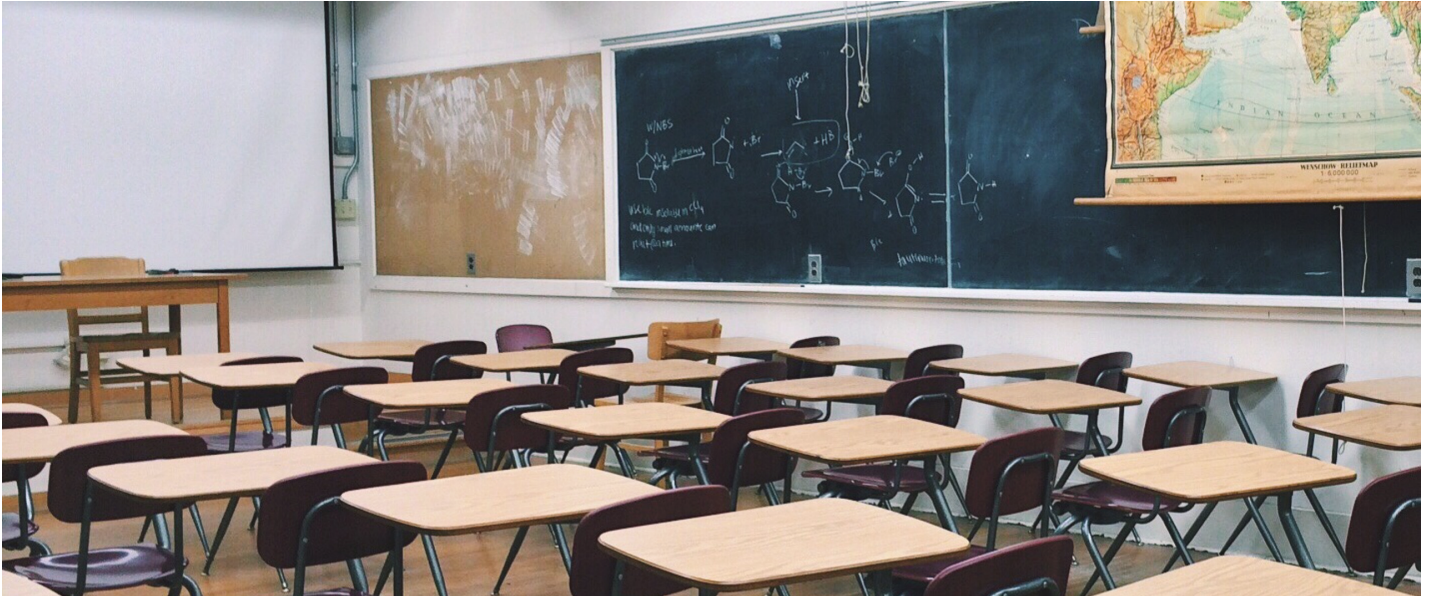


BOARD GUIDEBOOK

Best Practices in Public Charter School Board Governance



Governance Guidebook

By Jenn Thompson, PCSC Program Manager

This marks the first issue of our governance themed newsletters. Our goal is to provide access to quality resources on the topics your board encounters annually.

In each issue, you'll find exercises, book reviews, and quick snippets (such as quotes or charter school myths), as well as links to pertinent articles and videos. You can even customize the calendar.

Over time, we'll compile newsletters into a first year guidebook for new board members. We welcome your feedback about content or format.

Whether you have five minutes or are looking for a good book to read, we hope you find something useful here!

THIS MONTH

**STAY MOTIVATED:
"EVERY KID NEEDS A
CHAMPION"**

**ARTICLE:
DO WE VOTE ON THAT?**

**BOARD EXERCISE:
SELF-REFLECTION**

**SCHOOL HIGHLIGHT:
WELCOMING NEW
SCHOOLS**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
31	1	2	3
7	8	9	10
14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24
28	29	30	31

Don't Forget!

The final draft of your school's Annual Performance Report will be issued by the PCSC in January. This report evaluates your school based on academic, operational, and financial outcomes.

Take time to review this report as a board.
In what areas did your school improve?
What goals do you have going forward?

Stay Motivated

["Every Kid Needs a Champion"](#). In this TED Talk by Rita Pierson, a 40 year teaching veteran, we are reminded of the power of relationships in the work of education.

As we enter another long stretch of winter, take a minute to reflect on the personal stories that keep your team motivated. As Pireson says:

"We can do this. We're educators."

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Need a Good Book?

[Charter School Board University](#)

by Brian L. Carpenter, Ph.D.

CEO of the National Charter School Institute.

This book is designed as an introduction to charter school governance. Each chapter addresses a key topic, making it a useful tool for both new and experienced board members.

Chapter five, "First Things First," offers a brief list of the primary documents every board

member should be familiar with. The list features items such as the school's performance certificate, the board's bylaws, and a summary of academic performance. Less expected items include insurance certificates and debt instruments. Reviewing these documents at your annual board retreat is a simple, but powerful, practice.

This book is a great support to the work of on-boarding new board members. It can also spark great discussions about items you want to add to the list to provide an orientation to your charter's specific mission.

Governance Exercise

Practicing Self-Reflection

Carol Dweck, a psychologist at Stanford University who researches the science of motivation, has become a key figure in education circles over the past few years. Her work on "growth mindset," or the belief that you can always improve, has significantly influenced the way we think about school culture. Practicing growth mindset is hard and humbling work, but when we engage in self-reflection and seek out development opportunities as board members, not only do we model our expectations of our students, we learn and improve our own performance.

January is a great time to engage in self-reflection exercises with your board. The school year is half-over, the holidays are behind us, and hopefully everyone is rested and ready to reengage.

This issue of the Board Guidebook offers a collection of resources that can help you think about your practices and identify an area or two where a small turn of the dial can make a big difference.

Below are some ideas for exercises to facilitate self-reflection with your board.

1 - Getting Started. Try surveying your board using the Good to Govern self-evaluation (linked later in this document). Have each board member spend 10 minutes rating each of the statements on the list according to how true they are for your school.

Review the responses at your next board meeting. While this exercise might not result in specific solutions, it can help narrow the conversation about what to work on.

2 - Use time wisely. Board members are volunteers with limited time availability.

Present organized board packets a full week before the meeting. This allows busy volunteers to review materials on their own time, resulting in better informed participation and facilitating more efficient meetings.

Review the past year's meeting agendas. As you do, talk about whether agenda items are governance or management work. This can be an eye opening exercise. While we might be passionate about a topic, if there is sufficient policy in place to guide your school leader, there's no need to discuss it at length.

Set time expectations for each section of your agenda. This practice can help you identify pacing issues. Sometimes an agenda item drags on because training is needed. Other times it's because more work needs to be done before a decision can be made. This practice asks us to pause after a given length of time to evaluate whether the discussion is an important

opportunity for learning that should continue (now or later) or whether the issue should be tabled until more work is done.

3 - Policy oversight. Governing boards are tasked with the development of policies that administrators then implement and enforce.

It makes sense that administrators are the experts behind drafting and editing school policies. However, boards have a responsibility to regularly review those policies, verifying legal compliance and supporting the mission and vision of the school.

Consider establishing an annual schedule of policy review. Some boards establish a committee that does all of the work. Others choose to assign a handful of policies to various board members according to their interests or backgrounds.

This practice assures that the board has a deep understanding of the policies and procedures in practice at their school, and empowers them to make more confident decisions that align with those policies.

January / 2018

	Sun 31
	Mon 1
	Tue 2
	Wed 3
	Thu 4
	Fri 5
	Sat 6

Fact and Fiction

The first charter school opened in 1992. 25 years later, misconceptions about school choice are still out there. Here are some facts to help navigate the fiction.

FACT: All charter schools are required by law to enroll students based on a lottery. Every child has an equal chance of being drawn for a seat.

FURTHER: I.C. 52-33-5206 outlines the lottery requirements that ensure equal access to charter school enrollment for all students in Idaho.

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Do We Vote on That?

["Does the Charter School Board need to vote on Everything?"](#) by Joe Keeney and Michael Higgins. Charter School Tool Box, 2013.

Governing boards establish the "what". Administrators manage the "how". Still, we find ourselves in board meetings, an hour into a discussion, wondering if we really need to vote on this or that.

This article offers strategies for making that decision. It's a quick read and a good refresher!

Self-Evaluation Tool

The ["Good to Govern: Charter School Founding Board Diagnostic Tool"](#) was developed by the National Association for Charter School Authorizers.

Initially developed to help authorizing entities evaluate a new board's readiness, the tool offers one page of statements that are true for high functioning school boards.

As a mid-year survey, a brief discussion, or as an exercise for a governance committee, this tool facilitates meaningful reflection.

Weekly Notes

January / 2018

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January 2018

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31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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Check it Out

How well do you know your school's safety plans? January is a great time to review this group of policies.

What is the 2000-foot-view? How will information flow in a crisis? How are issues of bullying or discipline referred through your formal grievance procedures? What strategies are in place to keep students safe during drop-off and dismissal?

If you're on a committee tasked with reviewing these policies, the SDE provides resources and guidance to support your work.

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School Highlight

The PCSC is happy to welcome four new schools to our community. Opening in the fall of 2018, these teams are fully engaged in the work of establishing their schools. Please reach out to welcome them and offer your support.

[Gem Prep Meridian](#) - Blended Learning, K-8, Meridian

[Future Public School](#) - STEM Learning, K-8, Garden City

[Peace Valley Charter School](#) - Waldorf, K-8, Boise

[Project Impact STEM Academy](#) - STEM/ Personalized Learning, K-12, Kuna



Weekly Notes

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January 2018

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Did You Know?

Charter schools in Idaho are required to post certain documents on their website. Is your site compliant?

Items that must be posted include:

- Expenditures (current within 45 days)
- PCSC Annual Reports
- Continuous Improvement Plans

Highly functional websites have standard features.

You'll see greater engagement if your website:

- Includes a values statement (top/ home page)
- Features a sign-up in the footer (always present)
- Is easily navigable in desktop and tablet mode

