

Charter Board Partners' Top 10 Reasons To Join a Charter School Board

We read a great [post by Joan Garry](#) listing her top ten reasons for joining a non-profit board. We agreed with everything on her list and it inspired us to craft our own “top ten.” Our list captures our current thinking around why you should join the board of a public charter school, and we hope it inspires you to consider this important civic work. If these points speak to you, dash off to www.charterboards.org to complete an application and join our network of high quality, talented charter school board candidates.

Here it goes!

10. NO PAINTBRUSH REQUIRED – It’s fun to participate in a spruce-up event at a local school for one day. It really is. We are big believers in the importance of this kind of one-shot, hands-on service, and we appreciate that so many companies and individuals pitch in to help. But let’s be honest, you are no Michelangelo. You’re not even Benjamin Moore. Another way to support a local school, and make a difference that lasts much longer than a coat of paint, is by becoming a long-term skilled volunteer. You can put your actual expertise to good use as a valued member of the board of a charter school for a two- or three-year term.

9. YOU ROCK AT WHAT YOU DO – You are the best of the best in your field, your networks, and your community, and charter schools need you. A charter school is a school first, but as a registered, stand-alone 501(c)3, it’s also a business. In addition to having the very best teachers and providing a great education, schools need to acquire facilities, hire vendors, manage a large budget, fundraise, retain top talent, comply with a variety of laws, engage the community, and keep the lights on. If you are at the top of your game, you can help make sure that the school has sound business operations – because even the best school, with the best teachers, cannot survive if it’s not run effectively.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – Serving on a board is a great way to connect with the local community. Public schools are an integral part of their communities, whether they draw students only from the surrounding neighborhood or not. Serving on a board means you will get to know the children and families that make up the fabric of the school community, which gives you access to a whole new network of people to love and learn from, and gives you a front row seat to how schools change the lives of children every day. You will also be a great ambassador as the school collaborates with community groups and local businesses.

7. YOU HAD A GREAT TEACHER – You probably remember that one teacher who really made a difference in your life. The one who helped you conquer calculus, encouraged you to take an AP course, influenced your career choice, or wrote a superb reference letter for your business school application. Honor that person in the most directly relevant way possible: by actively supporting public education with your talents and making sure every child in that school has a great teacher.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY IS IMPORTANT – Charter schools, like other public schools, have multimillion-dollar budgets. As a board member you are part of the team that ensures

those tax dollars are spent wisely and in the best interest of kids. And you are there to ask the hard questions and review the information that indicates whether the school is in fact providing a top-notch education to students. One of the distinguishing features of public charter schools is that if they fail to provide a great education, they can be closed or rebooted much more readily than traditional public schools. This kind of accountability relies on the oversight of a strong and vigilant board that insists on quality and results, with no excuses.

5. CONNECT STUDENTS WITH YOUR PASSION – If you are passionate about something, there may be a school devoted to it. It could be learning a second language, protecting the environment, developing a love of the law, or finding success and enjoyment through the arts. Chances are, there's a school with that as a focus – imagine how exciting it would be to serve on the board of that school and see hundreds of students fall in love with the same passion that captivated you.

4. YOU'RE AN ADVOCATE – If you are quick to fire off a letter to a legislator, sign a petition or send a check to the Sierra Club, then a charter school needs you. Every school needs good people speaking up on its behalf, and the broader movement to help ensure that every single child has the chance to attend a great school does too. No marching required—giving your time and voicing your support for equity and quality in education is a powerful signal to decision-makers that you think kids matter.

3. MEET PEOPLE – That's right, meet people. Not in a match.com type of way, but serving on a board connects you with people who share your interest in community service and education, many of whom you might not have met in any other way. It's a great way to build your personal and professional networks. If you find love, hey, that's great too!

2. HEARTSTRINGS – Someone you love is a teacher. Maybe you come from a family of educators. Board service could be your labor of love, a way to honor these educators in your own life. Just because you chose a different career path, doesn't mean you can't get involved in education. You've heard all of their stories and you know this is tough but important work. Join them.

1. YOU CARE ABOUT KIDS – Not just your kids or your nieces and nephews, but ALL kids. And, you know that all kids deserve a great education. Wouldn't it be great if every single school was a school you would choose to send your kids to? Make that happen. By serving on a board, you can be part of the team that turns that dream into reality.

Inspired? We hope so. [Join us!](#)