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BOARD GOVERNANCE RETREAT

Charter schools can have their charters revoked for:

- Poor academic performance
 - Business mismanagement
 - Legal noncompliance
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- “A charter school can be shut down at the end of its third year if the school or any of its employees violates its charter, fiscal or accounting standards, or the law”

“Charters get 5 years to prove worth”

- Times-Picayune June 28, 2010
- “Charters have 5 year contracts which outline expectations”
- “Generally speaking, officials will judge them (charters) on academic performance, financial soundness and reporting, and compliance with state and federal laws”.

Goal of Retreat

- Define Board's Mission
- Determine skill sets of members
- Decide what other skills Board needs
- Agree on Responsibilities
- Establish Working Committees
- Define long and short term goals
- Action plans
- How to communicate to school leader and staff

Board of Trustees

- Organized group of volunteers
- Who Collectively
- Are legally and morally accountable
- **To the community**
- For the health, vitality and effectiveness
- Of the Organization

Why does a Charter School need a Board of Trustees?

1. Academic program is successful
2. Programs and operations faithful to terms of Charter
3. School is financially solvent with competent professional staff
4. Provides expertise
5. Added credibility
6. Helps complete the work to launch and sustain
7. Assist in fundraising activities
8. Provides forum for exchange of ideas
9. Connects school to community
10. Focuses on future and long term vision

Primary Role is Governance

- ◎ Board has critical role in:
 - Defining its Mission
 - Strategic planning
 - Setting Policy
 - Holding and abiding by its written Charter

WITHOUT GETTING INVOLVED IN THE
DAY- TO- DAY OPERATIONS OF SCHOOL

Governance v. Management*

⦿ Governance

- Sets a goal
- States an expectation
- Clarifies a direction

⦿ Management

- Acts in a way to accomplish a goal
- Carries out an activity
- Day to day

Examples of Governance v. Management*

⦿ Governance

- Develops personnel policies
- Approves annual budget
- Assesses compliance/progress in achieving academic outcomes

⦿ Management

- Implements policies; hires and evaluates
- Prepares annual budget; oversees preparation of reports
- Develops specific program goals and objectives; oversees staff development

How to Best Succeed*

- ⦿ Belief in Mission and Core Values
- ⦿ Strategic Plan-clarity of collective vision
- ⦿ Firm Understanding of the Charter promises
- ⦿ Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- ⦿ Be Aware of Common Mistakes Boards Make
- ⦿ Understanding the difference between governance and management
- ⦿ Focused on Results
- ⦿ The right structure
- ⦿ A school leader who assists in creation of effective government
- ⦿ A strong partnership between Board and school leader

Common Mistakes Made By Boards

- ⦿ Not understanding the charter
- ⦿ Not having a clear plan to conduct oversight of the academic program
- ⦿ Not enough expertise to conduct proper oversight
- ⦿ Original Board composition
- ⦿ Board size
- ⦿ Lack of previous governance experience
- ⦿ Lack of functioning committees
- ⦿ Bring too dependent on lead founder
- ⦿ Understanding the amount of fundraising
- ⦿ Lack of urgency

Mission Statement

- Legally mission must come from Board
- School Name
- Concise and short
- Memorable
- Compelling
- Communicate to staff and public

Strategic Plan (never ends.....)

- ① Mission
- ① Information Gathering
 - National data
 - Lay of the land
- ① Vision
- ① Draft policies and procedures to achieve goals
- ① Communicate goals to Board, Staff, and Community

Shared Vision of Future

“stretch”

- ⦿ 5 years from today
- ⦿ School physically
- ⦿ How many students
- ⦿ How many teachers
- ⦿ What kind of teachers
- ⦿ Parental and community involvement
- ⦿ Academic goals
- ⦿ Curriculum-same or different
- ⦿ Extra-curriculum
- ⦿ Competitors
- ⦿ Band and teams

Legal Responsibilities

- ⦿ Duty of Care
- ⦿ Duty of Loyalty
- ⦿ Duty of Obedience
 - The Board speaks as one voice
 - Sets policies
 - Follows its own Charter
 - Complies with laws

Does not mean the Board implements every decision

Composition of your Board (Best Practice)*

- Ideal Number
- Diversity
- Skill sets*
- Selection of Board Chair
- Term Limits
- No conflicts of Interest
- Selection of CEO
- No parents of currently enrolled students
- Reserve list

Individual Board members (best practice)

- Active advocate
- Regular attendance
- Contribute to effective operation
- Stayed informed
- Recruit
- Annual financial contribution
- Chair and/or serve on committee
- Help raise funds
- Inform of any conflict

Self Assessment

- Best Practice
- Set Standards for Board Members
- Agreement
- Compliance monitored
- Consequences
- Yearly signature of commitment

You don't want "dead weight" on your Board

Board Meetings

- Meet at least ten times a year
- Attendance requirements
- Agenda items-team approach
- Time limits for each item/keep to schedule
- Committee chairs to present
- Packets sent in advance for review
- Duration no longer than 2 hours
- Leader, facilitator, and scribe
- Comply with open meeting laws
- School leader present

Use Board Meetings Creatively

- Trends
- Guest speakers
- Continuing Education
- Attend other Board meetings

Board Chair Responsibilities

- Lead Board meetings
- Faculty interaction
- Explain what Board does
- Express support
- Share mission statement
- Clear about procedures
- Five year charter
- Staff to accomplish to get this done
- Goals working towards

School Leader

- ⦿ Responsible for:
 - Communicating with Board Chair
 - Preparation of Periodic Reporting
 - Implementing Board policy
 - Staff and student oversight
 - Hiring, firing and discipline
 - Grievances (in most cases)

The Board must give School Leader the latitude and discretion to manage

COMMUNICATION

- Between Board members
- Between Board and Committees
- Between Board Chair and School Leader
- Between School Leader and Staff
- Between Staff and Students
- Between Staff and Parents
- Between School and Community

Share the work load: Committees

- ◎ Recommended Best Practice:
 - Board Governance
 - Finance
 - Fund Development
 - Education/Academic Excellence
 - Facilities
 - Personnel/Human Resources/Policy

Committee Work

- Written Committee Descriptions
- Written Member Descriptions
- Regularly scheduled meetings
- Short and long term term goals
- Action plan after the first meeting
- Time table
- Chair to report to Board
- Great way to train prospective Board members
- Combination of Board and community

Writing Smart Goals*

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Results-focused
- Time-framed
- See examples in materials of goals and action plans

Task Forces

- Research
- Short term projects
- Fundraising efforts
- Policy drafting

SAMPLE
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Board Governance committee

- Board Oversight/ Assessment
- Board Development
- Create Reserve List (potential nominees)
- Better Board Meetings (organizational skills, efficiency, and creativity)
- Oversight of policies/keeping it fresh

Finance Committee

- Clean audit
- Educate Board on understanding numbers
- Full time fund development staff
- Grants
- Checks and Balances!!!!
- Security
- Use financial statements in a meaningful way

Academic Excellence (Education)

⦿ Charter Renewal

- Compliance with state expectations
- Review test data
- School creates its own standards for better performance
- Expectations/Evaluation of School Leader
- Expectations of students and parents
 - Grades
 - Homework
 - Probation/suspension

Academic Excellence A Key Indicator For Success

◎ Board Goals

- What is Excellence?
- How to Measure?
- How to Get Information?
- What can education committee do to get better all the time?

Fund(raising) Committee

- ① Methods for raising money
- ① Planning events
- ① Proposals for how money should be spent
 - i.e. computer and technological updates, science equipment
- ① Act as liason for community
- ① Scholarships; grants (overlap with education committee)

Policy Committee

- Oversee the drafting of policies
- Assign task forces
- Ensure internal grievance procedures
- Comply with charter, charter school laws, and all state and federal laws
- Retain counsel or expert to review

Facilities Committee

- Depends on state of building
- May be a task force
- Can review contracts (overlap with Finance committee)

Available Resources

- NSNO
- Louisiana Charter Schools Association
- RSD
- Seminars and workshops
- Other schools