

Developing a Leadership Dashboard: An Accountability Tool

A Leadership Dashboard is a crucial tool for **communication** between school leaders and the board. The process of developing the dashboard involves school leaders and the board working together. Boards should be constructed with relevant experience (e.g., finance, operations) so they know what questions to ask. This collaborative process is key to building a culture of **trust and transparency** between the board and leadership.

Starting Questions for Dashboard Development

To begin developing a dashboard, school leaders should address these key questions:

- **First:** What are the school's charter goals regarding student achievement, operations, and finance, and how are those goals measured?
- **Second:** What are the school's additional goals, and how will those goals be measured?
- **Third:** What data does the school collect that demonstrates progress toward these goals, and how will that data be managed?

Defining Goals and Measures of Success

Academic Measures

Some academic measures are imposed externally, such as **AYP** (Adequate Yearly Progress) and the targets outlined in the school's achievement plan or charter.

Schools should also consider what they want to compare their data to:

- Last year's scores
- Local school district
- Other charters
- Aspirational goals

When measuring academic success, it's essential to understand the assessments used:

- Are they **criterion or norm referenced**?
- Are they **aligned to state standards**?
- How **objective** are they (who creates, administers, and scores them)?
- How good is the benchmark considered to be? Is the state's definition of "proficient" a sufficient measure of success?

A **Sample Charter Goal** can cover **Absolute and Comparative Achievement**:

- **Absolute:** At least 75% of students will score proficient or advanced on the NYS assessment.
- **Comparative:** Students will perform at higher levels than their district counterparts and all NYC public elementary school counterparts on NYS assessments.

	2008-9 ELA Percent Proficient				
Group	Charter Goal	Charter School	NYC District 1	NYC All	Goal Met?
3 rd Grade	75%	90%	70.50%	64.60%	Yes
4 th Grade	75%	94%	69.50%	64.10%	Yes

	2008-9 Math Percent Proficient				
Group	Charter Goal	Charter School	NYC District 1	NYC All	Goal Met?
3 rd Grade	75%	97%	92%	91.40%	Yes
4 th Grade	75%	100%	83%	84.90%	Yes

Another sample goal focuses on **Progress**:

- **Goal:** Each student will make one year of progress as evidenced by performing at the same or higher levels on NYS ELA and Math assessments than the prior year.
- **Measure:** An individualized growth target is set for each grade student based on their performance on the previous year's test.

NYS ELA Practice Test							
	Percent Proficient				% Meeting Student Growth Target		
	Nov-09	Mar-10	Goal	Goal Met?	Mar-10	Goal	Goal Met?
4th Grade 1	57%	95%	75%	YES	71%	75%	NO
4th Grade 2	61%	87%	75%	YES	48%	75%	NO
5th Grade 1	50%	88%	75%	YES	69%	75%	NO
5th Grade 2	47%	100%	75%	YES	76%	75%	YES

Operational Goals

Operational goals are often driven by factors that affect revenue:

- **Enrollment**
- Special education students
- FRL (Free/Reduced Lunch) status
- **Attendance**
- **Compliance**

Operational Data

Enrollment: April 22, 2010					
Grade	Actual	Financial Goal	Goal Met?	Charter Goal	Goal Met?
K	48	48		41	
1	47	48		41	
2	47	48		41	
3	44	46		39	
4	33	33		28	
5	14	14		12	
Total	233	237	NO	201	YES

Attendance: April 22, 2010			
Grade	Actual	Goal	Goal Met?
K	92.0%	95.0%	
1	94.1%	95.0%	
2	93.5%	95.0%	
3	93.1%	95.0%	
4	93.3%	95.0%	
5	94.0%	95.0%	
Total	93.3%	95.0%	NO

In the early years, the board might also consider measures of **School Stability** in quantifiable terms, such as:

- Gauging student and teacher population stability
- Satisfaction surveys or intent to return.
- Financial stability.
- Effectiveness of organizational design.

Data Collection and Dashboard Advice

Data Management

It is critical to set up a well-designed system for managing student data from day one³⁷. The system should:

- Track everything (**attendance, student demographics, contact information, and test data**) in **one place**.
- Allow data to be **disaggregated** in different ways.
- Allow for creating reports for the board, as well as **BEDS, NYSED, donors, and internal use**.

- Be scalable to manage data for the entire student body when the school reaches capacity (think five years ahead).
- Tracking students by **OSIS number** can ease compatibility with ATS.
- **Microsoft Sharepoint** is noted as a user-friendly, low-tech option for tracking.

General Dashboard Guidance

Keep the dashboard a highly effective tool by following this advice:

- **Focus on outputs** (e.g., student assessment data and goal attainment) rather than inputs that are commonly believed to affect student achievement.
- Try to keep the dashboard to **one page**.
- Use it as a tool for **decision-making and steering**.
- Make sure it is **organic**.

Working with an EMO/CMO

When contracting with an EMO (Education Management Organization) or CMO (Charter Management Organization), the board must have access to both **academic and operational data**. The board may want to create a dashboard to track areas that have been delegated to the partner organization. It's important not to lose focus on academics and to get drill-down data from the EMO/CMO.

Communication and collaboration are essential.

Key Lessons

- **Carefully craft** your charter goals and choose your assessments and benchmarks.
- **Understand** your assessments and how terms like **growth, progress, and value-add** are defined.
- Different indicators can tell different stories; know which ones **matter most** to your school.
- Learn how to have these data conversations with your **authorizer**.
- Be aware that outside parties, such as those evaluating the **NYS Test and Progress Report**, will also evaluate you, and their definition of success can be a **moving target**.