

*Text of presentation by Joseph Keeney, Founder & CEO of 4th Sector Solutions and Charter School Tools, of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools
Excellence in Governance Award
October 21, 2014*

Over the past twenty years I have attended over 1,000 public charter school board meetings. I love it! I love it because charter schools represent a true innovation in governance. Rather than having people with personal agendas or political aspirations try to do what is best for 5, 20 or 50 different schools, a charter school board is concerned only with the success of one individual school. If they are successful and so inclined, they can earn the right to have more than one school.

That just makes sense.

But it is not always perfect, so the LAPCS is right to celebrate those who govern particularly well.

The Excellence in Governance Award was created to acknowledge the significant contributions of exemplary charter school board members who consistently hit homeruns as they act in the best interest of the students and staff they represent.

The nine nominees were judged on their record of board leadership, their strong organizational commitment, and the positive impact of their actions on the advancement of their organization's mission.

Back in 2011 when this nominee interviewed for a board seat with a charter school organization in New Orleans, he told the CEO that he wanted to join the board because improving the education system was the most important work he could do. Since 2011, this nominee has provided extraordinary leadership by epitomizing transparency and consistency in board operations.

He ensures that the board conducts its business in public, reserving executive sessions for those rare situations that are required by law. When the LENS began reporting on board meetings, he welcomed reporter Jessica Williams to meetings, provided ample information, and ensured she felt comfortable. "Transparency and openness were exuded by him. He knew how to deal with the press and I noticed the difference," said Ms. Williams.

During Strategic Planning Committee Meetings, he encouraged discussion while ensuring the board remained true to its mission in its decision-making. He has been part of a team of board members that successfully defended two charters and transformed two schools. Besides rarely missing a board meeting, he visits all three schools often -- choosing to come during the school day so he can visit classrooms, while also attending evening events so he can talk to parents.

"He challenges my thinking and ensures I have considered all options, but he makes it clear that he believes in me and trusts me to run the organization. His passion and commitment are unparalleled, and we are better thanks to his work," said Kate Mehok, CEO of Crescent City Schools.

I am honored to present this year's Excellence in Governance Award to Jean-Paul Hymel, Board President at Crescent City Schools.