

BOARD GUIDEBOOK

Best Practices in Public Charter School Board Governance



Back to Basics

What a governing board does is pretty clear: financial, operational, and academic oversight of the school. *How* that works gets done is more complicated.

In this issue of the governance guidebook you'll find a collection of resources to help you facilitate new board member orientation and/or experienced board member review of the "how to" of charter school governance.

While each board's "how to" manual is slightly different, spending time reviewing open meeting law, Robert's Rules of Order, and your board's communication policies is important to do regularly. Don't wait for a problem to happen! Know the warning signs of dysfunctional boards and have a plan for how you will handle stressful moments as a board.

A strong board celebrates the successes while planning for the challenges ahead.

THIS MONTH

**STAY MOTIVATED:
"HOW TO MAKE STRESS
YOUR FRIEND"**

**ARTICLE:
5 DYSFUNCTIONS**

**BOARD EXERCISE:
REVIEW THE LAWS THAT
GOVERN THE BOARD.**

**HIGHLIGHT:
WELCOMING THE NEWEST
COMMISSIONER**

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Don't Forget!

Check in with your school's parent teacher organization or your recruitment committee this month. Chances are there's a plan in the works for a family get-together. This is a great opportunity for board members to be active stewards of the school's mission and vision. Enjoy some time with staff and families, and share your excitement for the upcoming school year!

Stay Motivated

How to Make Stress Your Friend

Kelly McGonigal

We all work hard to avoid and reduce stress, but what if stress serves a purpose? What if stress is good for us? In this TED Talk, McGonigal shares her research on the positive effects of stress. Paying attention to how our bodies respond to stress can help us confront stressful situations with confidence.

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Need a Good Book?

[Learning Transformed: 8 Keys to Designing Tomorrow's Schools, Today](#)

Eric C. Sheninger and Thomas C. Murray

Sheninger and Murray argue that the modern design of public education prepares students for an industrial society that no longer exists.

In response, their research highlights 8 areas of focus that can shift our educational models to better prepare students for the future.

School culture, learner-centered spaces, individualized professional development, and innovation all contribute to successful outcomes.

Another key area of focus is meaningful connections between the school and its larger community.

This book is a good motivational read for school boards focusing on innovative programs. It is also easy to break into small chunks by topic for schools that may be exploring ways to strengthen culture or family engagement practices.

Governance Exercise

Review the Laws that Govern the Board

Governing boards should annually review the laws, rules, and policies that guide their work. Key among these are Idaho's open meeting law, the board's bylaws, and Robert's Rules of Order. These three documents provide structure for school boards and ensure transparency of public agency work. For new board members, this exercise is an essential part of their orientation. For existing and experienced board members, this work is a good opportunity to reflect and revise practices.

Idaho's Open Meeting Law

The primary source of guidance on board meetings is Idaho's open meetings law (I.C. §74-201-208). This statute applies to all governing boards of public entities, including charter schools.

Adopted by the Idaho Legislature in 1974, Idaho's open meetings law essentially requires that public business be conducted in public.

Open meetings law describes the requirements for notifying the public of meetings, posting meeting agendas, and taking meeting minutes. It also describes when executive sessions are permissible and when negotiations must take place in open session.

Members of the public must be permitted to attend any and all open meetings, and meetings may not be held in a location that practices any form of discrimination.

The law describes how virtual participation works for board members and states that decisions may not be made by secret ballot.

Board Bylaws

A second layer of guidance for a governing board is the board's bylaws. All charter school boards are required to have bylaws, and up to date bylaws must be on file with the school's authorizer.

While bylaws must be compliant with a variety of laws, they do vary from school to school. The purpose of this school-level document is both to ensure compliance and to provide a high level structure for how the board will engage in the work of governance.

A board's bylaws state how many directors will serve at any given time. They define the scope and terms of board service and outline how directors are appointed/elected as well as how they might be terminated if necessary.

Bylaws often include descriptions of officer duties (such as chair and vice-chair), standing committees (such as governance and finance), and the process by which a director may declare a conflict of interest on a particular issue.

Robert's Rules of Order

A third important piece of the puzzle is Robert's Rules. Originally published in 1876, this text outlines procedures for conducting orderly meetings.

Schools are not required to use Robert's Rules, but most school boards do adopt the practices to some degree.

Robert's Rules of Order provide a detailed structure for how to make a motion and how to call a vote with transparency.

They outlines best practices for facilitating public comments and presents a vocabulary that support consistency in the decision-making process, regardless of the topic.

Set aside some time to review these three important guides with your board. Does everyone understand open meetings law? Do your bylaws provide enough structure? What aspects of Robert's Rules might help you bring a greater sense of order to your board meetings?

Weekly Notes

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August 2018

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Fact and Fiction

Fiction: Charter school teachers are less qualified than teachers in traditional public schools.

Fact: All public education teachers in Idaho are required to hold the same certification as teachers at other public schools.

Further: [Idaho Code 33-1201](#) details the requirements for teacher certification.

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5 Dysfunctions

This article, a summary of Patrick Lancioni's book, identifies several of the common problems school boards face. A board that is experiencing dysfunction may lack trust between members, may avoid conflict rather than engage in meaningful discussion, and may struggle with accountability or commitment to the mission of the school.

Sharing this article with your board can facilitate discussion about important aspects of high-quality governance. It can help a struggling board find common ground, and it can serve as a rally cry for a strong one.

Staff and Board Relationships

While it is important for board members to have a positive relationship with staff and families, it is also important to be clear about what kind of communication is appropriate.

Your board's communication policy can help you know when it is best to listen, when it is okay to share, and when it is best to refer a conversation to the school's administration. This article offers some sound advice.

Board members wear many hats, and stewarding the vision and mission of the school is one that requires you to build strong relationships. Enjoy that work!

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Check it Out

Each month, a governing board should review financial reports, but it should also review the operational status and the academic progress of the school. These data points are often presented in the principal's report to the board.

As the purpose of the principal's report is to inform the board of the school's progress toward established goals, it can be useful for the board to consider what data points it needs to know and to provide some feedback to the principal about how the current structure of the report is meeting the needs of the board.

Check it out!

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Highlight

The 7 commissioners for the PCSC are appointed by the Governor (3 seats), the Senate Pro Tempore (2 seats) and the Speaker of the House (2 seats). Commissioners serve a four-year term with a two-term limit.

Commissioner Kelly Murphey's term expired in June of 2018. The PCSC staff is grateful for Commissioner Mrufey's service and wish him well in his future endeavors.

Speaker Bedke appointed a new commissioner in July. Please join us in welcoming Rep. Julie Van Orden to the PCSC.