



To: Sponsored Schools and Governing Authority Members
From: ESCLEW Community Schools Center
Date: May 7, 2019
RE: Governing Authority Update

Governing Board

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Board Development – Is there a Plan?

Does your board have a written development plan for itself? A development plan that outlines the development of board members from the start as a new member and throughout the terms served on the board, which is currently known by all members, visited frequently and adjusted as needed? If this plan is in existence, you can take pride knowing according to the National Charter Schools Institute, research shows that very few school boards actually have a plan in place.

Often governing authorities are focused on the development of the school operations and often the focus of their own development is overlooked. A simple one-page plan containing three key elements can be enough to keep your board members on track and focused on your own development as a board.

1. Initial development – what is the current on boarding process of new members? What information, documents, are provided or requested to be reviewed? The sponsor contract with the ESCLEW requires new board members to complete required trainings within a given timeline; but does the board itself require any additional development? Initial development is vital as many members are professional, community members with a connection to the school, but may not be familiar with the responsibilities of joining the board.
2. Ongoing development – your school will benefit if the board participates in meaningful, ongoing development. Ongoing development requires more than attending a conference once in awhile; instead devoting a few minutes during every regular meeting to board development can dramatically strengthen the performance of the board.
3. Self-assessment – on a regular basis, every board would benefit to ask itself, “How well are we doing at governing the school?” In order for the self- assessment to be valid, board members must be willing to be honest with themselves and honest with how well they believe the board is performing. The board can work together, or develop a committee to develop how to best self assess the progress of the board. A self assessment can be as easy as developing a series of questions; that one question becomes the focus of reflection per month during the regular meeting. A sample of self assessment questions is attached.

For more information regarding the development practices of Community Schools Governing Authority Boards please visit: <https://nationalcharterschools.org/>

If you should have any questions regarding the details above please reach out to your Regional Technical Assistance Educator, Academic Services Team Leader, or the Interim Director of the Community Schools Center.

Sample: Self-assessment questions to examine the performance of the board

The National Charter Schools Institute has recommended the following 10 questions to be used for board members to reflect on their own performance:

1. How well is our board doing at speaking to the school's executive (school leader, management company, etc) with only once voice? If the board has a good relationship with the school leader, ask him/her to rate the board on a scale from 1 to 10, with 8 being excluded as a possibility.
2. How well is our board doing at setting the tone and modeling excellence when it comes to its own professional conduct and performance?
3. How well is our board performing with its charter, bylaws, and basic parliamentary procedures?
4. How well is our board doing at governing the school vs. co-managing it? (The board needs to know the school's executive leaders' perception if this is different than their own.)
5. How well do our minutes reflect our board's commitment? Are the minutes accurate, complete, clear, and posted on a timely basis?
6. How well is our board doing with its relationship with the school's authorizer? Is the board responding on a timely basis to formal correspondence from the authorizer?
7. How well is the board focusing on "the vital few" vs. "the vital many" aspects of governance and operations?
8. How well is the board doing at organizing its own work? Is there a board calendar or other resources for systematically scheduling its oversight responsibilities so nothing is missed?
9. How well is our board doing at not undermining the school's leader if parents or teachers bypass the leader and take complaints directly to individual board members?
10. How well is the board building a culture of good governance and creating processes in which new board members will continue if current members move on?