

## **CHARTER SCHOOL GOVERNANCE MODELS**

The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) staff reviewed and assessed the provisions within the *Charter School Act* that address the governance of charter schools.

This handout includes information on:

- selection of charter school governance boards;
- composition of charter school governance boards;
- models of charter school board governance;
- potential issues of charter school governance boards; and
- recommendations for effective governance.

### **Selection of charter school governance boards**

Pursuant to the *Charter Schools Act*, 22-8B-8(I)1-3 NMSA 1978, a charter school application shall include:

1. “I. a description of the governing body and operation of the charter school, including:
  - (1) how the governing body will be selected;
  - (2) qualifications and terms of members, how vacancies on the governing body will be filled and procedures for changing governing body membership; and
  - (3) the nature and extent of parental, professional educator and community involvement in the governance and operation of the school”.

The statutory language that addresses charter school governance selection is limited and has, in some instances, proven to be problematic.

According to a report by the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) on the Program Evaluation of New Mexico Charter Schools dated July 23, 2010, LFC staff noted that there may be a conflict of interest between the school’s administrator and its governing body in certain instances:

- for example, administrators who are also founders of schools, select board members and replacements to the governing board; and
- in turn, the governing board approve administrators’ salaries and hiring recommendations.

To remedy this potential conflict, the LFC suggested in its report:

- “[c]harter school governing body members should have a conflict of interest disclosure form on file with the school or charter authorizer.”

### **Composition of charter school governance boards**

Pursuant to the *Charter Schools Act*, 22-8B-4 NMSA 1978, a “charter school shall be governed by a governing body in the manner set forth in the charter contract; provided that a governing body shall have at least five members; and provided further that no member of a governing body for a charter school that is initially approved on or after July 1, 2005 or whose charter is renewed on or after July 1, 2005 shall serve on the governing body of another charter school. No member of a local school board shall be a member of a governing body for a charter school within the local school board’s school district during the term of office for which the member was elected or appointed.”

The statutory language that addresses the composition of charter school governance boards is limited and may prove to be problematic. However, potential concerns may be remedied by amending the *Charter Schools Act* to include more structure on how charter school governance boards are composed.

For example, according to the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance’s report on Creating and Sustaining High-Quality Charter School Governing Boards, the laws in at least 14 states specifically address whether charter school governance boards may include certain members, such as parents and teachers. In at least three jurisdictions, pools of potential governance board members are created to assist charter schools with selecting qualified board members. Further, at least four states allow charter school authorizers to approve or appoint governance board members as opposed to allowing each charter school to do so.

### **Models of charter school board governance**

According to Gary R. Gruber, Ph.D., a consultant with Carney, Sandoe, and Associates in Santa Fe, there are three models of charter school governance boards that are used in most charter schools today:

1. a school committee or council composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and others:
  - according to Dr. Gruber, this model is “the most democratic and representative as it is inclusive, fully representational and delegates management and oversight to one or more of its members”;
  - openness and inclusion are guiding principles in this model;

- members are elected or appointed “and serve at the pleasure of those constituents”; and
  - criteria for membership includes a desire to execute the school’s mission; commitment to actively participate in the decision making process of the school; and responsibility for the program’s success;
2. a board of directors with officers, by-laws, and delegation of management to a principal, chief administrator/director, or head of a school:
- this model provides a distinct line between the management and administrative work of the paid staff, and the governance work of the board of directors;
  - the governance board is responsible for “setting the school’s general policies and overall curriculum policies; approving and monitoring the annual budget and financial procedures; fund-raising; hiring and evaluating the school’s principal; approving personnel policies and monitoring their implementation by the principal; assuring that the charter school fulfills its charter contract; and strategic planning”;
  - the governance board composition can include the principal, representatives of the teaching staff, students, parents, professionals, and community leaders; and
  - the governance board does not participate in the daily functions of operating the school, nor does it deal with specific personnel issues or individual student needs; and
3. owner/operator, either non-profit foundation or for-profit, with or without a board or committee;
- under this model, “an advisory committee functions to provide information and support or a board of directors of the corporation or foundation serve in that capacity”; and
  - sometimes, “a larger holding group or company may operate several schools in different locations but still depend upon a local group for advice and guidance.”

### **Potential issues of charter school governance boards**

The Colorado Department of Education’s Governance and Leadership Best Practice Resources<sup>1</sup> highlights potential issues that charter school governance boards may encounter:

- individual board members acting outside their decision-making authority;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cdechart/guidebook/gov/pdf/top%2010%20mistakes-best%20practices.pdf>

- conducting meetings without adhering to legal requirements, by not properly noticing a meeting, taking action in a workshop or executive session, or discussing inappropriate topics in executive session;
- approving a budget that is not based on realistic projections;
- meeting too often and for too long;
- failing to keep corporate records, such as charter applications, contracts, bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, and meeting minutes;
- micromanaging or failing to focus on what matters most;
- agreeing to capital financing terms that overextend the charter school's budget;
- neglecting the board's responsibility to create and be governed by board policies; and
- failing to communicate with constituents.

### **Recommendations for effective governance**

According to the Colorado Charter School Handbook: A Guide for Starting and Operating a Charter School, the following criteria lists important factors to consider when establishing governance for a charter school:

- governance structure;
  - first step is to establish the charter school's governance structure and reporting lines;
  - document the roles and responsibilities for the lead administrator and the governing board; and
  - the initial governing board should establish how meetings will be conducted, how issues with parents and staff will be addressed, and how meetings will be documented in the minutes;
- corporate documents;
  - establish a written vision and mission statement; and
  - create and maintain written bylaws and governing board policies;
- board expertise and training;
  - all board members must be trained in basic board function and responsibilities;
  - an orientation for new board members should be developed and delivered; and
  - every board member should be provided a copy of the original charter application, the charter contract, bylaws, and governing board policies;

- strategic planning and goal setting;
  - strategic planning will ensure that the governance board adheres to its original intent for the charter school; and
- election of new members;
  - the process for and frequency of elections for new board members should be outlined in the bylaws and board policy;
  - members may be appointed or elected by the membership; and
  - new board members should sign a board member agreement.

According to *Steering the Course for Success: Authorizers and Effective Charter School Governance*, **Attachment 1**, an issue brief developed by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), the following are ways to promote, support, and reinforce effective charter school governance:

- emphasize that the governance board, and not the school leader or founder) holds the charter, and ensure the governance board has the capacity to govern effectively;
- ensure the governance board is structured appropriately to deliver effective governance;
- ensure the governance board understands its role in oversight and accountability;
- establish means to monitor the work and effectiveness of the governance board; and
- establish clear criteria to determine the governance board's effectiveness.

Lastly, *A Framework for Continuous Improvement of Charter School Board Effectiveness*, **Attachment 2**, includes rating standards (developing, operational, advancing, and excelling) for measuring the following board effectiveness indicators:

- board composition;
- board development process;
- board meeting attendance;
- committee structure with objectives;
- board diversity;
- board participation in school events; and
- board giving.

The framework offers guidance to governance boards on ways to improve and to become a more effective governance board.



# Authorizer Issue Brief

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## Roles and Responsibilities

*In the charter school setting, effective governance is vital for delivering on promises made to students, parents and the community.*

## Steering the Course for Success: Authorizers and Effective Charter School Governance

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Researcher Gary Gruber has stated, "No other singular variable is more important for the health and vitality of a school than the way that it is governed. Teacher competencies, student achievement, parental and community support, adequate facilities and resources are all critical and essential for success.

Governance will determine how those characteristics are initiated, managed, supported and promoted."<sup>1</sup> In the charter school setting, effective governance is vital for delivering on promises made to students, parents and the community.

Because of the importance of governance, charter school authorizers have a vested interest in ensuring that the schools they oversee are effectively governed. Therefore, it is important that authorizers understand governance and know what makes for effective governance. Presented in two parts,

this Issue Brief defines effective governance in the charter school setting (Part I) and highlights concrete strategies authorizers employ to promote, support and reinforce strong charter school governance (Part II).

### Part I: Effective Charter School Governance Defined

"Charter schools have figured out what researchers and legislative commissions still fail to grasp: the real innovation of charter schools is nothing more than the power of

self-governance—the power to make changes that produce better results."<sup>2</sup> A charter school governing body, commonly referred to as the board of trustees or board of directors ("board"), is an organized group of volunteers who, collectively, are legally and morally accountable to the public for the health, vitality and effectiveness of the charter school. As representatives of the public, the board is the primary force pressing the organization to realize its opportunities for service and fulfill its obligations to its constituencies. In other words, the board is ultimately responsible for meeting the terms of the charter.

The general term used to describe the role of the board is "governance." The governance function encompasses legal responsibilities, management oversight, planning and policy-making, and fiduciary requirements. By its very nature, a board is a collective and its authority is a group function. No single individual within the board has authority for the board itself.

Although charter school boards vary in many ways, authorizers have found that effective boards share a number of characteristics:

#### **Passionate, Unwavering Belief in the Charter School's Mission and Core Values**

"Fit" is the key to success for any board member. Every board member must passionately support the school's core values. Quite often conflicts among board members or with the school's leader can be traced back to value clashes. For instance, a proponent of progressive education may be a poor fit



National Association of Charter School Authorizers

*Promoting quality charter schools*  
[www.charterauthorizers.org](http://www.charterauthorizers.org)

with a school with a rigid back-to-basics curriculum and discipline code.

### **Firm Understanding of the Charter Promises and Clear, Consistent Ways to Measure Them**

Boards need to create ways to make the charter a living, breathing document that guides their work throughout the charter term.

### **Clarity of Collective Vision—Where the School Is and Where It Wants to Be in the Future**

Effective boards have a clear, realistic grasp of their current performance and organizational viability and a road map to attain long-term goals.

### **Focus on Results**

An effective board maintains a constant focus on results. Many boards and school leaders struggle with the distinction between charter results, which are the purview of the board to uphold, and implementation strategies, which are means to achieve the results and should be primarily in the purview of the school leader.

### **Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities: the Full Board, Individual Trustees and Committees**

Well-defined “job descriptions” and performance expectations create clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the full board and individual members, respectively. In addition, the board as a whole should clarify the role of committees—what can be decided at a committee level versus what needs to be brought to the full board for discussion.<sup>3</sup>

## **The Right Structure**

### **Board size**

Charter school boards need the right number of members to accomplish the work. There should be enough people to have functioning committees and a diversity of opinions and perspectives needed to ensure public accountability.

### **Composition**

Governing a charter school requires a host of essential skills: legal, financial, real estate, fundraising, strategic planning, academic oversight, marketing, human resources and public relations. Effective boards have members that bring diverse and critical skills to the table.

### **Officers**

Officers, such as chair, vice-chair, treasurer and clerk, ensure an additional level of accountability by having a member responsible to the group for specific tasks and functions, and assist boards in not becoming overly dependent on the school leader.

### **Committee structure**

Well-functioning committees are the heart and soul of any effective board. This is the place where a group of experts can really delve deeper into key issues and bring their findings back to the full board.

### **Board Meetings Focus on Strategic Questions, Not Just Reporting**

Board meetings should be a venue for grappling with the most important issues facing the organization. Basic reporting can be more effectively handled in written materials sent out prior to each board meeting.

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### **Clear Understanding of the Difference Between Governance and Management**

It is critical that boards and school leaders understand the distinctions between management and governance. A key factor is to acknowledge that it is not an either/or

proposition, but more a level of degree. For example, both the board and the school leader have responsibility for financial management, but at varying levels of degree. Together, the two should create documents that are adopted as policy to demarcate each party's responsibilities.<sup>4</sup>

*Authorizers should emphasize that the charter is granted to a governing board, not to the lead founder, and that the board needs to have the requisite skills to govern effectively.*

### **A School Leader Who Has the Time to Assist in the Creation of Effective Governance**

The school leader is a critical ingredient to developing and sustaining an effective board. He/she serves as the primary information

source for the board and should work hand-in-hand with the board. Too many charter schools are structured so that the school leader does not have enough time to devote to creating effective governance.

### **A Strong Partnership Between the Board and School Leader, Which is Built on Mutual Trust and Respect**

Establishing a partnership rather than an adversarial relationship is essential. In addition, the board needs to counterbalance the common problem of blindly following one dynamic individual (often the school's leader).

With an understanding of what effective charter school governance is, authorizers can play an important role in ensuring that board members, in turn, understand their role and conduct their duties effectively.

## **Part II: The Authorizer's Role in Promoting, Supporting and Reinforcing Effective Governance**

### **Characteristics of an Effective Charter School Governing Board**

1. Passionate, unwavering belief in the charter school's mission and core values
2. A firm understanding of the charter promises and a clear, consistent way to measure them
3. Clarity of collective vision—where the school is and where it wants to be in the future
4. Focus on results
5. Clarity of roles and responsibilities of the full board, individual trustees and committees
6. The right structure in terms of board size, composition, committees and officers
7. Board meetings focused on strategic issues, not just reporting
8. Clear understanding of the difference between governance and management
9. A school leader who has the time to assist in the creation of effective governance
10. A strong partnership between the board and the school leader, which is built on mutual trust and respect

Actions by authorizers can send a clear message about the relative importance of charter school governing boards. There is a broad range of actions that authorizers take in influencing charter school governance. A great deal of the variation stems from the amount of financial and human resources a particular authorizer has to allocate to governance issues. There are, however, many concrete actions authorizers can take to promote, support, and reinforce effective governance, regardless of staff size or budget, which can be conducted in tandem with core authorizer responsibilities.

### **Emphasize that the Board (a Group) Holds the Charter, Not the School Leader or One Dynamic Founder (an Individual), and Ensure that the Board Has the Capacity to Govern Effectively**

Authorizers should emphasize that the charter is granted to a governing board, not to the lead founder, and that the board needs to have the requisite skills to govern effectively. Practical ways that authorizers evaluate board capacity include the following:



### Interview the Founding Board

As part of the charter school application process, authorizers are increasingly conducting in-depth interviews with the full founding board rather than just the lead founder or a representative sample of founders. The purpose of these interviews is to probe whether the full board understands and supports the details of the charter and that the school is not just the vision of one person. It also sends the message that a group will be accountable to the authorizer not just an individual.

### Ask for Resumes and Statements of Interest from Proposed Board Members

Resumes allow the authorizer to assess the skill sets an individual will bring to a charter school board. Key skills to look for include: financial, real estate, fundraising, legal, academic oversight, previous governance experience, marketing, human resources and public relations. Taken together, board members should have the skills and capacity necessary to effectively govern the charter school. Moreover, statements of interest often reveal much more than a resume about the person and their motivation for taking on the weighty task of governing a charter school. Statements of interest (See *Using the Charter Application to Assess Governance Capacity and Will*) allow the authorizer to look for a logical match between the individual and the collective vision of the school; tangible ties to the community intended to be served; and whether the individual can maintain an appropriate level of objectivity with the school leader.

### Ensure that the Governing Board is Structured to Deliver Effective Governance

Much of good governance hinges on creating the right structure. Key elements that authorizers should look for include:

#### Bylaws

Bylaws provide the basic parameters/general guidelines for how the board operates. Although authorizers do not need to dictate specific requirements, they should identify elements (See *Key Elements of Quality*

### Using the Charter Application to Assess Governance Capacity and Will

Knowledge of the skill set and motivation of charter school board members helps authorizers determine if the applicants have the capacity to operate a quality charter school. In addition to interviewing potential board members early in the application process, the State University of New York (SUNY) requires each potential board member to complete a *Request for Information from Prospective Charter School Board Members*. The instrument requires prospective board members to explain, among other things, their understanding of the school's mission and proposed educational program, why they want to serve, the specific knowledge and experience they would bring to the board, and their understanding of the appropriate role of a charter school board member.

See [www.newyorkcharters.org/howto/appkit.html](http://www.newyorkcharters.org/howto/appkit.html)<sup>5</sup> for additional information.

*Bylaws*) that must be included in the bylaws to ensure that parameters are set to promote good governance. For example, an authorizer need not determine the specific length of term limits, but should require that there are term limits to ensure that founders do not dominate the board in perpetuity, and that the term limits are staggered so that the board has continuity even as individual members change.

In addition, authorizers should ensure that bylaws do not violate federal or state laws and regulations. For example, bylaws should not allow for the board to meet via conference call if this is in violation with the states' open meeting law. Authorizers may also play an important role in determining if the bylaws are realistic—is the board planning to meet too frequently or not enough times? Is the number of proposed committees practical given the proposed size of the board?

### Ensure that the Governing Board Understands Their Role in Accountability and Oversight

There are a variety of practices used by authorizers to help governing boards understand and act on their oversight role. Examples include:

### **Hold a Public Ceremony Emphasizing that Charter School Board Members are Public Officials**

Some authorizers hold official ceremonies where the charter is awarded to the governing board. Central Michigan University holds a swearing in ceremony where each new board member is required by state law to take the constitutional oath of public office acknowledging that charter school board members are public officials. These types of public events do a great deal to underscore the weightiness of the governing responsibility.

### **Conduct Workshops to Clarify the Board's Responsibilities and the Authorizer's Expectations, and Require Board and School Leader Attendance**

Authorizers have found it beneficial to conduct workshops on the responsibilities

and expectations of charter schools, including but not limited to: reporting requirements, performance expectations, and criteria for charter renewal. Requiring board and school leader attendance sends the message that the group will be accountable to the authorizer not just an individual. Holding such meetings in the early morning or evening so that volunteer board members can attend during non-work hours may produce better turnout and will demonstrate that the authorizer expects full board participation.

### **Produce and Disseminate Documents Detailing the Obligations of the Governing Board**

There are several excellent examples of guidebooks detailing both the legal, financial, and oversight requirements of charter schools boards. These documents are intended to provide clear guidance and support to boards in fulfilling their obligations. The Resources and References section of this Brief contains website information for several quality guides.

### **Determine Ways to Monitor the Work of the Board and Its Effectiveness**

Authorizers conduct a variety of activities to monitor the work of the board including

- requiring boards to submit open meeting postings, board meeting agendas and minutes,
- observing board meetings and
- tracking board meeting attendance.

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office *Charter School Governance Handbook*<sup>6</sup> contains several excellent charts that detail how this authorizer monitors board meetings, board minutes, and other board business. (See Box: *Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes: a Valuable Tool to Monitor Board Effectiveness*)

To monitor overall board effectiveness, authorizers can require boards to report on the major policies that they have made over the course of the year; include interviews with the full board during site visits (See *Questions to Ask the Governing Board*, below); and require boards to complete an annual assessment of their performance (in the form of an annual report, for example).

### **Key Elements of Quality Bylaws**

Bylaws should address the following elements that provide the scaffolding for effective governance:

#### **Trustees**

- Number of trustees
- Qualifications
- Selection process
- Procedures for filling vacancies
- Guidelines for trustee removal and resignation
- Term limits for trustees
- General powers
- Fees and compensation

#### **Officers**

- Number and titles of officers
- Officer selection process
- Job description for officers
- Procedures for filling vacancies
- Term limits for officers

#### **Meetings**

- Location and number of meetings to be held each year
- Policy on special meetings

- Compliance with open meeting laws
- Quorum and voting rules

#### **Staff**

- Who reports to the board?
- Is the school leader ex-officio, voting or non-voting board member?

#### **Committees**

- Number and purpose of board committees
- Job description for each committee
- Procedure for creating a committee or task force

#### **Miscellaneous**

- Beginning and end dates for the fiscal year
- Rules of order
- Amendments
- Consistency of bylaws with governance processes described in the charter and with federal or state laws and regulations

Boards should also explain how they use this data to drive strategic decisions for the upcoming year(s). Authorizers can use the *Characteristics of an Effective Charter School Governing Board* as a framework for developing questions and documentation to monitor key areas of board effectiveness.

### **Establish Clear Criteria to Determine Board Effectiveness**

Authorizers should gather evidence to evaluate board effectiveness throughout the life of the charter. This evidence might include board meeting minutes, attendance, annual reports, major policy decisions and interviews with the board. When thinking about how to evaluate board effectiveness, the *Characteristics of an Effective Charter School Governing Board* can be a useful springboard for framing specific criteria. A board is only as good as the composition of its members—the skills, experience, insights and perspectives they bring and how this group is harnessed to conduct oversight—the processes by which they do the work, the information they use to make decisions and the effectiveness of their board meetings. Often at the renewal stage the fundamental challenge for the authorizer is to determine whether the board clearly grasps the challenges facing the organization and has a clear, viable plan to meet them. (See Box: *Questions to Ask the Governing Board*)

### **Authorizers Need to Connect Renewal to Governance, Not Just Academic Performance**

A school may be demonstrating academic success, but have a weak or ineffective board. In the long run, this board will harm

### **Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes: a Valuable Tool to Monitor Board Effectiveness**

Board meeting agendas, minutes and board packets can provide the authorizer snapshots of the effectiveness of a board. Meeting minutes are a formal record of transactions that happened at a particular time and place. Minutes should be a record of what was *done* at the meeting, not what was said by members. They are used for clarification of past activities and actions. Minutes help ensure continuity in the organization's transactions.

#### **Board Meeting Minutes Checklist**

- Attendance—Is there consistent attendance and a quorum?
- Agenda—Do items requiring board action appear to be within the scope of the charter and appropriate roles for the board to undertake?"
- Does discussion of past activities include qualitative evaluation or is it mere reporting?
- What major policy decisions were made?
- Are monthly financials being reviewed?
- Did the discussion and decisions further the mission of the school?
- Did school goals, standards and data drive decision-making?
- Were unresolved issues from the previous month's meeting carried over and resolved at this meeting?
- Is sufficient time being spent monitoring student achievement, fiscal health, legal compliance, faithfulness to the terms of the charter?

the school, and the authorizer needs to point this out to the organization for its long-term viability. Therefore, it is important that authorizers articulate the relative importance of governance for charter renewal and identify appropriate consequences for when the governing board is not meeting the standard.

*A board is only as good as the composition of its members—the skills, experience, insights and perspectives they bring and how this group is harnessed to conduct oversight—the processes by which they do the work, the information they use to make decisions and the effectiveness of their board meetings.*

## Conclusion

Authorizers across the country are paying increasing attention to the role that governing boards play in the creation and sustainability of successful charter schools. In order to actively promote effective governance,

authorizers need to deliberately articulate the relative importance of a strong governing board and develop authorizing procedures and practices that work to promote, support and reinforce effective charter school governance. For charter schools will only thrive if they are lead by effective governing board.

### Questions to Ask the Governing Board

Informed by the *Characteristics of an Effective Charter School Governing Board*, posing the following questions can help authorizers measure and analyze the effectiveness of a governing board:

- How do you characterize board-meeting attendance? If there are chronic non-attending board members, what will/is the board doing about it?
- Are there skill sets that are missing on the board? What is the plan to fill them?
- What is the process for filling vacant board seats? How many board members are rotating off next year and how will those seats be filled?
- What is the process for setting the school's annual budget?
- When you review the budget, how do you know whether or not you should approve it?
- Of the total organizational budget which items were discussed at length? What percentage of the budget do those items comprise? What percentage of the budget was passed without comment? Why?
- What are the organizational priorities for the upcoming year? What are the board's priorities?
- What major policy decisions did the board make last year? What do you think will be the major policy decisions that you will make next year?
- What is the process for evaluating the school leader?
- How does the board monitor academic achievement? What internal and external assessments are you using?
- How does the organization use data to make decisions and improve results?
- What tools and measures are used to monitor organizational performance?
- What are the organization's key challenges and how are you planning to address them?
- Is there a succession plan for both board and school leadership?

### Endnotes

1. Gruber, Gary. Rural Education Program. *Charter Starters Leadership Training Workbook 4*. "Governance and Management." July 1999.
2. Ed Kirby, former Associate Commissioner for Charter Schools, Massachusetts Department of Education. Personal Interview.
3. Samples can be found in *The Charter School Trustees Guide*—available through [www.buildingexcellentschools.org](http://www.buildingexcellentschools.org)
4. Ibid.
5. Specifically Section VI and the Appendix C.
6. Indianapolis Mayor's Office. *Charter School Governance Handbook*.

### About the Author

Marci Cornell-Feist is an independent consultant who has been focusing on charter school governance for the past seven years. She has worked with 80+ charter schools across the country. Formerly a staff member of the Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center, Marci is the author of *The Charter Schools Trustees Guide*.

### Acknowledgements

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## Resources and References

Visit the following websites to obtain additional information about practices highlighted throughout this brief:

*Central Michigan University Charter School Office Board Orientation Guidebook*

[www.cmucso.org/charter.asp?Link=administrators/index.htm](http://www.cmucso.org/charter.asp?Link=administrators/index.htm)

*Indianapolis Mayor's Office Charter School Governance Handbook*

[www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Schools/Operating/governance.htm](http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Schools/Operating/governance.htm)

*Massachusetts Charter School Administrative and Governance Guide: An Overview of Laws and Regulations that Board of Trustees and School Leaders Need to Know*

[www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/adminguide.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/adminguide.pdf)

*The Charter Schools Trustees Guide*

[www.buildingexcellentschools.org](http://www.buildingexcellentschools.org)

A guidebook designed specifically for charter school board members, in a Q&A format, containing tools and sample documents.

**The following websites provide useful information and guidance on effective governance:**

*Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board Guidebook*

[www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/contents.htm](http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/contents.htm)

An extensive compendium with lots of tools, samples, and tips.

*The Board Café*

[www.boardcafe.org](http://www.boardcafe.org)

A free, monthly electronic newsletter that offers a menu of ideas, opinions, news, and resources to help board members give and get the most out of board service.

*Board Source*

[www.boardsource.org](http://www.boardsource.org)

Formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, a comprehensive source for national standards of effective governance.

*Help4NonProfits*

[www.help4nonprofits.com](http://www.help4nonprofits.com)

A nonprofit library with very user-friendly articles.

*Improving School Board Decision-Making: The Data Connection*

<http://cmucso.org/boards/ImprovingSchoolBoardDecisionMakingTheDataConnection.pdf>

Written for traditional school boards, but very applicable to the charter school governing board context, it provides great examples of how boards should use data in making decisions.

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**A Framework for Continuous Improvement of Charter School Board Effectiveness**

<b>Board Effectiveness Indicator</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Advancing</b>	<b>Excelling</b>
<b>Board Composition</b>	The board has few, if any, active community leaders who can influence community decisions and finances. There is little board involvement that fulfills the charter schools needs.	The board has some recognized community leaders who influence community decisions and finances. There is a moderate level of board involvement in the charter school. Board directors sometimes use contacts they have to benefit the charter school.	The board consists mainly of community leaders who influence decisions and finances and who are involved in meeting most of the charter schools needs.	The board consists of community leaders who influence decisions and finances and who are actively involved in meeting the charter schools needs. They do not hesitate to use the contacts they have to benefit the charter school.
<b>Board Development Process</b>	Board directors are randomly recruited.	There is a formal process for identifying and recruiting board directors not necessarily based on the specific goals and objectives and needs of the charter school board.	The charter school board has and utilizes a formal process for the identification, recruitment, selection, and orientation of board directors based on its goals, objectives and needs.	The charter school utilizes a formal, ongoing board development process, which includes a dedication, recruitment, selection, orientation, ongoing evaluation and performance recording, and recognition of board directors.
<b>Board Meeting Attendance</b>	Charter school board meetings are not held on a regular basis; attendance is less than 50 percent; the agenda is dominated by problems and crises, preventing the board from dealing with substantive policy issues.	There are regular board meetings attended by not less than 50 percent of the members; strong domination by one or two members; agenda mostly consists of reports; few substantive decisions are made.	The board is regular meetings with not less than 70 percent attendance and with the clear focus on policy issues and decisions.	The board has regular, duly constituted meetings with not less than 80 percent attendance, active participation and a clear focus on policy issues and decisions
<b>Committee Structure With Objectives</b>	The board has no functioning committees.	There are appointed committees that occasionally meet to consider some matters pertinent to their responsibilities. Attendance by most of the committee at such meetings is generally poor.	The board has organized, functioning committees which make informed recommendations for board action. Attendance is better than 50 percent.	The board has organized, functioning committees with defined objectives consistent with the charter schools goals, objectives and needs and which makes informed recommendations for board action.
<b>Board Diversity.</b>	The board is not diverse in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup, and other critical factors.	The board has some diversity in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup and other critical factors, and has an informal plan to expand this diversity.	The board has some diversity in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup and other critical factors, and a formal plan is underway to expand this diversity.	The board is diverse in terms of gender, ethnic/racial makeup and other critical factors, and has a continuing action plan to maintain it.
<b>Board Participation In School Events</b>	There is little or no participation by board directors in charter school events.	There is board participation in some charter school events.	There is board representation/ participation in most charter school events.	There is board representation/participation in all charter school events
<b>Board Giving</b>	Fewer than 50 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to help meet the charter schools financial goals.	Not less than 50 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to help meet the charter schools financial goals.	Not less than 75 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to help meet the charter schools financial goals.	Not less than 90 percent of charter school board directors contribute personally and utilize their contacts to meet the charter schools financial goals.

Adapted from Stages of Organizational Effectiveness -- Board Of Directors, Boys and Girls Clubs of America