

Strategic Board Governance

Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools
August 1, 2021

EducationBoardPartners

great boards. great schools.



Education Board Partners is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to strengthening nonprofit boards in education. We focus our work to ensure **quality, equity** and **accountability**.

We are a team of teachers and educational leaders who believe **every child** deserves the opportunity to attend an excellent public school.



Agenda

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Welcome, Agenda, and Objectives |
| 2 | Temperature Check |
| 3 | Governance Versus Management |
| 4 | Things to Consider |



Objectives

1. Understand how board members navigate the balance between governance and management.
2. Identify and outline key steps to establish clear lanes for governance and management.
3. Reflect on and articulate next steps for applying today's learning to your board.



Temperature Check



Quiz #1

1. Which actions are the board responsible for?
1. Which actions are the school staff responsible for?
1. Check the box to identify who is responsible for making the corresponding decisions.



Governance and Management – Part 1

| Action | Board | School Leader |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Determines the curriculum for the school year. | | |
| Sets and reviews personnel policies | | |
| Hires and evaluates teachers | | |
| Hires and evaluates school leader | | |
| Approves annual budget | | |

Governance and Management – Part 1

| Action | Board | School Leader |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Determines the curriculum for the school year. | | X |
| Sets and reviews personnel policies | X | |
| Hires and evaluates teachers | | X |
| Hires and evaluates school leader | X | |
| Approves annual budget | X | |

Governance and Management – Part 2


| Action | Board | School Leader |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Develops a character education program | | |
| Hires the audit firm and reviews the annual audit | | |
| Changes the length of a school day | | |
| Responds to parent complaints | | |
| Changes graduation requirements | | |

Governance and Management – Part 2

| Action | Board | School Leader |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Develops a character education program | | X |
| Hires the audit firm and reviews the annual audit | X | |
| Changes the length of a school day | X | |
| Responds to parent complaints | | X |
| Changes graduation requirements | X | |

Governance Versus Management



The background of the slide features a silhouette of several hands holding interlocking gears. The scene is set against a bright, hazy sky, likely a sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange and yellow glow. The hands are positioned around the gears, suggesting a collaborative effort in assembling or maintaining a system.

“If management is about running the business,
governance is about seeing that it is run properly.”

Robert Tricker
Corporate Governance



Standards for Effective Governance



Focus relentlessly on student achievement



Recruit and retain an exceptional leader



Invest in exemplary governance



Act strategically and be accountable



Raise and use resources wisely



Commit steadfastly to compliance

Center People, Culture and & Equity

Aim

Explore the balance between governance and management; share and learn strategies for staying in your lane.



Focus Area

| | Lose sleep over | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Board |  | School Leader |
| School Leader |  | Teachers |
| Teacher |  | Students |

Staying in Your Lane

Discipline the board to insist on results and high performance but not dictate the means to achieve them

Board defines success—the **what**—what do we want to achieve?

Staff defines the means to achieve that success—the **how**—how are we going to get there?



Steps to Staying in YOUR Lane

Clearly define a **consistent set of expectations** for board members:

- **Board member agreements**
- **Officer descriptions.**
- Specify **roles and responsibilities** during onboarding and retreats.
- Craft well-defined **school leader job description, goals, and evaluation.**
- Formalize any decisions about governance vs. management **in writing.**
- Invite a consultant to observe several board and staff meetings – ask for **feedback on areas needing clarification** or roles/responsibilities.



Good Governance: Know Your Role (Step 1)

Board and school leader are accountable to each other and to same goals – running a school is a joint effort

Everyone is more productive when board and staff members do not spend time doing each other's work

Engage in strategic matters and generative conversations

Focus on number one concern – student achievement

Avoid legal liability problems

Foster good relationship between board and head of school

Good Governance: Know What Isn't Your Role (Step 2)

Board members do not provide opinions on purchases of office equipment/selection of vendors

The board does not become involved in personnel issue/hiring or firing staff

Board is not responsible for implementing policies and procedures within the school

Board members/board chair does not have individual authority

Board members do not go uninvited to staff meetings

Role of the Board vs. School Leader (SL)

| Governance/Board | Management/CEO/School Leader |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversight function | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementing, planning, organizing, directing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumes responsibility for the school's student achievement results | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produces student achievement results |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluates and supports School Leader/CEO | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluates and supports school staff |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead process and set short and long-term goals for board and approves leader's goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works in partnership with the board to establish both individual and school-wide short- and long-term goals |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruits, interviews, and votes to add new board members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports recruitment process, interviews candidates, and provides feedback |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluates and reports out on effectiveness of the board | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides input into effectiveness of the board |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitates board meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively participates in board meetings |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raises money and gives personally | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raises money |



Balance Between Governance and Management

| RESPONSIBILITIES | DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>STRATEGY</p> <p>Effective Board Governance Evaluation Growth Mission School Sustainability</p> | <p>Board's Decision</p> <p>School Leader Advice</p> |
| <p>Student Achievement Authorizer & Legal Compliance Enrollment Entry Points Goal-Setting Raising Resources</p> | <p>Shared Decisions: Board and School Leader</p> |
| <p>OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Day-to-day Policies & Procedures Resources Allocation School Culture Staff Hiring, Evaluation, Separation Agreements</p> | <p>Board Advice</p> <p>School Leader Decision</p> |





Case Study



Test Your Knowledge

Scenario 1

The board spends a significant amount of the board's meeting time discussing the effectiveness of individual teachers and whether they should be retained.

- *The board needs to focus its efforts on the school leader—is he/she effective? The school leader determines whether the staff is effective. The board is stepping over the oversight line if it is discussing individual teachers. Boards should confirm that the school leader evaluates teachers, keeping the most effective ones as a practice, but should not evaluate the effectiveness of staff for the school leader.*

Test Your Knowledge

Scenario 2

As a startup board, you wonder how far the board should step in on operational issues in the planning year.

- *Because there may be limited staff in the planning year, the board might step over the typical oversight line, roll up their sleeves, and get things done. There must be open communication between the board and the school leader on this temporary authority until the school is fully staffed. Once the school is operating, the board must step back from these management roles and provide oversight and support in its governance role solely.*

Test Your Knowledge

Scenario 3

The school leader receives frequent three-page long emails from the board chair demanding details of daily happenings at the school.

- *The board is overstepping its oversight role. The board and school leader determine which targets and goals to assess and evaluate the school leader. The school leader needs to report these metrics to the board.*

Test Your Knowledge

Scenario 4

The board wants to interview and have input into whom the school leader hires as vice principal.

- *The school leader determines who will staff the school. The board can offer support and guidance, but hiring is the domain of the school leader. The board is exceeding its role in this case.*

Test Your Knowledge

Scenario 5

The school leader doesn't think that he/she needs to share much information about school operations with the board.

- *The board holds the school leader accountable for specific metrics of the school including operations. The board and school leader need to have a clear conversation on what data pertaining to benchmarks and goals needs to be reported and at what frequency. This information gathering is in the board's domain.*

Where are your lanes going to be in the near term?

- List 2-3 key decisions that were made during the past year
 - Who made each decision?
 - Where was there friction?
 - How would you do it differently in hindsight?
- List the 5 most important decisions coming up in the next 6 months
 - Who owns each decision?
 - What input should the other individuals give?
- What will your turn signals look like?

What is the yellow line?



Reflections and Close



Reflection & Commitment

- What was a significant learning for you?
- When reflecting about balancing board governance and management, where is your board strongest? Where is there room for improvement and growth?
- As a result of what you learned, what are 2-3 actions you can take to improve your board's approach to balance governance and management?

Looking for more information?

For more information, resources and questions please visit:

<https://mdcharters.org/renewal-on-demand>

RENEWAL RESOURCES FOR MARYLAND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

This website is a Maryland Alliance for Public Charter Schools (MAPCS) curated page, developed specifically for Maryland Public Charter Schools operators and administrators. More resources are coming soon. Please bookmark this page and check back periodically for updated renewal resources.

Questions?

For any questions, please contact:

Stephanie Simms

Director of Operations

Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools

TA@mdcharters.org





www.edboards.org



www.facebook.com/EducationBoardPartners/



[@educationboards](https://twitter.com/educationboards)



www.linkedin.com/company/education-board-partners/

EducationBoardPartners

great boards. great schools.

