The Role of an Effective Charter School Board Chair

*Basics and Beyond*
Objectives for Today.......  

- Review Some Basics about the key roles and responsibilities of a board member
- Share “Lessons Learned”
- Examine Specific Examples  
  but most importantly.....

*Interact & Exchange Ideas*
Roles & Responsibilities of a Charter School Board

- Academic program is successful, as measured by both internal and external assessment.
- Program & operation are faithful to the terms of its charter including all statutory and regulatory requirements.
- School is viable, financially solvent and had competent staff.
Legal Duties of a NYS Nonprofit Board Member

- **Duty of Attention**: Participate actively in oversight of organizational activities
  - Attend meetings
  - Obtain adequate information (or request a delay in any decision if information is not available)
  - Review and digest information provided
  - Monitor delegated activities

- **Duty of Loyalty**
  - Avoidance of a conflict of interest, if possible.
  - Fairness toward the organization if avoidance of conflict of interest is not possible ("interested director")
  - Give priority to the organization over all other parties when organizational opportunities arise
  - Maintenance of confidentiality and avoidance of the use of "inside information" for personal gain
  - Disclosure to the organization of pertinent information necessary for the making of informed decisions by the board members

- **Duty of Care**
  - "In good faith and with that degree of diligence, care and skill which ordinary prudent men and women would exercise under similar circumstances in like positions."

  N-PCL #717 (A)
What is a Board Meeting?

- Volunteer board members spending time together making governance decisions for the future success of the organization
Role of the Charter School Board Chair

- One part orchestra conductor
  - So that the brass sections does not drown out the reed instruments!

- One part lion tamer
  - Ensuring that the end result is good and no one gets hurt!

- One part nurturer
  - Making sure each board members receives what she or he needs to continue to be of value to the organization
Characteristics of an Effective Chair...

- Passion
- Good People Skills
- Keen Negotiation Instincts
- Creativity
- Healthy Self-Esteem
- Ability to see the Big Picture without letting the details slide
- Knowledge of where they need help
The basic job descriptions....

- **Chair meetings** after having worked with School Leader to set agenda
- **Ensure Effective Functioning of Board** in fulfilling responsibilities of Governance
- **Appoint Committee Chairs & Membership** in consultation with Board members & School Leader
- **Chair the Executive Committee**
- Serve as an **Ambassador & Spokesperson**
- Provide Leadership in Identification & Outreach for **Resources**
Chair Meetings........

- Establish and Agree Upon Clear Objectives
- Manage Time, Focus, and Egos
- Check Balance using The Four Legged Stool Approach
  - STUDENTS ; SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
    - Funders and State authorizers
    - Teachers and Staff
    - Community
  - Use a Parking Lot for thorny issues
  - Share Leadership
Ensure Effective Governance

- Set expectations for reports from committees and school leader
- Review prior to meeting - set tone of openness and “no surprises”
- Insist materials are circulated at least one week before meeting
- Observe trustee involvement and understanding; coach as necessary
- Ensure that issues are addressed as necessary
Appoint Committee Chairs......

- Match trustee skills and committee needs
- Set collaborative tone
- Coach as necessary
Chair Executive Committee......

☐ Guide work of other committees, e.g. set format and substance expectations for reporting

☐ Call special meetings as necessary to deal with critical issues between regular board meetings

☐ Head efforts to appoint and evaluate school Leader

- Ensure Availability of Job Description and clear Statement of Measurable Expectations
Relating to the School Leader.....

☐ Chair
  - Supervise school leader
  - Define Processes
  - Drive the Mission
  - Make Strategic Decisions
  - Approve Operational Plan
  - Review Operational Milestones and Budget

☐ School Leader
  - Devise ways to involve other staff members
  - Solicit input and communicate to board
  - Recommend options
  - Develop operation plan and budget
  - Implement and present results

Volunteer Consulting Group
Relating to School Leader (cont)....

☐ Some Key Skills
  ■ The art of asking the right questions
  ■ Being part of the solution - not the problem
  ■ Maintaining a focus on facts – not anecdotes
  ■ Keeping the school’s mission, goals and objectives at the forefront when making decisions
  ■ Willingness to engage as necessary
Serve as Ambassador

- Lead by example in “friend” raising and community outreach
- Represent school at community events
- Attend school functions and encourage other board participation
- Visit the school regularly
Lead in Search for Resources......

- Lead by example
- Set clear statement of support expected from board members
- Work with development subcommittee on creation, tracking, and implementation of fundraising plan
- Hold board members accountable to their commitments, e.g. funds, recruitment, attendance, etc.
Action Axioms for Board Meetings...

- #1 Planning: have a plan - no plan, no meeting
- #2 Working: sitting on a board means work by board members--not just staff members
- #3 Learning: give board members a chance to learn something at each meeting
- #4 Deciding: make a decision about something at each meeting
- #5 Connecting: allow board members time to get to know each other
- #6 Speaking: a happy board is one where each member speaks – but not too little or too much
- #7 Acting: the brain can only absorb what the backside can endure—do something
- #8 Enjoying: board service can be fun, interesting and enjoyable
And Now Time for Sharing....

- Thorniest Problems
- Proudest Accomplishments
Remember........

☐ **Listen**
☐ **Encourage and engage**
☐ **Assess**
☐ **Decide using discipline, facts, respect, and collaborative compromise**