

BOARD GUIDEBOOK

Best Practices in Public Charter School Board Governance



Recruitment and Retention

By Jenn Thompson, PCSC Program Manager

Student recruitment and retention are challenges unique to charter schools. Enrollment directly affects funding, and as financial stability of the school is a primary function of a governing board, board members are obligated to focus attention on the budget. However, many operational areas, such as school culture, social emotional learning, and employee satisfaction, are also greatly impacted by the successes and challenges of recruitment and retention.

While a board doesn't play a significant role in carrying out these day-to-day efforts, a board is ultimately responsible for the operational and academic success of the school. Governing boards have many variables to weigh, particularly with regard to recruitment and retention, as they consider how best to provide stewardship of the school's mission without overstepping the governance role.

This issue of the Board Guidebook offers resources and inspiration to help your board identify its role in the crucial work of recruitment and retention.

THIS MONTH

**STAY MOTIVATED:
"HOW GREAT LEADERS
INSPIRE ACTION"**

**ARTICLE:
"THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
MARKETING AND
ADVERTISING"**

**BOARD EXERCISE:
RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION**

**SCHOOL HIGHLIGHT:
CONGRATS TO VISION
ROBOTICS TEAMS**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
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18	19	20	21
25	26	27	28

Don't Forget!

Mission Statement - This statement is brief. It explains why you do what you do. It is used to to guide the decisions you make and actions you take today.

Vision Statement - This statement is a little longer. It describes what you believe will be true in the future if your mission is implemented well.

Check out some great examples at HubSpot.

Stay Motivated

["How Great Leaders Inspire Action,"](#) a TEDx presentation by Simon Sinek based on Sinek's book, *Start with Why*.

Sinek illustrates that the most successful marketing plans are not focused on the product. Rather, they are focused the values shared between the organization and its customers.

Following this line of thinking, *Why* your school is dedicated to its model may resonate more with families than a description of *what* your model is like.

It might just change the way you think about your elevator speech!

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Need a Good Book?

[*The Celebrity Experience: Insider Secrets to Delivering Red-Carpet Customer Service*](#)

2008, Donna Cutting.

This book offers a collection of examples of high-quality customer service practices from successful companies across a wide variety of professional industries. It highlights important factors to consider as you engage in attracting and retaining customers.

It's a quick-read to consider as you prepare for recruitment events. Our families are our customers, after all. Their first impressions at an event can make or break recruitment. Similarly, the day-to-day experiences

of existing families have a tremendous effect on retention, impacting turnover rates. When it comes to recruitment and retention, the details always matter.

Every time we answer the phone, greet a family in the drop-off line, or change a light bulb, we have an opportunity to make our customers feel special and welcome.

This book can help us reflect on where the "touch points" are between families and school representatives (employees, volunteers, etc.), and help us identify the big and small things we can do to positively impact our school customers' loyalty.

Governance Exercise

Recruitment and Retention

Student recruitment and retention impact a school's success in different ways. Recruitment affects student membership, directly impacting the school's finances. Retention affects student turnover, impacting operational and academic performance. While the work of recruitment and retention belong to your administrative team, understanding the difference between the two and how they impact financial, operational, and academic performance is crucial for a governing board. Below are some ideas to get you started!

What's the Difference?

Student Recruitment affects student membership. Student membership is the total number of students enrolled at a given time. This number most significantly impacts funding.

If you need 100 students to balance your budget, but you only have 90 enrolled, it's time to kick recruitment into overdrive and make a budget back-up plan.

Student retention affects student turnover. Turnover is related to the stability of a school's population, or the ability to *retain* students across a single school year and from one year to the next. Student retention impacts operational and academic performance.

For example, if a classroom has 25 students, but the school has high turnover, many students are new to the school community at any given time. This leads to operational issues such as teacher satisfaction, discipline, and classroom management. It can even impact academic performance.

Not insignificantly, high turnover rates can impact how students build relationships with each other.

What is more important?

As a board, you'll likely hear

concerns about both student membership and student turnover. You'll have decisions to make that impact recruitment and retention efforts. This is one of those topics for which boards are presented with varied and valid viewpoints.

Some members of your community will stay focused on the budget and therefore prioritize student membership: more students bring greater revenues. Other members of your community will stay focused on the day to day experience of students and teachers: retaining the students already enrolled in a school can help stabilize school culture and allow teachers to focus on growth.

The truth is, both are important. The role of the board is to make informed decision that balance multiple variables.

How can a board help?

Student attrition early in the school year is a key indicator of long-term retention trends.

Boards commonly review their school's total enrollment numbers, especially at the beginning of a new school year. But it is also appropriate for a board to pay attention to the number of new enrollees, especially during the first month or two of the school year.

If the membership number is the same month to month, the school budget is likely in the clear, and

If the turnover number is high, even if membership number is stable, the success of the school's operations may need attention.

Exit Data

When a family does choose to withdraw from a charter school, an important source of data is the exit interview.

Knowing that 10 students withdrew from your school to enroll elsewhere may provide enough information for reporting purposes, but it doesn't necessarily tell the whole story.

An interview or survey helps get to the "push" and "pull" factors that influenced the family's decision.

When the exit data specifically identifies pushes ("the school day runs too late into the afternoon") and pulls ("xyz school has sports and you don't"), issues that can be addressed at the policy level stand out.

While it is important to know the push and pull factors that affect the overall enrollment of your school, it is also important to stay true to your mission. Just because families cite "no soccer club" as a reason for leaving your school, doesn't necessarily mean you need a soccer club.

As a school of choice, families will choose to come and go. The goal is to provide a high-quality choice within the scope of your school's mission.

Weekly Notes

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February 2018

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Fact and Fiction

Fiction: Charter schools are allowed to operate even if they aren't performing well.

Fact: Charter schools are held accountable to meet academic performance standards outlined in the agreement with its authorizer. Additionally, as schools of choice, charter schools are held accountable by the families who enroll their children.

Further: The PCSC provides a ["Guide to the Calculation of Academic Ratings"](#) that explains in detail how schools' performance outcomes are calculated.

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Marketing vs. Advertising

["The Difference Between Marketing and Advertising \(and Why it Matters\)"](#)

By Daniel Burstein

Marketing Experiments, November 2017

Marketing and Advertising are words often used interchangeably. This article describes the differences between the two and offers a few tips for engaging in effective marketing strategies.

For example, does your school have a "customer map"? Do you have a written plan? Check out the article for more ideas.

Using Social Media

["The Ultimate Guide to Social Media Marketing."](#)

By Jeff Bullas

Utilizing social media in your school's marketing plan is effective, but it can also be overwhelming. Which platform(s) should a school use? What kind of information should be posted? How often should the school post? What is too much? Most importantly, how do you add that to an already full plate?

This article provides a user friendly introduction to developing a marketing strategy based on data, rather than the time-honored tradition of throwing darts.

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Check it Out

School boards provide performance evaluations for their administrators. However, governing boards don't always have the same background or training as traditional superintendents do. This can make managing the detailed process complicated.

As your board prepares for a mid-year progress review meeting with your school administrator, read through the [Effective Principals](#) support documents provided by the SDE.

Regularly reviewing these documents can help board members or board committees provide meaningful feedback and support to our hard-working administrators.

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School Highlight

Congratulations to Vision Charter School's FLL robotics teams. All five teams advanced to State. These teams represent 37 students in grades 3-8. The Hydro Bots team (pictured here) brought home the Champions Award trophy.

Other awards include:

Emojis received the Core Values Award

Glitching Gophers received the Project Award

Tidal Waves received the Judges Award for Integrity

Hydra Bear Plumbers received the Robot Design Award

Congratulations to a hard working and passionate group of kids and mentors! Good luck to all of you at State on February 3rd!



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Did You Know?

Over 3 million students are enrolled in charter schools across the United States. In the last year alone, enrollment increased by almost 200,000 students. The demand for charter schools continues to increase.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools estimates that there are nearly 7,000 charter schools in operation.

You can read the full report here.

[Estimated Charter Public School Enrollment, 2016-17.](#)