthen the relationship with the School Leader.

School Leader Hiring	Compensation	Compensation Review	Evaluation And Goals	Contract Terms, Renewal, and Termination
Hired by the board	Should include:	Responsibility of subgroup of entire Board:	Set by Board and School Leader	Most common form is multiple-year
Offers a written contract that describes the: School leader responsibilities Compensation terms Evaluation process Terms of contract, renewal and provisions of termination	Cash salary, basic benefits extended to all staff, Other benefits allowable by law and as the Board is willing to customize to meet the School Leader’s needs and wishes	Chair, co-chair and treasurer Make certain compensation is competitive compared to similar markets Make recommendations to full board Board adopts recommendations	Evaluations based upon a small number of mutually agreed-upon goals Set in advance of the school year Measured some months later Conclude evaluation process before setting new goals	Contract should clearly spell out its duration Establish an annual timetable for contract-renewal talks Continuity is valuable Include a written termination provision

Template: School Leadership

NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook

Annual Objective(s) (Based on Charter Agreement, Accountability Plan and/or Board Expectation)

Definition: Leads the school by building high 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.

Key Behavior Rating Scale: 1 = *Rarely (Almost Never)*
 2 = *Occasionally (Every now and then)*
 3 = *Often (Usually)*
 4 = *Most of the time (Almost Always)*

				<i>Builds High Performing Teams</i>
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
				<i>Coordinates the Work of Others</i>
1	2	3	4	Works in close partnership with the teachers and staff
1	2	3	4	Clearly sets and communicates expectations and timelines
1	2	3	4	Delegates responsibility and tasks well
				<i>Implements the Vision</i>
1	2	3	4	Develops the school vision with stockholders (for example: Board, parents, staff and community members)
1	2	3	4	Identifies where the school is not achieving its vision; creates and implements plans to address problems
1	2	3	4	Communicates and demonstrates a clear personal vision for improving the school

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.

Instructional Leadership – Improving Teaching and Learning

Annual Objective(s) (Based on Charter Agreement, Accountability Plan and/or Board Expectation)

Definition: Promotes the success of all students by creating an instructional program that continually strives to improve teaching and learning.

Instructions

Please rate how frequently the following Key Behaviors are demonstrated, using the rating scale below. Circle the rating number that is most accurate.

Key Behavior Rating Scale: 1 = *Rarely (Almost Never)*
 2 = *Occasionally (Every now and then)*
 3 = *Often (Usually)*
 4 = *Most of the time (Almost Always)*

				<i>Assessment</i>
1	2	3	4	Evaluates student learning using interim assessments and a variety of techniques and sources of information
1	2	3	4	Analyzes and communicates data about students, staff and community
1	2	3	4	Uses school and student data to create programs that are appropriate to the students
1	2	3	4	Uses school data to monitor the instructional program
				<i>Coherent Curriculum</i>
1	2	3	4	Encourages staff committees to use student data to develop curriculum and drive instruction
1	2	3	4	Uses research, teacher expertise, and best practices to make curriculum decisions
1	2	3	4	Works with staff to align curriculum with city and state standards
1	2	3	4	Develop principles, strategies and actions for coordinating academic planning among administrators and teachers
				<i>Instruction</i>
1	2	3	4	Develops effective classroom routines across classrooms
1	2	3	4	Recognizes 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

Rating Scale for 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.

Operations and Financials

NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook

Annual Objective(s) (Based on Charter Agreement, Accountability Plan and/or Board Expectation)

Definition: Manages school resources and facilities effectively, uses knowledge of policies and procedures to make sound decisions, and ensures the efficient operation of the school.

Instructions

Please rate how frequently the following Key Behaviors are demonstrated, using the rating scale below. Circle the rating number that is most accurate.

Key Behavior Rating Scale: 1 = *Rarely (Almost Never)*
 2 = *Occasionally (Every now and then)*
 3 = *Often (Usually)*
 4 = *Most of the time (Almost Always)*

				Daily Operations
1	2	3	4	Supervises personnel and resources to address instructional and operational needs
1	2	3	4	Implements effective Human Resources practices
1	2	3	4	Implements efficient operating systems
1	2	3	4	Integrates technology to improve school administration and operations
1	2	3	4	Maintains a safe and risk-free school environment
				Fiscal Management
1	2	3	4	Manages the budget and spends funds responsibly and in a timely manner, and ties the budget to instruction
1	2	3	4	Secures supplemental funding (such as grants, discretionary funds) from outside sources to enhance school programs
1	2	3	4	Ensures fiscal policies are followed
1	2	3	4	Provides the Board with budget reports and financial information on a regular basis

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 operations 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.

Caring Culture of Commitment

Annual Objective(s) (Based on Charter Agreement, Accountability Plan and/or Board Expectation)

Definition: Creates and maintains a school environment that focuses on students and emphasizes high academic expectations, personal attention, caring, discipline and order.

Instructions

Please rate how frequently the following Key Behaviors are demonstrated, using the rating scale below. Circle the rating number that is most accurate.

Key Behavior Rating Scale: 1 = *Rarely (Almost Never)*
 2 = *Occasionally (Every now and then)*
 3 = *Often (Usually)*
 4 = *Most of the time (Almost Always)*

				<i>High Academic Expectations</i>
1	2	3	4	Works with stakeholders to set and communicate high academic expectations
1	2	3	4	Creatively develops ways to recognize and reward students' effort, success, and achievement
1	2	3	4	Creatively develops ways to get students to work and study
1	2	3	4	Enlist peer influence in support of higher expectations and the pursuit of Excellence
				<i>Personal Attention and Caring</i>
1	2	3	4	Creates an atmosphere of respect among students
1	2	3	4	Helps students, staff and families form productive and respectful relationships in support of teaching and learning
1	2	3	4	Ensures that staff, students, and families feel respected, valued, and important
1	2	3	4	Provides a continuum of student services
1	2	3	4	Creates a school environment that supports students through crisis and other challenges
				<i>Discipline and Order</i>
1	2	3	4	Develops and implements a plan to maintain and/or increase student 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 safety plan

Rating Scale for 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 climate 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.

Template: Job Description for a Charter School Board Member

NYC Charter Schools Governance and Board Development Guidebook

Responsible to:

Chair of the Board

Term:

As defined by Charter

Purpose:

Help make planning and policy decision, assure adequate funding, monitor and sanction activities, and employ the school leaders

Specific Duties:

- Attend Board meetings regularly.
 - Review agenda items in advance.
 - Ask discerning questions, constructive participate in deliberations, and vote according to your convictions.
- Assume a major responsibility on at least one standing committee and on task forces as needed.
 - Work in areas where your background and interest would be of value.
- Oversee school results, with a focus on Academics.
- Assume a leadership position as needed by Charter School (committee special event, etc.).
- Make a financial contribution and raise money for campaign.
- Employ and monitor the school leader.
- With other board members and staff, ensure that budget, policies and academic program is consistent with the school's Charter.
- Familiarize yourself with the organization's Charter, mission and academic program.
- Be willing and able to act as interpreter of/advocate for the organizations in the community.

Personal Attributes:

- Unquestionable character
- An interest in the objectives and programs of the organization
- High standing among professional colleagues
- Respected citizen of the community
- Breadth of understanding and a tolerance of others' viewpoints
- Willingness to state one's convictions – combined with equal willingness to accept the majority decision, when in conflict with one's own stand
- Ability to deal openly and directly with staff and other board members when pleased or displeased.

Template: Board Expectations

Passion & Connection

- Dedication to Public and Charter School mission and movement
- Knowledge and understanding of school charter

Wisdom & Participation

- Attend meetings (75% of Board and committee meetings).
- Serve on at least one committee and provide leadership to committees, special events and fundraising.
- Select individual focus area based on talents and interests
- Give judgment, expertise and support to key policies, decisions and results evaluation, particularly academics.

Financial Support

- Each Board member will make an annual personal gift and raise financial resources.
- It is the goal of the board to give and/or raise \$_____ per person. We ask each board member to personally give at least \$_____.

Community Positioning

- Identify and cultivate new prospects for support, and potential new Board members.
- Assist charter school in identifying pro bono resources.
- Represent and promote the organization at special events, and in community outreach.
- Advocacy on Charter School movement and individual Charter School with government officials and community influencers.

Professional & Personal Growth & Fun

- Participate in an annual Board self-evaluation of success in meeting expectations.
- Respect and enjoy Charter School mission, students, teachers, administration and staff/volunteer partnership.