

CHARTER SCHOOLS



CREATING EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARDS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board was created by *Frank Martinelli*, president of the Center for Public Skills Training in Milwaukee. He has provided training and management assistance to nonprofit organizations and public agencies since 1976. Frank has a special interest in charter school start-ups by nonprofit youth and family serving organizations and has assisted in the planning of three such charter schools in Milwaukee.

Areas of expertise include volunteer management, strategic planning facilitation, designing and leading high priority meetings and conferences, board and staff retreats, and forging community collaborations and alliances. Frank is also a member of the faculty of The Learning Institute, a national joint venture of the Society for Nonprofit Organizations, United Way of America, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension designed to deliver training through a range of emerging technologies.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

CREATING EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARDS

TWELVE CHALLENGES



1. BUILDING THE FOUNDATION



2. IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING BOARD MEMBERS



3. ORIENTING AND TRAINING BOARD MEMBERS



4. MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS



5. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THINKING



6. CARRYING OUT LEGAL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES



7. DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE BOARD-STAFF RELATIONS



8. DEVELOPING FRUITFUL BOARD-COMMUNITY/PARENT RELATIONS



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11. FOSTERING FUND-RAISING



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INTRODUCTION

The ability of a charter school to carry out its mission depends heavily upon the strength of its governing board. An effective board provides strategic direction for the school, chooses and nurtures strong school leaders, and ensures the school's financial and legal soundness. For a charter school to succeed, it must form a board that is committed to the school's mission, possesses substantial leadership skills and expertise, sets policy that guides the school's work, and evaluates both the school and itself with an eye toward continuous improvement.

Assembling and mobilizing a group of individuals to carry out these responsibilities is a daunting task, requiring commitment, careful planning, and wisdom. In response -- by building on the best of the nonprofit, district, charter and private school governance training and resources -- the Charter Friends National Network offers *Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board*, written by Frank Martinelli, with the Center for Public Skills Training in Milwaukee,

Wisconsin. Created with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the guidebook is designed to help prepare and sustain board members to lead an autonomous public school.

The much more extensive guidebook, available online at

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/, details governance principles and concepts, models of best practice, and essential resources. This overview of the larger guidebook summarizes twelve critical challenges that charter school developers must meet to build and maintain an effective charter school board. Following each challenge is a set of issues that boards may encounter along the way, and a discussion of possible strategies. At the conclusion of the discussion of each challenge is a list of some of the numerous resources available in the larger online guidebook and elsewhere.



CHALLENGE 1: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

An effective governance model requires that everyone is clear and in agreement about their roles and responsibilities. With that in mind, the board developer's initial challenge is to clearly define the board's roles, responsibilities and philosophy of governance.



ISSUES

Charter schools have been plagued by a variety of fundamental governance problems, including: ¹

- meddlesome boards who become entangled with issues normally entrusted to administrators or teachers
- unstable leadership by founders who prove better at articulating a vision than at actually running a school
- internal dissension, often exacerbated by insufficiently clear division of roles and responsibilities
- lack of professional competence in financial, managerial, or administrative areas,
- difficulty in balancing input from various stakeholder groups, and
- exhausting volunteers (including boardmembers) by expecting too much of them.



STRATEGIES

Many of these problems arise when there is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities between the board and staff of the charter school. However, all of these problems are preventable. Several steps can be initiated early in the board-building process to institute effective board practices.

Be clear and in agreement about roles and responsibilities.

An effective governance model requires clear and detailed descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the board, its committees, its officers, and staff. The National Center For Nonprofit Boards has developed the following list of the basic roles and responsibilities of a nonprofit board of directors which can serve as a guide for charter school governing boards as well: ²



¹ Grignano, Chenzie, **Guidance for Charter School Operators**, Charter Schools Project, Duquesne University, 1999.

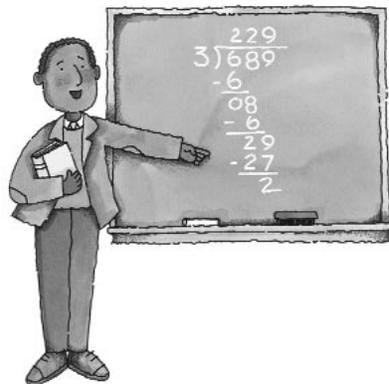
² Ingram, Richard T., **Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.

- determine the charter school's mission and purpose
- select the charter school administrator
- support the charter school administrator and review his or her performance
- ensure effective organizational planning
- ensure adequate resources
- manage resources effectively
- determine and monitor the charter school's programs and services
- enhance the charter school's public image, and
- assess its own performance.

Create a strategic plan for growth in school and board development.

Charter school developers will need to plan for the orderly transition from the emerging or planning stage — when volunteer founders do most of the work — to the growth or operational stage of development — when founders take on new roles as staff, teachers and/or board members. According to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) Charter Starters Leadership Training Academy, the following are some questions that are important to consider: ³

- What is the relationship between founders, the board, and day-to-day operators?
- Do all the founders want to remain involved in the school and if so, do they want to serve on the governing board, as non-board school volunteers, or as members of the paid staff?
- How will new board members be recruited as some or all founders leave the governing board in the future?
- What skills and areas of expertise are needed in different stages of development?
- Will the board be able to maintain the workload of a committee of the whole or will the board need to establish standing committees as the school grows?
- How will the board transition from operational/managerial tasks to governance, policy and strategic planning?



³ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), *Charter Starters Leadership Training Academy Workbook*, 1999. Module 4: Management and Governance, 1999. Visit www.nwrel.org.



Learn More about Building the Foundation

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Sample Articles Of Incorporation For Charter Schools That Are Separately Incorporated Nonprofit Organizations

Bylaws Checklist

Sample Bylaws

Charter School Board Governance Framework Chart

The Annual Board Development Sequence Chart

Additional Resources for Defining Board Roles, Responsibilities, and Governance Philosophy

Carver, John, **Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations**. Jossey-Bass, 1990.

Carver, John, **Reinventing your Board. A Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance**. Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Chait, Richard, **How to Help Your Board Govern More and Manage Less**. National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1994.

Gardner, Laurie and Premack, Eric, **Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition, Charter Schools Development Center**, 1999. [Section 1 includes a selection of sample foundation documents (bylaws and articles of incorporation that can be adapted to meet your charter school's specific needs).]

Ingram, Richard T., **Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.

Mathiasen, Karl, **Board Passages: Three Key Stages in a Nonprofit Board's Life-cycle**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards. (This publication is probably the only one that focuses in detail on how to understand, anticipate and manage Founder's Syndrome.)

Zeitlin, Kim Arthur, and Dorn, Susan E., **The Nonprofit Board's Guide to Bylaws: Creating a Framework for Effective Governance**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards. (This publication contains advice on the pros and cons of common bylaw language, a checklist of elements bylaws should contain as well as sample language. A diskette is available with 11 complete sample bylaws that can be easily adapted to meet your needs.)



CHALLENGE 2: IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING BOARD MEMBERS

The next challenge that faces charter school board developers is determining how to recruit board members who are committed to the school and possess the skills, knowledge and other attributes needed in order for the board to effectively carry out its responsibilities.



ISSUES

Most board performance problems can be traced to the casual or haphazard way that some charter schools go about recruiting, selecting and orienting board members. Common problems include:

- a temporary nominating committee that often relies on whoever is available from a relatively closed "circle of friends and supporters" already known to the organization or the committee members, and
- a narrow and ad hoc recruitment process which can result in a quickly assembled board that lacks diversity and balance in the critical areas of finance, management, and administration.



STRATEGIES

Having an effective board recruitment and nominations process in place is the first, and by far the most important, board development practice. While it is time-consuming, instituting a recruitment and nominations process from the start, rather than approaching the task as an ad hoc activity, will result in a more accurate assessment of the charter

school's board leadership needs, ensure involvement from the best qualified individuals to fill those board leadership needs, and create a solid orientation process for new board members.

The development of an effective recruitment and nominations process could take the following course:

1. Establish a board development committee.
2. Prepare for active board member recruitment.
3. Develop a profile of the current charter school board.
4. Determine strategies to build board diversity.
5. Develop an initial list of prospective board members.
6. Contact top recruiting prospects.
7. Schedule and conduct orientation sessions with prospective board members.
8. Select new members to the board.





Learn More about Identifying and Recruiting Board Members

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Invitation Letter And Packet

Position Descriptions For Individual Board Members

Prospective Board Member Application Form

Board Profile Worksheets

Additional Resources for Board Recruitment

Board Member Orientation. Published by Aspen Publishers, Inc. (In spite of the title, this publication includes a number of sample forms and documents useful in every step of the board recruitment process. As an added feature, all of the forms and worksheets in the manual are available on a diskette.)

Building Board Diversity, by Jennifer M. Rutledge. Published by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards. (This publication provides a comprehensive approach to developing and implementing a plan to build a board that is more diverse and inclusive. One of the few resources of its kind, it includes a number of worksheets.)



ISSUES

Because charter school board members are likely to come to their positions with very different perspectives on their roles and responsibilities, as well as the mission, vision, major goals, and strategies of the charter school, the lack of an effective orientation and training program can cause several problems, including:

- internal dissension and division of the board into various factions
- inability of new board members to fully function in their roles
- lack of productivity, and
- a general sense of personal dissatisfaction.



STRATEGIES

Develop a long-term orientation strategy.

There must be a commitment to developing a well-informed board, one with the knowledge needed to lead an effective charter school. Providing new board members with the information they need to perform effectively is the next critical step in developing strong leadership for the charter school.

Consider developing a long-term orientation strategy that is thorough, provided in a timely manner, and follows the board members from the recruitment stage, through the first three months, and beyond.

CHALLENGE 3: ORIENTING AND TRAINING BOARD MEMBERS

A central challenge of governance is to help charter school board members acquire the skills and knowledge they need to be effective leaders and decision-makers.

Assess the orientation and training needs of board members.

In order to learn what new board members really need from the orientation and training program, past and current board members can be asked the following question: "What do you know now that you wish you had known when you first joined the board?" Their responses can be used to develop the core curriculum.

Create a board member manual.

The written board member manual is an indispensable tool in the orientation and training of board members — both current and new. The board manual is never a substitute for face-to-face interaction, but without it, effective orientation and training is made much more difficult. The board manual will be a reference used in new board member orientation, as well as ongoing board training and education, and it will help to ensure efficient organization and access to these materials.

Develop a variety of orientation/training strategies.

New board member orientation and ongoing board education training programs are obvious ways to educate your board members. However, you may want to consider incorporating training into each board meeting, providing mini-seminars on special interest topics, helping set up study groups, and providing access to publications and conferences.





Learn More about Orienting and Training Board Members

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Sample Board of Directors Handbook Table of Contents

Sample Board Member Orientation Outline

Parliamentary Procedure Overview

Additional Resources for Board Orientation and Training

Board Member Orientation. Published by Aspen Publishers, Inc. (This publication includes a number of sample forms and documents useful in every step of the board orientation process. As an added feature, all of the forms and worksheets in the manual are available on a Macintosh and IBM compatible diskette.)

How Do We Keep Board Members Informed? National Center for Nonprofit Boards. Go to: www.ncnb.org. Click on "Frequently Asked Questions".



CHALLENGE 4:

MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

As the board of an independent public school (in many cases also a separately incorporated nonprofit organization) the charter school board is the source of all authority – much of it delegated to others – and has the ultimate responsibility as a result. Therefore it is critical to the success of the charter school that the board makes effective decisions.



ISSUES

A board that meets monthly for two hours has only 24 hours a year in which to make a number of major decisions and still have time to address unforeseen issues and challenges. Without a framework for making decisions, problems can often arise, including:

- confusion and lack of agreement about who decides what
- lack of ownership of tasks, and
- time-consuming duplication of efforts.



STRATEGIES

There are several tools that can be used to increase the effectiveness of board decision-making.

Create a board policy manual.

Staff members need to be clear about what they are supposed to implement and board members should not have to reinvent similar policies over and over again. Therefore, board policies should be kept organized and accessible. For this reason, it is advisable to have a written board policy manual in which all the policies the board adopts are maintained.

Develop a decision-making flowchart.

It will be very helpful to have a written description of the decision-making process the board intends to use. This approach reflects clarity about who is responsible for what. The flowchart offers visual details about where issues may originate from, where issues can be delegated to, how issues are to be dealt with, and how actions and recommendations are to be made.

Use a decision matrix.

The purpose of a decision matrix is to define the authority and decision-making roles and responsibilities of the board clearly in relation to the authority and decision-making roles and responsibilities of other groups and constituencies within the charter school. The matrix identifies decisions needing to be made in a number of broad categories such as: school goals, curriculum and instruction, personnel, staff development, communication, budget, assessment and evaluation, record-keeping, and school culture. For each of these decision categories, the matrix then specifies: the decision to be made; who should decide; who should recommend; who should be solicited for input; who should be informed; and which decision-making process should be followed.



Use an executive committee to help facilitate decision-making.

Another critical element in effective decision-making is a functioning executive committee. The executive committee facilitates effective decision-making by the full board by playing the following three critical roles: planning the agenda of board meetings, making decisions on behalf of the full board, and serving as a communication link with other members of the board.

Utilize consent agendas.

To expedite business at a charter school board meeting, the board can approve the use of a consent agenda that includes those items considered to be routine in nature. Full information about these items should be provided to the board in advance in the board packet and any questions or concerns can be directed to the makers of the motions and answered prior to the meeting. This process allows thorough examination of routine items without using up precious board meeting time. Any item that appears on the consent agenda may be removed from the consent agenda by a member of the board. The remaining items will be voted on by a single motion.

Create an annual calendar of major board decisions.

Another tool that can help charter school boards maintain their focus on governance policy and critical emerging issues is an annual calendar of major decisions. Major decisions (such as setting the annual budget, setting goals, and selection of new board members) can be scheduled on an annual basis, allowing other decisions and work to be scheduled in a timely manner. This can also facilitate decision-making by the board's committees and help the charter school administrator organize his or her priorities.

Display an organizational dashboard.

Another tool that can be used to increase the effectiveness of board decision-making is the "organizational dashboard."⁴ The dashboard displays up-to-date information about key success factors of the charter school – the most essential areas of performance. Once the critical success factors have been identified, the board and the charter school administrator (and other key staff) can then propose and consider strategic performance indicators – the qualitative and quantitative data that most accurately measure and convey the critical areas of performance. As the "dashboard" metaphor implies, the board

can regularly refer to the organizational dashboard for information about how well the school is doing relative to its critical success factors. In this way, corrective action can be taken before – not during or after – a crisis erupts.

Provide board members with a board book and other timely communications.

An effective way to provide board members with needed information in a timely manner is through a written "board book" or board member packet that goes out before board meetings. The book may include outlines of significant developments, an updated copy of the organizational dashboard, an agenda, minutes from other meetings, executive summaries of accompanying documents, etc. In addition, consider using your website and email for distributing information between board meetings.

⁴ Chait, Richard, Holland, Thomas, and Taylor, Barbara, *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards*, Oryz Press, 1996.





Learn More about Making Effective Decisions

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Flow Chart: How Board Decisions Are Made
Executive Committee/Board Meeting Planning Form
Questions Before Making Sound Decisions
Sample Board Meeting Agenda
Decision-making Matrix
Board Communication Plan
Policy Development Steps
Board Meeting Evaluation Form
Sample Board Operations Calendar

Additional Resources for Board Decision-making and Meetings

Sample Board Policies in Critical Areas: *conflict of interest, enrollment, etc.*
See the following websites:

- Independent Schools Association of the Central States at www.isacs.org; click on "Monographs", then scroll down and click on " Board of Trustees" and "Business Operations" for sample policies.
- Also see Minnesota Council of Nonprofits management resources at <http://www.mncn.org/manage.htm#2>.
- Also see the Free Management Library of The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits (MAP) at <http://www.mapnp.org/library/boards/boards.htm#anchor1322914>.

Fletcher, Kathleen, The Policy Sampler, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 2000. Contains a diskette with over 70 policies covering critical areas such as conflict of interest, grievances, sexual harassment, nepotism, confidentiality and more. Comes with printed user guide.

Gardner, Laurie, Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition, Charter Schools Development Center, 1999. (Section 2 includes a good selection of sample policies that can be adapted to meet your charter school's specific needs.)

Smoley, Eugene, Effective School Boards, Jossey-Bass, 1999.



ISSUES

There are a number of factors that prevent boards from thinking and planning strategically. The following factors can serve as barriers to visionary charter school board leadership:

- shortage of time
- avoidance of risk-taking
- micro-management
- lack of knowledge in an increasingly complex world, and
- lack of clarity about board-staff roles and responsibilities.



STRATEGIES

There are several strategies that you can employ to help your board adopt a visionary leadership style.

Focus on the ultimate ends of the organization.

Board members should concentrate on the charter school's ultimate ends rather than the day-to-day means.⁵ Board members should focus on the mission, vision, goals and strategies contained in the strategic plan, leaving the daily management to the staff and charter school administrator.

Create a long-range plan for the development of future board leadership.

In contrast to the typical short-term recruitment process that focuses narrowly on filling anticipated charter school board vacancies for the current year only, boards need a long-range plan for developing future leadership. Such a long-term plan centers on the following questions: Who will be serving on and leading the board over the next three years? What is our plan to scout board leadership talent for the future?

CHALLENGE 5

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THINKING

The charter school board has a critical role to play in strategic planning. Charter school board developers need to determine how the board can organize itself in order to function as an effective, future-focused leadership team.

Develop a shared vision of the organization's future.

A key strategic planning question for the board is: "If we could create the charter school of our dreams that will have the impact we most desire, what would that look like?" The board's answer to this question captures the organization's vision.

Keep up with the rapid pace of change.

Another strategy for nurturing visionary leadership is to help the board keep up with the rapid pace of change. Provide information that helps the board think about these key questions: What external changes and trends will have the greatest impact over the next three to five years on the charter school and the children and families it serves? How can the charter school effectively respond to these changes and trends? How are other schools and organizations serving youth responding to these changes and trends?

Stay in touch with the changing needs of your "customers."

The fifth strategy for transforming the leadership style of the board is to provide members with information to enable them to stay in touch with the changing needs of children and families served by the charter school – now and in the future. Key questions include: What do our constituents, primarily children and their families enrolled in the charter school, think of the organization? What is their perception or image of the charter school? What are the most important future needs and service expectations of the charter school on the part of our constituents?

⁵ Carver, John, *Boards That Make a Difference*, 2nd Ed., Jossey-Bass, 1997.





Learn More about Strategic Planning and Thinking

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Description of Strategic Planning Model
Strategic Planning Committee Description
Strategic Planning Information Gathering Worksheets
Critical Issue Worksheet
Worksheet: Foremost Critical Issues Facing the Charter School
Sample Strategic Planning Timetables

Additional Resources for Strategic Planning

Allison, Michael, and Kaye, Jude, Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997.

Barry, Bryan W., Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations, Revised, Saint Paul, Minnesota: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1997.

Bryson, John M., and Alston, Farnum K., Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Planning, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.

Bryson, John M., Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations, Revised, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.

Hundley DeKuyper, Mary, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998. (Especially useful is Chapter 4 - "Developing a Shared Vision and Planning Strategically".)

McNamara, Carter, PhD, Facilitator's Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning, Minneapolis, Minnesota: The Management Assistance Program, 1997.

O'Connor, Judith, The Planning Committee: Shaping Your Future, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.



CHALLENGE 6

CARRYING OUT LEGAL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

All charter school developers and operators face complex legal issues in starting and running their schools. Charter board developers need to learn the best possible ways for the charter school board to carry out its legal and financial oversight responsibilities.



ISSUES

As a relatively new phenomenon, charter schools involve legal requirements and responsibilities which not only differ widely from state to state, but which may also change over time. The following are just some of the issues that can mire boards into prolonged bouts of putting out fires, being reactive, rather than forward-thinking and proactive:

- conflicts of interest
- uncertainty regarding whether an appropriate education is being provided to all students (especially special education children), and
- unresolved fiduciary and legal matters.

Charter schools are operating under intense public scrutiny. Powerful forces opposed to charter schools continue to raise questions about the legitimacy of the movement, making it critical for charter school boards to pay special attention to carrying out their legal and financial responsibilities.



STRATEGIES

Educate board members about their legal and financial responsibilities. Board members of the charter school are the ethical, legal and financial stewards

of the school. As such, the board must actively exercise oversight functions in four governance areas: corporate law, internal policies, and procedures/contracts with third parties; local, state, and federal laws/regulations; the charter school's financial resources, facilities, and equipment; and risk management. Board members must be well-informed about all four areas, know how to monitor the organization's financial position, and understand their roles versus board and committee roles in the oversight responsibilities.

Implement a conflict of interest policy. When the personal or professional concerns of a board member or a staff member affect his or her ability to put the welfare of the charter school before personal benefit, a conflict of interest exists. The charter school board should institute a system of checks and balances to circumvent actual or potential conflict of interest, beginning with well-defined operating policies on all matters that might lead to conflict. Most importantly, create a carefully written conflict of interest policy that includes three essential elements: full disclosure; board member abstention from discussion and voting; and, staff member abstention from decision-making.



Implement a risk management process.

Risk management is a way to minimize uncertainty by identifying real and potential risks (such as tax penalties, malpractice, and injury) facing the charter school, and taking steps to manage them. The structure of the risk management process consists of the following five steps: identifying potential risks; analyzing identified risks; selecting the most suitable techniques for eliminating or reducing identified risks; implementing the selected techniques; and, monitoring the effectiveness of the techniques, modifying as necessary.

Arrange for regular financial audits.

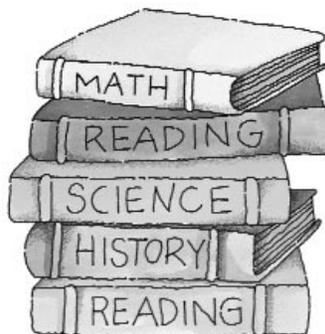
To ensure that there is progress in achieving the board's financial goals, that the school is adhering to sound financial policies, that the resources of the school's resources are safeguarded, and that the school is complying with regulatory provisions, the board should arrange for a financial audit to be conducted by a licensed independent auditing firm at least once annually or as otherwise required.

Develop special education policies prior to opening the school.

Charter school boards have a responsibility to ensure that schools receive the funding, information, and support systems to create special education programs and services. Some of the issues needing to be addressed by policies developed by the board include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. What is the philosophy of the school toward students with disabilities?
2. How will staff identify and serve students with special needs?
3. Who is responsible for serving students with disabilities?
4. What steps must charter schools take to ensure that appropriate services are provided to students with low-incidence disabilities?
5. Who pays for the services? How will transportation needs be met?
6. What personnel certification and licensure issues need to be considered?
7. Can charter schools serve only students with special needs? ⁶

⁶ Lange, Cheryl M., *Charter Schools And Special Education: A Handbook*.



Learn More about Carrying Out Legal and Financial Responsibilities

Full Resource Guide
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Conflict of Interest Policy Samples

Board Member Annual Disclosure Statement Concerning Possible Conflict Of Interest

Sample Board Confidentiality Policy

Sample Board Liability Questionnaire

Additional Resources for Understanding Board Legal and Financial Issues

*Babcock, George and Tremper, Charles, **The Nonprofit Boards' Role in Risk Management: More Than Buying Insurance**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.*

*Dalsimer, John Paul, **Understanding Nonprofit Financial Statements: A Primer for Board Members**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.*

*DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, **Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards**, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998.*

*Gardner, Laurie, **Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition**, Charter Schools Development Center, 1999.*

*Herman, Melanie L., and White, Leslie T., **Leaving Nothing to Chance: Achieving Board Accountability through Risk Management**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards and Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1999.*

*Johnson, Sandra L., **The Audit Committee: Key to Financial Accountability in Nonprofit Organizations**, The National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1995.*

*Kurtz, Daniel L., **How to Manage Conflict of Interest: a Guide for Nonprofit Boards**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1995.*

*Lange, Cheryl M., **Charter Schools And Special Education: A Handbook**.
Go to: http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/gb/sped.htm.*

*Leifer, Jacqueline C., Glomb, Michael B., **The Legal Obligations of Nonprofit Boards: A Workbook for Board Members**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1997.*

US Charter Schools Website contains legal issues page and links to other resources and sample documents at http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/legal.htm.

US Department of Education Website contains additional information and resources on special education at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA/>.

CHALLENGE 7

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE BOARD-STAFF RELATIONS

The selection and support of the charter school administrator is one of the most critical roles and responsibilities of the board. With that in mind, charter school board developers must help the board build and maintain an effective, mutually supportive working relationship with the charter school administrator.

Create a chart detailing by major areas of organizational decision-making (finance, planning, personnel, etc.) the specific responsibilities of the administrator and the board of directors.

Negotiate a communication plan between the board and administration about how much information is desired, the best ways to share information, and in general, how to maintain effective communication with each other.

Develop an administrator performance review process that evaluates the administrator on negotiated performance objectives, and that is adapted to meet the specific needs of the school and your particular governance structure.

Develop conflict resolution policies which include details about what situations require professional mediation and when conflict situations should be delegated to personnel or executive committees.



ISSUES

Common problems in the area of board-staff relations include:

- conflicts over responsibilities
- board member perceptions that the charter school administrator is over-stepping his or her authority
- staff withholding information from the board
- administrator perception that the board is not doing enough, and
- a micro-managing board.



STRATEGIES

There are a number of tools and practices that can be used to strengthen the relationship between the board and the administrator.

Implement an effective hiring/selection process for the charter school administrator.

Create written job descriptions for board members and the administrator, detailing position requirements and responsibilities.



Learn More about Developing Effective Board-Staff Relations

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Division of Roles between Board and Administrator

Board And Staff Roles Worksheet

Sample Job Descriptions For The Administrator

EXCEL Principal Evaluation Form

Principal Evaluation Form

Board Staff Time And Attention Graph

Should Staff Serve on the Board?

Additional Resources for Building Board-Staff Relations

Pierson, Jane, and Mintz, Joshua, Assessment of the Chief Executive, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999. Visit www.ncnb.org. (This publication includes a diskette containing an assessment tool for annual reviews.)



CHALLENGE 8

DEVELOPING FRUITFUL BOARD-COMMUNITY/PARENT RELATIONS

The eighth challenge focuses on the board forging strong relationships with parents and community members. The charter school board can play a critical role in developing partnerships and collaborations that tap the resources of the community, enhancing the school's capacity to meet the educational needs of its children.



ISSUES

Common barriers to healthy community/parent and board relationships include:

- board members and school staff who feel so overwhelmed by the day-to-day tasks of educating children that they overlook the value of involving families and community
- parents who may not be used to being active participants in their children's schools, and
- community members who may be unaware of a charter school's mission and educational programs and the important role that they can play in efforts to successfully educate the community's children.

Listen to parents and community members.

Send out surveys to solicit input before major policy decisions, host regular informal opportunities to meet and hear concerns, convene a series of community forums to discuss challenges to the charter school, write personalized letters to major donors, and organize personal interviews with leading family service agencies to develop collaborative programs.

Use advisory groups of parents and community members.

Groups of parents and community members can be convened to help raise money, serve as advocates for the charter school to the community, provide feedback from the community, and provide a means for involving people who are willing to give technical assistance.

Develop a community planning process for raising student achievement.

Use engagement strategies for involving parents and the community in planning several key student achievement-related areas (assessment process, student standards, etc.). Strategies might include holding community forums to discuss what standards should be set for your students and including community members in regular reevaluation of the school's student achievement vision.



STRATEGIES

Building a relationship with parents and community is a two-way street. The board will first need to listen to parents and the community, and communicate and report to them about the charter school. There are several activities that board members can participate in to promote parent involvement and community collaboration. Activities include:





Learn More about Developing Fruitful Board- Community/Parent Relations

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Model Parent/Family Involvement Policy
Plan for Parent and Family Involvement
Sample Advisory Committee Description
Sample Parent Involvement Policy
Why The Board Should Consider Volunteer Issues

Additional Resources for Building Parent and Community Relations

Arsenault, Jane, Forging Nonprofit Alliances, Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Axelrod, Nancy R., Creating and Renewing Advisory Boards: Strategies for Success, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1990.

Calfee, Carol, Wittwer, Frank, and Meredith, Mimi, Building a Full-service School: a Step-by-step Guide, Jossey-Bass, 1998. (This publication includes diskettes with numerous planning forms and worksheets)

Creating Family Friendly Charter Schools Guidebook, another Making Connections technical assistance product offered by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Charter Friends National Network. Visit www.uscharterschools.org/gb/familyfriendly/

Dryfoos, Joy G. Full-service Schools, Jossey-Bass, 1984.

Leadership for Student Achievement: A Board of Education Framework (Go to: www.nsba.org. Click on "Key Work of School Boards").

National Association of Partners in Education, Inc. Business And Education: a Practical Guide to Creating and Managing Business/Education Partnerships, 1990.

National Association of Partners in Education, Inc., Organizing and Managing School Volunteer Programs, 1987.

PTA Family Involvement Standards, Go to <http://www.pta.org/programs/pfistand.htm#Research>

Rackham, Neil, Friedman, Lawrence, and, Ruff, Richard, Getting Partnering Right, McGraw-Hill, 1996.

Sample Contracts with Parents (US Charter Schools website at http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/sd/menu.htm.)

Stern, Gary J., Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations: Mobilize People for Marketing Success, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1997.

The National Assembly, The Community Collaboration Manual, The National Assembly, 1993.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools, 1996.

Winer, Michael and Ray, Karen, Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1992.



CHALLENGE 9

ENCOURAGING BOARD MEMBER MOTIVATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Encouraging long-term commitment and maintaining high-performance of charter school board members can be an ongoing challenge. Charter school board developers need to consider how the charter school board can create an environment that fosters and maintains a high level of board member motivation and accountability.



ISSUES

Board members offer their time, skills, knowledge, energy, and commitment. But their service is part of a larger mutually beneficial relationship as they receive an opportunity to serve an organization they believe in, a chance to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge, an opportunity to be around people that share the same values, and the opportunity to forge strong personal and professional connections. Several problems may result if this two-way transaction breaks down including:

- board members may stop contributing
- board actions and board member values may become misaligned, and
- a general sense of dissatisfaction on the board.



STRATEGIES

There are several tools that can be utilized to maintain and increase board member commitment and performance.

Align the board members with the organization.

Once again, the key to motivation and accountability has its roots in the early nominations and recruitment process — when interviewing prospective board members, it is important that there is a solid initial match between the board member and the organization. Ask questions that help you understand candidates' interests and motivations in serving as a board member of your school. Be sure that they understand the challenges and requirements of board service, and help them determine if service on the board will meet their needs and align with their interests, values, and beliefs.

Develop an ongoing recognition program.

Recognition of board members is one of the most powerful motivational strategies to encourage commitment and high-performance in the future, and is well worth the extra time and effort. Show appreciation often and in informal and formal ways. Make it appropriate to performance, meaningful, public, and fun. Recognition can take place in many forms — notes, emails, plaques, awards, prizes, etc.

Use board members' skills and add to their knowledge base.

Involve board members in areas where they feel they can use their skills and knowledge and add real value. Make training opportunities available to board members to increase skills and knowledge.

Put into place an annual board self-evaluation program.

Developing a process that allows the board to step back and look at itself will provide feedback on individual and group performance, and help develop corrective action strategies. There are several self-evaluation tools that are ready-made, or you can develop your own self-evaluation process.

Develop individual accountability contracts.

Determine strategies for holding board members accountable for attendance, contribution of expertise, willingness to make constructive comments during meetings, and representation of the charter school board in the broader community.





Learn More about Encouraging Board Member Motivation and Accountability

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Board Self-evaluation Questionnaire

Individual Board Member Self-Review Form

Board Leadership Succession Process

Additional Resources for Board Member Motivation and Accountability

Wolfe, Rebecca Luhn, Systematic Succession Planning, Crisp Publications, 1996.



CHALLENGE 10

CREATING EFFECTIVE COMMITTEES

Committees are indispensable – they do the bulk of the work of the charter school board, freeing the full board for attention to matters like responding to emerging critical issues, strategic planning, major policy development and long range financial planning. Charter school board developers need to develop strategies for helping the board to design and maintain a committee structure that enhances its overall effectiveness.



ISSUES

Typically committees don't work well for many of the same reasons boards don't function effectively, including:

- the lack of long-term agendas
- reliance on poor or incomplete information, and
- the failure to distinguish between board level and operational issues.



STRATEGIES

Develop a written committee description.

To guide the committee chair and members, describe what is expected of each committee, offering details about the purpose of the committee, its composition and selection procedures, and its specific duties.

Nominate an effective committee chair.

Choose a board member who has relevant content knowledge and experience, and most importantly, has proven leadership and people skills.

Appoint members thoughtfully.

Committees should be recruited with the following question in mind: What tasks

are the committee responsible for and who among our members and supporters possesses the skills and experience needed to complete those tasks? As is the case with other forms of volunteer recruitment, every effort should be made to match the needs and requirements of the committee and the skills, knowledge and interests of prospective committee members.

Detail what the board expects from each committee.

Clearly communicate to all board committees what kind of reporting is expected and with what frequency.

Ensure well-run meetings.

Provide for meeting space that matches the needs of the group, and offer a written meeting agenda. Make sure that committee members receive an agenda in advance of meetings and have all of the information they will need to complete their work.

Provide training.

Schedule orientation for new committee members. Provide on-going training for committee members to help sharpen their skills.





Learn More about Creating Effective Committees

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Sample Committee Descriptions

Sample Committee Descriptions from ISACS and/or Mosaica Academy Charter School

Committee Meeting Evaluation Form

Committee Chair Job Description and Committee Member Job Description

Committee Preference Form (can be used with prospective board members during recruitment and annually with current board members)

Annual Board Committee Report

Sample Annual Board and Committee Calendar

Additional Resources for Effective Committees

Hirzy, Ellen Cochran, Nonprofit Board Committees, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1993. Visit www.ncnb.org. (The National Center for Nonprofit Boards also publishes booklets on individual committees including Audit, Executive, Nominating, Finance, Fund Development and Planning.)



CHALLENGE 11

FOSTERING FUND-RAISING

Plain and simple, many charter schools cannot meet their budgets by relying only on the per pupil allocation of public school financing. Other sources of funds must be tapped and among these, board driven fund-raising is one of the most important. Charter school developers need to help boards to play an effective and ongoing role in fundraising.



ISSUES

Common problems involving board members in school fund-raising include:

- few board members see themselves serving as fundraisers
- some perceive fund raising as personally distasteful, and
- others are unsure of their ability to raise funds and see it as someone else's duty.



STRATEGIES

Despite such hesitations and fear, the bottom line is that board members are critical to the fund raising success of the charter school.

There are several methods for ensuring successful board fund-raising. These include the following:

Make sure that every board member fully understands, accepts, and gives full attention to several principles:

- The board is ultimately responsible for attracting funding resources to ensure the financial viability of the charter school and its educational and support programs.
- Asking for and giving money are natural processes and need not be viewed as something to be avoided.

- Board members should help in preparing the "case," which is the rationale for supporting the charter school, and be able to explain the case persuasively to prospective donors.
- Every board member can do something useful to support the fundraising effort, employing his or her own skills and interests.
- Motivation of board members is the most critical and the most difficult task of all. Indifference will not raise money. Board members and staff need to be enthusiastic about the purpose of the charter school and show eagerness to be involved.

Create a strong fund development committee.

Develop a standing committee whose purpose is to plan, organize, and build successful fund-raising campaigns. Responsibilities include:

- Soliciting current board members. The goal of every fund development committee is to get 100 percent board participation.
- Recruiting fund-raising volunteers, and developing and implementing a program for orienting and soliciting funds from volunteers.



- Developing written plans, estimated budgets, and dollar goals for fund-raising programs to be reviewed and ratified by the charter school's board. These plans, reflecting a period of at least three years, should be reviewed semi-annually for appropriate payoffs and cost/benefit adjustments.
- Developing and conducting annual personal solicitation programs on behalf of the board to major donors, corporations and foundations that have been identified as potential supporters of the charter school.
- Organizing and conducting special event fund-raising programs.
- Assisting in development and maintenance of donor records and reporting procedures.
- Evaluating fund-raising successes at least once a year, and making appropriate recommendations to the board for maximizing results.

Offer training to support the board's fund-raising role.

Many board members don't want to raise money because they don't know how. This reluctance can be countered by simply asking them if they would be willing to try if the charter school offers them support and training. Often this will increase their confidence to get involved.

Create a fund development plan.

The financial development plan sets goals for the charter school's income, typically over a three-to five-year span, incorporating specific objectives and action steps that will help the charter school acquire and effectively use the financial resources it needs. Done properly, a good fund development plan will help the charter school take advantage of strengths, shore up weaknesses, open up opportunities and diffuse threats to the charter school's financial well-being.

Develop the fund-raising case.

An important responsibility of the board's fund development committee is to create a fund-raising case statement. The case looks at the charter school from the perspective of the supporter, setting forth the reasons why the donor/prospect should want to contribute to your charter school. Interpreting and explaining the mission of the organization, the case essentially answers the questions why, what, who, and how.





Learn More about Fostering Fund-raising

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Sample Fund-raising Committee Description

Sample Resource Development Committee

Additional Resources for Board Involvement in Fund-raising

Boschee, Jerr, Merging Money and Mission: A Board Member's Guide to Social Entrepreneurship, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1998.
The Foundation Center (<http://fdncenter.org>)

Brinckerhoff, Peter C., Financial Empowerment: More Money for Mission, John Wiley and Sons, 1996.

DeKuyper, Mary Hundley, Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards, National Association of Independent Schools, 1998. Take a look at Chapter 5. (www.nais.org)

Howe, Fisher, Fund Raising and the Nonprofit Board, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1998. (www.ncnb.org)

Klein, Kim, Grassroots Fundraising Journal, Chardon Press. (www.chardonpress.com)

National Association of Fund Raising Executives. (www.nsfre.org.)

Scanlon, Eugene A., Corporate and Foundation Fund Raising, Aspen Publishers, 1997.

School Endowment: Sample Policy Statement (See the following website: Independent Schools Association of the Central States at www.isacs.org; click on "Monographs", then scroll down and click on "Business Operations" for sample school endowment policies.)

Thorton, Grant, Planned Giving: A Board Member's Perspective, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999.



CHALLENGE 12

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Because so much is riding on the effectiveness of the board in carrying out its roles and responsibilities, it is important that the board spends time looking at its own performance in order to improve it. Charter school board developers will need to institute a self-assessment process to continuously help the board enhance its effectiveness.

ISSUES

Board assessment is a relatively new practice. Resistance to instituting a self-assessment process may occur because of two primary reasons:

- evaluation of governing boards' performance is not yet a common practice, and
- board members may feel threatened and judged.

STRATEGIES

Board members, even though they are volunteers, want their time and skills to be used well; they do not want them wasted. With the goal of board assessment as improvement, not judgment, boards will find great value in examining their performance, and the charter school will benefit greatly as well.

There are several tools available to assess a board's performance. A good assessment process is based on a set of standards or best practices that characterize effective board performance. The charter school board can develop its own written self-assessment tool or use off-the-shelf board assessment instruments, such as:

Board Self-assessment Questionnaire. This self-assessment is also available online at the Website of the National School Boards Association (www.nsba.org).

Self-Assessment For Nonprofit

Governing Boards. This assessment tool is available from the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (www.ncnb.org), and examines both individual board members and the performance of the board as a whole.

Charter School Board Of Directors Self-Assessment Template.

This assessment, available from the Charter School Development Center (www.cacharter-schools.org), reflects basic rules and responsibilities of the board as well as a number of explicit references to items like compliance with state and federal laws, instruction and assessment, and terms of the school's charter contract.

Board Development Assessment Tool.

This assessment is available from the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations.⁷ It includes sections on internal procedures, operational matters and financial management responsibilities. It also includes a sample work plan for implementing the results of a board self-assessment.

⁷ Lewis, Andrew, *Board Development Assessment Tool*, The Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations, 1999.





Learn More about Developing Effective Board Self-assessment

Full Resource Guide

www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Tools Available in Online Resource Guide

Principles of Good Practice for Member Schools
Board Governance Indicators Assessment
Board Development Assessment Tool
Visionary Board Leadership Assessment
Exit Interview with Departing Board Members
A Framework for Continuous Improvement of Charter School Board Effectiveness
Sample Recommendations for Board Improvement

Additional Resources for Board Self-assessment

Board Tune-ups. (The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) has prepared a collection of 13 assessment tools for the periodic tune-up of your charter school board. Topics include: Board Bylaws, Committees, Board Evaluation, Policies, Board Recruitment, Board Structure/Meeting Pattern, Contract for Administrator, Endowment Policies, Enrollment Contract, Enrollment Policies, Faculty Contracts, Administrator Evaluation, and Long-range Planning.

The approach suggested is to compare the "best practices" ISACS version to your school board's version of policies and practices. All of the documents cited are available for free by downloading from the ISACS website: Go to www.isacs.org then click on Monographs, scroll down to Board of Trustees, and choose the appropriate monograph title. Alternatively, school board chairs can order from ISACS the tune-up package of all the monographs for a charge of \$25.00, payable to ISACS.

Charter School Governance Toolkit, First Edition, *Charter Schools Development Center*, 1999.
[Section 4 includes a "Charter School Board of Directors Self Assessment Template."
(www.cacharterschools.org)]

Hughes, Sandra, **To Go Forward, Retreat**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1999. (This publication includes many practical suggestions and ideas for planning and conducting successful board retreats.)

Slesinger, Larry H., **Self-assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.
(www.ncnb.org)

Smoley, Eugene R., **Effective School Boards: Strategies for Improving Board Performance**, Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Szanton, Peter, **Board Assessment of the Organization**, National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1992.

ACCESS MORE TOOLS FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

Guidebooks Available on Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board, Personnel Policies & Practices, Creating and Sustaining Family Friendly Institutions, and Mobilizing and Motivating Your Staff to Get Results. These guides can be accessed online at <http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/cfguides.htm>

The Charter Friends National Network has a limited number of print summaries of the documents available. To request a copy of one, or all four, please send an email to info@charterfriends.org.

ABOUT THE SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the U.S. Recognizing that strong families and strong neighborhoods are interdependent, the Casey Foundation is supporting broad strategies for neighborhood development and family transformation in twenty-two urban communities around the nation through its Making Connections initiative. For more information about the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Making Connections initiative visit the website or contact:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Tel: (410) 547-6600
Email: webmail@aecf.org
Web: <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/ntfd/making.htm>

The Charter Friends National Network (CFNN) is a project of the Minnesota-based Center for Policy Studies in cooperation with Hamline University. Founded in early 1997, CFNN's mission is to connect and support state-level charter school organizations - mainly non-profit resource centers and associations of charter school operators.

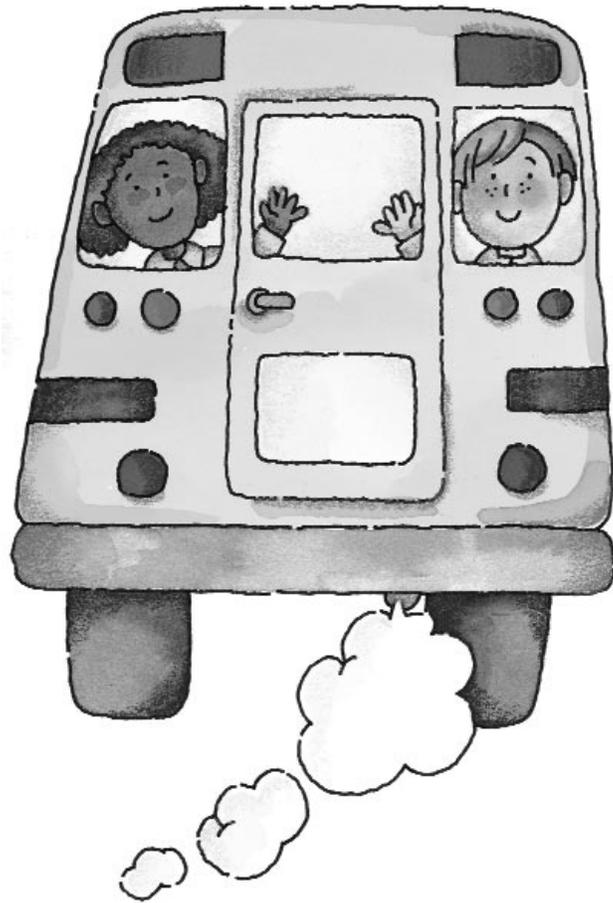
Charter Friends National Network:
1745 University Avenue, Suite 110
St. Paul, MN 55104
Tel: (651) 649-5479 • Fax: (651) 649-5472
Email: info@charterfriends.org
Web: <http://www.charterfriends.org>

OTHER RESOURCE GUIDES AVAILABLE FROM CHARTER FRIENDS NATIONAL NETWORK:

- Charter School Accountability: A Guide to Issues and Options for Charter Authorizers
- Charter School Facilities: A Resource Guide on Development and Financing
- Charting a Clear Course: A Resource Guide for Charter Schools Contracting with School Management Organizations
- Employer-Linked Charter Schools: An Introduction
- A Guide for Developing a Business Plan for Charter Schools
- Thinking About a Pre-existing Comprehensive School Design
- Out of the Box: An Idea Book on Charter School Facilities Financing
- Paying for the Charter Schoolhouse: Policy Options for Charter School Facilities Financing
- Shaping an Accountability Plan for Your Charter School



The Annie E. Casey Foundation



CHARTER FRIENDS
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connecting and supporting state-level charter school initiatives