

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a green sweater, smiling and holding a yellow cup filled with colorful markers. The cup features a sun with sunglasses. A young girl with dark hair, wearing a white polo shirt and a floral headband, stands next to her, looking at the camera. The background shows a classroom with an American flag and educational posters.

Charter School Board Governance Playbook

2025-2026





Charter School Board Governance Playbook

Created by The Colorado League of Charter Schools, 2025

Version 1.1, October 2025

All Rights Reserved

Thank you to the consultants who worked on previous renditions of the board training modules. Much of the content in this playbook was derived from their work.

Thank you to the organizations and researchers cited in this document. Through the collective support and advocacy for charter schools, we are stronger together.

Special thanks to our lead project consultant, **Kia Murray**, and our governance working group, **Kim McClelland**, **Tom McMillen**, and **Lisa Jarvi** for lending their experience and expertise to this project.



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
What is a Charter School?.....	7
Charter Schools in Colorado.....	7
The Colorado League of Charter Schools.....	8
Using This Playbook.....	9
Chapter One: Board Fundamentals.....	11
I. Board Responsibilities.....	11
Full Board Responsibilities.....	11
Individual Responsibilities.....	13
Board Member Norms and Board Agreement.....	13
Board Member Commitments.....	14
Board Officer Job Descriptions.....	15
Governance versus Operations.....	17
Board Member Characteristics and Skill Sets.....	20
Board Responsibilities Case Studies.....	21
II. Legal Responsibilities.....	22
Standards of Conduct.....	22
Oath of Office.....	23
Responsibilities as a Nonprofit Organization.....	25
Open Meetings Law.....	26
Open Records Law.....	31
Legal Protection.....	33
Additional Applicable Federal and State Laws.....	35
Legal Requirements Related to Special Education.....	36
Legal Responsibilities Case Studies.....	39
Chapter Two: Financial Oversight.....	40
I. Charter School Funding.....	41
How Charter Schools Are Funded.....	41
Charter School Expenses.....	41
Public School Accounting.....	42
II. Indicators of Good Board Financial Oversight.....	42
III. School Financial Health.....	44
IV. Recommended Financial Policies.....	45
V. Reviewing Financial Documents.....	46
Balance Sheet.....	46
Budget vs. Actuals.....	47
Annual Audit.....	47
Audits for Groups of Schools.....	49



VI. Budget Development.....	51
Budget Cycle.....	51
Reviewing Draft Budgets.....	52
Five-Year Forecast.....	53
Financial Transparency Act.....	53
Ensuring Adequate Financial Resources.....	54
VII. District/Authorizer Considerations.....	56
Fees and Services.....	56
District Financial Waivers.....	56
VIII. Student Enrollment and Retention.....	56
IV. When Your School Is Not Meeting Financial Benchmarks.....	58
Financial Oversight Case Studies.....	59
Chapter Three: School Leader Hiring, Oversight, and Evaluation.....	61
I. Hiring the School Leader.....	61
School Leader Hiring Process.....	62
II. Evaluating the School Leader.....	65
The School Leader Evaluation Process.....	67
Evaluation Tools.....	70
III. Supporting the School Leader.....	71
School Leader/Board Relationship.....	71
School Leader Development.....	72
Performance Improvement Plan.....	73
Leader Separation.....	74
IV. Succession Planning.....	75
V. School Management: The role of EMOs, CMOs, & ESPs.....	77
School Leader Hiring, Oversight, and Evaluation Case Studies.....	80
Chapter Four: Navigating Risk.....	82
I. Policies and Procedures.....	82
Legal Authority.....	83
Creating Policies.....	84
Organizing Policies.....	86
Understanding Waivers.....	88
II. Identifying Potential Risks and Monitoring Data.....	91
The Charter Contract.....	91
Signals of Success and Signals of Struggle.....	91
Data Dashboards.....	93
Additional Tools for Navigating Risk.....	95
III. Legal Issues and Insurance.....	100
IV. Crisis Communications.....	103
V. Social Media.....	107
Navigating Risk Case Studies.....	107



Chapter Five: Academic Performance.....	109
I. Academic Data.....	109
Types of Assessments.....	109
Required Assessments in Colorado.....	110
Colorado's Accountability Model.....	111
II. Unified Improvement Plan.....	115
III. The Board's Role in Curriculum.....	117
IV. When Your School Is Not Meeting Academic Expectations.....	118
Academic Performance Case Studies.....	120
Chapter Six: Meetings and Members.....	121
I. Running Effective Meetings.....	121
Meeting Logistics.....	122
Robert's Rules of Order.....	123
Meeting Materials.....	124
Meeting Materials.....	125
Annual Board Calendar.....	128
Public Comment at Board Meetings.....	130
Board Work Sessions and Trainings.....	131
II. Board Committees.....	131
Types of Committees.....	131
Committee Development and Logistics.....	134
III. Board Recruitment and Development.....	136
Board Recruitment.....	136
New Member Onboarding.....	139
Board Manual.....	141
Board Development.....	142
Meetings and Members Case Studies.....	146
Appendices.....	147
Appendix 1 - Board Officer Job Descriptions.....	148
Chair of the Governing Board.....	148
Vice Chair.....	150
Secretary.....	151
Treasurer.....	152
Appendix 2 - Board Responsibilities Case Studies.....	153
Appendix 3 - Sample Colorado Open Records Policy (CSI).....	156
Appendix 4 - Legal Responsibilities Case Studies.....	159
Appendix 5: Sample Executive Director Job Description.....	161
Appendix 6: Sample Interview Timeline.....	164
Appendix 7: Sample Interview Questions.....	166
Appendix 8: Sample Leader Evaluation Templates.....	170
Appendix 9: Sample Leader Professional Improvement Plan (PIP).....	183



Appendix 10: Sample Emergency Succession Plan Template.....	185
Appendix 11: School Leader Hiring, Oversight, and Evaluation Case Studies.....	188
Appendix 12: Sample Grievance Policy.....	190
Appendix 13: Signals of Success and Signals of Struggle Chart.....	192
Appendix 14: Sample Data Dashboard.....	197
Appendix 15: Navigating Risk Case Studies.....	199
Appendix 16: Financial Oversight Case Studies.....	202
Appendix 17: Sample School Assessment Schedule.....	204
Appendix 18: CDE's 2024 Annotated Framework Report.....	205
Appendix 19: UIP Progress Tracker Template.....	211
Appendix 20: Academic Performance Case Studies.....	212
Appendix 21: Sample Board Meeting Agendas.....	213
Appendix 22: Sample Annual Board Calendar.....	220
Appendix 23: Sample Quarterly SAC Year-at-a-Glance.....	226
Appendix 24: Sample Committee Job Descriptions.....	227
Appendix 25: Sample Committee Action Plan.....	231
Appendix 26: Sample Declaration of Candidacy Form.....	232
Appendix 27: Sample Board Orientation Process.....	235
Appendix 28: Sample Board Self Evaluation.....	236
Appendix 26: Meetings and Members Case Studies.....	241
Appendix 27: Public Comment Guidance (CSI).....	243



Introduction

What is a Charter School?

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools that operate with greater flexibility than traditional public schools in exchange for increased accountability. They have been a vital part of the American public education landscape for over 30 years and serve a growing number of students across the nation.

Charter schools are always free, public, and open to all students. They are designed to meet the diverse needs of students and communities by offering unique educational models. Each charter school operates under a charter contract, which outlines the school's mission, educational program, student population, performance goals, and methods of assessment. This contract is agreed upon with an authorizer, which in Colorado is the local school district or the Colorado Charter School Institute (a state-level authorizer).

Charters are typically granted for a five-year term. To be renewed, schools must demonstrate strong academic outcomes, responsible operations, and adherence to the commitments in their charter contract. They are held accountable to the authorizer, the state, taxpayers, and most importantly, the families they serve.

Charter schools are also unique because of their governance model required by law. As non-profits, according to Colorado's Charter School Act (1996), charters must be governed by a governing body in a manner agreed to by the charter school applicant and the authorizer.

While charter schools enjoy autonomy in areas like staffing, budgeting, and curriculum design, they must still comply with all state and federal laws governing public schools. They receive public funding based on student enrollment through the state's per-pupil revenue (PPR) formula. However, unlike traditional public schools, charter schools do not receive dedicated public funding for facilities, which often presents financial challenges.

By combining innovation with accountability, charter schools expand the range of high-quality public school options available to families.

Charter Schools in Colorado

In 1993, Colorado became the third state in the U.S. to enact a charter school law. In fall of 1993, the state's first two charter schools, The Connect School in Pueblo and Academy Charter School in Castle Rock, opened their doors and continue to thrive today.

Colorado charters have delivered on the promise of offering high-quality public school options across the state. In 2024, families of over 135,000 elementary through high school students chose to send their children to charter schools. This steady growth now equates to over 15% of



the state's public school enrollment. School models ranging from Montessori to College Prep are located in 70 communities across the state and serve urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The academic performance of the state's charter school students is notable. According to Peterson and Shakeel's 2024 study¹ of charter school student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Colorado charter students have the second highest scores, only behind Alaska, in reading and math, 23.7 percent of a standard deviation above the national average. When comparing the 2022 Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) data, charter school students performed better than students attending district-managed schools on literacy and math achievement and growth measures.²

The Colorado League of Charter Schools

The Colorado League of Charter Schools is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to supporting charter schools in the state. Founded in 1994, membership is open to all charter schools in Colorado to help them reach higher levels of student performance and overall success.

From technical support and public relations assistance to professional development and advocacy, the League provides a steady stream of up-to-date information and resources to enhance academic achievement and streamline school operations. The League also offers guidance and assistance for developing new charter schools, including application reviews, contract negotiations, and general start-up support.

Mission

The mission of the Colorado League of Charter Schools is to improve student achievement by supporting Colorado's charter schools, positively reshaping the public school landscape, and advancing opportunities for innovation and expanded high-quality public school choice.

Vision

The vision of the Colorado League of Charter Schools is for all Colorado students to have access to high-quality, public school options.

¹ Peterson, P., & Shakee, M. (2024, January 10). *The Nation's Charter Report Card*. Education Next. <https://www.educationnext.org/nations-charter-report-card-first-ever-state-ranking-charter-student-performance-naep/>

² Schoales, V., Lagana, M., Berdie, L. (2022). *Back to School: Colorado's Charter School Performance 2022*. Keystone Policy Center.



Using This Playbook

Thank you for your commitment to Colorado's charter schools through your service on a charter school board. Board members play a critical role in the success of the schools they govern, and your leadership makes a meaningful difference for students and communities.

The Charter School Board Governance Playbook, developed by the Colorado League of Charter Schools, is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide to support strong and effective governance.

Ways to Use This Playbook:

- Use the Table of Contents to find the topics most relevant to your board's current needs.
- Print and organize the playbook in a binder to keep on hand for reference during board meetings and retreats.
- Treat each chapter as a stand-alone mini-lesson during board meetings. Assign one chapter at a time for board reading and discussion.
- Structure your board retreat around 1–3 chapters that align with your board's current challenges or priorities.
- Use the case studies and discussion prompts to engage in team-building.

What You'll Find in Each Chapter:

- Chapter Objectives that outline key takeaways
- Board Discussion and Board Action prompts, clearly marked in callout boxes like these:

Board Discussion:

How do you, as board members, demonstrate the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obedience?

Board Action:

Review your board bylaws annually to ensure your board is adhering to them. If your bylaws require revisions, consider consulting legal counsel in this process to ensure compliance with your charter and state laws. Check your charter contract to see when or if bylaw amendments must be shared with your authorizer.

- Links to additional tools and resources in the appendix
- Case Studies for real-world application and meaningful discussion
- Suggested board responses to case studies (located in the appendix) to guide your conversation if your board is unsure how to respond



This playbook is intended to be practical, flexible, and user-friendly, whether you're onboarding new members, deepening your board's effectiveness, or navigating a challenging decision. Use it in a way that works best for your board's culture and needs.



Chapter One: Board Fundamentals

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Explain the collective and individual responsibilities of a charter school board and its members.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of board officers.
- Differentiate between governance and operations.
- Assess the skills needed to fulfill board responsibilities.
- Define the legal responsibilities of charter school boards.
- Summarize the key laws applicable to charter schools.

I. Board Responsibilities

Full Board Responsibilities

A charter school board is responsible for ensuring the school's academic success, financial stability, and adherence to its charter and applicable laws. Research³ on high-performing charter schools reveals key characteristics of effective boards that directly contribute to school quality:

1. **Informed Governance** – Board members of high-quality schools have a deep understanding of their school's mission, operations, and performance.
2. **Commitment to Growth** – These boards actively participate in training, engage in strategic planning, and meet regularly (typically monthly).
3. **Accountability & Leadership Oversight** – High-performing boards are significantly more likely to evaluate school leaders, incorporating staff satisfaction as a key factor in assessments.

By fostering strong governance practices, charter school boards can create a culture of accountability, continuous improvement, and long-term success for their schools.

To fulfill a board's mission, it must uphold the following six key responsibilities:

- Vision and Mission⁴
 - Periodically review the school's vision and mission statements
 - Ensure effective organizational planning, both yearly and long-term
 - Enhance the school's public standing
 - Develop policies in alignment with the school's mission
- Financial Oversight

³ Squire, J. & Crean Davis, A. (2016). *Charter School Boards in the Nation's Capital*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

⁴ BoardOnTrack. (2018). *Charter School Board: Overview of Job Responsibilities*.



- Approve annual budgets
 - Monitor periodic financial reports
 - Approve financial policies
 - Ensure adequate resources are available to meet the school's mission
- Leadership Oversight
 - Hire the school's executive leader
 - Evaluate the school's executive leader
 - Support the school's executive leader
- Compliance and Accountability
 - Adhere to authorizer requirements
 - Adhere to local, state, and federal laws and regulations
 - Assess the quality of the school's program
 - Monitor academic performance
- External Relations
 - Describe the school's mission and key programs.
 - Maintain visibility at the school and school events.
 - Identify and capitalize on opportunities to raise awareness of the school in the broader community.
 - Ensure the school has policies and plans for social media, marketing & communications, and crisis communications & management.
- Board Function
 - Adhere to the organization's bylaws and articles of incorporation
 - Recruit new members based on membership needs
 - Provide new member orientation and continuous development
 - Assess board performance annually
 - Adopt board policies governing individual board member responsibilities

Board Discussion:

Reflect on how your board measures up to the list of key board responsibilities above. What are the responsibilities where you feel your board is strongest? What are the responsibilities where you think your board most needs improvement?

Board Action:

Collectively identify the areas where the board should focus its attention. Plan for and schedule additional training in the identified areas.



Individual Responsibilities

As public servants, board members take an Oath of Office⁵ and commit to performing their duties with integrity and diligence. They often adhere to established board norms and sign an agreement outlining their responsibilities. Individual board member duties typically include:

- Attending all board meetings, committee meetings, and required school events, including special functions (typically 8–10 hours per month).
- Staying informed about the school's vision, mission, policies, programs, and services.
- Reviewing meeting agendas and supporting materials in advance of board and committee meetings.
- Considering a personal financial contribution to the school in a personally meaningful amount.
- Acting as an ambassador by informing others about the school.
- Identifying and recommending potential board nominees who can contribute meaningfully.
- Keeping up to date on developments in legislation, education and charter school policies.
- Adhering to conflict of interest and confidentiality policies and openly disclosing any actual or perceived conflicts.
- Avoiding direct requests to staff members.
- Assisting the board in fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities, including reviewing the school's financial statements.

Board Member Norms and Board Agreement

It is highly recommended that boards establish a board agreement and/or board norms. Board members should review and sign this document annually, affirming their commitment to upholding a shared standard for board participation.

Norms serve as the foundation for a positive board culture and foster trust among members. Without them, boards risk inefficiency and unproductive conflict. Clear, well-defined norms help boards stay focused on their goals. Elena Aguilar⁶ suggests that teams collaboratively determine their norms and ensure that all members understand their meaning. Ideally, boards should adopt five memorable norms.

Norms can be **procedural**, such as:

- **Be Prepared** – All board members will come to meetings having read the board packet in its entirety and be ready to engage in discussion.

Norms can also be **behavioral**, such as:

⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-30.5-104.9

⁶ Aguilar, E. (2016). *The Art of Coaching Teams*. Jossey-Bass.



- **Respect Diverse Perspectives** – We encourage open discussion and value different viewpoints, even when they challenge our own.
- **Maintain Confidentiality** – Discussions held in executive sessions and sensitive matters regarding staff, students, or families will remain confidential.
- **Stay Mission-Focused** – Decisions will be guided by what is best for students and aligned with the school's mission, rather than personal interests.

SAMPLE BOARD MEMBER AGREEMENT

I, _____, understand that as a member of the Board of Directors of ABC Charter School, I have both a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that the organization operates effectively in pursuit of its mission. I acknowledge my legal obligations, including the duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience, and I commit to acting responsibly and prudently as a steward of the school's success.

I understand that I do not have authority as an individual board member; rather, my authority comes through the collective decision-making of the Board. Once the Board reaches a decision, I will support it, regardless of my personal stance.

I have read and understand the Board Responsibilities and Individual Board Member Responsibilities that guide my role. I will uphold my individual responsibilities and work collaboratively with fellow board members to fulfill the collective duties outlined in our Board Manual.

If I fail to meet these commitments, I expect the Board Chair to discuss my responsibilities with me. If, after this discussion, I find myself unable to fulfill these expectations, I will step down from the Board.

Board Member Commitments

I commit to:

- **Support and Advocate** – Act as an ambassador for ABC Charter School, upholding and promoting its mission, vision, and values.
- **Collaborate Effectively** – Work in partnership with fellow board members to fulfill the Board's governance responsibilities.
- **Demonstrate Professional Conduct** – Contribute to an effective and professional board environment by:
 - Prioritizing the best interests of the school over personal agendas.
 - Supporting board decisions once they are made.
 - Engaging in honest self-assessment of my performance and that of the Board.
 - Focusing on governance rather than management matters.
- **Engage and Participate** – Attend board and committee meetings in accordance with the Board's attendance policy. Prepare in advance by reviewing meeting materials and actively participate in discussions. If unable to attend, I will notify the Board or committee Chair in advance.
- **Stay Informed** – Remain knowledgeable about the school's operations, policies, and key issues by reviewing materials, engaging in discussions, and asking strategic



questions.

- **Support Fundraising Efforts** – Actively participate in at least one fundraising event annually.
- **Leverage Expertise and Networks** – Use my personal and professional connections to benefit ABC Charter School.
- **Serve in Leadership** – Take on a leadership role by chairing or serving on a committee as directed by the Board.
- **Contribute Financially** – Make an annual financial contribution at a level that is personally meaningful. (Board participation in giving is more critical than the specific dollar amount.)
- **Adhere to Conflict of Interest Policies** – Disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest and abide by the Board's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- **Commit to Continuous Improvement** – Engage in annual board self-evaluation and participate in ongoing professional development opportunities.

By signing this agreement, I affirm my commitment to serving ABC Charter School with integrity, accountability, and dedication.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Board Discussion:

What issues are important to address in your board norms and agreement?

Board Action:

Collectively create board norms. Use the board agreement template to draft one for your school.

Board Officer Job Descriptions

Board officers play a crucial role in maintaining order, structure, and effective governance. The following descriptions outline the typical responsibilities of charter school board officers. These should serve as guidelines and may be adapted to fit the unique needs of each school.

Board President (Chair)

The Board President provides leadership and oversight to ensure the board functions effectively and in alignment with the school's mission. Key responsibilities include:

- Overseeing board and executive committee meetings.
- Serving as an ex-officio member of all committees.
- Partnering with the school leader to ensure board resolutions are implemented.



- Calling special meetings when necessary.
- Appointing committee chairs and, in collaboration with the school leader, recommending committee members.
- Assisting the school leader in preparing board meeting agendas.
- Supporting the orientation and onboarding of new board members.
- Leading the search process for a new school leader, when needed.
- Coordinating and overseeing the school leader's annual performance evaluation.
- Working with the nominating committee to recruit and vet potential board members.
- Acting as an alternate spokesperson for the school.
- Consulting with board members periodically to assess their performance and clarify their roles.

Board Vice President (Vice Chair)

The Vice President supports the Board President and is prepared to assume leadership duties when necessary. Responsibilities include:

- Serving on the executive committee.
- Taking on special assignments at the request of the Board President.
- Understanding the responsibilities of the Board President and being prepared to fulfill those duties in their absence.
- Participating as an active leader within the board.

Board Secretary

The Board Secretary ensures proper documentation, compliance with governance laws, and effective communication. Responsibilities include:

- Serving on the executive committee.
- Maintaining a working knowledge of Open Meeting Law and Open Records Act requirements.
- Organizing and preserving all board records to ensure accuracy and accessibility.
- Reviewing and ensuring the accuracy of board meeting minutes.
- Assuming leadership responsibilities in the absence of the Board President, Chair-Elect, and Vice Chair.
- Providing official notice of board and committee meetings as required.

Board Treasurer

The Board Treasurer oversees financial stewardship, transparency, and compliance. Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining a thorough understanding of the school's financial operations and a commitment to its fiscal health.
- Understanding financial accounting for both nonprofit organizations and public schools.



- Ensuring compliance with financial reporting and transparency requirements for charter schools.
- Serving as the board's financial officer and chair of the finance committee.
- Leading the board's review and decision-making related to financial responsibilities.
- Collaborating with the school leader and finance personnel to provide timely financial reports to the board.
- Assisting in the preparation of the annual budget and presenting it to the board and finance committee for approval.
- Reviewing the annual audit and addressing board members' questions regarding audit findings.

*Detailed sample job descriptions can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Board Discussion:

Are board officers fully cognizant of their responsibilities? Are the current responsibilities of your board officers meeting the school and board's needs? What adjustments may need to be made?

Board Action:

Review your school's board officer job descriptions. Compare them with those in this playbook and determine if anything is missing or needs to be changed.

Governance versus Operations

Who does what? Oftentimes, charter school boards struggle with the delineation of roles and responsibilities. Are we too deep in the weeds? Are we closer to the moon? Finding the right balance of appropriate governance and oversight is essential for a school's success. The typical breakdown between governance and operations is as follows:

Board of Directors	School Administration
Responsibilities: Establish policies, provide oversight, and ensure the school's long-term sustainability.	Responsibilities: Execute policies, manage daily operations, and lead the team to achieve strategic goals.
Focus: ENDS/Outcomes	Focus: MEANS/Methods
Key Questions: Why? What? How Much?	Key Questions: When? Where? Who? How?
Actions: Monitor, Vote	Actions: Implement, Recommend, Report



Another valuable framework for understanding governance vs. operations comes from Ken Schuetz's *Aligned Influence: Beyond Governance*⁷. Schuetz emphasizes that when boards and executive leaders are misaligned, they risk undermining an organization's direction, effectiveness, and sustainability. Some organizational structures lead to a competition for power and influence between the board and the executive leader. Instead, they should function as interdependent gears, turning in sync to drive success.

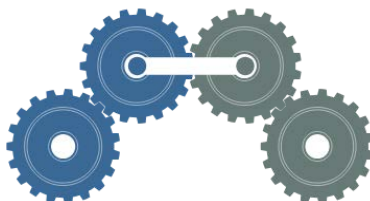


Image Source: <https://alignedinfluence.com/>

The board chair and the board, in blue, are aligned with the school leadership and staff, in gray. They are joined together in a common alignment that allows for efficiency and effectiveness.

Roles and responsibilities, according to Schuetz, are as follows:

Board of Directors	School Executive
Direct - Establishes and maintains the strategic <i>what</i> of the organization. Defines organizational targets.	Lead - Designs the tactical <i>how</i> to accomplish the strategic <i>what</i> ? Creates organizational plans to complete the work of the organization within the set boundaries.
Protect - The board establishes boundaries, often expressed as policies, that result in the safe operation and long-term success of the organization.	Manage - Manages the day-to-day systems and processes of the organization. Recognizes her own strengths and weaknesses and builds a strong team to support her.
Enable - Boards advocate for their schools through their personal networks and look for resource development opportunities. When the board sticks to its role, it also enables the organization to succeed.	Accomplish - Creates tactical plans, operational policies, and procedural guidance to accomplish the goals set by the board. The leader provides the board with the information they need to monitor the organization.

The roles and responsibilities of a board and school executive can be looked at in yet another way. This time and attention chart⁸ provides a helpful visual for the distinction between board and administrative roles and those responsibilities that are shared:

⁷ Schuetz, K. (2021). *Aligned Influence: Beyond Governance*. Morgan James Publishing.

⁸ Miller, T. (2019). *A design partnership*. Leaders Building Leaders.



A Design of the Partnership

	Time and Attention	
Governance Decisions • Mission and Vision • Board Structure • School Leader Supervision & Evaluation • Policy • Branding	Board's Decisions	
Partnership Decisions • School Goals • Student Outcomes • Education Plan • Budget Development • Grades & Enrollment • Facility • HR & Employment Terms • Development	Shared Decisions: Board and Management	
Management Decisions • Staffing/Evaluation • Programming • Systems & Procedures • Stakeholder Communication • School Culture • Marketing	Board's Advice	Management Decisions

When both governance and operations align, schools foster strong leadership, clear accountability, and long-term sustainability. The key is collaboration, not competition, for influence.

When the line may shift

There may be rare times when the governing board becomes more heavily involved in operations. Two clear examples are when a school is in the start-up phase and staff have not yet been hired, AND during a leadership transition. If the board is going to overstep the typical line between governance and management, it is helpful to follow this three-step process:⁹

1. Acknowledge the exception
2. Define the reason for the exception
3. State when the exception will end

Board Discussion:

In what areas has the distinction between governance and operations been clear? In what areas has it been ambiguous or challenging?

Board Action: Ensure that board members have received training in understanding the difference between policy governance and operations.

⁹ Charter Board Partners. (2018). *Charter School Governing Board Primer: School Leadership*.



Audit a board meeting and analyze the discussion using the Time and Attention Chart as a reference. Assess whether the board is allocating its time appropriately across governance, partnership, and operations.

If misalignment is identified, consider restructuring the board meeting agenda to ensure discussions stay at the appropriate level.

Board Member Characteristics and Skill Sets

Having the right mix of skills, experience, and perspectives on a charter school board is essential for strong governance and effective decision-making. While board size may vary depending on the school's stage (founding boards tend to be smaller) or authorizer requirements, a well-structured board typically includes 5 to 11 members—enough to staff committees and fulfill governance responsibilities.

A balanced and diverse board ensures that members bring a variety of expertise and lived experiences to discussions. Board diversity includes attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic background, age, physical ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and ideologies. Research shows that more diverse executive boards tend to outperform those lacking a varied composition.¹⁰

Certain qualities are non-negotiable for effective board service:

- **Mission Alignment** – Members must believe in and support the school's mission.
- **Commitment & Time** – Members must have the availability to serve meaningfully.
- **Strong Personal Characteristics** – Members should foster collaborative, respectful, and productive board dynamics.

Beyond these foundational qualities, a strategic board composition ensures a broad range of skill sets to support governance and oversight.

According to Charter Board Partners¹¹, a high-functioning board should collectively include expertise in:

- Finance
- Education
- Fundraising
- Human resources
- Real estate
- Legal

¹⁰ Barta, T., Kleiner, M., & Neumann, T. (2012). Is there a payoff from top-team diversity? *McKinsey Quarterly*.

¹¹ Charter Board Partners. (2018). Charter School Board Composition: A Toolkit for Board Members.



- Leadership
- Strategic planning
- Governance
- Experience relevant to the organization's mission
- Communications/marketing

Board Discussion:

What are the top areas of expertise, professional skills, and dimensions of diversity that are critical to our school and the board's current work?

Board Action:

Create a Board Diversity & Skills Assessment using a tool like Google Forms to evaluate the expertise, professional backgrounds, and diversity represented on your board. Once all board members have completed the assessment, analyze the results to identify gaps in expertise or representation.

Discuss as a board:

Are there potential new members who could fill these gaps?

Should we seek external expertise (e.g., staff support, consultants, or advisory committees) to strengthen board capacity?

Board Responsibilities Case Studies

Define the board's role and the school leader's role in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 2](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: State Test Score Disparities

Scenario: It is the fall of your second year. The state test scores are released, showing exceptional results in English Language Arts (ELA) but poor performance in math.

Case Study 2: High Teacher Turnover

Scenario: In June, the school leader presents a year-end wrap-up. The board is shocked to learn that 60% of teachers are leaving.

Case Study 3: Teacher Bonus Distribution

Scenario: The board and school leader agree to pay teacher bonuses from a designated budget.



Case Study 4: Teacher Conflict with School Leader

Scenario: A teacher publicly raises a conflict with the school leader during a board meeting.

Case Study 5: Board Chair & School Leader Disagreement

Scenario: The board chair and the school leader strongly disagree on a major policy issue.

Case Study 6: Media Inquiry on Teacher Unrest

Scenario: A reporter calls a board member at home, investigating rumors of teacher unrest.

II. Legal Responsibilities

Charter school board members are responsible for ensuring that their organization complies with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Each board member must take the time to fully understand the legal responsibilities associated with their role. Noncompliance can result in consequences for both the individual and the organization.

This playbook does not constitute legal advice. For any legal questions, consult your school's legal counsel.

Standards of Conduct

Under well-established principles of nonprofit corporation law, board members must meet certain standards of conduct and attention in fulfilling their responsibilities. Many states have statutes outlining variations of these duties, which courts may reference to determine whether a board member has acted improperly. These standards are commonly referred to as “fiduciary responsibilities” and include the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obedience.

Duty of Care

The duty of care describes the level of competence that is expected of a board member and is commonly expressed as the duty of “care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in a like position and under similar circumstances.”¹² This means that a board member owes the duty to exercise reasonable care, such as being informed, asking questions, and exercising prudent judgment, when he/she makes a decision as a steward of the organization, in this case, the school.

¹² BoardSource. (n.d.). *What are the Legal Duties of Nonprofit Board Members?* BoardSource. <https://boardsource.org/resources/legal-duties-nonprofit-board-members/#~:text=The%20duty%20of%20care%20describes,organization's%20best%20interest%20in%20mind.>



Duty of Loyalty

The duty of loyalty is a standard of faithfulness; a board member must give undivided allegiance when making decisions affecting the organization. This means that a board member can never use information obtained as a member for personal gain but must act in the best interests of the organization above any private interests.

Duty of Obedience

The duty of obedience requires board members to be faithful to the organization's mission, its governing documents, and to applicable local, state, and federal laws. They are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the central goals of the organization. A basis for this rule lies in the public's trust that the organization will manage donated funds to fulfill the organization's mission.

Oath of Office

As public officials, charter school board members must take an oath affirming their commitment to their duties.¹³ Schools must submit oaths to the County Clerk's Office in the county where the school is located. Additionally, they must be registered as a public entity with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

¹³ 24-12-101, C.R.S.



SAMPLE OATH OF OFFICE**OATH OF OFFICE**

STATE OF COLORADO

_____ County

_____ City/Town

I, _____ do swear and affirm that I will support the
Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Colorado, and the laws of the
State of Colorado, and will faithfully perform the duties of the office of Board Member at

upon which I am about to enter to the best of my ability.

Signature_____
Print name

Board Member subscribed and sworn to before me on this _____ day of
_____, 20____.

Witness Signature_____
Witnessing Official Printed Name and Title

Responsibilities as a Nonprofit Organization

The Colorado Revised Nonprofit Corporation Act (CRNCA)¹⁴ is the primary state law in Colorado that determines how nonprofits may (or must) be governed. The Colorado Secretary of State's office offers free online training that provides an overview of applicable responsibilities under state law.¹⁵

Articles of Incorporation

The CRNCA requires that articles of incorporation include provisions regarding the corporation's purpose, the characteristics of members, and the management and regulation of the corporation's affairs.

Bylaws

Charter school board bylaws establish internal rules that govern operations and the rights and responsibilities of its members. Bylaws typically include sections related to board member criteria, number of board members, terms and term limits, duties and expectations, board member attendance, board meeting procedures, voting, board committees, code of conduct, conflict of interest, board member removal, and amendments.¹⁶

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a board member's personal or professional interests could interfere with their duty to act in the best interests of the school. This violates the fiduciary duty of loyalty.¹⁷ Every organization should adopt a written conflict of interest policy to manage actual or perceived conflicts through disclosure, recusal, or other appropriate measures. Common conflicts of interest include:

- Hiring a board member's company for services
- Engaging in transactions with related parties
- Having financial interests in entities that do business with the school

Under CRNCA, a conflict of interest transaction means a contract, transaction, or other financial relationship between the nonprofit and one of its board members, the nonprofit and someone related to a board member ("related party"), or between the nonprofit and another business for which a board member also serves as a board member or has a financial interest.¹⁸

Organizations thus clarify in their conflict of interest policy that board members have a duty to disclose all conflicts of interest, both in advance and as situations arise, and that lays out the process for approving and documenting transactions where a conflict of interest is identified.

The mere existence of a conflict is not prohibited, and CRNCA provides that a conflict of interest transaction is not voidable if:

¹⁴ C.R.S. §7-121-101 to 137

¹⁵ <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/charities/boardTraining.html>

¹⁶ CSI. (2020). *Do's and don'ts of board bylaws*. CSI.

<https://resources.csi.state.co.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Dos-and-Donts-of-Board-Bylaws.pdf>

¹⁷ Zack, G. M. (2003) *Fraud and abuse in nonprofit organizations: a guide to prevention and detection*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

¹⁸ C.R.S. §7-128-501(1)



- There is disclosure of material facts regarding the conflict of interest to the board, and the transaction is approved by the affirmative vote of a majority of disinterested board members.
- The transaction is fair to the nonprofit corporation. For example, this can be demonstrated by showing the cost to the organization in comparison to other bids.
- While the individual with the conflict can make a presentation and respond to questions, he or she should leave during deliberation, debate, and voting and should not attempt to exert personal influence regarding the matter.

Parent Board Members

Conflicts can also arise when a board member is a parent of a student at the school. Balancing the roles of parent and board member can be challenging, especially when personal interests conflict with the overall best interest of the student body and school as a whole. While parent board members do not need to recuse themselves from general student-related votes, it is considered best practice to disclose any personal interest that could impact their decision-making.

Whistleblower Policy

Organizations should adopt a written whistleblower policy to provide a clear process for reporting financial misconduct, illegal practices, undisclosed conflicts of interest, or violations of organizational policies. The policy should clearly state that the organization will not retaliate against whistleblowers and will do its best to protect their confidentiality as long as the report is made in good faith.

Board Discussion:

How do you, as board members, demonstrate the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obedience?

Board Action:

Review your board bylaws annually to ensure your board is adhering to them. If your bylaws require revisions, consider consulting legal counsel in this process to ensure compliance with your charter and state laws. Check your charter contract to see when or if bylaw amendments must be shared with your authorizer.

Open Meetings Law

A charter school is classified as a “local public body” upon execution of its charter contract and must comply with the Colorado Open Meetings Law.¹⁹

The Open Meetings Law follows a straightforward principle:

¹⁹ C.R.S. §24-6-401 et seq.



“All meetings of a quorum or three or more members of any local public body, whichever is fewer, at which any public business is discussed or at which any formal action may be taken are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times.”

This means that whenever three or more members of a charter school board discuss school business, the meeting must be open to the public. No member of the public may be excluded from attending.

“Meeting” Defined

In considering whether the law applies to any particular meeting, charter school board members should remember that the term “meeting” is defined in an extremely broad way in the act.²⁰

Under the law, the term “meeting” is defined broadly²¹. It includes:

- Any gathering convened to discuss public business
- Meetings held in person, by telephone, electronically, or through other means of communication

However, the law does not apply to:

- Chance encounters
- Social gatherings where public business is not the main topic of discussion²²

Emails

An email discussion of three or more board members can be considered a meeting and is subject to open meeting laws. Since the public cannot be included in email conversations, board members should avoid “Reply to All” emails unless absolutely necessary. Emails that include all board members should be minimized and sent for one-way informational purposes (e.g., the president reminding board members of an upcoming meeting).

Additionally, board members should avoid “daisy chaining” email communication to circumvent open meetings requirements. This is where one board member communicates with individual board members one at a time on a matter of public interest. Courts have begun to scrutinize this practice.

Certain types of emails are not considered public meetings and do not fall under Open Meetings Law, including:²³

- Emails regarding scheduling and availability.
- Emails sent by an elected official for the purpose of forwarding information.
- Emails from elected officials responding to a constituent inquiry.
- Emails posing a question for later discussion by the public body.

²⁰ C.R.S. §24-6-401 et seq.

²¹ C.R.S. §24-6-402(1)(b)

²² C.R.S. §24-6-402(2)(e)

²³ HB 21-10259



Notice

The Open Meetings Law outlines the required notice for public meetings. A local public body is considered to have provided full and timely notice if:

- The notice is posted in a designated public place
- The notice is posted in a designated public location (electronically or in person)
- The location is adopted annually by the school's board at its first meeting in January
- It is posted at least 24 hours before the meeting
- The notice includes an agenda, when possible

Methods of notice recommended and typically used by charter school boards:

- Notice at the school's main entrance
- Email notice in regular school communication, such as newsletters
- Notice posted on the school's website

HB 19-1087 allows a local government to post notices on the local government's website. The notices must be accessible to the public at no charge and must be searchable, if feasible, by type of meeting, date and time of meeting, and agenda contents. A local government that posts notices of public meetings on its website may continue to post notices in a physical location, but is not required to do so.

Open Meetings vs. Noticed Meetings

Charter school boards often face confusion about whether boards must provide notice of all meetings. A common question is: "If two other members of the board and I meet in the school lunchroom to discuss school business, do we have to post a notice the day before?" The answer involves the distinction between an "open" meeting and a "noticed" meeting.

As noted previously, an "open" meeting is any meeting of three or more board members. A "noticed" meeting, on the other hand, is any meeting where either of the following occurs:

- A formal action of the board is taken (e.g., adoption of a policy or other motion); or
- A majority (or quorum if less than a majority) of the board is present or is expected to be present.

The meeting of three board members, assuming a quorum for this board is more than three, in the lunchroom is an open meeting, but it is not a meeting for which notice must be posted in advance. If, however, the charter school has seven board members and four members meet to discuss school business, that meeting must be noticed.

Similarly, a situation where board members are attending a school event (e.g., an open house or basketball game) does not require an advance notice unless board business is discussed.



Minutes

Under Open Meetings Law, charter school boards must keep minutes of meetings and make them publicly available.²⁴ While the law does not specify a timeframe, best practice is to adopt minutes at the next meeting and post them, typically on the school's website.

Executive Session

The statute provides that a charter school board may call an executive session to discuss certain matters but cannot do so merely to hold private discussions. All discussions of the charter school board must occur in open session unless there is specific statutory authority for holding an executive session on a topic.

Executive Session Purposes

The specific grounds for which a charter school board may meet in executive session are listed in C.R.S. §24-6-402(4) as follows:

- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(a): Discussions regarding acquisition, transfer, or sale of property;
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(b): Conferences with an attorney to receive legal advice;
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(c): Matters required to be kept confidential by state or federal law (e.g., student records);
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(d): Security arrangements or investigations;
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(e): Determining contract negotiation strategies;
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(f): Personnel matters, unless the person(s) being discussed request an open meeting (Note that “personnel matters” does not include discussions concerning a member of the charter school board or the appointment of a person to fill a vacancy on the board. Nor does the topic include discussion of general personnel policies like salary schedules. The exception occurs only when an individual employee or group of employees is discussed.);
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(g): Consideration of documents protected from disclosure under the Open Records Act per C.R.S. §24-72-202(6.5) (for more on this see the discussion of that act below); or
- C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(h): Discussion of individual students where public discussion would adversely affect the student(s) involved.

Executive Session Process

To enter executive session, the board must:

- Announce the general topic using as much detail as possible without compromising the purpose of the executive session and cite the relevant legal provision.
- Vote by a two-thirds majority.

²⁴ C.R.S. §24-6-402(2)(d)



No Formal Action

Executive sessions are for discussion only. No motions or votes can take place. Any formal action must occur in an open meeting. For example, If the board wants to adopt a motion after discussing it in executive session, it must first resolve itself out of executive session into an open meeting and then hold the vote.

Minutes

The statute has special provisions for the minutes of executive sessions. First, if the charter school board resolves itself into executive session the minutes of the regular open meeting must state the general topic of discussion (e.g., “consultations with legal counsel,” “determining contract negotiation strategy,” etc.). The minutes of the regular open meeting should not include the actual discussions that occurred in the executive session.

Recording of Discussion, not Subject to Open Records

The discussions that occur in executive sessions must be electronically recorded. At the start of the recorded executive session, the statutory provision allowing for executive session should be cited so it is recorded. The charter school is required to keep the recording of an executive session for at least 90 days, after which it may discard the recording. The recording of an executive session of the charter school board is not open to the public unless the school agrees to open the minutes or is ordered to produce the recording by a court.

There are two exceptions²⁵ when it comes to recording executive session discussions:

Exception for Discussions of Individual Students

The statute specifically excepts from its provisions discussions of individual students at the school. Therefore, if the purpose of the executive session is to discuss an individual student (for e.g., discipline, etc.) no recording is required.

Exception for Consultation with an Attorney

The statute also provides an exception to the executive session recording for consultations with attorneys. However, if the charter school board takes advantage of this exception, the attorney must sign a statement attached to the minutes of the regular meeting that the portion of the executive session for which a recording was not kept constituted a privileged attorney-client communication. In addition, the chair of the meeting must sign a statement in the minutes affirming that the portion of the meeting that was not recorded was confined to a subject for which it is proper to hold an executive session under the statute.

²⁵ C.R.S. §24-6-402(2)(d.5)(II)(B)



Sunshine List

A little-known and used part of the Open Meetings Law requires the secretary of each local public body to keep a record of individuals requesting meeting notices and provide them individual notice in advance of any meeting.²⁶

Head of School Appointment

The Open Meetings Law includes a provision that dictates how boards should publicly share information about hiring a head of school.²⁷ Specifically, the board's search committee must establish job search goals, a draft job description, deadlines for applications, requirements for applicants, selection procedures, and the time frame for hiring the head of school. The law then requires the school board to make public the list of finalists for the position no later than 14 days prior to hiring one of the finalists to fill the position. An offer of employment cannot be made prior to this public notice.

Board Discussion:

How does your method for posting public meeting notices encourage access to meetings for families and the community?

How can you improve your public meeting notification practices?

How are you leveraging technology to enhance public access to meetings?

Open Records Law

Like the Open Meetings Law, the Open Records Act²⁸ declares as its general purpose that all public records shall be open for inspection by the public. The general rule of the Open Records Act is also quite simple: All public records shall be open for inspection by any person at reasonable times.

"Record" Defined

The Open Records Act defines the term "record" extremely broadly to include practically any kind of written, electronic, or recorded communication or document imaginable. Note that the term specifically includes e-mail and generally any work product paid for with public funds. Thus, charter school board members should assume that any e-mails among board members will be subject to open records law, and copies of any communications may be requested by any member of the public who wishes to see them. Charter school board members should never use their personal email accounts for board business communications.

²⁶ C.R.S. §24-6-402(7)

²⁷ C.R.S. §24-6-402(3.5)

²⁸ C.R.S. §24-72-200 *et seq.*



Charging for Copies

The charter school may charge up to twenty-five cents (\$0.25) per standard page for copies.²⁹ It may charge actual costs for non-standard pages. It may not charge a document fee for electronic documents. As of July 1, 2024, the school may also charge up to \$41.37³⁰ per hour (after the first hour, which must be free), designed to cover costs for staff time for research and retrieval in responding to the request. This rate increases periodically.

The statute requires the copy, research, and retrieval fees to be published on the custodian's website and in published written policy prior to the request. In other words, if the fee schedule is not published prior to the request, no fee may be charged. The statute allows the school to require fees to be paid prior to producing the records.

Procedures for the Production of Open Records

The Open Records Act contains very specific and detailed instructions for the production of public records to a requesting member of the public. The school should designate a "custodian of records" to respond to requests. Generally speaking, the procedures require the charter school to make the records available to the requesting party within three working days of the request, starting the first business day after the request is received. This can be extended up to 7 working days based on extenuating circumstances specified in statute.³¹ In no event can extenuating circumstances apply to a request for a single, specifically identified document.

Exceptions

While the general policy of the State of Colorado is that all records are open records subject to inspection, there are a number of exceptions.³² Unless a record falls within a specific exception, it must be produced. Schools are permitted to manipulate or redact information that is excludable to ensure that the exempted information cannot be seen.

Some exemptions applicable to charter schools are the following:

- Producing the record would violate state or federal law (i.e., individual student records);
- Test questions, scoring keys, and other examination data;
- Real estate appraisals relating to property acquisitions until title has passed;
- Medical, mental health, sociological, and scholastic achievement data on individual persons;
- Personnel files (Note that notwithstanding this exception, any employment contract or other information regarding amounts paid to individual employees and amounts paid under settlement agreements must be produced);
- Letters of reference;
- Privileged information (e.g. attorney-client communications);
- Addresses and telephone numbers of students (such information may not be provided in, for example, a school directory unless specific authorization is obtained); and
- Records of sexual harassment complaints.

The League strongly recommends that schools develop and communicate a process for taking open records requests, including having an Open Records Request Form available

²⁹ C.R.S. §24-72-205 *et seq.*

³⁰ Per C.R.S. §24-72-205 (6)(b), this amount is scheduled for review and possible update as of July 1, 2019.

³¹ C.R.S. 24-72-203(3)(b)

³² C.R.S. 24-72-202 through 204



so such requests can be responded to promptly. It is always advisable to alert your school's legal counsel for guidance every time you receive a CORA request.

A Sample Colorado Open Records Act policy, provided by the Charter School Institute, is located in [Appendix 3](#).

Legal Protection

A common question asked is whether serving on a charter school board exposes individual members to personal legal risk. Charter school board members do have some legal immunity as described below. Additionally, the League strongly recommends, and most authorizers require through the contract, that the school obtain directors and officers (D&O) insurance.

Qualified and Official Immunity for Public Officials

Charter school board members are considered public officials and may be entitled to qualified and official immunity in certain situations.

Qualified immunity³³ shields public officials from liability for civil damages as long as their conduct does not violate “clearly established” statutory or constitutional rights that a reasonable person in their position would have known. It exists to ensure that civil servants can perform their duties without the constant fear of litigation.

The legal standard for qualified immunity involves two key questions:

1. Was the law governing the official’s conduct clearly established?
2. Could a reasonable official have believed the conduct was lawful under that law?

Official immunity³⁴ protects public officials from liability for negligence related to discretionary (i.e., judgment-based) duties. However, officials can still be held liable when performing ministerial duties—tasks that are mandatory and involve little or no personal judgment.

As stated by the Missouri Supreme Court:

“The doctrine of official immunity recognizes that society's compelling interest in vigorous and effective administration of public affairs requires that the law protect those individuals who... must daily exercise their best judgment in conducting the public's business.”

(Green v. Lebanon R-III Sch. Dist., 13 S.W.3d 278 (Mo. 2000))

³³ <http://definitions.uslegal.com/q/qualified-immunity/>

³⁴ <http://definitions.uslegal.com/d/doctrine-of-official-immunity/>



Volunteer Immunity Laws

Board members also receive protection under the Colorado Volunteer Service Act,³⁵ which aims to balance the public's right to seek legal redress with the need to encourage volunteer service.³⁶

This Act provides immunity from civil liability for acts or omissions by a volunteer acting in good faith, unless the behavior is willful or wanton. Specifically, it grants immunity if:

- The volunteer is covered under the federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 (42 U.S.C. §14501 et seq.).
The injury or damage was not caused by misconduct or another exclusion under the federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997.³⁷

However, this immunity **does not** apply to:

- Acts of negligence involving a motor vehicle.
- Liability claims against the nonprofit or governmental entity itself.
- Violations of federal statutes such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Civil Rights laws.

Directors and Officers Insurance

D&O insurance is an essential safeguard for your school's board of directors and officers. It provides financial protection in the event that a board member is personally named in a lawsuit related to alleged wrongful acts in their official capacity.

For example:

- A creditor may sue the board for poor investment decisions that result in financial loss.
- An employee may file a lawsuit claiming wrongful termination.

D&O policies generally cover legal defense costs and damages awarded if the board is found liable (except in cases of criminal or fraudulent behavior).

However, D&O insurance typically **does not cover**:

- Property damage or bodily injury (covered under separate school policies)
- Claims stemming from criminal, fraudulent, or intentionally harmful actions

Your board should carefully review its D&O policy to fully understand what is covered and what is excluded and whether the policy includes employment-related claims, which are among the most common.³⁸

³⁵ C.R.S. §13-21-115.5

³⁶ C.R.S. §13-21-115.5 (2)(c)

³⁷ C.R.S. §13-21-115.5 (4)(a)

³⁸ Pakroo, P. (n.d.). *What types of insurance should a nonprofit buy?* Nolo: Law for All.
<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/insurance-types-for-nonprofits-32393.html>



Board Discussion:

What is your school's CORA Request Policy? What is your process for updating these policies as legal requirements change over time?

Board Action:

Review your D&O policy. What does it cover? Does it need to be modified?

Additional Applicable Federal and State Laws

Federal Laws

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)³⁹ - Establishes general provisions for all programs administered by or under the U.S. Department of Education, including funding, accountability, and support for disadvantaged students.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)⁴⁰ - Protects the privacy of student education records and grants parents (and eligible students) the right to access and request corrections to those records.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964⁴¹ - Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

Age Discrimination Act of 1975⁴² - Prohibits discrimination based on age in any program or activity receiving federal funds.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972⁴³ - Prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended⁴⁴ - Prohibits discrimination based on disability by public entities, including public charter schools and local educational agencies, regardless of federal funding status.

³⁹ P.L. 114-95

⁴⁰ 34 C.F.R. Part 99

⁴¹ 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.

⁴² 42 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6107

⁴³ 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688

⁴⁴ 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131 et seq.



National School Lunch Act⁴⁵ - Establishes the framework for the National School Lunch Program, including student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards⁴⁶ and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) - Provide federal guidance on the proper use of federal education funds, including requirements for financial management, accountability, and compliance in schools and districts receiving federal funding.

Colorado Statutes

The Colorado Charter Schools Act (1993)⁴⁷ - First enacted in 1993, this act provides the legal framework for establishing and operating charter schools in the state. The Act was designed to improve student learning and expand educational choices within the public school system.

Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA)⁴⁸ - This act protects individuals from discrimination based on disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, national origin, or ancestry. CADA applies to all public schools, including charter schools, and covers various aspects of school life, such as admissions, academic programs, student treatment, and employment.

Title 22 of the Colorado Revised Statutes⁴⁹ - Title 22 outlines the laws and regulations governing public education in Colorado, which applies to charter schools, except where expressly exempt under the Colorado Charter Schools Act. It serves as the foundation for how the state's education system operates.

Legal Requirements Related to Special Education

Special Education Overview

What is Special Education?

Special Education is specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Do charter schools have to provide special education services?

Yes. Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, charter schools must be open to all students within the district, have non-discriminatory admissions policies, and serve students with disabilities without discrimination, consistent with federal and state laws. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has stated that charter schools may

⁴⁵ P.L. 396

⁴⁶ 2 CFR Part 200

⁴⁷ C.R.S. 22-30.5-101 through C.R.S. 22-30.5-704

⁴⁸ C.R.S. 24-34-302 (2)

⁴⁹ C.R.S. 22-1-101 through C.R.S. 22-107-105



not ask parents to waive their child's right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in order to enroll in the charter school.⁵⁰

Federal and State Special Education Laws

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973⁵¹ and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)⁵² - Prohibit discrimination based on disability in public schools, including charter schools. Both laws require schools to provide reasonable accommodations, use a broad definition of disability, ensure equal access to programs, services, and activities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)⁵³ - IDEA is a federal law that guarantees eligible children with disabilities the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Students eligible under IDEA are also protected under Section 504.

Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA)⁵⁴ - ECEA is Colorado's special education law. It aligns with IDEA and includes additional state-specific provisions guiding how students with disabilities are identified and served in Colorado schools, including charter schools.

Special Education Services in Charter Schools

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are responsible for delivering special education services. In Colorado, LEAs are referred to as Administrative Units (AUs).

An AU oversees and ensures compliance with special education requirements, which may or may not be the same entity as the charter school's authorizer. Charter schools should collaborate with the special education director of the AU to develop and implement appropriate special education services.

Types of Administrative Units:

- Large School Districts - Large school districts often serve as both the authorizer and the AU.
- Charter School Institute (CSI) - The Charter School Institute (CSI) acts as both authorizer and AU for its schools. Non-CSI charter schools can elect to join CSI's AU even though they are authorized by a different district.
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) - Small districts may contract with a BOCES to serve as the AU.

⁵⁰ OCR-00105. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-201612-504-charter-school.pdf>

⁵¹ 29 U.S.C. § 794

⁵² 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131 et seq. (1990)

⁵³ 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.

⁵⁴ Article 20 of Title 22, C.R.S.



- Charter schools can form and apply to be their own Special Education AU outside of their district.⁵⁵

Service Delivery Models:

Charter schools must coordinate with their AU to determine how services and funding are delivered. Common models include:

- Insurance Model - The charter pays a per-pupil fee; the AU provides services directly.
- Contracted Model - The charter receives funding and hires third parties to deliver services.
- Hybrid/Modified Model - A mix of both models, based on a negotiated agreement with the AU.

Students with disabilities who attend charter schools, and their parents, retain all rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Administrative Unit (AU) is ultimately responsible for ensuring IDEA compliance for all its schools, including charter schools. This means the AU must:

- Provide special education and related services to students with disabilities in charter schools in the same manner and to the same extent as in traditional public schools, including delivering services onsite at the charter school.
- Allocate special education funding to charter schools on an equitable basis, either through in-kind services or a proportional share of funding based on the number of students with disabilities enrolled.

The specific terms for delivering services and funding are outlined in the charter contract negotiated between the charter school and its authorizer.

Board Discussion:

Who is your school's AU? What service delivery model do they provide?

Board Action:

Review your charter contract for language pertaining to special education. Ensure you and your authorizer are compliant with your contract.

⁵⁵ C.R.S. 22-20-103



Legal Responsibilities Case Studies

Define the board's response in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 4](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: CORA Request Received by a Board Member

Scenario: A charter school board member receives a Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) request via email from a community member asking for access to recent board communications about the newly adopted school discipline policy decision.

Case Study 2: Serving Students with Disabilities

Scenario: A parent raises concerns during public comment that their child with an IEP is not receiving the services outlined in their plan since transferring to the charter school.

Case Study 3: Informal Chat Turns Into Policy Discussion

Scenario: Three board members (a quorum of the board) are volunteering at the Book Fair. After the event ends, they begin chatting informally in the library. The conversation shifts from logistics to discussing the school's fundraising policy.

Case Study 4: Email Chain Becomes a Group Discussion

Scenario: A board member emails the full board to add a discussion topic to the upcoming agenda. Other board members reply-all, sharing their thoughts and ideas on the discipline policy.



Chapter Two: Financial Oversight

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Describe the charter school board's responsibilities for financial oversight.
- Identify and interpret core financial statements (e.g., balance sheet, budget vs. actuals, cash flow statements).
- Explain the board's role in the budget development process.
- Summarize the requirements of the Colorado Financial Transparency Act.
- Articulate strategies for ensuring sufficient financial resources, such as the development of an annual fundraising plan.

Two of a charter school board's most critical responsibilities are ensuring proper financial oversight and securing adequate resources to support the school's mission. These areas are also where many charter schools have historically encountered significant challenges. While it's tempting to focus on exciting programmatic initiatives, maintaining strong financial oversight must remain a top priority. Without a solid financial and operational foundation, the school cannot effectively implement its educational program or serve students well. In addition, the financial operation is how a school resources the mission, vision, and strategic plan.

Several common financial pitfalls that have emerged in Colorado charter schools include:

- The board places full trust in the school's administration and assumes financial oversight is unnecessary.
- One board member has financial expertise, and the rest of the board relies solely on that individual to manage all financial matters.
- Urgent, short-term issues consistently distract the board from regular financial monitoring.
- The board lacks an active and engaged Finance Committee to guide its fiscal responsibilities.
- The school lacks a quality financial leader to manage the many diverse requirements of school finance and business operations.
- The school fails to meet the required bond ratios related to its bonded indebtedness.

To avoid these pitfalls, it is essential that **every board member** has a working understanding of the school's financial health. This includes knowing how to:

- Adhering to the Board's financial policies and procedures
- Read and interpret monthly financial statements and identify financial trends
- Evaluate and approve the annual budget, and
- Understand and monitor key reporting requirements.

If your board lacks this collective knowledge, prioritize financial training as part of upcoming meetings. Investing time in financial literacy will strengthen the board's ability to make informed decisions and safeguard the school's future.



I. Charter School Funding

How Charter Schools Are Funded

In Colorado, charter schools are primarily funded through Per Pupil Revenue (PPR), which is allocated annually by the state legislature. The number of students each school receives funding for is based on an official student count taken in October of each year. Because PPR is directly tied to student enrollment, increasing the number of students attending a school is the most direct way for a school to increase its revenue. All school districts and charter schools operate on a fiscal calendar (July 1st through June 30th).

Schools likely receive additional revenue that falls into four general categories:

1. Local Revenue (i.e., Student fees, facility rental income, and revenue from voter-approved mill levy overrides)
2. State Revenue (i.e., Charter School Capital Construction funding, READ Act funding, at-risk student allocations, and other categorical programs)
3. Federal Revenue (i.e., Title I grants (for schools with high percentages of low-income students), National School Lunch Program reimbursements, and IDEA special education funding)
4. Other Revenue (i.e., Private grants, individual or corporate donations, and interest earned on cash reserves or investments)

Not all charter schools receive all of these revenue sources. Eligibility and funding amounts often depend on factors such as student demographics, school location, and authorizer practices. Board members should understand the school's full funding portfolio and how each revenue source supports the school's mission and operations.⁵⁶

Charter School Expenses

The largest expense for any charter school is salaries and benefits, which generally account for 60% to 80% of the school's total budget.

Unlike traditional district schools, charter schools typically cover facility costs from their general fund, as they often lack access to district-owned buildings. On average, facility expenses account for 9% to 15% of a charter school's budget, although this percentage can be higher.

The remainder of the budget is allocated to items such as staff development, instructional materials and supplies, technology, and cash reserves.

⁵⁶ House Bill 24-1448



Public School Accounting

Schools are required to follow the Colorado Department of Education's Chart of Accounts for both budgeting and for their annual financial audit. The most common fund accounts are as follows:

Fund	Source of Funding	How is budget allocation determined?	Can funds be transferred?	Can remaining balance be carried forward to the next year?
General Fund	State funding/taxpayer	Allocations per enrollment (PPR-per pupil revenue)	Yes, funds can be transferred within the General Fund but not to other funds	Yes
Special Revenue Fund - Student Activity	Student fees, fines, fundraisers, and donations	Amount of revenue received	No, monies are to be spent for the reason they were collected from students, parents, and/or community	Yes, however schools should not collect fees that are higher than needed for that year's expenses. Fee programs should not have a remaining balance at the end of the year.
Special Revenue Fund - Grants (if not included in the General Fund)	Special Revenue from state, federal, and private grants	Grant award amount	Yes, funds can be transferred within the Grant Fund with grantor approval but not to other funds	Determined by grantor

II. Indicators of Good Board Financial Oversight

The following indicators, adapted from BoardStrong,⁵⁷ can help your board analyze areas of strength and weakness in your current governance practices. Reflect on your board's work using this indicator quiz.

Financial Oversight Quiz	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. The Board has established sound financial policies and internal financial controls and reviews them annually.			

⁵⁷ BoardStrong. (n.d.). *The good governance guide*. <https://boardstrong.org/resources/the-good-governance-guide/>



2. The Board complies with all statutory budget requirements to include: required resolutions, account codes, posting and deadline compliance and the Uniform Budget Summary.			
3. The Board approves an annual operating budget (based on accurate enrollment projections) before the start of the fiscal year.			
4. The Board annually reviews and updates a long-term projected budget for guiding the next 5+ years.			
5. The board sets budget priorities based on vision, mission, school performance, and strategic planning, including priorities for allocating surplus funding and a contingency budget should revenues fall short of projections.			
6. The Board approves large expenditures in excess of a predetermined limit.			
7. The Board reviews monthly financial reports to monitor budget compliance and fiscal health, and responds appropriately when performance varies from original plans.			
8. All board members understand how to read the financial reports provided by the school's administration.			
9. The Board approves the annual audit after it has been recommended by the finance/audit committee and/or presented by the auditor to the Board.			
10. The Board actively oversees the organization's investments and financial assets. The Board understands its investment policy, where the school's cash and investments are housed and how they are managed by school administration.			
11. The Board understands the organization's exposure to risk and actively manages that exposure.			
12. The Board manages financial risk by maintaining the TABOR-required emergency reserve, in addition to cash on hand for 2 or more months of expenditures (i.e. 17-25% of annual budget), and unrestricted reserves sufficient to cover the equivalent of multiple salaries should unexpected expenses arrive.			
13. The Board approves the executive compensation level and ensures that it is within the range of community norms and within legal bounds regulating excessive compensation.			



14. The board is comfortable asking hard questions and addressing challenging financial matters when needed.			
15. The board understands its bonded indebtedness and bond compliance requirements, if applicable.			
16. The Board adopts it's own set of financial policies, usually waiving out of authorizer policies, to manage financial operations to include: Cash management and investments, budgeting, procurement, expenditure reimbursements, debt authorization, and other applicable financial areas.			

III. School Financial Health

A key step in strong financial oversight is understanding what defines a financially healthy organization. These principles apply to charter schools just as they do to other nonprofit and for-profit entities. A financially sound school will consistently demonstrate the following characteristics:

- **Liquidity:** The school can meet its current liabilities with available cash and reserves.
- **Positive Net Asset Trend:** The school shows an annual increase in unrestricted end-of-year net assets, indicating long-term financial sustainability.
- **Budget Discipline:** The school consistently operates within its approved budget.
- **Compliance with Public School Requirements:** This includes maintaining a legally required reserve under TABOR and adhering to Financial Transparency laws.

TABOR (Taxpayer's Bill of Rights): A provision in the Colorado Constitution that limits the amount of revenue governments, including public schools, can collect and spend. It also requires public schools to maintain a reserve equal to at least 3% of fiscal year spending, to be used only for emergencies.

- **Efficient Use of Resources:** The school maintains appropriate student-to-teacher ratios and a balanced allocation of expenditures between instructional and support services.
 - **Facilities spending:** Ideally 12–15% of per-pupil revenue (PPR), not exceeding 20% for new schools.
 - **Salaries and benefits:** Typically 60–80% of PPR, broken down as:
 - 8–15% for administrative staff
 - 45–60% for instructional staff
- **Cash Flow Management:** The school can meet its cash obligations throughout the year. A typical benchmark is maintaining 30–60 days of unrestricted cash on hand, though requirements may vary depending on bond covenants and authorizer expectations.



- **Realistic Revenue Projections:** Enrollment projections used to estimate revenue are based on credible and attainable figures. Enrollment is vital to a charter school's success since it is by far the largest revenue line item in the school's budget.
- **Accurate FTE and Compensation Projections:** Salaries and benefits are usually the largest expenditure category for a charter school. Accurate projections for salary and benefit line items combined with FTE authorizations are critical to managing your most important resource, your staff.

By monitoring these indicators, board members can better ensure the school's financial health and long-term viability.

IV. Recommended Financial Policies

To ensure strong financial health and reliable financial operations, the governing board of a charter school should develop and adopt a clear set of financial policies. These policies should promote accurate, timely financial tracking and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. At a minimum, the following policy areas should be addressed:

- **Budget Policy:** Define a comprehensive budgeting process aligned with state statutes. Policies should cover budget development, revision, approval timelines, submission to the authorizer, and regular monitoring and reporting practices.
- **Fiscal Management Policies:** Establish procedures to ensure compliance with school finance laws and regulations. These policies should create a clear system of checks and balances, including proper segregation of duties and defined roles and responsibilities for financial transactions.
- **Credit/Debit/Purchase Card Policy:** Outline the proper use of school-issued cards, including:
 - Authorized users
 - Spending limits
 - Receipt submission and recordkeeping
 - Payment processes
 - Handling of fees, rewards, or rebates
- **Procurement Policy:** Details the requirements for purchasing competition and board approvals. A good procurement policy also establishes and restricts who is authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the school.
- **Cash Management and Investment Policy:** Establishes investment authority, eligible investments, and reporting requirements.
- **Debt Policy:** TABOR restricts debt acquisition, and a good debt policy details who is eligible to incur debt, whether in the form of leases, loans, or bonds, on behalf of the school.

By adopting and regularly reviewing these policies, the board can build a strong financial foundation and fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities with confidence and transparency.



Board Discussion:

Reflecting on your responses to the Financial Oversight Quiz, review the characteristics of financially healthy schools and the recommended financial policies. Discuss the following:

- In which areas of financial oversight is your board currently strong?
- Where are there gaps or areas for improvement?
- What specific indicators of financial health should the board monitor more closely?

Board Action:

Develop a plan to strengthen the board's financial oversight based on the areas identified for improvement. Action steps may include:

- Scheduling targeted financial training through the Colorado League of Charter Schools
- Creating or updating financial policies and procedures
- Engaging a financial expert to advise the board on budget planning, financial reporting, and long-term sustainability

V. Reviewing Financial Documents

The board should ensure that all documents required for board review are being presented according to policy. At a minimum, this should include a monthly review of budget vs. actuals, which is sometimes called a profit and loss statement or an income statement and balance sheet. If schools have a tight cash flow, the board may also choose to review a monthly cash flow statement.

We strongly recommend that schools have an active Finance Committee that also reviews these key financial documents on a monthly basis. The Finance Committee should include the board president, board treasurer, school leader, business manager, and two or three other people (e.g., parents/guardians, community members) with expertise in finance and/or accounting. The Finance Committee would receive and review the financial statements after the school has closed the school's books for the month, and prior to the board meeting. The Finance Committee can then provide any recommendations or share concerns with the full board for their consideration at their next meeting.

The following suggestions are designed to assist board members without a financial background in reviewing key financial documents.

Balance Sheet

- ✓ Review the total amount of money in **bank accounts**. Does it seem adequate to cover expenses until the next per-pupil revenue payment is received? Understand average monthly disbursements, especially large items (e.g., payroll, benefits, rent/facility financing payment, utilities, etc.), and make sure there is enough money in the bank for sufficient cash flow.



- ✓ Review **assets** and make sure the school's assets appear here (e.g., lease deposits, capitalized furniture/equipment). The assets shouldn't change much throughout the year. Make sure you understand any changes to the school's assets.
- ✓ Review **liability** accounts, particularly any payables. Look for any large amounts or significant changes.
- ✓ Review **fund balance** accounts in order to properly understand the school's reserves.

Budget vs. Actuals

- ✓ Ensure that the profit and loss statement is being presented as a **budget vs. actual report**.
- ✓ Review all major **income categories** and compare with budgeted amounts. Are there any significant shortfalls? If so, how is the administration preparing to handle that? Does the board understand *why* there are shortfalls?
- ✓ Review all major **expense categories** (sorted by both program and object codes) and compare with budgeted amounts. In areas where the school is over budget, be sure you understand *why* the school is spending more than anticipated. How is the administration planning to offset any higher-than-expected expenses?
- ✓ Make sure the administration has a way of tracking and accounting for **significant budget deviations** to ensure that the school will end the year with a balanced budget. This document should be shared with the board.
- ✓ Determine whether the school's **total expenses** will exceed budgeted expenses. If this is the case, the school is at risk of violating state law for public entities. Even if a school receives more revenue than expected, actual expenditures cannot exceed budgeted expenditures. If this is likely to happen, determine when a revised budget will be presented and approved by the board.
- ✓ Request reports on **restricted funds** (e.g., grants, mill levy, title funding, etc.) as needed to ensure that spending restrictions are being met and that required spending will be completed by year-end.

Note: Schools that contract with an EMO, Collaborative, or other external service provider to provide back office and other financial accounting support should still have board and committee policies and procedures for reviewing the financial documents as part of their board oversight of the contracted service provider. This process should be spelled out clearly in the agreement between the Board and the service provider.

Annual Audit

An annual financial audit conducted by a third-party certified public accountant is an essential aspect of strong financial oversight. Authorizers will require this of their charter schools in compliance with CCR (Colorado Code of Regulations) 301-88: Standards for Charter Schools and Charter School Authorizers and state law

The purpose of an audit is to verify the accuracy of the school's financial statements, which the school's administration creates. As a result, the auditor should be hired by and report to the



board of directors, not the school's administration. Were the school administrator to take responsibility for hiring the auditor, this would likely pose a conflict of interest. Thus, the process of securing an auditor should fall upon the Board and its Finance Committee. Please note that it is not the primary function of the auditor to determine fraud, although if found, the auditor is required to disclose it.

Note: State Audit Law allows for an entity to request an audit exemption if the total activities in its revenues and/or expenditures fall below \$750,000. Eligible schools still need to request the exemption via submission of the appropriate form to the Colorado Department of Education. These forms are available through the Office of State Auditor at <http://leg.colorado.gov/agencies/office-state-auditor/forms>. Check your contract with your charter authorizer to see if the audit requirement differs from the statute.

We recommend that charter schools use the same auditor for three to five consecutive years. If the school is working with a large CPA firm, the school might stay with the firm for a longer period, as long as the lead auditor changes periodically. For schools that are seeking a new auditor, we recommend using an RFP (request for proposal) process. The RFP should be developed by the board's finance and/or audit committee. A sample RFP is included below. Charter school boards should modify this, as needed, to meet their needs.

Sample Request for Proposals (RFP) for Audit Services

Background: The mission of ABC Charter School is to _____. ABC Charter School opened in XX and currently serves XX students in kindergarten through 8th grade. ABC Charter School is both a governmental entity as a public charter school and is a non-profit entity incorporated with the Colorado Secretary of State and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

The ABC Charter School is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board's by-laws, fiscal policies, and contract with the authorizer (XYZ) require the school to perform an annual audit. ABC Charter School desires the service of a Colorado auditing firm to conduct an audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 20XX with such audit to be completed along with an accompanying management letter by September 30, 20XX.

Standards: The auditor will be required to perform the following at a minimum:

- 1) To conduct the audit in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and the principles of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).
- 2) The auditor should understand fund accounting and the modified accrual method of financial reporting.
- 3) The auditor will test compliance of the organization with the ABC Charter School Board's adopted financial policies.
- 4) The auditor will provide a report to management addressing any concerns with the school's financial practices or financial position.
- 5) The auditor will complete Form 990, the tax return required of 501(c)3 organizations.



Process: Upon selecting an auditor, the auditor will meet with the Board's Finance Committee and key staff, including the school leader and business manager, to review the scope of the audit, establish clear meeting dates, and information requirements and deadlines.

The auditor will have direct access to staff, Finance Committee members, and the Board of Directors. Upon completion of the draft audit and management letter, the auditor will meet with the Finance Committee and key staff to discuss the draft results. The auditor's chain of command will be to the school leader or his/her designees for access to books and records and to the Finance Committee for acceptance of work performed.

The auditor will then proceed to produce a final audit with XX copies to be presented to the Finance Committee and Board of Directors for review and acceptance.

Responses to the RFP: A responding CPA firm must submit the following and its response shall be limited to 5 pages:

- 1) Provide a short history of the firm.
- 2) Provide a brief resume of the partner assigned and resume of anyone else who will be assigned to the account.
- 3) Provide information on the work the firm has done with other charter schools, public entities and non-profit organizations.
- 4) Provide three references from Colorado charter schools or public entities in which the firm or the principal partner has acted as auditor in the past two years.
- 5) Provide certification that the audit firm and partner assigned are not currently being investigated by an industry regulatory body.
- 6) Provide a total cost as a fixed price for the audit service. Please include the price for a one-time engagement, as well as for a three-year commitment.

Timeline: Responses are due to ABC Charter School Finance Committee no later than the close of business on XX.

Supporting Documentation: If it would assist the firm in comprehending the scope of the work involved, ABC Charter School's June 30, 20XX audited financial statements and FY XX budget are available upon request.

Questions: Inquiries can be directed to Jane Doe, Board Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair, at 303-123-4567 or jdoe@abccharterschool.org.

Audits for Groups of Schools

Certain groupings of charter schools will have different auditing requirements, depending on whether they are legally tied together. Here is a brief summary of the types of charter groupings and resulting implications for the annual independent audit(s), though legal counsel should always be engaged to ensure the appropriate process is followed.

- **Charter Network:** A grouping of multiple school locations that are treated as one charter school under one charter contract. This arrangement may include one or more schools under different authorizers. In this instance, one multi-site audit should be conducted for all locations and submitted to the main authorizer of the network, including locations that



are governed by another district. Those schools under a separate authorizer from the main network could be asked to conduct a separate audit for the campus(es) governed by them, as well.

- **Charter Collaborative:** Schools that group together and form a collaborative for the purpose of providing centralized services to the member schools. In this structure, each school needs a separate, independent audit that is submitted to each of their specific authorizers. The collaborative itself also requires a separate, independent audit.
- **Charter Management Organization (CMO):** For the purposes of audits, this is defined as a separate organization that operates one or more charter school(s), but is a separate organization from the charter school. In these cases, a separate audit would need to be completed for each campus.
- **Education Management Organization (EMO):** This is an outside organization contracted to operate a charter school. In this instance, a separate audit would need to be completed for each campus.

Board Discussion:

Reflect on your board's financial oversight practices:

- How much time is spent reviewing financial documents during monthly meetings?
- Are all board members actively engaged in the discussion of financial documents, demonstrating an understanding of the reports?
- OR, are financial reports routinely accepted without questions or meaningful dialogue?

Board Action:

If not all board members are confident in reviewing and interpreting key financial documents, prioritize financial literacy at your next board meeting. Schedule time for a focused training session on:

- The purpose and structure of each financial report (e.g., balance sheet, income statement, cash flow)
- What the numbers mean
- Key indicators of financial health or risk and trends

This training can be led by your school's business manager, board treasurer, or a qualified school finance professional, depending on the board's needs. Strengthening financial understanding across the board ensures better oversight and more informed decision-making.



VI. Budget Development

A school typically begins the budgeting process in the winter prior to the coming school year. The budget development process should be driven primarily by the school's administration with input and review by the Finance Committee and Board. The Board should set an annual timeline for the budgeting process, and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the budget is reasonable and that it reflects the school's mission and priorities. The Board is also responsible for approving the budget annually. The board should refer to the charter contract to understand the authorizer's requirements for budget submission. This includes when an annual budget must be approved by the board and submitted to the authorizer, and requirements around submission of revised budgets.

Budget Cycle

A sample budget cycle is included here:

January	▪ School leader, business manager, and board treasurer collaboratively develop a draft budget for the upcoming academic year based on actuals in the current year and identified strategic priorities. ▪ Key aspects of the draft budget (e.g. staffing plans, curricular areas that need investment, etc.) are shared with the key staff. ▪ Feedback is gathered and adjustments made.
February	▪ Draft budget is reviewed by Finance Committee. Feedback is gathered and adjustments are made. ▪ Draft budget is presented to the Board, along with any recommendations or concerns identified by the Finance Committee. ▪ Board members conduct an initial review of the budget.
March	▪ School leader and business manager make any changes to the draft budget based on Board review and feedback. ▪ Finance Committee reviews budget again. ▪ Near-final version of budget is presented to the Board again with any final recommendations or concerns identified by the Finance Committee. ▪ Board of Directors approves preliminary budget.
April	✓ The school leader can begin renewing offers of employment and making any new hires, subject to board approval of the budget.
May	Board approves Proposed Budget by adopting the required Appropriation Resolution, Interfund Borrowing Resolution and Use of Beginning Fund



	Balance Resolution. The adopted budget should be submitted to the authorizer and posted on the school's financial transparency webpage.
November/ December	✓ In some cases, the board may need to approve a revised budget in November or December once student enrollment numbers are confirmed, the prior year's financial audit is completed, and all hiring has been completed. Boards have until 1/31 to approve a revised budget, unless the charter contract states an earlier deadline.

Reviewing Draft Budgets

Here are several tips to keep in mind when reviewing draft budgets:

- ❑ When reviewing a proposed budget, **compare projected income and expenses with historical financial data**. In other words, do the projections reflect the reality of the current year's income and expenses? It is helpful to have the administration create a spreadsheet in which three years of data are compared side-by-side (the previous fiscal year, which should already be audited; the current fiscal year, which would be year-end projections; and the proposed budget). This will help the board understand whether projections are realistic. Any significant increases or decreases should be understood by board members.
- ❑ The board should have a mechanism in place for ensuring that **board priorities, strategic planning goals** for the coming year, **Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) strategies**, etc. are supported financially in the budget. For example, if the school has determined that raising academic achievement in math is the primary focus of the coming year's UIP, this goal may need to be reflected in the budget. Or, if out-of-the-classroom experiences are an important part of the school's mission, the board should make sure that these priorities are financially supported in the budget.
- ❑ Ensure that the proposed budget includes an adequate **contingency fund** in the case of under-enrollment, other revenue shortfall, or unexpected expenses. Some schools complete a **contingency budget** each year, projecting a flat increase in per-pupil funding.
- ❑ For long-term planning, ensure that any board-dictated **year-end reserve** goals will be met with the proposed budget.
- ❑ If the budget includes any **variable income** (e.g. grants not yet received, donations, capital construction, etc.), make sure the board understands what cuts will be made in the event that the school does not receive these revenues. One way to address this is to create an alternative budget that eliminates variable income and expenses that would be covered by that income.



Five-Year Forecast

A five-year forecast outlines the school's projected financial performance over the next several years. It is a critical tool for long-term planning and sustainability, helping the board and leadership anticipate future needs and make informed decisions.

When reviewing a five-year forecast, ensure that the assumptions are realistic and aligned with both the school's strategic plan and external factors. Consider the following questions:

- Are there anticipated changes in local demographics that could impact enrollment?
- Is the school planning for major expenses, such as curriculum adoptions or technology upgrades?
- Are projected revenues and expenditures based on reasonable trends?

A strong five-year forecast should include:

- Enrollment projections with supporting assumptions
- Estimated annual increases in Per Pupil Revenue (PPR)
- Staffing plan, including anticipated hiring needs and average salary increases
- Operational expenses, adjusted for inflation or programmatic changes
- Debt service obligations and any plans for refinancing or additional borrowing

The board should review and update the five-year forecast annually as part of the budget development process and use it as a guide to ensure that the school remains financially sustainable over time.

Financial Transparency Act⁵⁸

All public charter schools are required to comply with the requirements of the Colorado Financial Transparency Act (C.R.S. §22-44-301 *et seq.*) by posting all required documents on the school's website in a timely manner (must be posted no more than 60 days after approval). This includes posting the following according to the proscribed template order:

- The Charter School's Adopted Budget - Including Uniform Budget Summary (current and prior two years)
- The Charter School's Financial Audit (current and prior two years)
- The Charter School's Salary Schedules &/or compensation policies (current and prior two years)
- List of automatic and non-automatic waivers received by the Charter School (with rationale & replacement plans for non-automatic waivers)⁵⁹
- Federal Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-PF and any associated schedules
- A link to the Authorizer's Financial Transparency webpage

⁵⁸ See guidance on CDE's website at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/sffinancialtransparency>.

⁵⁹ See <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/alertwaiverpostingcharterschools>



- A link to the state's Public Financial Transparency website (<https://coloradok12financialtransparency.com>)
- OPTIONAL: An informational summary outlining details about the school such as size, location, and assets

It is recommended that schools add a disclaimer to the financial transparency section of their website. It should remind reviewers that financial information should not be taken out of context and that questions can be directed to the school (with contact name and information included).

Best practice for charter school boards includes having a policy that defines how quickly documents must be posted to the website (for example, within one week of the board approving the documents or the reports being finalized), and also specifies who is responsible for doing the postings (for example, the business manager, technology director, or office manager).

Ensuring Adequate Financial Resources

While most of this module is dedicated to financial oversight, it is important to understand that another of the board's key responsibilities is ensuring that the school has adequate financial resources to fulfill its mission. Some key strategies for this responsibility include the following:

- ✓ **Assign the Role of Fundraising:** School fundraising is a systematic process, typically managed by a specific entity or group. Common structures include:
 - **Development or Fundraising Committee** - A board-approved committee may lead fundraising efforts.
 - **School Foundation** - Some charter schools have separate foundations charged with raising funds.
 - **Parent Teacher Organization/Association** - Some schools delegate this responsibility to the PTO or PTA.
- ✓ **Annual Fundraising Plan:** This plan should be developed by the school administration in collaboration with the school's fundraising group. It should include fundraisers, internal fundraising through parent/family/staff/board members, external fundraising through solicitation of individual and corporate donors/sponsors, revenue-generating programs, and applications to multiple grant sources. Some revenue-generating programs to consider include before/after school care/programming, pre-school, rental of facilities by outside entities, and entrepreneurial endeavors that align with the school's vision and mission.
- ✓ **Grant Writing:** Schools often delegate fundraising to a specific group, while grant-writing is a responsibility of the administration. However, the Board still has a role in pursuing grant leads and supporting the administration in developing proposals.
- ✓ **Leveraging Networks:** Board members leverage personal and business contacts to support the school and help reach fundraising targets.



- ✓ **Board Contributions:** Some boards have a policy that 100 percent of board members should make an annual financial contribution at a level that is personally meaningful. Board contributions are important for a number of reasons: 1) they help the school reach fundraising targets; 2) they demonstrate a high level of commitment to the school community; and 3) many foundations require or prefer this when making grants.



VII. District/Authorizer Considerations

Fees and Services

An authorizer may charge a charter school up to 5% of per-pupil revenue for central administrative overhead costs for services actually provided to the charter school.⁶⁰ Additionally, many charter schools and their authorizing district annually engage in the negotiation of a purchased services agreement. Purchased services are those in addition to central administration overhead costs. These may include food and nutritional services, curriculum, assessments, and custodial services.

Colorado law requires transparency regarding what these fees cover. The authorizer should provide the charter school with an annual list of personnel and services covered under administrative overhead and purchased services. Any variance between charged costs and actual costs must be reconciled.

District Financial Waivers

Charter schools should inquire with their authorizer regarding any automatic waivers for financial policies. There may be policies that do not apply to charters and are therefore automatically waived. If your authorizer does not offer automatic financial waivers, your school may want to consider waiving specific financial policies. See [Understanding Waivers](#) in Chapter 4: Navigating Risk for more information on charter school waivers.

VIII. Student Enrollment and Retention

Student enrollment and retention are driving factors that influence the financial stability of a charter school. As such, charter schools should have a clear enrollment marketing plan. The board may assist in developing and approving this plan through a committee or may simply view the plan administration creates. The basic steps in creating an enrollment marketing plan are as follows.

Step 1: Set Clear Marketing Goals

Start by identifying no more than three specific, measurable goals for the year. Use the chart below to clarify what success looks like and who you're targeting.

⁶⁰ C.R.S. 22-30.5-112



Quantifiable Goal	Target Audience	Completion Date
Example: Secure 500 applications for enrollment and increase applications from students of color by 10% over last year.	Prospective Parents	March 15, 20XX

Step 2: Define and Understand Your Target Audiences

With your goals in mind, identify up to three narrowly defined target audiences.

Recommended process:

- Define the audience (e.g., age, background, income, etc.)
- Identify initial reasons they might consider your school
- Explore how they make their decisions and how you can influence that process
- Highlight what matters most to them
- Clarify your desired action (visit, enroll, attend an event, etc.)

Target Audience	Why They Choose	How They Choose	What's Important to Them	Desired Action

Step 3: Craft a Clear and Compelling Message

Develop a value proposition and key messages that speak directly to your target audiences. Your value proposition should highlight what makes your school unique and relevant. Key messages are the primary points that support that proposition and encourage action.

Messaging Plan Template:

- **Positioning Statement:** *A one-sentence description of how your school wants to be perceived.*
- **Value Proposition:** *Why your school is the best fit for this audience.*
- **Key Messages & Supporting Points:**



Key Message	Supporting Points (Data, Facts, or Examples)
Message #1	
Message #2	
Message #3	

Step 4: Select and Align Marketing Tactics

Match your tactics to your audiences and messaging. Include a call to action and projected cost.

Target Audience	Marketing Type	Tactic/Description	Call to Action	Estimated Cost
Example: Families in 80222	Online Ads	Facebook and Google Ads featuring school video	Visit enrollment page	\$500

Step 5: Implement with Consistency

For your campaign to be effective, consistency is key across all visuals and messages.

Tips for Implementation:

- Use the same color palette, logo, and tone throughout your materials
- Align all visuals with your target audience's values and preferences
- Ensure your top-level campaign message appears in all materials
- Cross-check communications to verify key messages are present and aligned with your goals
- Also see the League's "Step Up" Guide to School Marketing and Enrollment at this link: <https://coloradoleague.org/school-services/enrollment-and-communications.html>

IV. When Your School Is Not Meeting Financial Benchmarks

The board should maintain a system for continually monitoring financial benchmarks. See [Data Dashboards](#) in Chapter 4: Navigating Risk for further guidance.

Financial instability, often driven by low enrollment or unsustainable spending, is one of the leading causes of charter school closure. If your school is falling short of key financial



benchmarks, the board must take prompt and strategic action to stabilize operations and protect the school's future.

Below are several board-level strategies to consider when the financial outlook is declining:

- Review and Revise the School's Budget
- Develop and Implement an Enrollment Plan
- Consider a Strategic Reduction in Workforce
- Expand Revenue-Generating Offerings (i.e., homeschool program, before and after care, preschool)
- Review and Evaluate Debt Obligations
- Rent Unused Facility Space (Review bond covenants and non-profit restrictions carefully to ensure rental income is permitted.)
- Explore Facility Cost Reductions
- Refinance Existing Debt

Board Discussion:

- How does your board's **budget development cycle** compare to the recommended timeline outlined above?
- Who is currently responsible for creating and implementing your school's **fundraising or development plan**?
- What is the board's role in supporting and monitoring fundraising efforts?

Board Action:

Ensure that your school's fundraising or development plan is clearly aligned with the board's strategic priorities. If gaps exist, consider forming a Development or Fundraising Committee that brings together representatives from all key stakeholder groups involved in fundraising and strategic goal-setting, such as the board, administration, finance committee, and PTO or parent organization. This collaborative approach will help coordinate efforts, clarify responsibilities, and improve fundraising outcomes.

Financial Oversight Case Studies

Define the board's response in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 16: Financial Oversight Case Studies](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: Financial Crisis and Payroll Risk

Scenario:

Colorado River Charter School is a small charter school serving 250 students. In the middle of the school year, the school experiences a series of unexpected expenses: a major HVAC failure



costing \$60,000, legal fees from an ongoing personnel issue, and higher-than-anticipated special education service costs. These expenses were not included in the original budget or contingency planning.

As a result, CRCS's cash flow is significantly strained. The school's business manager informs the board treasurer that without immediate intervention, the school may not be able to meet payroll within the next two pay periods.

This issue will be fully discussed at the upcoming board meeting. What might be the board's response to this situation?

Case Study 2: Overreliance on Variable Income

Scenario:

The board is reviewing the proposed budget and realizes it assumes the school will receive two large grants that have not yet been secured. If the funding does not come through, the school may face a deficit. How might the board proceed?

Case Study 3: Passive Financial Review

Scenario:

At monthly board meetings, the financial report is included in the agenda, but it is quickly approved with little to no discussion. Only the board treasurer seems to understand the details, and most members rely on them to raise any concerns. What should the board do to improve its financial oversight practices?



Chapter Three: School Leader Hiring, Oversight, and Evaluation

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Gain confidence in making positive school leader hiring decisions.
- Define a strong school leader evaluation system.
- Summarize ways to support a school leader.
- Plan for school leader succession.
- Differentiate between the roles of Education Service Providers, Education Management Organizations, and Charter Management Organizations.

Leading a charter school requires a diverse and complex skill set, including instructional leadership, operational management, financial stewardship, and initiating community engagement and marketing campaigns, to name a few.⁶¹ Ultimately, a school leader must be able to uphold the school's mission and vision. Given the autonomy of charter schools, leaders have greater flexibility than traditional public school principals but face heightened accountability for academic and operational outcomes. It is uncommon to find a single individual who excels in all these areas. Most leaders possess strong skills in some domains and require a leadership team to complement areas for growth.

To secure and support strong leaders, charter school boards should develop a hiring process that identifies a candidate's strengths and areas for development, including a process using clear criteria aligned with the school's mission and a multi-stage approach. Once a leader is hired, the board must commit to investing in their growth, developing them from good to great. Effective school leadership is one of the most influential factors determining school quality and success.⁶²

I. Hiring the School Leader

When facing a leadership transition, a board must engage in a comprehensive recruitment and hiring process to ensure the successful appointment of a new school leader. Ideally, a succession and transition plan should be in place before a vacancy arises. Also, if replacing a current leader, plan for interim leadership to maintain stability during the search. A proactive approach minimizes disruption and ensures a seamless transition. Leadership plays a critical role in school quality, and hiring should be approached with thoughtfulness and strategic planning.

⁶¹ Carpenter, D. M. & Kafer, K. (2010). *Charter School Leadership in Colorado*. Colorado Department of Education.

⁶² Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). How leadership influences student learning. *Learning from Leadership Project*. <https://doi.org/10.59656/el-sb5787.001>



School Leader Hiring Process⁶³

1. Prepare

- **Form a Hiring Committee** - Establish a board subcommittee to lead the process. Include a balanced of representatives from key stakeholder groups, such as staff and parents.
- **Train the Hiring Committee** - Ensure that all committee members are trained on the hiring process and interview process. Providing implicit bias training, for example, can mitigate unconscious bias that could affect candidate ratings, especially in a diverse applicant pool.
- **Consider Search Support** - Decide whether to engage an executive search firm to assist with outreach and recruitment.
- **Review or Draft the Job Description** - Clearly articulate the responsibilities and desired competencies for the school leader. See [Appendix 5: Sample Executive Director Job Description](#) for reference.
- **Establish Application Requirements** - These may include a cover letter, resume, references, leadership philosophy statement, and/or responses to mission-aligned questions.
- **Design the Interview Process** - Outline the hiring timeline, promotional strategy, and interview formats. See [Appendix 6: Sample Interview Timeline](#).
- **Prepare Interview Materials** - Develop interview questions, role-play scenarios, written assignments, and scoring rubrics. See [Appendix 7: Sample Interview Questions](#).

2. Execute

- **Advertise the Position** - Post the vacancy on various community and hiring platforms such as the Colorado League of Charter Schools job board, LinkedIn, and Chalkbeat. Encourage staff and families to share the posting within their networks.
- **Share Updates with the Community** - Create a timeline of regular updates to be shared with the school community via newsletters, website posts, or town halls. Clarify which parts of the interview process are confidential and which parts can and will be shared.
- **Screen Applicants** - Committee reviews submissions to assess for qualifications, relevant experience, and alignment with the school's mission and culture using a prepared rubric. Create a shortlist of the 3-5 top candidates.
- **Conduct Interviews** - Design a process that is manageable for the school and candidates, while offering a thorough assessment. Possible components include:

⁶³ Education Board Partners. (2019). *School leader hiring, retention & succession planning*. https://masscharterschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/MCPA-Webinar_-School-Leader-Hiring-Retention-and-Succession-Planning-December-2019.pdf; Charter School Institute. (2024). *Charter School Leader Hiring, Development, and Evaluation*. <https://resources.csi.state.co.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Charter-School-Leader-Hiring-Developing-and-Evaluation.pdf>



- **Initial Interview:** Typically virtual or in-person, focused on background, leadership experience, charter experience, and mission alignment.
- **Panel Interviews:** Engage key stakeholders (i.e., board members, teachers, parents). Limit panel sizes to 5-7 members to balance input and efficiency. Focus on leadership style, problem-solving, school vision, and committee's priorities (i.e., student enrollment, building culture, school expansion).
- **School Tour:** Invite candidates to visit the campus and meet with staff and students to understand the school culture.
- **Leadership Task or Case Study:** Ask candidates to complete a relevant task or respond to a real-world scenario. This allows for evaluation of their problem-solving, communication, and stakeholder engagement skills.

3. Decide

- **Select Finalists** - The hiring committee reviews all candidate data and feedback to identify finalists.
- **Public Notification Requirement** - Colorado law requires that finalist(s) for the chief executive role (executive director or principal) be publicly named at least 14 days before the position is filled.⁶⁴ Best practice is to post finalist names on the school's website. Some application materials, such as resumes, must be available for public inspection if requested.⁶⁵
- **Complete Due Diligence**
 - Conduct background checks.
 - Verify credentials (e.g., Colorado credentials via [COOL](#)).
 - Check references from former employers and colleagues.
 - Negotiate the contract with the board and legal counsel.
- **Board Approval and Offer** - The committee recommends one to three top candidates to the full board. The board makes the final hiring decision. A formal offer should be made upon board approval, including compensation, responsibilities, and other terms.

4. Onboard

- **Develop a 30-60-90 Day Plan** - Work with the new leader to outline priorities for their first three months. This may include training on internal systems and policies, meeting with staff, families, and board members, and participating in school year planning.
- **Establish Goals** - Engage in collaborative goal setting.
- **Provide Support** - Offer leadership coaching, mentorship, or access to professional development to ensure a successful transition and long-term success.

⁶⁴ C.R.S. § 24-6-402(3.5)

⁶⁵ C.R.S. § 24-72-204(3)(a)(XI)(B)



How to Support a New Leader (*Whether they're new to leadership, charter schools, or Colorado*)

A Leader New to School Leadership

While many schools aim to hire experienced leaders, sometimes the best candidate is someone stepping into school leadership for the first time. New leaders bring potential and fresh energy but also significant room to grow. It's critical for the board to engage in open, honest conversations with a new leader about areas for development.

If a new leader claims to "have it all covered," take caution. Overconfidence can lead to poor decision-making and burnout. Instead, begin by affirming the strengths and experiences that led to their hiring. Then, review the job description together. Ask the leader to mark areas where they feel confident (green) and where they see room for growth (yellow).

Remember, leadership is a team sport. Some schools use a dual leadership model (e.g., one leader for instruction and another for operations), while others have assistant principals, deans, or instructional coaches. When identifying growth areas for your new leader, consider the strengths of the broader leadership team. Can responsibilities be shifted to leverage existing expertise?

Create a comprehensive professional development plan using the 70-20-10 model.⁶⁶

- 70% of a leader's development comes from on-the-job experience. Ensure your new leader is reflecting on the day-to-day challenges and successes.
- 20% of a leader's development should come from other people. Hire a mentor or coach for your new leader.
- 10% of a leader's development should come from formal training. Have your new leader attend workshops and conferences from organizations like the Colorado League of Charter Schools, CDE, PEBC, or CASE.

An Experienced School Leader New to Charter Schools

Leaders coming from traditional public schools often benefit from a central office that handles key operations. In charter schools, however, much of that responsibility falls to the school leader. Some areas where they may need support include:

- Understanding the charter contract, waivers, and renewal process
- Building and maintaining a relationship with the authorizer
- Supporting a non-unionized teaching staff
- Engaging effectively with a board of directors
- Keeping a clear focus on the school's mission
- Overseeing facilities and ensuring smooth operations (e.g., insurance, legal compliance, transportation, food service)

⁶⁶ McCauley, C. (2022). *The 70-20-10 rule for leadership development*. Center for Creative Leadership.



Support this type of leader by connecting them with resources specific to the charter school sector. Ensure they're subscribed to email updates from the Colorado League of Charter Schools, CDE Schools of Choice, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. It's also highly beneficial to pair them with a seasoned charter school leader for mentorship.

An Experienced Charter School Leader New to Colorado

A leader with charter school experience from another state may provide expertise in many operational duties, but Colorado's unique policy and regulatory environment may pose a learning curve. Areas where this leader might need guidance include:

- Colorado's state assessment program
- The state accountability system—particularly for schools that are “on the clock”
- Colorado's funding model
- Teacher licensure requirements and alternative pathways
- Special education and the Administrative Unit structure
- The political landscape and state education laws

Help this leader get up to speed by ensuring they're connected with relevant resources and networks. Have them join email lists from the Colorado League of Charter Schools and CDE Schools of Choice. As with other new leaders, pairing them with a Colorado-based charter leader can provide invaluable local insight.

Board Discussion:

If you have recently engaged in a school leader hiring process, what from the above process is similar or different? Are there steps you would like to incorporate next time?

Board Action:

Review and revise your school executive's job description annually.

II. Evaluating the School Leader

Conducting an annual evaluation of the Executive Director is one of the charter school board's most critical responsibilities. Through effective oversight and accountability, the board ensures that the leader is advancing strategic goals, managing operations efficiently, and fostering a strong and supportive school community. A robust evaluation process also includes providing actionable feedback, supporting professional growth, and recognizing accomplishments throughout the year.



Colorado state law mandates the annual evaluation of teachers and school leaders.⁶⁷ According to statute, leader evaluations must address the Colorado Principal Quality Standards and incorporate several required system components.

Principal Quality Standards	System Components
Quality Standard I: Principals demonstrate organizational leadership by strategically developing a vision and mission, leading change, enhancing the capacity of personnel, distributing resources, and aligning systems of communication for continuous school improvement. Quality Standard II: Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and Community. Quality Standard III: Principals demonstrate instructional leadership by: aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment; supporting professional learning; conducting observations; providing actionable feedback; and holding staff accountable for student Outcomes. Quality Standard IV: Principals demonstrate professionalism through ethical conduct, reflection, and external leadership.	• The title or role of the evaluator; • Identification of the personnel to be evaluated; • A schedule outlining the frequency and duration of evaluations, conducted regularly enough to allow for sufficient data collection and reliable conclusions; • A clear purpose for the evaluation; • Defined standards for effective performance, along with criteria used to assess whether those standards are met; • Use of valid evaluation methods, which must include direct observations and systematic data collection.

Additionally, state law requires a written evaluation report that includes:

- Specific strengths and areas for improvement;
- Recommendations for further development or education;
- Dates of direct observations and sources of evaluation data;
- Signatures from both the evaluator and the executive leader, along with documentation that the evaluation was reviewed and discussed.

If the school leader disagrees with any part of the evaluation, they are entitled to submit a written response or provide supporting documentation to be attached to the report.

⁶⁷ C.R.S. 22-9-106 and 1 CCR 301-87



The School Leader Evaluation Process⁶⁸



1. Establish Structures and Timeline

- a. Create a Year-Round Evaluation Timeline - The school leader evaluation is not a one-time event. It is a continuous process that unfolds throughout the year, allowing for consistent monitoring and feedback.
- b. Form a Leader Evaluation Committee - Rather than involving the entire board, a small evaluation committee, typically the board chair and one additional board member should be appointed annually. Depending on the school's culture, a community member such as a school accountability committee representative or parent/teacher liaison may also serve on the evaluation committee. This group is responsible for coordinating the evaluation process and maintaining consistent communication with the school leader.

⁶⁸ Education Board Partners. (2019). *Head of school evaluation toolkit*. <https://www.edfuel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/edfuel-headofschoolevaluationtoolkit-062519-2.pdf>; Charter School Institute. (2020). *School leader evaluation toolkit*. CSI.



SAMPLE EVALUATION TIMELINE

Timeline	Action Steps
Summer/Prior to Start of School Set Performance Goals	1. Board holds Annual Summer Retreat/Strategic Planning Session 2. School leader develops goals against strategic plan focus areas and job description and submits to the Board President 3. Board reviews and approves performance plan 4. Board President communicates any changes and approval of plan 5. School leader development is planned/agreed upon 6. The Board decides if an external evaluator is needed
January Evaluation & assess and re-assign goals if needed	1. School leader writes Self-Assessment against pre-set goals 2. Board reviews, gives performance feedback, and approves any changes to the initial goals in writing 3. The Board President completes and delivers the performance evaluation to the ED a. Data to inform evaluation may include i. Staff Surveys ii. Parent Surveys iii. Interviews with direct reports iv. School Performance Results (MAPS, CMAS, DIBELS) 4. The completed evaluation is presented to the Board in Executive Session. The President makes a recommendation to retain or not retail the ED for the upcoming year. The Board votes on contract renewal. 5. Check-in on school leader development plan progress 6. Board President presents new school leader contract for the upcoming year
Late Spring Review goals and Goal Setting review	1. School leader writes year-end self-assessment 2. Board reviews and gives performance feedback a. Data to inform review may include i. Staff Surveys ii. Parent Surveys iii. Interviews with direct reports iv. School Performance Results (MAPS, CMAS, DIBELS) 3. Board President provides collective feedback, discussion and review of professional development plan
Ongoing Continuous Feedback	1. Regular monthly meetings with the Board President and Executive Director 2. Dashboard report-outs on monitoring of critical data 3. Executive Director Reports 4. Opportunity for positive reinforcement on good results and/or course-correct throughout the year

2. Set Goals and Define Competencies

- a. Goal Setting - Clear, measurable goals help establish expectations for the school leader and provide a framework for the evaluation. The school leader should propose 3–5 goals aligned with the school's strategic priorities. These goals may focus on:
 - i. Academic achievement
 - ii. Financial or operational health
 - iii. Organizational growth



iv. Mission alignment

Tip: Set goals around data that is easy to collect and analyze.

- b. Define Leadership Competencies - In addition to annual goals, the school leader should be evaluated on a set of consistent leadership competencies. These may be drawn from:

- i. The Colorado Principal Quality Standards
- ii. The leader's job description

Competencies typically remain the same year over year and reflect the essential skills needed for the role.

EXAMPLES OF GOALS	EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCIES
By September 1, 2024, the school will meet or exceed the annual enrollment projection (800 in SY24-25). By MOY 2024-25, 85% of students will meet their target growth in NWEA AMPS reading. By May 15, 2024, the school will increase its cash reserves to \$2m to fund future capital expenditures.	• Vision and Strategy • Staff Management • Finance and Operations Management • Quality Standard II: Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and Community.

3. Monitor Progress and Provide Feedback

- a. Ongoing Monitoring - Progress should be reviewed regularly through tools such as a monthly Leader Report presented at board meetings. A member of the evaluation committee should document progress throughout the year.
- b. Mid-Year Feedback - The committee should provide structured feedback at key intervals, including a formal mid-year performance update.

4. **Gather and Review Data** - The leader evaluation committee should review all relevant data as it becomes available. Evaluation data may already be included in monthly board reports or a Data Dashboard. *See Chapter 4: Risk Management for more information on data dashboards.*

Evaluation Evidence Examples	
State SPF Academic benchmark data Staff culture survey data Student survey data Family survey data Staff interviews (esp. direct reports) Discipline data Student enrollment Authorizer's Annual Reports	Staff retention Board member input Monthly Principal reports Types of grievances Financial performance of school School level policies (e.g. Student Handbook) Leader communication



5. **Leader Self-Evaluation** - The school leader should complete a self-evaluation aligned with the board's evaluation criteria. This allows for reflection and fosters meaningful dialogue. *Tip: Provide the self-evaluation template at the start of the year during the goal-setting meeting.*
6. **Board Review Discussion** - The evaluation committee compiles a draft of the performance evaluation and includes the school leader's self-assessment. This draft is shared with the full board confidentially, a few days before the scheduled review meeting. The board meets in executive session to discuss the evaluation and provide input to the evaluation committee. Feedback from this session is incorporated into the final written evaluation.
7. **Performance Evaluation Delivery** - The board meets with the school leader to present the final evaluation. This conversation should:
 - a. Celebrate successes
 - b. Offer constructive and actionable feedback
 - c. Summarize conclusions
 - d. Propose next steps and draft goals for the following year

The law does not require the school leader to be present for the discussion of their evaluation. Excluding the leader for parts of the discussion is a common practice and allows for free deliberation without the influence of the leader's presence. However, the leader may be invited to provide input or respond to performance feedback. If the leader explicitly requests that their evaluation be discussed in an open meeting, the board must comply, and the discussion cannot occur in executive session.⁶⁹

Discussions involving allegations of criminal misconduct or formal disciplinary actions may require additional legal considerations. Depending on the school's bylaws or employment contract, the leader may have a right to be heard.

If performance is unsatisfactory, a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) may be developed at this time. The board may choose to work with the school's human resources department or an external HR professional to create the plan. Refer to [Appendix 9: Sample Leader Professional Improvement Plan \(PIP\)](#).

Evaluation Tools

Selecting an evaluation tool that reflects the unique responsibilities of your executive leader is essential for providing a fair, meaningful, and actionable performance review. Many evaluation tools are available and can be adapted to align with your school's mission, leadership expectations, and strategic goals. Refer to [Appendix 8: Sample Leader Evaluation Templates](#) for examples.

⁶⁹ C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(f)(I)



If your charter school, like many in Colorado, has obtained waivers for C.R.S. 22-9-106 and C.R.S. 22-2-112 (1)(q)(1), you are not required to use the state performance evaluation system and submit results to the state. These waivers allow your school to implement a locally designed evaluation process tailored to the specific context and priorities of your school community.

Board Discussion:

What data does the board currently use to assess the effectiveness of your school leader? Does it include a comprehensive view across academic performance, school culture, financial health, and operational management?

Board Action:

Review and refine your school leader evaluation process and timeline to ensure it allows for ongoing, meaningful feedback and support throughout the year—not just at year-end.

III. Supporting the School Leader

Charter school boards play a critical role in developing, encouraging, and retaining their school leader. The school leader works for the board. Be a great board to work for! According to Education Board Partners,⁷⁰ supporting a leader leads to:

- Retention
 - Good leaders are hard to find
 - Leaders who feel supported and valued are better for the organization
- High performance to goals
 - People who feel valued and supported are more likely to be effective in their jobs
- Professional growth and development
 - Helps the leader, helps the organization, helps the students

School Leader/Board Relationship

Building a strong school leader and governing board relationships can significantly impact the success of your school.⁷¹ When trust is established, it becomes much easier to navigate challenges—and there will inevitably be challenges.

Establish Regular Communication - Schedule consistent, formal check-ins. A great place to start is your monthly agenda-planning meetings. Consider opening these meetings with a few reflective questions, such as:

⁷⁰ Education Board Partners. (2019). *School leader hiring, retention & succession planning*.

⁷¹ Montgomery, M. (2024). *Building strong board relations: 5 key strategies for superintendents*. AASA.



- Are we operating within our respective roles and responsibilities? If not, what needs to change?
- How are we supporting and encouraging each other in our work?

Invest in Personal Connection - Take time to build informal relationships. Invite your school leader for a coffee, schedule a lunch, or incorporate a team-building activity during your board retreat. These moments foster trust and connection.

Align Around Strategic Priorities - Ensure that both the board and the school leader are focused on work that supports your strategic plan. Clearly defining responsibilities helps the board avoid overstepping or placing unnecessary demands on the school leader, who already carries a full plate.

Maintain Transparent Communication - Address concerns early and honestly. Clear, timely communication helps prevent misunderstandings from escalating and keeps the working relationship healthy.

Streamline Channels of Communication - Establish a clear protocol for how information flows between the board and the school leader. Typically, the board chair acts as the primary point of contact, both for receiving updates and relaying board input.

Embrace Conflict as Growth - Disagreements will happen. Stay focused on the mission when conflicts arise, and approach them with respect and a commitment to collaboration. When managed well, conflict can actually strengthen the leader–board relationship.

School Leader Development

One of the most impactful ways a board can support its school leader is by actively investing in their continued growth. Strong leadership is foundational to a successful school, and development opportunities help leaders sharpen their skills, stay inspired, and adapt to the evolving needs of their communities.

Hiring an Executive Coach or Mentor

Every school leader, regardless of experience, can benefit from the guidance of a coach or mentor. Bill Gates once said, “Everyone needs a coach... That’s how we improve.” An executive coach provides an external, objective perspective and can be a vital thought partner. Coaches support leaders in identifying areas for growth, navigating complex challenges, and fostering creativity and innovation in their leadership approach.⁷²

Professional Development Training

Encourage your school leader to participate in relevant professional learning opportunities such as conferences, workshops, and leadership institutes. High-quality professional development not only expands skill sets but also connects leaders with a network of peers and resources.

⁷² HYA Associates. (2024). *Why is executive coaching important for superintendents and school district leaders?*
<https://hyasearch.com/2024/04/18/why-is-executive-coaching-important-for-superintendents-and-school-district-leaders/>



Some great organizations offering school leadership training in Colorado include the Colorado League of Charter Schools, Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC), and RELAY Graduate School of Education.

Engage in a Comprehensive School Review

Partnering with an external organization to conduct a Comprehensive School Review can provide a valuable lens into school performance. The Colorado League of Charter Schools offers this service, where educational experts spend time on campus conducting classroom observations, interviewing stakeholders, and reviewing essential school documents. The resulting report highlights strengths and provides targeted recommendations for improvement, many of which can be tied directly to the leader's development goals and coaching focus.

Performance Improvement Plan

If a school leader is not meeting expectations, the board should implement a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to provide clear, structured support. A strong PIP includes:

- Specific areas for improvement
- Measurable, observable goals to reach satisfactory levels
- Professional growth activities and resources to support the leader in achieving the goals
- Evidence, such as documentation or behaviors, that shows the goal was met
- Checkpoints and timelines for monitoring progress and a final completion date
- Consequences for unmet goals, including whether the plan will continue with more intensive support or result in a leadership transition

The PIP should be reviewed in detail with the school leader, signed by both parties, and monitored closely for progress. When implemented thoughtfully, a PIP can be a powerful tool for course correction and growth. Refer to [Appendix 9: Sample Performance Improvement Plan Template](#).

Board Discussion:

How are you intentionally cultivating a positive board/school leader relationship?

Board Action:

Work with your school leader to create a comprehensive leader development plan using the 70-20-10 model.⁷³

- 70% of a leader's development comes from on-the-job experience.
- 20% of a leader's development should come from other people.
- 10% of a leader's development should come from formal training.

⁷³ McCauley, C. (2022). *The 70-20-10 rule for leadership development*. Center for Creative Leadership.



Leader Separation

A school leader may leave their position for a variety of reasons. The departure may be initiated by either the board or the leader, and it's important to approach both scenarios with clarity, professionalism, and a strong communication plan.

Board-Initiated Separation

Boards may choose to dismiss a leader due to reasons such as poor performance, low school outcomes, a crisis situation, or contractual disputes. Before proceeding with dismissal, ensure there is thorough documentation, which may include:

- A formal performance evaluation indicating unsatisfactory results
- An unmet Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)
- Written warnings or notices outlining specific concerns

Clear and respectful communication with the leader is essential throughout the process. Consider consulting an HR professional, either someone on the board or an external expert, to help navigate the process. Establish a clear timeline and communication plan to share the transition news with staff, students, and families.

Leader-Initiated Separation

Leaders may choose to leave their role for various reasons, including retirement, new professional opportunities, or personal considerations. Upon receiving notice, the board may want to attempt to retain the leader. Finding a new leader is challenging and renegotiating their contract or providing additional support may convince a high-performing leader to remain with the school. Advance notice is crucial, as the search for a new leader takes time. When possible, negotiate a transition timeline that allows for meaningful handoff. Encourage the outgoing leader to support the transition process by:

- Assisting in onboarding the new leader
- Organizing key resources and documents
- Communicating thoughtfully with staff, students, and families



IV. Succession Planning

Having a succession plan in place **before** it's needed is a best practice for any charter school. A survey of 400 charter school leaders found that 71% planned to leave their school within five years.⁷⁴ Leadership transitions are inevitable, and being prepared ensures continuity for students, staff, and the school community.

It's wise to develop both an emergency succession plan and a long-term succession plan. Unexpected events can occur, including the *five Ds* of succession planning: death, disability, divorce, disagreement, and distress.⁷⁵ Your school leader might also leave for career growth, relocation, or even an unexpected windfall (like winning the Powerball!). Regardless of the reason, transitions are far smoother when a plan is in place.

Emergency Succession Planning

An emergency succession plan identifies who will step in and how responsibilities will be managed if the school leader is suddenly unable to perform their duties. These plans provide clarity for the board, staff, and families in times of disruption.

The school leader should be in charge of creating their emergency succession plan by following these steps:⁷⁶

1. **Update the School Leader's Job Description** - Ensure it accurately reflects current responsibilities. List main responsibility areas and include clarifying notes such as systems used, key contacts, links to documents, or passwords.
2. **Determine Responsibility Delegation** - Decide whether one person could take on the full role, or if different responsibilities would be divided among multiple staff members.
3. **Assess and Prepare Successors** - Identify which staff members would assume which responsibilities. Outline what skills or knowledge they need and create a plan to fill any gaps.
4. **Document and Share the Plan** - Clearly outline each responsibility area, the designated successor, their key responsibilities, and their development plan. Share this with assigned staff and present the plan to the board for approval.
5. **Review Annually** - Revisit and revise the plan each year to ensure it remains current and relevant.

See [Appendix 10: Sample Emergency Succession Plan Template](#) for a full template developed by the Charter School Growth Fund.

Long-Term Succession Planning

In addition to emergency planning, charter leaders and boards should develop a long-term succession strategy for situations where the school leader's departure is known in advance.

⁷⁴ Campbell, C. (2010). *You're leaving? Succession and sustainability in charter schools*. University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education.

⁷⁵ Bell, L.. (2025). *Succession planning strategies when life is unpredictable*. Meaden & Moore.

⁷⁶ BoardOnTrack. (2020). *Charter school CEO succession: emergency succession planning and long-term talent development strategy*.



While these conversations can be challenging, uncomfortable, or sensitive, boards should engage school leaders in annual discussions about their career plans.

One of the most impactful parts of long-term succession planning is building a **leadership pipeline** within the school. Even if an internal candidate isn't ultimately selected, having qualified individuals ready to step up strengthens the organization. Schools with leadership pipelines outperform those without them.⁷⁷ Internal candidates are familiar with the school's mission, culture, and current initiatives. To start cultivating a leadership pipeline:

- **Discuss Leadership Development** - Ask your school leader how teachers and staff are being supported in growing their leadership skills.
- **Identify and Categorize Talent** - Have your school leader identify staff with leadership potential and assess their readiness. Are they ready for a leadership position now, in 1-2 years, or in 3+ years. Your leader should talk to these people and ensure they are interested in future leadership responsibilities. This may take some convincing! Leading a school is a big job.
- **Create Development Plans** - Invest in high-potential staff. Identify existing leadership roles they can step into (e.g., department head, instructional coach, summer school administrator), or consider external training opportunities or continuing education.

The board may need to appoint an **interim school leader** while conducting a formal search for a permanent replacement. Your long-term plan should include:

- The process for selecting an interim leader
- A clear job description for the interim role
- A timeline and search process for the permanent hire

For more on hiring a school leader, see the previous section titled School Leader Hiring Process.

Board Discussion:

How are you currently engaging with your school leader about their career goals?
Where does your school leader see themselves in the next five years?
What steps is the board taking to promote leadership stability and retention?

Board Action:

Develop or update both your emergency and long-term succession plans for the school leader.

⁷⁷ Gates, S., Baird, M., Master, B., & Chavez-Herrerias, E. (2019). Principal Pipelines: A Feasible, Affordable, and Effective Way for Districts to Improve Schools. <https://doi.org/10.7249/rr2666>



V. School Management: The role of EMOs, CMOs, & ESPs

While many charter schools in Colorado operate as independent, freestanding entities, some choose to partner with management organizations. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, management organizations manage at least three schools, serve at least 300 students, and are a separate business entity from the schools it manages.⁷⁸ This topic appears in the leader evaluation and support chapter because many management organizations also provide leadership training, development, and evaluation. With a management organization, the board and school leader relationship might look different.

Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) are nonprofit entities that manage charter schools. One well-known example is KIPP, which operates schools across the country. While CMOs offer centralized support and oversight, each CMO-managed school typically has its own governing board to which the CMO is accountable.

Education Management Organizations (EMOs) are for-profit entities that provide similar services. EMOs often identify local community leaders interested in opening charter schools and assist with tasks like drafting charter applications and securing facilities. Like CMOs, EMO-managed schools generally have their own boards. However, the for-profit status of EMOs can influence how they manage capital and operate financially.

Both CMOs and EMOs can play a significant role in the day-to-day operations of a school. Their responsibilities may include selecting curriculum, supporting and evaluating school leaders, and managing financial operations. In general, CMOs tend to be more directly involved in instructional leadership and program design, while EMOs often focus on back-office services and operational support.

Education Service Providers (ESPs) offer a range of services to schools. Some ESPs focus on a single function, such as back-office support or technology services, while others offer comprehensive services that closely resemble those provided by CMOs or EMOs.

Hiring a CMO or EMO is a significant decision with long-term implications for a school's academic performance, financial health, and governance. If a school's board of directors chooses to enter into a management agreement, it is important to remember that the board still holds the charter with the authorizer and is responsible for governance of the school and upholding the terms of the charter contract. Part of the board's governing duty is to make sure the management entity does its job. If the entity fails to deliver its contractual results, the board can fire it and seek a new partner.⁷⁹ Clear understanding and careful negotiation of the management contract are essential.

⁷⁸ David, R. (2016). *National charter school management overview*. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

⁷⁹ American School Choice. (n.d.). *ESP, EMO, CMO?*.

<https://americanschoolchoice.com/what-is-school-choice/what-purpose-do-network-charter-operators-serve/>



CMOs, EMOs, and ESPs typically charge fees for their services. These fees are often structured as a percentage of per-pupil revenue (PPR) or as a flat rate. Most CMOs and EMOs charge between 5% and 17% of PPR, with 10% being the average.⁸⁰

If your board currently has, or is considering, a management agreement, here are a few questions to consider asking:

Organizational Background and Philosophy	What is your mission and educational philosophy? How many schools do you currently operate or support? What are your outcomes and track record in comparable schools or communities? How do you ensure alignment with a school's unique mission or vision?
Academic Program and Student Outcomes	What curriculum do you use, and is it aligned with our state standards? How do you support diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English learners? What academic results have your schools achieved (state assessments, graduation rates, etc.)? What role will we have in customizing curriculum or instructional approaches?
Governance and Autonomy	How is decision-making authority divided between the CMO/EMO and the charter board? How much autonomy will the school have in hiring, curriculum, budgeting, and operations? Can you provide a sample contract or management agreement? How do you handle disagreements or disputes with a school board?
Financial Arrangements and Transparency	What are your management fees, and how are they structured? What services are included in your fee, and what is billed separately? Can you provide a breakdown of how funds are used across your schools?

⁸⁰ Curious2. (2010). *Charter school management fees*.
<https://curious2.typepad.com/curious2/2010/02/charter-school-management-fees.html>



	Do you provide financial reports to the school board? How often?
Human Resources and Staffing	Who hires and evaluates school leadership and staff? Is there transparency and collaboration with the school leader evaluation? What role do you play in setting compensation and HR policies? What professional development and teacher support do you provide?
Legal and Compliance Issues	How do you ensure compliance with federal and state laws (e.g., special education, civil rights)? What is your process for responding to audits or corrective actions? Do you assume legal liability for your services, or is the school solely responsible?
Community Engagement and Culture	How do you engage with families and the local community? What steps do you take to reflect the community's values and demographics? How do you handle parent complaints or concerns?
Exit Strategy and Contract Terms	Under what conditions can the contract be terminated? What happens to school assets, staff, and data if the relationship ends? Have any schools ever terminated your services, and why?
References and Performance Validation	Can you provide references from schools you currently serve or have served in the past? Can we visit one or more of your existing schools?

If hiring a management company, consider forming a board committee that evaluates the CMO, EMO, or ESP annually or at least the year before renewing the management agreement. The committee can use the above questions and/or the components of the management agreement to form the evaluation document.



School Leader Hiring, Oversight, and Evaluation Case Studies

Define the board's response in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 11](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: A Well-Loved Leader Struggling with Finance and Goals

Scenario: Principal Morgan has been with her charter school for seven years. She is deeply respected by staff, beloved by students, and trusted by families. Under her leadership, school culture is strong and enrollment is steady. However, in recent years, the school has failed to meet key academic growth targets, and the financial outlook is increasingly precarious due to some unexpected facilities expenses. The board is concerned but hesitant to intervene, worried about damaging the relationship with a leader who has been so central to the school's success.

Case Study 2: Hiring a Leader Who Will Need Support

Scenario: After a thorough search, the board hires Mr. Diaz as the next school leader. He is a dynamic former assistant principal with a strong instructional background and deep ties to the local community. While his potential is clear, the board knows he lacks experience with facilities, budget management, and charter compliance. The board is excited but aware that Mr. Diaz will need significant support to succeed in his new role.

Case Study 3: Sudden Medical Leave Triggers Emergency Succession Plan

Scenario: Dr. Taylor, the long-time school leader of Horizon Charter School, suddenly informs the board that she must take an immediate medical leave and will be unavailable for the remainder of the semester. Dr. Taylor is a seasoned and effective leader who has managed many aspects of the school personally, including academic oversight, compliance, and family engagement. Unfortunately, while she had started drafting an emergency succession plan, it was never finalized or formally adopted by the board.

The board is caught off guard. Staff and families are anxious, and key deadlines related to state reporting, enrollment projections, and assessments are approaching. The board must act quickly to stabilize the school, ensure continuity of operations, and communicate with stakeholders.



Chapter Four: Navigating Risk

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Describe the board's responsibility to create and regularly review policies.
- Differentiate state and district waivers and the processes to obtain them.
- Identify indicators and metrics to monitor through a data dashboard based on potential risks their school may face.

Navigating and managing risk as a charter school board is not just about insurance and policies, it is about developing processes and systems to avoid or mitigate all kinds of risk. Risks can affect people, property, or programs. Ultimately risk management is about ensuring your school is sustainable and can successfully operate.

According to Brian L. Carpenter⁸¹, a charter school can manage risk by:

1. Hiring competent individuals at all levels;
2. Adopting and following sound policies and procedures;
3. Being proactive in identifying potential risks;
4. Having a method for monitoring data and information related to key risk indicators;
5. Retaining and consulting competent legal counsel; and
6. Maintaining proper insurance coverages.

I. Policies and Procedures

Policies represent some of the most important decisions a charter school board will make, making it essential for board members to fully understand this key responsibility. Policies are broad principles or directives that guide and shape the board's future decisions, actions, and strategic direction.

Policies provide a consistent framework for decision-making and help ensure that both board and staff actions align with the school's mission and values. They promote stability and consistency, especially during challenging or high-pressure situations, and reduce the need to revisit issues the board has already resolved. Ultimately, well-crafted policies reflect how the board intends to govern and how the school aims to operate.⁸²

While the board is responsible for establishing overarching policies, it entrusts day-to-day operations and procedures to the school's administration. While boards are not creating

⁸¹ Carpenter, B. L. (2028). *Governing for greatness: Ten fundamentals every charter school board member needs to know*. National Charter Schools Institute.

⁸² Hundley DeKuyper, M. *Trustee handbook: A guide to effective governance for independent school boards*. National Association of Independent Schools.



school-level procedures, they should be evaluating how well key policies are being implemented through procedures.

Policies:	Procedures:
Generally created by the board Change infrequently State who, what, when, or why Are broad and general	Generally created by the school leader Continuously change and improve State what, how, when or who Offer a detailed description of activities

Legal Authority

It is essential for a charter school board to understand that it is legally responsible for the policies it adopts. Recognizing the hierarchy of legal authority in which board policies operate is critical for ensuring compliance and avoiding legal risk. This hierarchy is structured so that each level must comply with the levels above it, meaning no action or policy at a lower level may contradict or violate a higher-level authority.

The legal hierarchy can be summarized as follows, with each tier superseding those below:

1. **Federal Law and Regulations** - Includes laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), anti-discrimination laws, and Internal Revenue Service regulations (e.g., requirements for maintaining tax-exempt status).
2. **Non-Waived State Statutes and Regulations** - Covers mandatory elements such as state assessments, compulsory attendance laws, performance frameworks, and fiscal policies like the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR), and the school's replacement plan for non-automatic waivers to state statute and regulations.
3. **Authorizer Policies (Unless Waived)** - These are policies set by the school's charter authorizer and must be followed unless a waiver has been granted.
4. **Charter Contract** - The binding agreement between the school and its authorizer, which outlines the school's rights, responsibilities, and performance expectations.
5. **Articles of Incorporation** - Legal documents that establish the school as a nonprofit corporation in the state.
6. **Bylaws** - The internal rules governing how the school's board operates, including procedures for meetings, officer roles, and decision-making processes.
7. **Board Policies** - Standing policies adopted by the board to guide the long-term governance of the school.
8. **One-Time or Short-Term Board Actions** - Policies or decisions documented in board meeting minutes that address specific, time-limited issues.
9. **Personnel Policies and Procedures** - Internal guidelines governing staff behavior, performance, and employment practices.
10. **Administrative Decisions** - Day-to-day decisions made by school staff, which must be consistent with all higher levels of authority.



Creating Policies

Schools sometimes face challenges in determining when a formal policy is necessary. In addition to common or required policies, the following situations often warrant adopting one as a best practice:

- When it will be helpful due to confusion or efficiency to provide notice to students, parents, staff, and other parties about protocols followed at the school.
- When the board needs to clarify its expectations for the school and the community. This includes institutionalizing the school's priorities and promoting uniformity in the school decision-making processes and values.
- When the school wants to formalize its commitment to compliance with applicable laws.
- When informal policies and standard practices need to be codified.
- When dealing with matters that require a high level of predictability and fairness (e.g. enrollment, discipline, employment issues, etc.).

The board can effectively develop policy by proceeding through the following sequence:⁸³

1. **The board first identifies a need for new policy.** The recognition that there is a need for a new institutional policy can come from a number of sources: board committees, the chair of the board, the school leader, other staff, parents, students, and community members. Some of the conditions that cause the charter school board to consider development of a new policy include the following:
 - a. Issues are arising which are not adequately/acceptably addressed by current board policies.
 - b. Changes in operating practice have accumulated over time so that the current policies do not reflect reality.
 - c. External changes and trends that have an impact on the charter school and the families being served, for example, workforce demographics have brought new issues forward.
 - d. The charter school has changed in size, scope, services offered, or methods of delivery of services.
 - e. Recent federal or state laws have created the need for adjustments in policy, e.g., wage and hour laws, equal employment, safety, provisions of the applicable state charter school legislation, etc.
 - f. Current policy does not adequately reduce ambiguity and ensure uniformity of decisions across the charter school.

When such new issues and questions arise, the first question for the board to ask is "What do our current policies say?" If the language of the current policies does not

⁸³ Andringa, R. C. & Engstrom, T. W. (1997). *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book*. National Center for Nonprofit Boards.



provide guidance, the next question is, “What policy should we adopt to cover this and similar situations in the future?”

2. **The board then assigns a team to draft the new policy.** After it has been determined that a new policy is needed, often it is the school leader who is in the best position to draft policies for board review, because he or she is heavily involved in school operations and therefore, is most aware of what is needed. However, since setting board policy is ultimately the board’s responsibility, a board-staff team, such as the Governance committee, can also be effective. In either case, the board needs to clearly communicate to the team that will write the policy draft its concerns and any preferences regarding how the new policy will be approached.
3. **Gather input from stakeholders.** The team drafting the policy should gather input from relevant stakeholders, including all board members, outside experts when appropriate, and other stakeholders who would be impacted by the new policy or amendment.
4. **Write a first policy draft.** The writing team then develops a written policy statement that responds to the issue or question at hand. In some cases, the team can use policies that have been drafted by other charter schools. John Carver, author of *Boards That Make a Difference*,⁸⁴ encourages boards to start with broad statements and become more specific only if it will improve the policy. He suggests the following.
 - a. Decide the largest issue in a given category before smaller issues in that same category.
 - b. Stop at the level where you can accept any reasonable interpretation of the decision just made.

If the policies become too detailed, it is almost certain that the board has moved beyond policy-making and has begun to invade school leader operations. The board should keep its policies at the broad governance level, maintaining the distinction between “Ends” and “Means.”

5. **Ask legal counsel to review the draft policy.** In some cases, it may be important to bring the charter school’s legal counsel in to review the policy draft. The attorney, who should be familiar with applicable charter school law and regulations, should not write policy but he or she will certainly have many helpful suggestions including how new policies should be adopted in such a way that any previous, related policies can then be continued. By no means, however, is a legal review required of each and every policy draft under consideration by the charter school board.
6. **Present draft policy to the board for approval.** Once the writing team has the policy draft ready for board approval, it is advisable to have a first reading at a board meeting to give the writing team informal feedback. The writing team can then incorporate any

⁸⁴ Carver, J. (2011). *Board that make a difference: A new design for leadership organizations*. Wiley.



suggestions and bring the final policy draft to the next board meeting when the board can formally adopt.

7. **Continue to review and revise board policies.** Periodically, the board should review its policies to make sure they are still relevant and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

A Note on Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded mandates⁸⁵ are regulations or policies imposed by the state or federal government without any funding provided to the school to implement them. Despite the lack of financial support, schools are still legally obligated to comply and often must find creative ways to do so using existing resources. Because such mandates are inevitable, schools and their boards should proactively plan for them.

A recent example of an unfunded mandate is 8 CCR 1501-11⁸⁶ which establishes accessible technology standards for public information in Colorado. These rules apply to public schools, prompting many schools to allocate resources to ensure their websites meet accessibility requirements.

Organizing Policies

Staff must clearly understand the policies they are responsible for implementing and the boundaries within which they operate. At the same time, boards should avoid the need to repeatedly create similar policies. To support both clarity and efficiency, board policies must be well-organized and easily accessible.

To achieve this, the board should maintain a dedicated policy section within its Board Manual where all adopted policies and amendments are stored. It is recommended that each board member have access to a hard copy (if preferred), that a hard copy be available to the public in the front office, and that an up-to-date version be posted on the school's website. A clear, comprehensive policy manual equips the board to speak with one voice on important issues and supports efficient, effective decision-making.

Policy Categories

There is no universal list of required policies for every school. However, at a minimum, the following policies are strongly recommended:

- Student Discipline
- Grievance and Complaint Process

⁸⁵ Fiveable. (2024, July 31). Unfunded Mandates – Education Policy and Reform. <https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/education-policy-reform/unfunded-mandates>

⁸⁶ 8 CCR 1501-11



- Communication Protocols (among board, parents, students, teachers, and staff)
- Enrollment
- Anti-Discrimination
- Employee Matters (e.g., hiring, termination, performance evaluations, anti-harassment)
- Financial Policies (e.g., budgeting, asset management, check-signing authority, audits, fundraising)
- Conflict of Interest
- Board Meeting Procedures, including opportunities and processes for public comment
- Risk Management and School Safety

Policy Updates

A critical component of maintaining organized policies is assigning clear responsibility for managing the policy section of the Board Manual—both in hard copy (if applicable) and electronically. This responsibility should be explicitly included in the job description of the board secretary, a designated school administrator, the Governance Committee, or another appropriate individual. Each policy should clearly indicate its original adoption date as well as the date of its most recent amendment.

The school should also implement a system to track:

- The date each policy was approved by the board and/or authorizer
- Dates of board review
- When the policy was published or otherwise made available to the public

Consider establishing a policy review schedule to be managed by the board secretary, a school administrator, and/or the Governance Committee. When a policy is identified for revision, the identified team can draft proposed updates and present them to the full board for review and potential adoption. The sample schedule below organizes the review process by policy section.

Policy Review Annual Action Plan		
Policies for Review	Deadline	Status
Review Bylaws	August	No revisions needed
Review Policy Section: The School & The Board	September	Draft updates to 1.3 & 1.6 completed 9/2 and will be presented to the board on 9/18 for a first read.
Review Policy Section: Administration & Personnel	October	
Review Policy Section: Students	November	
Review Policy Section: Education Program	December	



Review Policy Section: Finance and Accounting	January	
Review Policy Section: Facilities	February	
Review Policy Section: School-Community Relations	March	

Sample Policies

Many schools have their board policy manuals posted online. To find sample policies, consider finding a school with a similar mission, model, or size to your school. Then, explore their website for board policies.

See [Appendix 12](#) for a sample grievance policy.

Board Discussion:

How true are the following statements regarding your board policies?

- Policies are reflective of the educational goals of the charter school.
- Policies are written within the scope of the school board's authority.
- Policies are adopted through proper board procedure.
- Policies are respectful of legal and constitutional rights and requirements.
- Policies are communicated to the persons within the charter school community it will affect.

Board Action:

Create a schedule for regularly reviewing board policies. Assign a person or group, like the Governance committee, to lead this process.

Understanding Waivers

One defining factor of a charter school is its ability to waive out of certain state and district policies. These waivers are meant to provide the charter school with the flexibility and autonomy to implement their unique program.

Charter schools often have both state waivers and district/authorizer waivers.

State Waivers

The Charter School Act⁸⁷ allows charter schools to obtain waivers from specified areas of state statute and rule. These waivers are submitted by the authorizer, on behalf of the school, to the State Board of Education as part of the school's charter contract.

⁸⁷ title 22, article 30.5, C.R.S.



Automatic Waivers - Automatic waivers⁸⁸ are granted to charter schools automatically with their charter contract. “Automatic” means the charter school does not have to supply a Rationale and Replacement Plan (RRP), however, schools must still indicate which automatic waivers they intend to use. The State Board of Education determines which waivers qualify as automatic. For the most current list, visit the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) website.

Non-Automatic Waivers - Non-automatic waivers apply to all other state statutes and rules. These require a formal request approved by the State Board of Education which must include a RRP.

CDE provides a template for schools to use when requesting non-automatic waivers. Each request must include the statutory citation and title of the provision to be waived, a rationale explaining why the waiver is being requested, and a replacement plan indicating how the school will meet the intent of the law that is being waived. While not required, CDE recommends schools include the anticipated financial impact of the waiver, how the impact of the waiver will be evaluated, and the expected outcomes from implementing the waiver.

Non-Automatic Waivers: Statute Description and Rationale and Replacement Plan	
Statutory Citation and Title (<i>i.e. C.R.S. §22-9-106 Local Board of Education, Duties-Performance Evaluation System</i>)	
Rationale:	
Replacement Plan:	
Duration of Waivers: We formally request the waiver be in effect for the duration of our contract with _____. Therefore, the waiver is requested through June 30, 20____. Authorizer Date	
Financial Impact:	
How the Impact of the Waivers Will be Evaluated:	

⁸⁸ 22-30.5-103, C.R.S.



Expected Outcome:

Prohibited Waivers - Some state statutes and rules cannot be waived by charter schools. For example, schools must comply with requirements related to state assessments, the Public School Finance Act, and anti-discrimination laws.⁸⁹

It is essential for charter school boards to stay informed about legislative changes at the state level. The Colorado League of Charter Schools is a valuable resource for timely legislative updates. Boards are encouraged to subscribe to the League's newsletter and participate in Town Halls or Legislative Update calls. Visit the Colorado League of Charter Schools' website for more information on how to stay current and connected.

District/Authorizer Waivers

Schools may also waive out of some district policies. District waivers are approved by the authorizing district's board and do not need to be submitted to the state.

Unless a specific district/authorizer policy has been formally waived, it applies to your charter school. Since most charter schools are authorized by school districts, they should assume that existing, non-waived district policies apply to the charter school. Therefore, charter school boards should:

- Collaborate with their authorizer to establish a reliable system for receiving newly adopted or proposed policies. Some charter schools have one member of their board attend each authorizer board meeting to take note of policy changes. Some authorizers communicate policy changes directly with charter schools through an authorizer/charter liaison.
- Regularly review their own policies to determine whether any authorizer policies should be waived and replaced
- When appropriate, draft a substitute policy and submit a waiver request to the authorizer

Authorizer policies generally fall into three categories:

- **Clearly applicable and not waived:** These should be included in your policy manual and followed in routine decision-making.
- **Applicable but waived and replaced:** These should be removed from your manual and replaced with the school's replacement policy.
- **Inapplicable (but not waived):** Some authorizer policies may not apply to charter schools due to structural or operational differences. In these cases, it's important to obtain written confirmation from the authorizer acknowledging that the policy does not apply.

⁸⁹ §22-30.5-104(6)(c), C.R.S.



Board Discussion:

How is your board staying current on changes to authorizer policies and state law that may influence the need to revise current policies or create new policies?

Board Action:

Review your current authorizer and state waivers. In preparation for your next charter renewal, what additional waivers might you seek? Start drafting replacement policies.

II. Identifying Potential Risks and Monitoring Data

One important component of managing risk is identifying key indicators of success and struggle and monitoring data to ensure the charter school is meeting its goals related to each metric. As stated by Carpenter,⁹⁰ while risks can't always be predicted, if "your school's management is intentional about being proactive in identifying *potential* risks, it can position itself to manage and/or mitigate them" (p. 27).

The Charter Contract

The charter contract is a legally binding agreement between the charter authorizer and the school that "stipulates the terms and conditions by which the school will operate and defines the rights and responsibilities of each party, including performance expectations and conditions for renewal" (National Association of Charter School Authorizers, 2009, p. 1).⁹¹ If the defined terms are not met, the school can be closed. Charter school boards must monitor the metrics in the charter contract to know if the school is thriving or declining and at risk of non-renewal.

Signals of Success and Signals of Struggle

According to the National Charter School Resource Center,⁹² if a school board can identify signs of distress early, they can intervene before failure is too deep, systemic, or extensive to recover from" (p. 2). The National Charter School Resource Center identifies six key indicators of distress that align with the metrics in many charter contracts: leadership, governing board, finance and operations, talent, culture, and instruction.

⁹⁰ Carpenter, B. L. (2028). *Governing for greatness: Ten fundamentals every charter school board member needs to know*. National Charter Schools Institute.

⁹¹ National Association of Charter School Authorizers. (2009). Charter School contracts. https://qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PolicyGuide_CharterSchoolContracts_2009.10.pdf

⁹² National Charter School Resource Center. (2021). *Identifying Indicators of Distress in Charter Schools, Part 2: The Roles and Perspectives of Charter School Leaders and Board Members*. Bethesda, MD: Manhattan Strategy Group.



The following charts outline several signals of success and signals of struggle⁹³ in each indicator. Governing boards can determine which of these metrics are most critical to monitor based on the needs of their school. See [Appendix 13](#) for more detailed descriptions of each signal.

Leadership		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Leading School Improvement	Successful School Improvement	Inability to Execute Improvement
Leadership Responsibilities	Distributive Leadership	Overextended Leadership
Feedback and Growth	Collaborative Leadership	Insular Leadership

Governing Board		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Board Member Skill Sets	Complete Skills	Incomplete Skills
Board Deliberation	Active deliberation	Lack of deliberation
Board Strategy	Proactive Board	Reactive Board

Finance and Operations		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Student Enrollment	Stable or Growing Enrollment	Low or Decreasing Enrollment
Budget Management	Managed Budget	Inadequate Budget Management
Financial Controls	Comprehensive Policies and Procedures	Weak Policies and Procedures

Talent		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Staff Retention	High to Average Staff Retention	Low Staff Retention
Staff Capacity	Responsive Staffing	Reactive Staffing
Staff Development	Meaningful Staff Development	Insufficient Staff Development

Culture		
---------	--	--

⁹³ Murray, K. (2025). *Dashboard Indicators to Board Action Chart*.



Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Student Culture	Positive Student Culture	Negative Student Culture
Staff Culture	Positive Staff Culture	Negative Staff Culture
Community Culture	Positive Community Culture	Negative Community Culture

Instruction		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Academic Progress	Progress Towards Academic Goals	Lack of Progress Towards Academic Goals
Quality Resources	High Quality Curriculum & Assessments	Inconsistent Curriculum & Assessments
Systems of Support	Continuum of Supports for Students	Little Support for Students

Data Dashboards

Once boards identify the most critical indicators, they must develop monitoring tools. One such tool is the board dashboard. A board dashboard provides a concise, high-level snapshot of data aligned with those indicators. As defined by BoardSource (2016),⁹⁴ “a dashboard brings together a set of key ratios and other metrics in a way that conveys to the board the internal system dynamics of the organization” (p. 1).

Guided by the school’s mission, goals, strategic plan, and authorizer requirements, the board should determine the metrics that will be monitored. Metrics on a dashboard are updated at various intervals depending on when data is available. For example, enrollment data is available monthly, while interim assessment results are reported in fall, winter, and spring. Although the board designs the dashboard, the school leader typically enters the data and presents the findings. This partnership allows the board to monitor leadership, governance, finance and operations, talent, culture, and instructional quality with confidence.

⁹⁴ BoardSource, (2016), *10 Common Benefits of Dashboard Reports*, BoardSource.



Dashboard Indicators and Sample Metrics ⁹⁵	
Indicator	Metrics
Leadership	• Organization chart • Progress toward implementing improvement initiatives • Major leadership responsibilities (including annual projects) and identified leads
Governing Board	• Number of board members • Number of board vacancies • Skill set matrix • Length of board meetings
Finance and Operations	• Facility costs • Estimated facility improvement expenditures (5-year projections) • Student enrollment trends • Reasons for student attrition • Wait lists by grade level • Year to Date (YTD) Revenue • YTD Expense • YTD Income • YTD Cash on hand by number of days • Debt service ratio • % income dedicated to personnel
Talent	• Staff Retention Rate • Number of staff vacancies • Reasons for staff attrition • Staff diversity statistics • Professional development completed by staff • Number of observations completed by leadership
Culture	• Student discipline rates (referrals, suspensions, expulsions) • Number of behavior plans • Student attendance rate • Number of attendance plans • Student demographics • Stakeholder survey data • Parent volunteer hours • Student participation in clubs/activities
Instruction	• State Ranking • State Test Scores • Interim Test Scores • % students on track with credits • % students admitted to a 4-year college • % students passing courses

⁹⁵ Marks, R., Goldstein, J., Floodeen, D., & Croy Lewis, T. (2015). *Utilizing a Dashboard to Manage and Monitor Success*, Charter School Institute.



Some tools align actual performance to goals, with color-coded stoplight visuals reflecting progress. Others are organized around the strategic priorities of the board and the set of measures that indicate success. See [Appendix 14](#) for a sample data dashboard tool.

A dashboard alone will not support school success. Instead, the metrics on a dashboard are evidence of the systems that exist within a school. BoardSource (2016) emphasizes, “faced with inadequate progress, the board can ask some good questions as to underlying causes, which may result in changing certain policies and practices that will better ensure attaining the vision year goal in question, modifying the goal itself, or some combination of both” (p.2).

Board Discussion:

What key indicators, based on your charter contract or signs of success and struggle, are most important for your board to monitor? If the school is not meeting goals in these areas, what actions might you take as a board?

Board Action:

Create or revise your board dashboard to include both metrics based on your charter contract and metrics based on your mission. Add a review of your dashboard to your monthly meeting agendas.

Additional Tools for Navigating Risk

Risk Mitigation Checklist

The following checklist can be used to examine the policies and procedures in place to mitigate risk in common areas. Many of these items are operational, meaning the charter school board will not create the policy or procedure; the school administrator will. However, the board may ask the leader to report on certain elements to ensure they are in place.

1. **Health and Safety Risk Management** - Establish comprehensive health and safety policies to ensure that the school environment is safe for students, staff, and visitors.
 - ☐ Regular safety drills (fire, lockdown, earthquake, etc.)
 - ☐ Hazard assessments for facilities (slips, falls, etc.)
 - ☐ Procedures for responding to accidents, injuries, and emergencies
 - ☐ Compliance with local health regulations (sanitation, food safety, etc.)
 - ☐ Mental health support services for students and staff
2. **Financial Risk Management** - Manage the financial health of the charter school, ensuring transparency, accountability, and the proper use of public funds.
 - ☐ Annual budgets with clear lines for expenditures and revenue



- ☐ Independent audits and financial reviews
- ☐ Fraud prevention strategies (e.g., segregation of duties, checks and balances)
- ☐ Insurance coverage for liability, property, and workers' compensation
- ☐ Policies for emergency fund management and contingency planning

3. **Legal and Compliance Risk Management** - Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws, as well as charter-specific agreements.

- ☐ Adherence to the terms and conditions of the charter contract
- ☐ Compliance with state education regulations (e.g., testing, curriculum standards)
- ☐ Protection against legal liabilities (e.g., employee contracts, student rights)
- ☐ Training for staff on legal responsibilities (e.g., reporting child abuse, anti-discrimination laws)
- ☐ Policies to address complaints and disputes (e.g., student bullying, discrimination)

4. **Cybersecurity and Data Protection** - Safeguard sensitive information (student data, staff records, financial information) from cyber threats and unauthorized access.

- ☐ Secure storage and encryption of student records
- ☐ Training for staff on cybersecurity best practices (passwords, phishing attacks, etc.)
- ☐ Incident response plans in case of data breaches or cyberattacks
- ☐ Compliance with laws such as FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)
- ☐ Regular software updates and security patches

5. **Risk Associated with Facilities and Operations** - Ensure that the physical building and operations are safe and well-maintained.

- ☐ Preventative maintenance schedules for facilities (e.g., HVAC, plumbing, fire systems)
- ☐ Proper signage and accessibility for students and staff with disabilities
- ☐ Safety inspections for playgrounds, sports facilities, and classrooms
- ☐ Emergency evacuation plans and evacuation drills
- ☐ Insurance coverage for property damage or loss

6. **Reputation Management** - Protect the school's reputation and ensure communication is clear, transparent, and timely.

- ☐ Social media policies for staff and students to avoid harmful content or behavior
- ☐ Public relations strategy in the event of negative publicity (e.g., parent complaints, scandals)
- ☐ Crisis communication plans (e.g., school closures, public health issues)
- ☐ Policies for engaging with stakeholders (parents, local community, board members)
- ☐ Regular surveys to assess satisfaction and address concerns promptly

7. **Staff and Personnel Management** - Mitigate risks associated with staff behavior, performance, and turnover.

- ☐ Clear hiring, training, and evaluation processes
- ☐ Background checks for all employees (including volunteers)
- ☐ Policies for handling grievances, performance issues, and terminations
- ☐ Employee wellness programs and support
- ☐ Clear codes of conduct and professional behavior expectations



8. **Emergency and Crisis Management** - Develop protocols for handling emergencies such as natural disasters, accidents, or other unforeseen events.

- ☐ Crisis management plan that outlines roles and responsibilities during emergencies
- ☐ Communication protocols to keep parents, staff, and the community informed
- ☐ Coordination with local emergency responders and public health authorities
- ☐ Resource management (e.g., emergency kits, first aid supplies)
- ☐ Recovery plan to return the school to normal operations quickly

9. **Insurance Policies** - Ensure that the school has adequate insurance coverage to mitigate risks and reduce potential financial exposure.

- ☐ General liability insurance for accidents and injuries
- ☐ Director and Officer liability
- ☐ Errors and Omissions
- ☐ Property insurance to cover building damage
- ☐ Workers' compensation insurance for staff injuries
- ☐ Professional liability insurance for staff-related legal issues (e.g., negligence)
- ☐ Coverage for events and activities outside the school grounds (e.g., field trips)
- ☐ Cyber crimes coverage

10. **Transportation and Field Trip Risk Management** - Manage the risks associated with student transportation and off-campus activities.

- ☐ Policies for school transportation safety (e.g., vehicle maintenance, driver qualifications)
- ☐ Permission slips and emergency contact information for field trips
- ☐ Risk assessments for field trip destinations and activities
- ☐ Supervision requirements for off-campus activities
- ☐ Insurance coverage for student transportation and activities

11. **Student and Parent Engagement** - Ensure the safety and well-being of students and facilitate constructive parent involvement.

- ☐ Clear codes of conduct for students and parents
- ☐ Protocols for handling student behavior and discipline
- ☐ Regular parent-teacher meetings to discuss student progress
- ☐ Community outreach and parent engagement programs
- ☐ Conflict resolution mechanisms for parent disputes

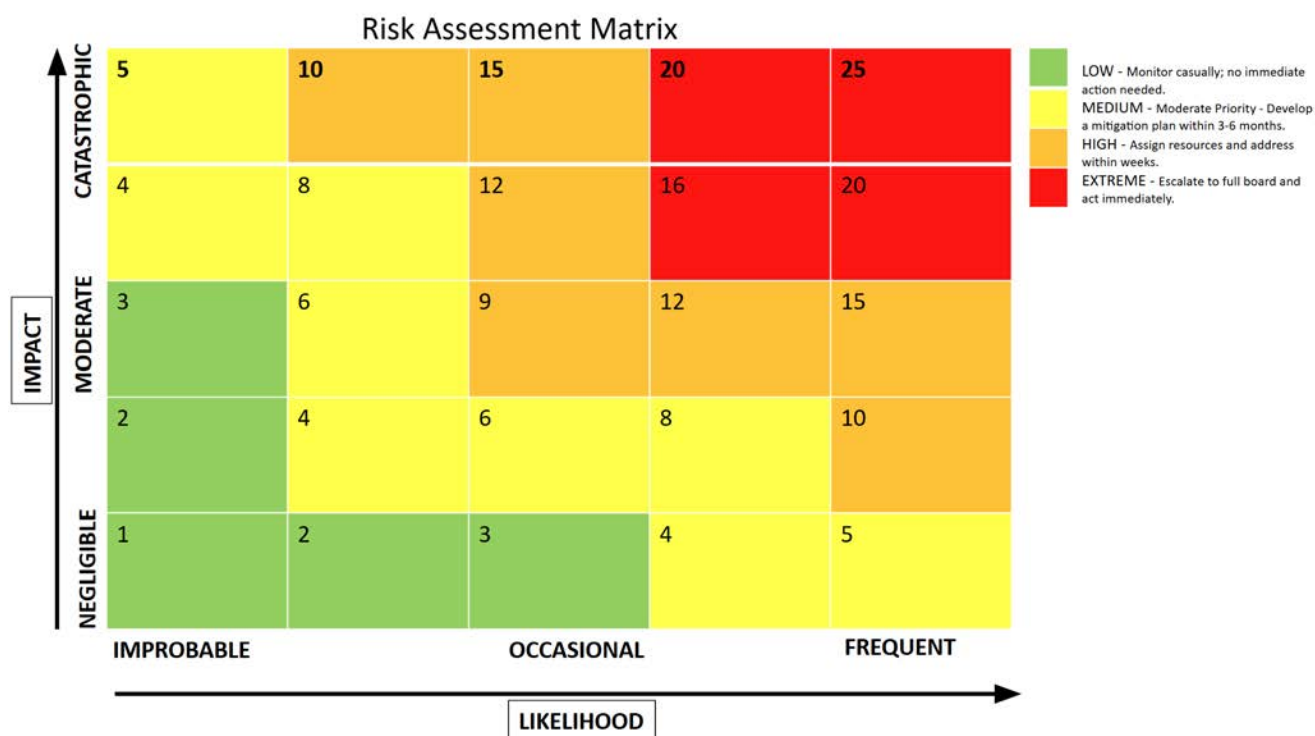
Risk Assessment Matrix

It is impossible and would be overwhelming for boards and school leaders to handle every potential risk with the same level of urgency. After identifying potential risks, a risk assessment matrix can provide a visual view of the likelihood and impact of a particular risk and prioritize the action required.⁹⁶ Schools can start with a general risk assessment template and customize it to include the particular risks being assessed.

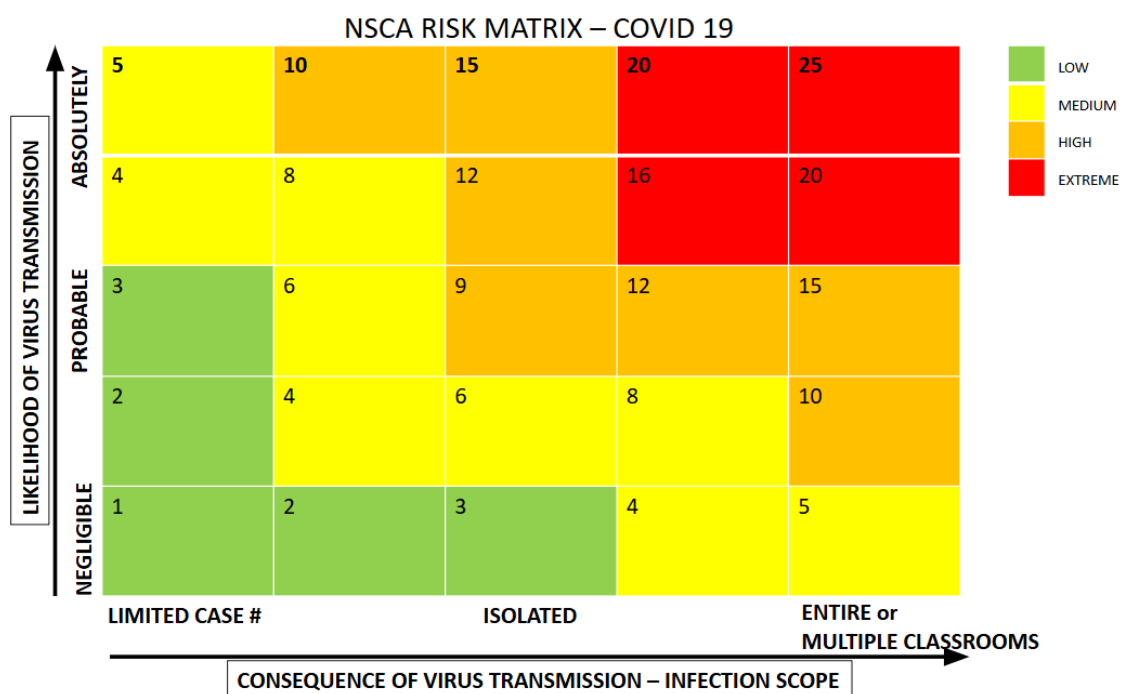
⁹⁶ Kirvan, P. (2023). *Risk assessment matrix: Free template and usage guide*. TechTarget. <https://www.techtarget.com/searchdisasterrecovery/feature/How-to-use-a-risk-assessment-matrix-A-free-template-and-guide>



Risk Assessment Matrix



New Summit Charter Academy⁹⁷ customized a risk assessment matrix for use during the COVID-19 pandemic to assess the likelihood of transmission and infection scope.



⁹⁷ Image used with permission from New Summit Charter Academy.



Additional examples of using the risk matrix are as follows:

Risk Identified: Declining enrollment due to competition

- Likelihood 5 (new school opened)
- Impact 4 (20% funding loss)
- Score 16 (Red)
- Act now with a marketing plan

Risk Identified: Roof Failure

- Likelihood 3 (roof leaks reported)
- Impact 3 (classes disrupted)
- Score 9 (Orange)
- Fix within weeks and allocate money for roof repair or replacement

Board Discussion:

How is your board and leadership planning for potential risks? Have there been challenges in the past that could have been handled early if a risk assessment had been completed (i.e., the school lacked a clear policy, or a lack of preventative maintenance on the facility led to a costly repair)?

Board Action:

Identify risks facing your school. Complete the risk assessment matrix and develop a plan to mitigate each risk.



III. Legal Issues and Insurance

Every charter school should have its own legal counsel. The board should know who their legal counsel is and how to contact them. Carpenter (2018)⁹⁸ recommends “consulting an attorney prior to engaging in any potentially high-risk act” (p. 28). Examples of when a school may contact its attorney include:

- Expelling students
- Terminating employees
- Conducting investigations into alleged misconduct
- Improving high-dollar contracts
- Reviewing certain policies

While consulting legal counsel does come with an expense, a lawsuit is much more costly than a few hours of consultation.

There has been a significant increase in legal claims against schools over the past two decades.⁹⁹ Charter schools are not immune to these challenges. Some of the more common legal issues that charters have faced include:

- Special Education and Section Violations
 - Failure to provide Free Appropriate Public Education under IDEA
 - Improper discipline of students with disabilities
 - Disputes over responsibilities between charter schools and authorizers or districts for providing services
- Civil Rights and Equity
 - Discrimination in admissions, programing, or services
 - Inaccessible websites ot learning materials
 - Failure to serve English learners according to state or federal standards
- Governance and Board Oversight
 - Conflicts of interest among board members or between the board and school employees
 - Failure to follow open meetings and public records laws
 - Improper delegation of authority
- Employment and Labor
 - Wrongful termination or discrimination claims
 - Misclassification of employees, especially distinguishing between independent contractors and employees
 - Employee handbook or policy gaps that lead to legal exposure
- Student Discipline and Due Process
 - Failure to provide due process before suspensions or expulsions
 - Disciplinary policies that are vague or overly punitive

⁹⁸ Carpenter, B. L. (2018). *Governing for greatness: Ten fundamentals every charter school board member needs to know*. National Charter Schools Institute.

⁹⁹ Modan, P. (2024). *Top legal hurdles facing schools in 2024-25*. K-12 Dive.



- Disproportionate discipline impacting certain student groups, which may raise civil rights concerns
- Financial and Compliance Issues
 - Misuse of public funds or lack of internal financial controls
 - Noncompliance with procurement laws, especially regarding transparency and competitive bidding
 - Inadequate financial reporting to authorizers or state agencies
- Facilities and Health/Safety
 - Zoning or permitting violations
 - Noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or state building accessibility requirements
 - Failure to meet state or local health and safety codes, especially during construction or major renovations
- Data Privacy and Technology
 - Violations of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) through improper sharing or storage of student records
 - Inadequate cybersecurity protections, especially for schools using cloud services or remote learning platforms
 - Noncompliance with state student data privacy laws

Insurance

Charter schools should maintain comprehensive insurance coverage to protect against a wide range of risks. A school's certificate of insurance outlines its policies by category and should be reviewed regularly to ensure adequate protection.

Common types of insurance coverage include:

- **General Liability Insurance** – Covers accidents or injuries on school property
- **Directors and Officers (D&O) Liability** – Protects board members and school leaders from claims related to governance decisions
- **Errors and Omissions (E&O)** – Covers mistakes or oversights in administrative or professional duties
- **Property Insurance** – Protects buildings and contents against damage or loss
- **Workers' Compensation** – Provides coverage for employee injuries sustained on the job
- **Professional Liability Insurance** – Covers staff against claims such as negligence or misconduct
- **Event and Activity Coverage** – Extends liability protection to off-site events like field trips
- **Cyber Liability Insurance** – Protects against data breaches, ransomware attacks, and other digital threats

Charter schools can obtain insurance through a broker, a risk pool, or independently, depending on their size, authorizer requirements, and budget.



Board Discussion:

Do you know who your legal counsel is? Discuss as a board when you have used your attorney or when you might in the future.

Board Action:

Budget for regular legal consultation. How are you budgeting for unexpected legal issues?



IV. Crisis Communications

The board and school leadership should work together to develop a comprehensive crisis communication plan. In the world of public education, it's not a matter of *if* a crisis will occur, but *when*. Being prepared greatly influences how effectively a school can respond and maintain trust with its community.

Not all crises require a defensive response. Some situations, such as the death of a student or a public health emergency, call for thoughtful, compassionate, and deliberate communication. Others may arise from external events, such as a nearby shooting or a local fire. While these situations may not directly involve the school, they still require prompt acknowledgment and an appropriate communication strategy.

Components of a Crisis Communication Plan

1. **Identify the School Spokesperson** - One individual should be designated as the primary spokesperson to make official statements and be the media contact. However, it is important to designate a backup spokesperson in the event that the primary spokesperson is unavailable. The spokesperson (and back-up spokesperson) can be a board member, administrator, or assigned staff member. When picking a spokesperson, think about someone who is:
 - a. Comfortable in front of a TV camera and with reporters
 - b. Can stick to the talking points, and speak without using jargon
 - c. Able to remain calm in stressful situations

Make sure your staff knows **NO ONE ELSE TALKS** to the media, even if it **SEEMS** urgent. It's not that they cannot be trusted, but the media should have one contact to go to and one person who can deliver a message consistently every time.

Train the support staff to gather information from the reporter—the reporter's name, media outlet, telephone number, deadline for calling back, what they are calling about, and what time they called. This will enable the spokesperson to prepare before returning the call.

2. **Identify a Crisis Communications Team** - This may vary depending on the crisis. The team might include representatives from the school's administration, authorizer, educational service provider (if applicable), attorney, board members, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, and/or local law enforcement. The job of this team is to come up with a plan of action. They help the spokesperson understand what happened and how the crisis will be handled and resolved.
3. **Gather Critical Contact Information** - At the beginning of every school year, prepare a crisis communications reference binder and/or online electronic folder. Keep this handy



and up-to-date. Keep a separate copy of the binder off-site in case the school is not accessible during a crisis (i.e., fire, flooding, etc.) Include in this binder/e-folder:

- a. Staff directory with cell phone numbers
- b. Board member directory with contact information
- c. Attorney contact information
- d. Contact information for your authorizer
- e. Educational service provider contact information (if applicable)
- f. Colorado League of Charter Schools contact information
- g. State Department of Education contact information
- h. Local law enforcement contact information
- i. Local TV, radio, and newspaper stations (assignment editors & education writers)
- j. School fact sheet

When a Crisis Occurs

The first and most important step during a crisis is to follow your crisis communications action plan. Immediately convene your Crisis Communications Team and designate a spokesperson. Agree on the key messages—and stick to them.

A helpful tool in these moments is a set of **talking points**—short, focused statements that ensure your message is consistent across all interactions with the media, families, and community members.

Key Principles to Remember

- Tell the truth.
- Stick to confirmed facts.
- Never speculate. If you don't know something, say so. It's better to delay a response than to guess or give incorrect information.

Before Speaking to the Media

- Rehearse. Practice your talking points with your team.
- Prepare. Ensure you're confident and comfortable with what you'll say.
- Prioritize clarity. Avoid jargon and overly technical language.

Messaging Tips

People tend to remember what they hear **first** and **last**, so open and close your messages with the most critical information. For example:

- "All students are safe and accounted for."
- "We are asking parents NOT to come to the school. Please pick up your child at..."
- "For information, parents should call..."

Close by repeating your key points to reinforce your message.



Tips for Talking to a Reporter

When speaking with reporters during or after a crisis, it's important to be strategic, consistent, and legally cautious. Here are key guidelines to follow:

1. Stick to the Talking Points

- Only share information that aligns with your pre-approved talking points.
- Do not volunteer extra information, even if it seems helpful in the moment.

2. Assume Nothing is Off the Record

- **“Off the record” does not exist.** Always assume anything you say to a reporter can be used and quoted.

3. Be Cautious with Personnel Matters

- If the crisis involves a staff member, do not discuss specific individuals or incidents.
- Instead, refer to the relevant school policy or standard procedure.
- Disclosing personal details can violate employee rights and expose the school to legal liability. Always consult legal counsel before making public statements related to personnel.

4. Avoid Saying “No Comment”

- Saying “no comment” may sound evasive or defensive.
- Instead, explain why you cannot provide certain information (e.g., due to privacy concerns or ongoing legal matters) and then refocus on the process or facts you can share.

5. Limit Who Speaks on Behalf of the School

- Keep interviews limited to the primary spokesperson, backup spokesperson, or a designated technical expert.
- If others need to speak publicly, take time to fully prepare and brief them.
- Controlling the message helps maintain consistency and credibility.

6. Know Your Limits

- While you can manage your school's internal messaging, remember that reporters are free to speak with anyone off-campus, including staff, students, or parents. You cannot control this, but you can prepare your internal team and community by reinforcing key messages and providing support.



If a Reporter Calls the School's Spokesperson

If you are serving as the school's spokesperson and a reporter contacts you about a negative story or crisis that you are not yet aware of, do not respond with confusion or denial. Instead:

- Ask clarifying questions to better understand the topic of the inquiry.
- Request the reporter's deadline and let them know you will follow up before that time.
- Gather accurate information internally before responding.
- Follow through on your commitment to call back.

Timely and informed responses maintain credibility and prevent misinformation.

On the Record versus Off the Record

There is no such thing as "off the record." Assume that anything you say to a reporter may be quoted and attributed to you. Even when offering background or explaining context, your words can still appear in print. Be deliberate and composed in your speech. Even casual comments can become headlines.

Common Communication Tools in a Crisis

1. **Talking Points** - Talking points are brief, key messages about your school and the situation you want consistently communicated to the media. Benefits include:
 - a. Ensuring all staff and board members are aligned on messaging
 - b. Providing a clear stance and focus
 - c. Supporting consistency across different platforms (interviews, emails, public meetings)

Distribute talking points to the internal team, board members, and, when appropriate, all staff—especially if they may be contacted by reporters.

2. **Press Releases** - A press release is a written statement for the media that:
 - Summarizes the situation
 - Presents verified facts
 - May include approved quotes from leadership

Stick to the basics: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Do not include any information beyond your talking points or what has been vetted by legal counsel if legal considerations are involved.

3. **Media Advisories** - Media advisories are short alerts informing media outlets about a news conference or upcoming announcement. Include:
 - What the announcement is about
 - Who will be involved
 - Date, time, and location
 - Directions or access instructions if needed



4. **Community Allies** - Leverage trusted voices in your community, like loyal parents, community leaders, and local partners, can serve as valuable advocates during a crisis. Sometimes, the most credible voice is not the school's, but a well-informed ally. Consider how they might support your school by:
 - Writing op-eds
 - Sharing accurate information on social media
 - Countering misinformation with facts

V. Social Media

A board's responsibility when it comes to social media is simply to create and maintain a social media policy. Social media comes with legal risks, so the policy should address the following:

- Who is allowed to post on behalf of the school?
- What are appropriate staff-to-staff communications on social media?
- Is it okay for staff to "friend" students? Parents?
- What types of social media postings are staff required to report?
- In your student bullying policy, what are the consequences for student cyber-bullying incidents on social media?
- Compliance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Most authorizers have a policy regarding electronic communications and technology that schools should either review and adopt or waive and adapt to their own school.

Navigating Risk Case Studies

Define the board's response in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 15](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: Risk Assessment

Scenario: The charter school board completed a risk assessment to identify, evaluate, and prioritize risk in the following areas.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Rating	Risk Level
Declining Enrollment	4	4	16	Extreme
Leadership Turnover	3	5	15	High



Cybersecurity Breach	2	4	8	Medium
----------------------	---	---	---	--------

Create a prioritized mitigation plan to address declining enrollment, leadership turnover, and a cybersecurity breach.

Case Study 2: Media Request

Scenario: The board chair receives a call from a local news outlet regarding an alleged bullying incident involving a 7th-grade student. The reporter states that the student's parent has made a public post on social media alleging that their child was physically assaulted during recess and that the school has not taken appropriate action. The post has already gained traction online, with dozens of shares and emotional responses. The reporter asks for a statement and confirmation of the school's handling of the situation. What steps should the board chair and subsequent people take?

Case Study 3: Missed Financial Oversight

Scenario: The board meets monthly, and financial reports are presented by the business manager. At each prior meeting, the board received unaudited financial statements and cash flow projections, which were often accepted without discussion or question. Board members are generally unfamiliar with financial terms and indicators, and assume that if the business manager raised no red flags, the school is operating within its budget. In April, the board receives news that the school may not have sufficient cash on hand to make payroll for the last months of school. After digging into the financials, it was discovered that the budget had not been updated since January, and there were several significant financial developments since then. The cash flow projections provided by the business manager were not accurate. What steps should the board take to improve its financial oversight to mitigate future risk?

Case Study 4: Discipline Policies in Question

Scenario: The school is served with a lawsuit filed by a group of parents represented by a civil rights organization. The lawsuit alleges that the school's discipline practices violate federal civil rights laws, resulting in unlawful suspensions and removals from class, and a lack of proper procedural safeguards and parent notification. In addition to the lawsuit, the authorizer has issued a notice of concern. How will the board respond?



Chapter Five: Academic Performance

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Understand Colorado's accountability system and interpret the School Performance Framework (SPF).
- Explain the purpose of the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP).
- Define the board's role with curriculum oversight.
- Demonstrate how to respond when academic performance is below expectations.

Providing strong oversight of the charter school's academic program does not require board members to be education experts, but it does require clear, shared expectations between the board and the school leader. These expectations should be grounded in key documents such as:

- The school's contract with its authorizer
- The Colorado School Performance Framework (SPF)
- The Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)
- Mission-specific goals

Once board members understand these frameworks, they are well-positioned to regularly monitor the school's academic performance.

I. Academic Data

Students at your charter school participate in a variety of academic assessments throughout the year. Some assessments are required by state or federal law and cannot be waived. Others may be locally chosen to align with the school's curriculum or mission.

As a board member, you should receive high-level assessment data as it becomes available. Your role is to look for patterns, track progress toward goals, and ask strategic questions—not to interpret student-level results.

Types of Assessments

This chart describes the three most common types of assessments.

Summative Assessments	Interim Assessments	Formative Assessments
Measure what students have learned by the end of the year or course	Checkpoints during the year to monitor progress toward standards	Ongoing, quick checks for understanding during instruction



Examples: Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), SAT, unit tests...	Examples: NWEA MAP, DIBELS, i-Ready, STAR-360... <i>(Your school should administer at least one nationally normed interim assessment.)</i>	Examples: Quizzes, exit tickets, and classroom assignments <i>(The board typically would not have access to formative data.)</i>
--	--	--

Required Assessments in Colorado

Below is a summary of the state-required assessments charter schools must administer.

Assessment	Purpose	Administration
CMAS Math and English Language Arts (ELA) ¹⁰⁰	Measures standards mastery and school/district performance	Grades 3-8 - Spring
Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) ¹⁰¹	Alternative to CMAS ELA for qualifying Spanish-speaking students	Grades 3-4 - Spring
CMAS Social Studies	State standards mastery in Social Studies	Grades 4 & 7 (select schools only) - Spring
CMAS Science	Science standards mastery	Grades 5, 8, 11 - Spring
SAT ¹⁰² Math and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW)	College entrance exam; postsecondary readiness	Grade 11 - Spring
PSAT ¹⁰³	Progress toward college readiness	Grades 9 & 10 - Spring
Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt) ¹⁰⁴	Alternate assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities	Students with significant disabilities - Spring
ACCESS for ELLs ¹⁰⁵	These assessments measure English language acquisition	K–12 English Learners - Winter

¹⁰⁰ 22-7-1006.3(1)(a)(I)

¹⁰¹ 22-7-1006.3(4)(b)

¹⁰² 22-7-1006.3(2)(b)

¹⁰³ 22-7-1006.3(2)(a); 22-7-1006.3(2)(a.5)

¹⁰⁴ 22-7-1006.3(3)(c)

¹⁰⁵ 22-24-105



School Readiness ¹⁰⁶ - Schools can select from a list of CDE-approved school readiness exams	Identifies needs for incoming students	Kindergarten - First 60 days of school (Schools may choose to administer the assessment more often)
Early Literacy (READ) ¹⁰⁷ - Schools can select from a list of CDE-approved early literacy exams	Identifies reading skill levels and need for interventions	Grades K-3 - 3 times per year

If your school is designated as an Alternative Education Campus (AEC), you may submit alternative assessments (e.g., NWEA MAP, SCANTRON, Galileo) for SPF calculations, subject to CDE approval.

Ask your school's leader about the assessment schedule at your school. Monitor progress of key data points on a data dashboard. See [Appendix 17: Sample School Assessment Schedule](#). Refer to Chapter 4: Risk Management for additional information on data dashboards.

Colorado's Accountability Model

To provide effective academic oversight, board members must understand Colorado's Accountability Model, including the three key performance indicators used to evaluate and accredit all public schools and districts. These indicators are:

- Academic Achievement
- Academic Growth
- Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

These indicators form the foundation of the School Performance Framework (SPF), the tool used by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), school districts, and the Charter School Institute to measure and report school performance.

Tip: This section is easier to understand with a copy of your school's SPF in hand.

What SPF Measures

The SPF assigns a rating to each performance indicator based on how well the school meets state expectations. The rating levels are:

- Exceeds
- Meets
- Approaching
- Does Not Meet

¹⁰⁶ 22-7-1004(2)(a) and §22-7- 1014(2)(a)

¹⁰⁷ 22-7-1205(1)(a) and §22-7-1209(1)(b)



These ratings are combined to produce an overall performance evaluation, which determines the school's plan type for that year.

How Performance is Measured

Key performance indicators are weighted to determine the performance rating.

For elementary and middle schools, academic growth is weighted at 60% and academic achievement at 40%.¹⁰⁸

For high schools and districts, academic growth is weighted at 40%, academic achievement at 30%, and postsecondary readiness at 30%.

Academic Achievement - Average score on CMAS and PSAT state assessments.

Academic Growth - Progress students make in their achievement on assessments from one year to the next on CMAS, PSAT, SAT, and ACCESS.

Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness - High school and district ratings depend on graduation rates, dropout rates, average scores on the SAT, and matriculation into a college or career certificate program.

Each performance indicator is based on state-defined metrics and includes disaggregated data for specific student groups:

- English learners
- Students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch
- Students of color
- Students with disabilities
- (For CMAS ELA) Students previously identified for a READ Act plan

The weight of each indicator varies by school level (elementary, middle, high), and schools are rated based on the aggregate and subgroup performance.

Participation Matters

Schools also receive a participation rating, which may influence their overall SPF rating.¹⁰⁹

Participation Category	Definition
Meets	95%+ total participation in two or more content areas
Low Participation	Below 95% total participation in two or more content areas

¹⁰⁸ CDE, (2025). *District and school performance frameworks*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks>

¹⁰⁹ CCR 301-1 5.02



Decrease Due to Participation	Below 95% <i>accountability</i> participation in two or more content areas
-------------------------------	--

- *Parent excusals* count as non-participants in the total rate but as participants in the accountability rate.
- Only the third category (*Decrease Due to Participation*) affects the school's SPF rating.
- If participation is low, data may not fully represent the school's population, and results should be interpreted with caution.
- Schools can also be assigned an Insufficient State Data (ISD) rating if the total participation rate is too low.

SPF Plan Types

Plan Type	Description
Performance Plan	School meets or exceeds expectations on most metrics.
Improvement Plan	School is underperforming on several metrics.
Priority Improvement	School meets few metrics; receives increased state oversight.
Turnaround Plan	School is among the lowest performing; receives intensive state intervention.

All School and District SPFs are publicly available on the School View website:
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/explore/welcome>

CDE annually provides an annotated version of the SPF to help stakeholders understand its components. See [Appendix 18: CDE's 2024 Annotated Framework Report](#).

Board Discussion:

How are you, as a board, providing academic oversight?

Board Action:

Review your school's most recent School Performance Framework (SPF) report. Use the information to complete the chart below. Afterward, write a short summary in your own words about how your school is performing according to the state accountability system.



School Performance Overview Worksheet

SPF Category	Your School's Information
Overall SPF Plan Type	Plan Type ☐ Performance ☐ Improvement ☐ Priority Improvement ☐ Turnaround How many points earned?
Academic Achievement Rating	☐ Exceeds ☐ Meets ☐ Approaching ☐ Does Not Meet
Academic Growth Rating	☐ Exceeds ☐ Meets ☐ Approaching ☐ Does Not Meet
Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Rating (High schools only)	☐ Exceeds ☐ Meets ☐ Approaching ☐ Does Not Meet
Accountability Participation Rate Rating	☐ Meets ☐ Low Participation ☐ Decrease Due to Participation

Dive Deeper into the Data

Choose one grade band (Elementary, Middle, or High School) and one subject area (ELA, Math, or Science) for the following:

Question	Your Response
What was the mean scale score for all students in the selected grade band and subject? What was the state rating ?	



What mean scale score is needed to achieve a “Meets” rating for all students in this grade band and subject? (See <i>scoring guide on last page of SPF</i>)	
What was the rating for students with disabilities in the selected grade band and subject?	
In academic growth, which student subgroup had the highest Median Growth Percentile (MGP) ? How many students were in the group? What was their MGP?	

Summary Statement

In your own words, summarize your school’s overall performance based on the SPF. Consider which areas are strong, which need improvement, and what stands out to you as a board member.

Summary:

Bonus Question: Do your UIP goals align with what you see on the SFP? If they don’t explore why.

II. Unified Improvement Plan

The Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) is Colorado’s tool for streamlining school and district improvement planning. Created in 2008, it merges state, federal, and some grant accountability requirements into one planning process. The goal is to reduce duplicative work and promote a culture of continuous improvement, rather than treating planning as a one-time event.

While school leaders and staff are responsible for developing the plan, the board must review, approve, and monitor it, ensuring it aligns with the school’s challenges, strategies, and financial resources.

All schools, regardless of plan type, should be engaged in continuous improvement. The UIP is one way to communicate the school’s improvement initiatives and strategies to stakeholders. The UIP has schools set priorities and targets, identify root causes and strategies, and then



determine action steps and a progress monitoring plan. The following image¹¹⁰ shows the structure of the UIP:



Key Deadline: UIPs are submitted to the state each year by October 15 via the online UIP system. There are some exceptions to this deadline.

In 2016, Colorado passed HB 16-1440, allowing schools with a Performance Plan and districts rated Accredited or Accredited with Distinction to submit their UIP biennially (every other year).

The Board's Role

Charter boards should not view the UIP as just a compliance task. It's a strategic planning tool that can guide school improvement. The board should:

- Review and approve the UIP
- Ensure it reflects the school's real challenges and strategies
- Confirm alignment between the UIP and the school's budget
- Use the School Accountability Committee (SAC) for input and quarterly progress monitoring

See [Appendix 19: UIP Progress Tracker Template](#) for a sample of a quarterly progress report that the school leader and SAC can provide to the board.

¹¹⁰ CDE. (2025). *UIP workbook*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/UIPWorkbookPDF>



III. The Board's Role in Curriculum

The charter school board plays an essential governance role in curriculum oversight by approving the school's curriculum and establishing policies related to instruction and curriculum.

When to Review or Adopt New Curriculum

Adopting a new curriculum or textbook is a significant investment of time and resources. Schools may review or adopt new programs when:

- Assessment results reveal persistent academic challenges
- Educators identify a need for improved or updated materials
- State standards change, requiring instructional alignment
- A mandate is issued, such as under the Colorado READ Act,¹¹¹ which requires the use of evidence-based early literacy curricula

Some schools use a curriculum review cycle, rotating subjects or grade levels for review every few years, to support budgeting, planning, and continuous improvement.

The Curriculum Adoption Process

The curriculum adoption process should be collaborative and inclusive. While the school's administration typically leads the curriculum selection process with the help of a curriculum selection committee, the board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the process is rigorous, inclusive, and mission-aligned
- Approving the final curriculum decision
- Monitoring the success of implementation through academic performance data

EdReports¹¹² suggests six key curriculum adoption steps schools should follow:

Prepare:

1. Establish your process - Set parameters, timelines, and milestones. Assemble a curriculum adoption committee.
2. Develop your lens - Analyze data and the local context to establish priorities for considering new instructional materials.

¹¹¹ CDE. (n.d.). *Colorado READ Act*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy>

¹¹² EdReports. (n.d.). *Selecting for Quality: 6 Key Adoption Steps*. <https://edreports.org/resources/adoption-steps>



Study

3. Know and winnow your choices - Learn about available programs, conduct initial research, and decide on 2-4 programs to study more deeply.
4. Investigate the materials - Engage in a thorough, hands-on investigation of the top programs. This stage may include soliciting feedback from multiple stakeholder groups.

Decide and Launch

5. Make a decision - Use the evidence collected to make a final decision. Present the decision to the board for approval. Communicate the decision with stakeholders.
6. Implement - Develop and execute a plan to prepare teachers and leaders to implement the materials and assess the progress of implementation.

IV. When Your School Is Not Meeting Academic Expectations

When a school is not meeting academic expectations, it is the board's responsibility to address the issue proactively and strategically. Academic underperformance, if left unresolved, can lead to serious consequences at both the authorizer and state levels.

Authorizer-Level Consequences

If a school fails to meet the academic benchmarks outlined in its charter contract, the authorizer may:

- Place the school on a corrective action plan
- Require additional oversight, supports, or interventions
- Ultimately choose not to renew the charter, resulting in school closure

To prevent this, the board must stay informed about progress toward contract goals and hold school leadership accountable for addressing gaps.

State-Level Consequences

Schools that receive a "Priority Improvement" or "Turnaround" rating on the School Performance Framework (SPF) are placed on the state's Accountability Clock.¹¹³ Schools can remain on the clock for a maximum of five consecutive years. If insufficient improvement is made, the school must appear before the State Board of Education, which will determine next steps. These may include:

- Replacing the school's operator or governing board
- Requiring the school to partner with an external management organization

¹¹³ CDE. (n.d.). *Accountability Clock*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/accountabilityclockfactsheet>



- Closing the school

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) offers targeted supports and grant opportunities to help struggling schools improve before State Board intervention is necessary.

Board Action

While the board is typically focused on the “ends” (student outcomes) and school leadership manages the “means” (day-to-day operations and strategies), there are times when the board may need more frequent updates on how the school plans to improve. This may include:

- More detailed dashboard metrics
- Reports on interim benchmarks
- More frequent progress updates aligned to the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)
- Evidence of strategy implementation

The school leader may seek board input on potential strategies, but the board must be careful to avoid micromanagement. Instead, the board’s role is to:

- Set and communicate clear, outcome-oriented expectations
- Ensure the school leader has the resources and support needed to improve
- Hold the leader accountable for meeting the agreed-upon outcomes

By maintaining this balance, the board supports school improvement without stepping into operational management.

Board Discussion:

In what areas can the board improve its academic oversight?

Board Action:

If you have not already done so, read your school's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP).



Academic Performance Case Studies

Define the board's response in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 20: Academic Performance Case Studies](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: SPF Red Flag

Scenario: Your school just received its new School Performance Framework (SPF). The school has dropped from a "Performance Plan" to a "Priority Improvement Plan." CMAS data shows flat academic growth in math and declining achievement for English learners. How might the board respond?

Case Study 2: Upcoming Renewal

Scenario: Your school's charter contract is up for renewal in 18 months. While academic achievement is improving slightly, academic growth remains low, particularly for students with disabilities and students of color. How might the board respond to ensure the school is prepared for its upcoming renewal?

Case Study 3: Curriculum Misalignment

Scenario: Teacher and parent feedback suggest that the current ELA curriculum is outdated and lacks support for struggling readers. Recent READ Act assessment results show 45% of K–3 students are reading significantly below grade level. How might the board respond?



Chapter Six: Meetings and Members

By the end of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Describe the key components of effective charter school board meetings.
- Explain the purpose and structure of board committees and how they support governance.
- Develop a system for recruiting and onboarding new board members.
- Identify strategies for ongoing board development and understand their importance to board effectiveness.

I. Running Effective Meetings

Charter school boards must dedicate time and energy to running effective meetings. This means being organized, strategic, and prepared for all meetings. This will facilitate the success of the school and also reduce the likelihood of burnout among board members.

Below are a few foundational principles for running effective board meetings.

Board members come prepared and engaged. Meeting materials, especially the board packet, should be distributed in advance. Board members are expected to review all materials before the meeting to support informed discussion and timely decision-making.

Meetings focus on governance, not management. The board is responsible for setting policy and monitoring outcomes. Day-to-day operational decisions are the responsibility of school leadership.

Use written materials to convey updates. Routine reports and background information should be shared in writing before the meeting. This allows meeting time to be reserved for discussion, questions, and decision-making.

Meetings are structured and time-bound. Most charter boards meet monthly for two to three hours. Agendas should be realistic and followed closely to maintain momentum and respect everyone's time.

Boards encourage open dialogue and shared responsibility. All board members should feel comfortable asking questions, sharing differing viewpoints, and exploring issues from multiple perspectives. Once a decision is made, the board must speak with one voice in support of that decision.



Strong facilitation is critical. The board chair plays a key role in managing the flow of discussion and keeping the meeting on track. Effective facilitation includes:

- Ensuring all members have an opportunity to speak
- Moving the group toward a vote when discussion is complete
- Preventing one or two individuals from dominating the conversation
- Redirecting off-topic discussion back to the agenda
- Adhering to time limits or checking with the board before adjusting them

Use data and context to inform decisions. Before making difficult decisions, the board should seek relevant information, data, and perspectives to ensure its choices are well-informed and mission-aligned.

Normalize respectful disagreement. Differing perspectives are a sign of a healthy board culture. Thoughtful deliberation leads to better outcomes. Once a vote is taken, all board members are expected to support the final decision publicly. If a board member finds this level of commitment difficult, it may be time to reconsider their role on the board.

Meeting Logistics

While it may seem that all you need for a board meeting is a room and attendees, careful attention to logistics can significantly improve the effectiveness and professionalism of your meetings. As public entities, charter school boards are subject to Open Meetings Laws (see [Chapter One: Board Fundamentals](#)), which require that all board meetings be open to the public. Even if members of the public, such as parents or community members, do not regularly attend, meetings should be organized and conducted as though they might. Thoughtful logistical planning reinforces transparency, encourages community trust, and supports productive governance.

- ✓ Board members should sit around a table where they can see each other.
- ✓ The school leader and any other senior staff members that might be participating in the meeting should also be seated at the table.
- ✓ The board president and head of school should sit next to each other.
- ✓ There should be seating for parents, other staff members, or members of the public, but it should be away from the table where the board members are seated. (When everyone is seated around one large table, members of the public feel more inclined to participate in conversation when it should really be a board discussion.)
- ✓ Board members and key staff should be identified with name cards. This makes it easy for the public to know who is involved and speaking.



Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order¹¹⁴ are a very long (11th Edition is 670 pages) formal set of practices and procedures often used by large public bodies. They are designed for assemblies of hundreds of people, not small boards. We do not recommend that charter schools formally obligate themselves to using Robert's Rules of Order through policy; however, Robert's Rules of Order do provide a great framework for creating order at meetings and a helpful framework for decision-making.

Below are key highlights from Robert's Rules of Order to offer procedural guidance.

Basic Parliamentary Rules

- **Making a Motion:** A motion must be made, seconded, debated, and then voted upon. The chair announces the result of the vote.
- **One Motion at a Time:** Only one main motion may be considered at a time. A secondary motion (e.g., an amendment) may modify or replace the main motion before a vote.
- **Debate Guidelines:** Each member may speak once per motion before anyone speaks a second time. Debate is limited to one speaker and one question at a time.
- **Majority Rules:** Most motions pass by a simple majority.
- **Ending Debate:** A motion to "call the question" (end debate) requires a two-thirds vote and is not debatable. If adopted, the board immediately votes on the main motion.
- **Resolutions:** These are formal written motions that typically include "whereas" clauses (justification) and a "be it resolved" clause (action to be taken).
- **Quorum:** A simple majority of board members constitutes a quorum, unless otherwise defined in the bylaws.
- **Friendly Amendments:** A motion may be amended without a separate vote if both the original mover and seconder agree. If not, the amendment is voted on separately.
- **Wording of Motions:** Motions should be phrased in the affirmative. If no action is recommended, a motion may not be necessary.
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** This motion effectively kills the main motion without a direct vote on it.
- **Point of Order:** A board member may raise a "point of order" if procedural rules are not being followed. The chair rules on procedural issues.
- **Written Motions:** Complex or lengthy motions should be submitted in writing to the chair.
- **Germane Amendments:** Amendments must be directly related to (germane to) the original motion and follow the same five procedural steps.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Board members should not vote on issues in which they have a personal or financial interest. Members should abstain only for potential conflicts, not for indecision.

Techniques to Expedite Business

- **Consent Agenda:** Use a consent agenda to approve routine or non-controversial items without discussion.
- **Voice Vote:** The chair typically calls for a voice vote unless a roll call is requested or a division of the house is likely.

¹¹⁴ Online at <http://www.robertsrules.com/>



- **Adjournment:** The chair may declare the meeting adjourned if a motion to adjourn is made and there is no objection.

Standard Steps for a Motion

1. A board member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair restates the motion.
4. The chair opens the floor for discussion.
5. The chair calls for a vote and announces the result.

Out-of-Order Motions

The board chair may declare a motion "out of order," or a member may raise a "point of order," for the following reasons:

- The motion violates state or federal law, or school district policy. Even a unanimous vote cannot make such a motion valid.
- The proposed action exceeds the board's legal or governance authority.
- The motion contradicts a previously adopted motion still in effect (unless the board first rescinds or amends the original motion).
- The motion repeats a question already decided earlier in the same meeting.

Meeting Materials

Effective board meetings rely on timely, well-organized materials. Key documents typically include the meeting agenda, minutes from previous meetings, and a comprehensive board packet which may include written reports and financial statements. To set board members up for success, meeting materials should be distributed in advance, ideally one week before the meeting. If that timeline is not feasible, the board should agree on a consistent expectation, such as at least three days in advance, to ensure all members have adequate time to prepare. A designated staff member can often assist with compiling and distributing the board packet. Since board meetings should focus on strategic discussion and decision-making, the packet should serve as the primary vehicle for conveying background information, updates, and supporting documentation.

Below are the essential components to include when preparing for a board meeting:

Board Meeting Agendas

Board meeting agendas should be developed collaboratively by the board president and school leader. Other board members should have opportunity to add agenda items they believe the board should address. The board president and school should ideally draft an agenda for the next meeting within 48 hours of the conclusion of the previous meeting. This way issues from the previous meeting will be fresh in people's minds as they plan the next meeting. Setting agendas in advance also helps the board stay focused on strategic issues, rather than being reactive to "crises" that might arise.



The following cycle for establishing a board meeting agenda is adapted from Marci Cornell-Feist's *Board Meetings: A Guide for Charter Schools*.¹¹⁵

When	What
Day after previous meeting	Board chair and school leader debrief and draft agenda for next meeting.
3 weeks before meeting	Draft agenda sent to full board and committee chairs
2 weeks before meeting	Board and committee comments and additional agenda item suggestions are incorporated, and the agenda is finalized
1 week before meeting	Committee reports finalized and advanced board meeting packet sent to each board member. Materials not protected by privacy laws should be posted for the public.
Week of meeting	Full board reads all advanced material and is ready to discuss strategy

The agenda should be structured so the most important items to discuss are at the beginning of the meeting. Routine items or items which require little discussion should be left for the end of the agenda when people might be more tired. Stacking the more significant items at the beginning of the agenda also provides incentive for board members to arrive at meetings on time.

Each agenda item should include:

- ✓ The person presenting the item or leading the discussion
- ✓ The amount of time the item should take to discuss
- ✓ The purpose of the agenda item, which might be “discussion,” “vote,” “gather input,” etc.
- ✓ Supporting materials included in the packet for the item

See [Appendix 21: Sample Board Meeting Agendas](#).

Meeting Materials

Effective board meetings rely on timely, well-organized materials. Key documents typically include the meeting agenda, minutes from previous meetings, and a comprehensive board packet which may include written reports and financial statements. To set board members up for success, meeting materials should be distributed in advance, ideally one week before the meeting. If that timeline is not feasible, the board should agree on a consistent expectation, such as at least three days in advance, to ensure all members have adequate time to prepare. A designated staff member can often assist with compiling and distributing the board packet. Since board meetings should focus on strategic discussion and decision-making, the packet should serve as the primary vehicle for conveying background information, updates, and supporting documentation.

Below are the essential components to include when preparing for a board meeting:

¹¹⁵ Cornell-Feist. (2011). *Board meetings: A guide for charter schools*. The High Bar.



Board Meeting Agendas

Board meeting agendas should be developed collaboratively by the board president and school leader. Other board members should have opportunity to add agenda items they believe the board should address. The board president and school leader should ideally draft an agenda for the next meeting within 48 hours of the conclusion of the previous meeting. This way issues from the previous meeting will be fresh in people's minds as they plan the next meeting. Setting agendas in advance also helps the board stay focused on strategic issues, rather than being reactive to "crises" that might arise.

Agenda Item Cover Sheets: A best practice used by many boards is to include an agenda item cover sheet with most agenda items. The cover sheet provides background information, the purpose of the item being included on the agenda, and a recommendation regarding the action the person presenting the item hopes the board will take. The information in the background should be meaningfully detailed, but not to the level of being burdensome to read and digest. The recommendation can be worded in the form of a draft motion. Below is a sample agenda item cover sheet:

Agenda Item Cover Sheet	
Agenda Item:	Appointment of K. Smith to the ABC Charter School Board of Directors
Purpose:	Board vote
Submitted by:	Governance Committee
Background: - The board has been seeking a board member with legal expertise. K. Smith is an attorney who has expressed interest in serving on the board. She has experience in real estate law and currently works as a City Attorney for the City of ABC. - Ms. Smith met with J. Davis and C. Yi on October 15, 20XX to discuss board roles and responsibilities, as well as the school's mission and focus. - Ms. Smith is interested in participating on the Facilities and Finance Committee and has attended the November and December committee meetings. - Ms. Smith would bring a number of assets to the ABC Charter School Board, including: - Legal expertise - Real estate background - Organizational management - A commitment to serving the school's targeted student population - Ms. Smith supports the school's mission and is interested in serving on the board as indicated in the attached Statement of Interest submitted by Ms. Smith on December 1st. - As an attorney for a public entity, Ms. Smith indicated that she can offer the board legal perspective, but cannot provide official legal counsel. The board would need to continue to rely on its attorney for this.	
Recommendation: The Governance Committee recommends a motion be made to appoint K. Smith to the board of directors of ABC Charter School, effective the next board meeting (January 20XX).	



Board Packets

Distributing board packets several days to a week in advance is critical to having effective board meetings. (The timeline for distributing board packets should be an established board norm.) It is only fair to board members that they have adequate time to review materials in order to engage meaningfully in meetings. Packets should include sufficient documentation to enable board members to formulate questions and opinions in advance of meetings. Board packets are typically compiled by a staff member with documentation provided by board members, committee chairs, and staff members.

The board packet should include the agenda item cover sheet and all other documents identified in the “materials” section of each agenda item. Discuss with your board members whether they would prefer to receive documentation electronically or in hard copy.

Regardless of whether you distribute hard copies of board packets, documents should be available electronically – both for board members and members of the public who may be interested in the board’s business. For this reason, board documents can be posted on the school’s website. We also recommend using an online system for sharing and revising documents among board members to ensure version control. A number of good tools exist for this purpose including Google Docs, Dropbox, and the online Charter School Board Governance Platform developed by Board On Track¹¹⁶.

School Practice Tip: When documents are distributed electronically, some boards like to receive a single, reduced-size PDF version of all documents, in order of the agenda. This makes reviewing documents prior to the meeting convenient. Individual documents are still available, but this facilitates the board member preparation process.

Board Meeting Minutes

As a public entity, keeping good minutes and making them publicly available is an important aspect of transparency. Although discussions can happen in Executive Sessions for reasons defined in state statute, all decisions/votes must happen in an open, public meeting and must be documented in the meeting minutes.

Minutes should not include a detailed transcript of every discussion that took place at the meeting, but should be a record of all *actions* taken. They are legal documents and when a charter school undergoes its annual financial audit, the auditor typically reviews all meeting minutes. We recommend that Colorado charter schools post their meeting minutes (after they are reviewed and approved at the following meeting) on their website to promote transparency.

Meeting minutes should include the following:

- ✓ Heading with the name of the school; date, time, and location of meeting; and whether it was a regular or special meeting.
- ✓ Full names of all board members who were present, as well as list of absent board members.
- ✓ Names of guests who were in attendance, including the school leader and other staff members. (The board can distribute a sign-in sheet for this purpose.)

¹¹⁶ www.boardontrack.com (formerly The High Bar)



- ✓ Time the meeting was convened and the name of the officer who led the meeting.
- ✓ All votes of the board. Any action of the board should be recorded, including approval of the agenda, approval of the previous meeting's minutes, and any other votes that take place. Votes should be recorded in the order they happen. The minutes should reflect the person making the motion, the person who seconds the motion, and the votes. Indicate whether the motion passed unanimously or, if not unanimous, indicate each individual's vote, as well as any abstentions.
- ✓ Board acceptance of key documents. When documents are presented to the board that do not require approval but do require formal board action, the board should vote to accept the items. For example, the board should review and accept the monthly financial statements, as well as the annual audit. Votes of acceptance, including monthly financial statements, should be indicated in the board minutes.
- ✓ Key points or perspectives when critical or controversial discussions take place. If the discussion is not critical or controversial, it is adequate to note the board had a discussion about the topic.
- ✓ Time the meeting is adjourned.

Annual Board Calendar

We recommend creating an annual board calendar for the year. This should include the items that need to happen every year, as well as those specific tasks that align with the school's strategic plan and/or annual goals. Other items will surely come up throughout the year, but they can be fit in around the larger tasks for which the board needs to plan. In addition, some of the major tasks can be shifted, if needed, but having an annual calendar ensures that these key responsibilities do not fall off the board's radar as other unexpected issues surface.

See [Appendix 22: Sample Annual Board Calendar](#) as a starting point for your own board's needs.



Board Discussion:

What is missing that you would add to your board calendar? When should these things ideally happen?

Board Action:

As a board, take the quiz below, adapted from Marci Cornell-Feist's book *Board Meetings: A Guide for Charter Schools*, Reflect on your board's practices and solutions for improving your board meetings.

BOARD MEETING QUIZ	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
We have an active, engaged board evidenced by typically having all board members in attendance at each board meeting.			
We always comply with Open Meetings Law.			
Our board meetings always start and end according to the time published.			
Our meetings are well facilitated by the board chair.			
We rarely have members of the public attend our board meetings.			
Our head of school and board chair partner to shape the board meeting agendas and the overall work of the board for the year.			
We have lively discussions and occasional dissent.			
Our board focuses on results, guided by a clear set of measurable board-level and management-level goals for the year.			
An advanced packet goes out ahead of time to set the stage for strategic conversations.			
We spend most of our board meeting time discussing strategic issues rather than reporting on items that have already happened.			



Public Comment at Board Meetings

Allowing time for public comment is an important component of any public entity's board meetings. Charter school boards should plan for this and communicate a clear process for public comment to parents/guardians, staff, and other stakeholders who may wish to share their views with the school's board of directors. Every school will face a time when the board is grappling with a controversial issue and dozens of people show up for a board meeting to weigh in on the issue. Boards are wise to prepare for this day in advance by having a well-defined and appropriate structure for hearing public comment. Below are recommendations for managing public comment at board meetings.

Build a public comment period into each board meeting. Some boards prefer to do this at the beginning of the agenda so people can make public comment and then leave if they choose. This structure also allows for public comment that might be relevant to an item on the agenda to be heard prior to that item being discussed by the board. Others prefer to have it at the end of the meeting so the board can get through the normal agenda and not have public comment take over the entire meeting. With the latter option, this also provides members of the public with opportunity to observe the board in action, which might provide helpful perspective.

Limit the amount of time an individual may take for public comment, for example three minutes. In the school's public comment procedures, define the time limit and then enforce it consistently.

Board members should not feel compelled to respond to public comments when they are made. While this is a natural instinct, having board members respond takes time and only reflects individual perspectives, not the collective board response. Instead, the board president should thank the person for sharing their perspective and keep the agenda moving along. If a public comment warrants a response, the board should add the topic as an item on a future agenda, discuss it publicly, and then take action through a vote if necessary.

Keep in mind that the school should have a grievance policy and members of the public should be encouraged to follow it. This usually involves trying to resolve an issue at the lowest level possible (for example, with a teacher or administrator) before elevating it to the board. When a parent or staff member has not followed the grievance policy and instead wants to go directly to the board, that individual should be encouraged to follow the proper process first and give others opportunity to resolve the issue before making it an issue of the board.

Provide clear guidelines regarding what is appropriate to share during public comment. Members of the public should not use public comment to criticize individual staff members or call out individual students. Instead, the comments should be focused on school policy or procedural issues. Problems or concerns with individuals should be addressed through the school grievance policy. If they do rise to the level of the board, they should be submitted in writing to the board for consideration, added to the agenda, and, if appropriate, discussed by the board in Executive Session. If someone uses public comment inappropriately, they should be cut off by the board chair.

For more on public comment see the Charter School Institute's guidance in [Appendix 27: Public Comment Guidance \(CSI\)](#).



Board Work Sessions and Trainings

Oftentimes boards need to have a work session where they can have extended conversations about critical board issues or strategic planning discussions so that board meetings can focus on substantive actions. These can be planned separately from traditional board meetings. Work sessions and trainings are still public meetings if sufficient board members are in attendance, and thus must be noticed. Sometimes a board will hold a work session or training for an hour or two prior to a formal board meeting, or on a completely different date from the regular board meeting. Either of these options is fine, so long as adequate notice was posted (in alignment with the board's regular board notice procedures) and the meeting is open to the public.

As no actions, voting, or decision-making happens at work sessions or trainings, meeting minutes need not be taken.

II. Board Committees

Committees serve a number of critical functions in charter school governance. They share the board's workload so board members don't burn out, they engage a broader set of members of the school community (including parents and community members), they allow for focused expertise on important areas of the school's work, and they set the foundation for efficient and productive board meetings. It is recommended to have no more than 2 board members serving on an individual committee so it doesn't become an open meeting.

Types of Committees

When developing committees, the first strategic question to ask as a board is which committees are needed. It is recommended that the school's by-laws specify as few standing committees as possible. Instead, ad hoc committees or task forces can be created (and ultimately dissolved) as needed in response to the school's needs. Too many committees can become difficult to manage. Only create committees that are necessary or address critical issues the school is facing.

School Accountability Committee

Under Colorado law, all public schools, including charter schools, are required to have a School Accountability Committee.¹¹⁷ This statute defines the composition of the committee, as well as its powers and duties.

SAC Purpose

The purpose of the SAC is to serve in an advisory role to the school principal and to inform, encourage and provide opportunities for parent and community members to be involved in the planning and evaluation of the school's instructional program and quality improvement processes.

¹¹⁷ C.R.S. § 22-11-401 and 402



Composition of the School Accountability Committee¹¹⁸

The School Accountability Committee (SAC), should consist of at least the following seven members:

- The principal of the school or the principal's designee;
- At least one teacher who provides instruction in the school;
- At least three parents of students enrolled in the school;
- At least one adult member of an organization of parents, teachers, and students recognized by the school; and
- At least one person from the community.

The SAC can have more than seven members; however, the number of parents/guardians on the SAC must always exceed the number of members from any other represented group (e.g., teachers, administrators). One individual cannot represent multiple groups. For example, a parent who is also a teacher must serve in only one role. A member of the charter school board may serve on the SAC.

If a school cannot meet the membership requirements despite good-faith efforts, it may adopt an alternative membership plan that reflects the intent of the law as closely as possible.¹¹⁹

Selection of Members

The school board determines how SAC members are selected, either by appointment or election. Regardless of method, schools must make every effort to include individuals who reflect the demographics of the student population, especially underrepresented groups.¹²⁰ If a vacancy occurs, remaining SAC members may fill it by majority vote.¹²¹

Committee Leadership

SAC members must annually elect a parent/guardian to serve as chair or co-chair.

Each SAC is responsible for the following:

- Making recommendations to the principal on the school priorities for spending school moneys, including federal funds, where applicable;
- Making recommendations to the principal of the school and the superintendent concerning preparation of a school Performance or Improvement plan, if either type of plan is required;
- Publicizing and holding a SAC meeting to discuss strategies to include in a school Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan, if either type of plan is required, and using this input to make recommendations to the local school board concerning preparation of the school Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan prior to the plan being written;
- Publicizing the district's public hearing to review a written school Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan;

¹¹⁸ CDE. (n.d.). *SAC and DAC Responsibilities*. https://www.cde.state.co.us/familyengagement/sac_dac_responsibilities

¹¹⁹ C.R.S. §22-11-401 (4)(a)

¹²⁰ C.R.S. §22-11-401 (1)(d)(I-VI)

¹²¹ C.R.S. §22-11-401(3)



- Meeting at least quarterly to discuss whether school leadership, personnel, and infrastructure are advancing or impeding implementation of the school's Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, or Turnaround plan, whichever is applicable, and other progress pertinent to the school's accreditation contract;
- Providing input and recommendations to the District Accountability Committee and district administration, on an advisory basis, concerning principal development plans and principal evaluations. (Note that in a charter school, the board makes decisions regarding principal development plans and evaluations, not the DAC.); and
- Publicizing opportunities to serve and soliciting parents to serve on the SAC;
- Assisting the district in implementing at the school level the district's parent engagement policy; and
- Assisting school personnel to increase parents' engagement with teachers, including parents' engagement in creating students' READ plans, Individual Career and Academic Plans, and plans to address habitual truancy.

See [Appendix 23: Sample Quarterly SAC Year-at-a-Glance](#) for an example of how a SAC can spread out its responsibilities across the year. The Colorado Department of Education's website contains many resources for SAC Committees. Explore https://www.cde.state.co.us/familyengagement/sac_dac.

Strongly Recommended Committees

While the following committees are not required by law, they are strongly recommended. Below includes a description of their purpose.

Finance Committee: The Finance Committee shall be responsible for oversight of the fiscal matters of the school. It is responsible for working with the School Leader to create the upcoming fiscal year budget; presenting budget recommendations to the Board; monitoring implementation of the approved budget on a regular basis and recommending proposed budget revisions; recommending to the board an auditor to perform an annual third-party financial audit; oversight of the annual audit; and recommending to the board appropriate policies for the management of the school's assets.

Governance Committee: The Governance Committee is dedicated to supporting high-quality practices of the board of directors. It is responsible for matters pertaining to Board recruitment, nominations, orientation, training, and evaluation in accordance with the school's bylaws, as well as established policies and practices approved by the Board.

Development (Fundraising) Committee: This is a resource development committee that assumes primary responsibility for raising non-grant funds to meet the budget of the charter school. The Board, in consultation with the Development Committee, Head of School, Business Manager, and Finance Committee, determines an annual fundraising goal that this committee works to reach. This includes creating an annual fundraising plan and coordinating with fundraising efforts by staff, parents, and other volunteers.



Optional and Ad Hoc Committees

A charter school board may choose to develop other ad hoc committees as needs arise. Ad hoc committees are put together to address a specific need and are usually temporary (though they may be in place for a year or more for a longer-term need such as facility acquisition or hiring a new head of school). The ability to create and dissolve ad hoc committees is an important aspect of being a responsive and strategic board.

Examples of typical ad hoc committees include the following:

- Facility Committee (if undergoing a facility search or acquisition process)
- Personnel Committee (for development of personnel policies)
- Leadership Selection (Hiring) Committee (for conducting a search and making a recommendation on the hire of a new head of school or contracted educational service provider)
- Community Relations Committee (usually in place during the school development process, prior to this task being delegated to the school's administration)

Other schools have standing committees that aren't essential, but are very relevant for their mission. Examples of these include:

- Parent Advisory Council – schools that do not have much parent/guardian representation on the governing board may put together a parent advisory council as a formal mechanism for capturing parent voice in board and administrative decision-making.
- School Leader Development, Support, and Evaluation Committee – if putting this committee in place, it should be formed at the start of the year; don't wait until the end of the year just prior to the school leader evaluation process.
- Health and Wellness Committee – schools that are working to integrate a significant focus on health and wellness might find having this committee to be helpful for providing implementation support, oversight, and accountability.
- Other Mission-Specific Committees

Committee Development and Logistics

The board should adopt a policy and process for establishing committees. When a new committee is constituted, its charge should be clearly articulated through a job description, as well as its composition and reporting expectations. All of these items should be formally approved by the board.

Job Descriptions

The general purpose of the committee and the specific responsibilities of the committee should be outlined in a job description. The committee composition should also be defined in the committee job description. See [Appendix 24: Sample Committee Job Descriptions](#) for a variety of sample committee job descriptions.



Committee Members

In order to ensure that appropriate connections are in place between the committee, the board and the school's administration, the school should create strong structures for committee operations including ensuring that the right people are on the committee. All committees should encourage non-board member participation; however, it is important for the board to define how non-board members are added to committees. Committee membership should include:

- At least one board member who serves as committee chair and as a liaison to the board.
- At least one staff member who serves as a liaison to the administration and staff.
- Parents and/or community members with relevant expertise.

Open and Noticed Committee Meetings: Keep in mind that if more than two board members are on a committee (or even if more than two board members happen to attend a committee meeting), Open Meetings law takes effect and the meeting must then be noticed and open to the public.

Work Plans, Reporting, and Accountability

Once a committee has been constituted and a job description defined, each committee should develop annual goals and a work plan that the full board reviews and approves. This process should be built into the annual board calendar to ensure that it is prioritized each year.

Each committee should complete the same action plan template. This helps the board chair hold everyone accountable and makes it easier to anticipate what committee items will need to be discussed at which board meeting. An easy way to track committee progress in real time is to have action plans housed in a shared electronic document.

See [Appendix 25: Sample Committee Action Plan](#) for a sample action plan template.

Committees are Advisory

Charter school board committees serve an essential advisory role. They are not decision-making bodies and should never be delegated authority that properly belongs to the full board. Instead, committees gather and analyze information, explore options, and build consensus around **recommendations for board consideration**. They do the groundwork that enables the board to make informed, strategic decisions.

Examples of Committee Recommendations

- **Finance Committee Recommendation:** The Finance Committee recommends that the administration develop and the board review a contingency budget that reflects a 20% reduction in projected enrollment. This conservative model supports a strategic discussion about potential program reductions in the event of a revenue shortfall.
- **Audit Committee Recommendation:** After issuing an RFP for audit services, reviewing five proposals, interviewing three firms, and checking references, the Audit Committee recommends hiring Tax Accountants Are Us to conduct the school's annual financial audit. Attached are the proposal and a summary of the committee's evaluation process. (Note: This responsibility may also fall under the Finance Committee.)



- **School Accountability Committee (SAC) Recommendation:** Based on an analysis of annual academic performance data (e.g., NWEA MAP and CMAS results), the SAC recommends a comprehensive review of the school's math program, with attention to alignment with Colorado Academic Standards, staffing, and supports to improve student growth.
- **Governance Committee Recommendation:** Following the board's annual self-evaluation, the Governance Committee recommends that the board prioritize recruiting a new member with legal expertise during the next appointment cycle.

Board Discussion:

Which of our committees are highest functioning?

Do we have committees that are struggling? If so, how can they be supported?

How might additional committees support the board in its responsibilities?

Board Action:

Review your board's policy and job descriptions for committees. Revise, if needed, to ensure clarity of composition and purpose.

III. Board Recruitment and Development

Board Recruitment

When your board has a vacancy or identifies a need for additional expertise or diverse perspectives, it is important to develop a clear and intentional process for selecting new members. Some aspects of this process will be guided by your bylaws—specifically, whether board members are elected, appointed, or selected through a combination of both methods.

Regardless of the method outlined in your bylaws, it is strongly recommended that all prospective board members participate in a structured interview process to assess their alignment with the school's mission and their capacity to contribute effectively.

For elected positions, this may include written candidate statements or responses to interview questions, which can then be shared with voting stakeholders (often parents or guardians). For appointed positions, a governance committee should lead the recruitment process. This committee is responsible for identifying and vetting candidates, conducting interviews, and making recommendations to the full board.

See [Appendix 26: Sample Declaration of Candidacy Form](#) for an example of a board application form.



Background Materials

Providing prospective board members with selected background information can provide a useful overview of the school, the board's work, and the responsibilities of board members. Helpful material includes:

- the school's annual report
- the most recent audited financial statement
- the long-range strategic and financial plan
- a list of current board members, titles, and all affiliations
- a description of board members' responsibilities
- a board organization chart
- a staff organization chart
- the school's newsletter, brochure, or other publications
- newspaper or magazine articles about the school
- a brief biography of the school leader

Sample Questions for Prospective Board Members

Below are sample questions that boards can use during the interview process for potential members. Please don't overwhelm candidates by asking every question. Instead, select those most relevant to your school's needs and the qualities you are seeking in a board member.

Skills and Expertise

- What is your prior experience serving on a board? In your opinion, was that board effective? Why or why not?
- Why are you interested in supporting this school? What unique strengths or perspectives would you bring to the board?
- In what ways could you leverage your professional networks or community connections to benefit the school?
- How would you respond if the school faced public criticism or opposition from local groups or media?
- Tell us about a project where you were involved in fundraising. What were the goals, and what was the outcome?

Teamwork & Collaboration

- How do you define the role of an effective board member?
- If your personal views differed from a board decision, how would you handle the situation?
- Share an example of a leadership role you've held within a group. What worked well, and what did you learn about yourself?
- Describe a time you experienced conflict with a team member, colleague, or supervisor. How did you approach resolving it?



Time Commitment & Capacity

- Are you willing and able to dedicate at least ten hours a month to a cause you care about? Can you share a recent example where you've done so?
- How many other boards are you currently serving on? Could this position create any potential conflicts or challenges?

Mission & Philosophical Alignment

- What does an ideal elementary, middle, or high school look like to you?
- What practices or approaches would you not want to see in this school?
- What are your views on charter schools? In your opinion, how do they impact public education and the students they serve?
- Imagine the school ten years from now. What outcomes would indicate it had been truly successful? What measurable or observable evidence would support that conclusion?

Questions Potential Board Members Should Ask

Like any strong partnership, board service should be a good fit for both the individual and the organization. Just as the board evaluates potential members, prospective board members should thoughtfully assess whether the school and board align with their interests, values, and capacity. The following questions can guide that evaluation:

Questions to Ask About the School's Programs

- What is the school's mission, and how do its current programs align with it?
- What academic or enrichment programs set the school apart?

Questions to Ask About the School's Financial Status

- What is the current financial condition of the school?
- Are there any major funding challenges or financial risks on the horizon?

Questions to Ask About the School's Students and Families

- Who does the school primarily serve (e.g., demographics, geographic area)?
- What were the key findings from the most recent student and family satisfaction surveys?

Questions to Ask About the Structure of the Board

- How is the board structured? What are the roles of officers and committees?
- Is there Directors and Officers (D&O) liability insurance for board members?

Questions to Ask About Board Member Responsibilities

- How much time is expected of board members, including meetings and events?



- How are committee assignments determined?
- What orientation or ongoing training will I receive as a board member?
- What is the board's role in fundraising? Will I be expected to make an annual financial contribution?

Questions to Ask About the Board's Relationship with School Leadership

- How does the board evaluate the performance of school leadership?
- What is the typical working relationship between board members and staff?

Reflecting on Your Readiness to Serve

- Am I committed to the mission and values of the school?
- Do I have the time necessary to be a fully engaged board member?
- Can I prioritize the school's mission and interests over my own when making board decisions?

New Member Onboarding

Once a new board member joins the board, the Governance Committee should ensure that there is a strong orientation process in place so they are prepared to fulfill their obligations. There are two primary focuses of an orientation process: 1) general information about strong charter school governance; and 2) specific information about the school and the function of its governing board. The board should develop a simple protocol that new board members follow to fully acquaint themselves with the school and their specific board member role.

For a sample board orientation process that can be modified, as needed, see [Appendix 27: Sample Board Orientation Process](#).

Preparing your New Board Members for Success - An Onboarding Roadmap

Charter school boards frequently welcome new members as terms expire, if not sooner, due to unexpected vacancies. Onboarding new board members can feel like a never ending process, that is, if new board members are onboarded at all. Some are thrust into their very important role with little preparation.

By creating a clear onboarding roadmap that includes a combination of general information about strong charter school governance and specific information about the school and the function of its governing board, new board members will be better equipped to engage in their role.

If your school's board lacks a clearly defined onboarding plan, the first step is to engage a committee in creating one. This is an excellent task for the Governance Committee.



Consider the following roadmap when executing your plan.

Stage 1: Preparation - Before their first meeting

- Ensure you have an informative, but not overwhelming, board manual that provides useful information about the school, board structure, and key policies. Consider noting which sections of the manual should be read before their first meeting and which sections should be read in their first few months on the board.
- Send a welcome email to new board members with links to the board manual and other overview materials.
- Schedule a one-on-one orientation meeting with new members and the board chair. Answer any questions related to the board manual and review the upcoming meeting agenda to ensure new members are fully prepared to participate in their first meeting.
- Schedule training for new members on charter board basics with the Colorado League of Charter Schools, or have new members review the League's free board training module, "*Board Fundamentals*."
- Collect all required documents for signature, such as a code of conduct, conflict of interest acknowledgment, volunteer disclosure, confidentiality agreement, and commitment to board duties.

Stage 2: Orientation - In their first two months

- Complete and sign an Oath of Office at the new member's first meeting and submit it to the local County Clerk's Office.
- Introduce new members to the full board and leadership team. Review the governance structure and organizational chart.
- If the new member is unfamiliar with the school campus, take them on a tour.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting after the new members' first few months to see if they have any questions or concerns. Review key documents that were not reviewed prior, such as the board's bylaws, strategic plan, and charter agreement.

Stage 3: Integration - In their first six months

- Encourage active participation in board meetings through discussions and decision-making.
- Assign new members to committees that align with their skills and interests.
- Provide a schedule of additional board training modules to review.
- Recognize and appreciate the contributions of new members.

Stage 4: Ongoing Development - Six months and beyond

- Complete an annual board self-assessment to inform a board development plan.
- Facilitate an annual board retreat.



- Encourage all board members to participate in continuous development by engaging in annual training with the Colorado League of Charter Schools, attending the Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference, and the Annual Leadership Summit.
- Continually review the League's free board training modules during regular meetings.

By following an onboarding roadmap, new board members will be better equipped to contribute effectively in their roles.

Board Manual

The orientation process is directly connected to the development of a Board Manual. Any of the written documents new members are expected to review should be included in a board manual that is given to each board member at the time of joining.

A thorough board manual should include the following materials. Remember to keep each item as concise as possible.

The Board	Board members listing and bios Board members terms Board statement of responsibilities Committee and task force jobs and descriptions Board annual meeting calendar Agendas and minutes from recent board meetings
Historical References of the Organization	Brief written history and/or fact sheet Original charter application Contract with Authorizer Articles of Incorporation Bylaws IRS determination letter Listing of past board members
Strategic Framework	Mission and vision statement Strategic framework or plan Current annual operating plan
Policies Pertaining to the Board	Board policies and procedures Policy on potential conflicts of interest Insurance policy coverage Legal liability policy



Policies Pertaining to the School	Enrollment Policy Employee Handbook Student Handbook Behavior/discipline policy Grievance policy
Finance and Fundraising	Financial Management policies Prior-year annual report Most recent audit report Current annual budget Form 990 Banking resolutions Investment policy Current funder list
Staff	Staff listing Organizational chart
Other information	Annual academic calendar Web site information School promotional material

Board Discussion:

Spend a minute thinking back to when you joined the board and discuss:

- Did you fully understand charter schools, your school, and your role as a board member?
- What was challenging about being a new board member?
- Which of the steps above would have been helpful in orienting you to the role?

Board Action:

Revise or create a thorough board onboarding process.

Board Development

Charter school governing boards should commit to regularly evaluating their own performance and investing in their professional growth. If you are participating in a governance training through the Colorado League of Charter Schools and using this playbook, you're already taking important steps in the right direction.

The most effective way to ensure professional development occurs consistently is to schedule it in advance. Use your annual board retreat to plan when these activities will happen throughout



the year, and then follow through. Making continuous improvement a part of your board's culture starts with making it part of your calendar.

Professional Development

Just as boards expect ongoing professional development for school staff, board members should also engage in regular learning and training. With many boards adding new members each year, the need for orientation and continued development is ongoing.

Below are a few strategies to support board-level professional development:

Customized Training

The Colorado League of Charter Schools and other organizations offer half- and full-day trainings tailored to your board's specific needs. Bringing in an outside facilitator can be especially valuable, particularly during times of transition, conflict, or when the board needs a fresh perspective.

Conferences

The League hosts an annual charter school conference that includes sessions specifically for board members, along with other events throughout the year. Additionally, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools offers a national conference each year. Attending the national conference can be especially beneficial for experienced board members and officers seeking broader insights from across the country.

Mini-Trainings at Board Meetings

If time or scheduling challenges make full-day trainings difficult, consider incorporating short trainings into regular board meetings. For example, start a meeting an hour early and offer a focused session on topics such as reviewing financial statements, interpreting the School Performance Framework, or setting strong academic goals. These sessions can be led by school staff, fellow board members, or external experts such as League staff.

Board Meeting Evaluation

An increasingly common and effective practice among charter school boards is to conduct a brief self-evaluation at the end of each board meeting. This process takes just five minutes, requires no special tools, and helps build a culture of reflection, accountability, and continuous improvement.

One simple and popular method is the “**Plusses and Deltas**” exercise. Here's how it works:

- Take a large sheet of chart paper and draw a line down the middle.
- Label the left column with a “+” and the right column with a “Δ”.

Plusses (+) are things that went well—what the board wants to continue or build upon. These might include effective processes, strong participation, or good use of time.



Deltas (Δ) represent areas for improvement. These should be framed as constructive, action-oriented suggestions. Avoid vague complaints.

Importantly, the board should review and act on deltas in a timely manner to demonstrate that feedback is valued and applied.

Example: Plusses and Deltas Chart

+ Plusses (What Worked Well)	Δ Deltas (Opportunities for Improvement)
Open, honest conversation	Monitor noise level
Everyone participated	Commit to not texting/emailing during meetings
Clear next steps were established	Explain educational jargon when needed
We stayed on agenda	Include a 5-minute break halfway through
Materials were shared in advance	Begin meetings on time, even if some members are late

By consistently using this five-minute exercise, your board can reinforce positive habits, surface small but meaningful adjustments, and model a commitment to ongoing growth.

Annual Self-Evaluation

A strong best practice for charter school boards is to set aside time each year for a formal self-evaluation. This process encourages reflection, identifies areas for improvement, and reinforces the board's commitment to good governance.

As part of this process, consider including a few questions about the board's effectiveness on the school's annual staff and parent/guardian satisfaction surveys. This external feedback, combined with insights gathered throughout the year, can enrich the board's internal self-assessment.

Each board member should complete the self-evaluation individually. The results should then be compiled, anonymously if possible, and presented to the full board for discussion. To simplify the process, we recommend using an online survey platform such as SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, or Typeform. Evaluation questions should assess both individual contributions and the board's collective performance.

Once results are shared, the board should engage in a thoughtful discussion about the findings. Focus attention on areas where ratings were lower, and use that feedback to inform the board's goals and professional development priorities for the coming year.



See [Appendix 28: Sample Board Self Evaluation](#).

External Evaluation/School Quality Review

In addition to internal self-assessments, charter schools can strengthen their continuous improvement efforts by engaging in an external evaluation, often referred to as a holistic school review. This process provides an objective, comprehensive assessment of the school's performance across multiple areas.

Schools may contract with an organization such as the Colorado League of Charter Schools to conduct the review. The League's School Quality Review (SQR) is grounded in a research-based, evidence-driven framework that supports continuous improvement tailored to each school's unique mission and model.

During the review, a team of experienced education professionals spends approximately three days onsite. The evaluation uses the Rapid School Improvement +2 framework, which includes the following six domains:

- Leadership for Rapid Improvement
- Talent Management
- Instructional Transformation
- Culture and Climate Shift
- Board Governance
- School Finance

Data is collected through a triangulated process that includes stakeholder interviews (staff, students, families, board members), classroom observations, and a review of key school documents.

Following the visit, the school receives the following deliverables:

- A fully completed assessment rubric supported by evidence
- An executive summary highlighting key strengths
- Targeted recommendations and next steps for improvement

These findings can be integrated with student outcome data to inform a focused and actionable school improvement plan that supports long-term success.

Board Discussion:

How does your board regularly integrate professional development throughout the year?

Board Action:

Complete a formal self-evaluation as a board. Use the information obtained to create a board development plan.



Meetings and Members Case Studies

Define the board's response in each of these scenarios. See [Appendix 26: Meetings and Members Case Studies](#) for possible responses.

Case Study 1: Board Stagnation

Scenario: Summit Charter School's board has remained largely unchanged for the past five years. While the members are deeply committed and experienced, the board has not conducted a self-evaluation in three years and has not participated in any formal professional development during that time. Recently, board meetings are running long and often veer off-topic. How might the board respond?

Case Study 2: Growing Pains

Scenario: Trailblazer Academy is experiencing rapid enrollment growth and is planning to expand to a second campus within two years. The current board is made up of five founding members who are passionate about the school but have limited experience with facilities expansion, finance, or strategic planning. Recognizing the need for new expertise, the board agrees to add two new members, but struggles with how to recruit and select the right candidates. How might the board respond?

Case Study 3: Public Comment Challenge

Scenario: During the last board meeting at North River Charter School, the board voted on a controversial policy adjusting the school's start and end times. Nearly 30 individuals signed up to speak at public comment. However, the school had no written policy or formal structure for public comment. No time limit was announced, and some spoke for over 8 minutes. One parent used the time to accuse a teacher of bias and demand their removal. One board member decided to respond to a speaker, which led to a heated back-and forth. The meeting ran an hour over. How might the board respond?

Case Study 4: Committee Chaos

Scenario: Horizon Peak Charter School has a highly engaged board of directors, and over time, it has created eight standing committees to address various areas of oversight and planning. Each committee meets monthly and expects school leadership to attend, provide reports, and respond to follow-up action items. In recent months, board members have begun to feel burned out by the constant stream of committee meetings and reports. The Executive Director is also showing signs of frustration. She is spending over 20 hours per month preparing for and attending committee meetings, in addition to preparing for regular board meetings and leading the day-to-day operations of the school. Many feel they are stretched too thin, and that there is significant duplication and misalignment between committee work. How might the board respond?



Appendices



Appendix 1 - Board Officer Job Descriptions

Chair of the Governing Board

Supports: School Leader (Executive Director or Principal) and Governing Board

Term: Two years; renewable with board approval

Overview: The Board Chair is the lead volunteer for the school's governing board. They guide board meetings, support the school leader, and help ensure the board fulfills its role in governance, oversight, and strategic direction.

Key Responsibilities

- **Lead Board Meetings:** Plan and run effective board meetings, working with the school leader and board officers to set agendas and priorities.
- **Support the School Leader:** Maintain a strong, collaborative relationship with the school leader. Help ensure clear boundaries between governance (board) and management (staff).
- **Board Oversight and Leadership:**
 - Ensure the board operates according to bylaws, policies, and legal responsibilities.
 - Support a healthy and effective board culture.
 - Coordinate leadership succession, including officer and committee roles.
 - Partner with the Governance Committee to support board training and development.
- **Strategic Planning and Oversight:** Help the board set clear goals and priorities aligned with the school's mission and future needs, including academics, operations, and community engagement.
- **Fundraising and Advocacy:**
 - Personally contribute at a meaningful level.
 - Support fundraising by thanking donors and representing the school at key events.
- **Committee Coordination:** Stay informed about committee work and help ensure alignment and communication between committees and the full board.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Represent the board and school in public settings when appropriate (e.g., media, funders, partners, families).

Key Qualifications

- Strong belief in the school's mission and values
- Leadership and communication skills
- Ability to build consensus and encourage diverse perspectives
- Organized, collaborative, and decisive
- Committed to supporting and developing the school leader
- Understanding of the difference between governance and management
- Willingness to advocate for the school and support fundraising

Indicators of Success

- Leads effective board meetings and supports board productivity



- Builds a positive, results-oriented board culture
- Supports and enhances the performance of the school leader
- Earns trust from fellow board members, school staff, and the broader community



Vice Chair

Supports: Board Chair

Term: Two years; renewable with majority board approval

Overview: The Vice Chair is the board's secondary leader, stepping in when the Chair is unavailable and providing ongoing support to the Chair to ensure effective board operations and governance.

Key Responsibilities

- **Act in Chair's Absence:**
 - Lead board meetings and represent the board when the Chair is unavailable
 - Serve as an ex officio (non-voting) member of all board committees when needed
- **Support Board Leadership:**
 - Help plan board meeting agendas
 - Support the Chair in board operations and decision-making
 - Help communicate with committee chairs and ensure board priorities are moving forward
 - Represent the board at school and community events as needed
- **Fundraising and Example Setting:**
 - Make a personal financial contribution at a meaningful level
 - Support fundraising efforts and represent the board at donor events
- **Provide Leadership and Partnership:**
 - Offer honest feedback, new ideas, and perspective to the Chair
 - Step into special projects or leadership roles as needed
 - Help support and monitor the overall effectiveness of the board

Key Qualifications

- Strong commitment to the school's mission and values
- Clear understanding of governance vs. management roles
- Strong communication and teamwork skills
- Ability to lead meetings and build consensus
- Fair, organized, and decisive when needed
- Comfortable representing the school in public or stakeholder settings

Indicators of Success

- Effectively supports the Chair and steps in when needed
- Helps maintain a productive and respectful board culture
- Contributes to the board's focus on student achievement and school success
- Is seen as approachable, constructive, and representative of the broader school community



Secretary

Supports: Board Chair and designated staff or volunteers taking minutes

Term: Two years; renewable with board approval

Overview: The Secretary ensures that the board's official records are accurate, complete, and accessible. This includes overseeing meeting minutes, bylaws, and compliance with legal notice requirements.

Key Responsibilities

- **Manage Meeting Records:**
 - Ensure accurate minutes are recorded for all board and committee meetings
 - Include meeting details such as time, place, attendance, and key decisions
 - Share minutes for board review and approval
- **Maintain Legal Documents:**
 - Keep updated copies of the organization's bylaws
 - Ensure official records (like minutes and notices) are stored in an accessible location
- **Ensure Legal Compliance:**
 - Help ensure board follows open meeting laws and required procedures
 - Confirm that meeting notices are sent as required by bylaws or state law
- **Support Good Governance:**
 - Act as a guide on process and protocol during board meetings
 - Serve as a resource for questions about governance procedures
- **Fundraising and Participation:**
 - Make a personal contribution to the school at a meaningful level
 - Support the board's fundraising and community engagement efforts

Key Qualifications

- Commitment to the school's mission and values
- Attention to detail and strong organizational skills
- Basic understanding of board governance and open meeting laws
- Ability to manage documents and records consistently and securely

Indicators of Success

- Maintains clear, accurate records of all meetings and decisions
- Helps the board stay compliant with open meeting laws and bylaws
- Supports an organized, transparent board culture
- Is viewed by fellow board members and the school community as reliable, fair, and detail-oriented



Treasurer

Supports: Board Chair, school leader, business manager, bookkeeper, and auditors

Term: Two years; renewable with board approval

Overview: The Treasurer is responsible for helping the board fulfill its financial oversight duties. They lead the Finance Committee, guide budgeting and financial planning, and ensure the board has the information it needs to make sound financial decisions.

Key Responsibilities

- **Financial Oversight:**
 - Monitor the school's financial health
 - Ensure financial records and reports are accurate, timely, and clear
 - Help the board understand financial statements and trends
- **Lead the Finance Committee:**
 - Chair the committee that reviews budgets, financial policies, and audit reports
 - Work with staff to develop the annual budget and present it for board approval
 - Monitor how the school is performing against the budget throughout the year
- **Policy and Compliance:**
 - Oversee the development and review of financial policies and internal controls
 - Ensure compliance with all reporting requirements and audit processes
 - Help protect the school's assets and monitor investment policies (if applicable)
- **Audit and Risk Management:**
 - Present the auditor's recommendation for board approval
 - Review audit results with the board and lead follow-up on any concerns
- **Board Education:**
 - Support fellow board members in understanding financial documents and responsibilities
 - Provide tools or training to strengthen financial oversight across the board
- **Fundraising and Participation:**
 - Make a personal contribution to the school at a meaningful level
 - Play an active role in fundraising and community engagement

Key Qualifications

- Commitment to the school's mission and values
- Familiarity with nonprofit or school financial systems and reports
- Ability to explain financial matters clearly to others
- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail
- Understanding of the board's oversight role versus staff management

Indicators of Success

- Provides clear, timely, and accurate financial updates to the board
- Helps the board make informed financial decisions and understand risks
- Supports transparency, accountability, and long-term financial stability
- Is seen by the school community as reliable, trustworthy, and fiscally responsible



Appendix 2 - Board Responsibilities Case Studies

Case Study 1: State Test Score Disparities

Scenario: It is the fall of your second year. The state test scores are released, showing exceptional results in English Language Arts (ELA) but poor performance in math.

Board's Role:

- **Governance & Oversight:** Review overall academic performance trends and ensure alignment with the school's mission and charter goals.
- **Strategic Planning:** Ask the school leader for a data-driven action plan to improve math performance.
- **Accountability:** Monitor the effectiveness of interventions and request periodic updates.

School Leader's Role:

- **Operational Management:** Analyze data to identify the root causes of low math scores.
Program Implementation: Work with instructional leadership to adjust curriculum, provide teacher support, and introduce interventions.
- **Reporting:** Present the board with a plan of action and measurable goals for improvement.

Case Study 2: High Teacher Turnover

Scenario: In June, the school leader presents a year-end wrap-up. The board is shocked to learn that 60% of teachers are leaving.

Board's Role:

- **Oversight & Inquiry:** Ask the school leader for data on why teachers are leaving. Conduct an anonymous teacher satisfaction survey if necessary.
- **Policy & Strategy:** Ensure policies exist for teacher retention (e.g., competitive salaries, professional development, and leadership opportunities).
- **Budget Considerations:** Assess whether compensation, benefits, or working conditions need improvement.

School Leader's Role:

- **Operational Management:** Conduct exit interviews to determine reasons for attrition.
- **Staff Support:** Develop a teacher retention strategy, including mentorship programs and feedback-driven improvements.



- **Transparency & Reporting:** Keep the board informed about hiring and retention efforts.

Case Study 3: Teacher Bonus Distribution

Scenario: The board and school leader agree to pay teacher bonuses from a designated budget.

Board's Role:

- **Budget Oversight:** Ensure that bonuses align with the approved budget and compensation policy.
- **Policy Setting:** Define the criteria for how bonuses should be distributed (e.g., performance-based, retention incentives).

School Leader's Role:

- **Implementation:** Distribute bonuses equitably and transparently based on the board-approved criteria.
- **Communication:** Ensure teachers understand how and why bonuses are awarded.

Case Study 4: Teacher Conflict with School Leader

Scenario: A teacher publicly raises a conflict with the school leader during a board meeting.

Board's Role:

- **Respect Chain of Command:** The board does not intervene in day-to-day personnel matters.
- **Redirect:** Advise the teacher to follow the school's grievance policy.
- **Monitor Organizational Culture:** Ensure proper HR procedures exist for conflict resolution.

School Leader's Role:

- **HR & Conflict Resolution:** Address teacher concerns through internal channels.
- **Foster a Supportive Environment:** Maintain a transparent, fair process for addressing workplace disputes.

Case Study 5: Board Chair & School Leader Disagreement

Scenario: The board chair and the school leader strongly disagree on a major policy issue.

Board's Role:

- **Governance, Not Micromanagement:** The board as a whole, not just the chair, makes policy decisions.



- **Facilitate Resolution:** The full board should discuss and vote on the policy issue in question.
- **Focus on Mission:** Ensure the disagreement does not interfere with the school's overall leadership and success.

School Leader's Role:

- **Collaboration & Communication:** Maintain professionalism and work with the full board to resolve policy issues.
- **Implementation:** Once the board decides, ensure the policy is executed as intended.

Case Study 6: Media Inquiry on Teacher Unrest

Scenario: A reporter calls a board member at home, investigating rumors of teacher unrest.

Board's Role:

- **Designate a Spokesperson:** The board should have a clear media policy. Typically, only the board chair or school leader should respond to media inquiries.
- **Avoid Off-the-Cuff Responses:** The board member should not make statements without consulting leadership.

School Leader's Role:

- **Crisis Communication:** Address media concerns transparently while protecting staff and students.
- **Control the Narrative:** Ensure messaging aligns with school values and does not escalate the situation.



Appendix 3 - Sample Colorado Open Records Policy (CSI)¹²²

COLORADO OPEN RECORDS ACT (CORA)

This regulation applies to all requests submitted pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-72-201 et seq., to inspect public records in the custody or control of **SCHOOL**. **SCHOOL** is committed to the guiding principles of openness, transparency, accountability and responsiveness.

This policy is intended to balance the demands of the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) and **SCHOOL**'s obligations as a public school within the State of Colorado.

Protocols for Requests

Before making a request for records pursuant to this policy, requesters should refer to the school's website, **[SCHOOL WEBSITE]** to determine if the information sought is posted and publicly available. If there are any questions regarding what type of information is posted on the **SCHOOL**'s website please contact **the Custodian of Records (contact information below)**.

Requests for Records:

SCHOOL is required to produce records in response to qualifying requests made pursuant to CORA. **SCHOOL** strives to be as transparent as possible; however, not all documents maintained by the school are available for public inspection. Some documents must be kept confidential to respect the privacy of students and families or otherwise comply with relevant federal and state laws. All documents restricted from disclosure under C.R.S. § 24-72-204 shall not be released.

For the fastest and best response, requesters should avoid vaguely worded inquiries. Each request must be as specific, clear, and narrow as possible. Requests should include:

- Requestor's name and mailing address;
- Requestor's phone number or email address so that **SCHOOL** can contact requestor if clarification is needed;
- A detailed list or description of the specific records sought, including search terms and date range.

A statement explaining the requester's reason for making the request is helpful for **SCHOOL** to fulfill the request but is not required.

If a request fails to meet these guidelines, the school may be unable to fulfill the request. If more information is needed to process the request, or if the records requested do not exist at the **SCHOOL**, the **SCHOOL** will make reasonable efforts to contact the requester at the contact information provided within the timeframe for responding to the request.

Requests to inspect public records must be in writing and mailed or emailed to the Custodian of Records (contact information below). If a request is sent via email to anyone other than the

¹²² CSI. (n.d.). *Colorado Open Records Act Requests*. CSI.
<https://resources.csi.state.co.us/legal-policy/cora/>



Custodian, or if the Custodian does not accept such an email request, it will not be considered received by **SCHOOL**.

CORA is not a record retention statute, and the school is not obligated to create records that do not exist or maintain records outside of relevant legal guidelines or school's policy on records retention.

General Questions and Requests for Information

General questions and requests for information that are not submitted in writing pursuant to this policy are not requests for "public records" as defined by the law. Therefore, the school is not required to respond to them according to CORA's specifications. Although it is not required, the school may respond to all such questions and requests for information.

Responses to Requests

Time for response to records requests shall be as follows:

- The normal time for production shall be three (3) working days, beginning on the first business day after the request is received.
- Such a period may be extended upon determination by **SCHOOL** that extenuating circumstances exist. Such period of extension shall not normally exceed seven (7) working days. The requester shall be notified of the extension within the three-day period.

Requests to inspect records will not take priority over the regular work activities of **SCHOOL'S** employees. Charges for copies of requested records shall be as follows:

- The normal cost for requested documents shall be \$.25 per page or, for documents in non-standard formats, the actual duplication costs. **SCHOOL** will not charge for the first 25 pages of printing and will not charge a per-page fee for records that are provided in a digital or electronic format.
- **SCHOOL** may charge a research and retrieval fee based on the actual cost of responding to the request. The hourly rate for employee time is \$41.37 per hour, and there shall be no charge for the first hour of employee time. If the custodian charges research and retrieval fees under this paragraph, copying shall be charged at a rate of \$.25 per page.
- Payment must be received prior to the requestor receiving copies. The **SCHOOL** must accept credit card or other electronic payments if the **SCHOOL** accepts such payment types for other charges.

If charges are expected to exceed \$25, the **SCHOOL** will provide the requestor with an estimate of the cost of responding prior to responding and may require a deposit. If the requestor wishes to proceed once receiving an estimate, they must respond in writing. By responding in writing, the requestor agrees to pay all fees associated with responding to the request. The time between the date of the custodian's estimate and the receipt by the custodian of a written response to proceed will not be counted against the time period set forth above for responding to the CORA request.



If a requester wishes to inspect available records in advance of receiving copies, such inspection shall be by appointment only during normal SCHOOL working hours. Such inspection must be supervised by a school representative and the requestor may be charged for any employee time exceeding one hour associated with such inspection.

Manipulation of Records

The school may manipulate existing records to redact or exclude information not subject to disclosure. If the school is required to manipulate data to generate the record, the school may charge an hourly fee that applies in the same manner as the research or retrieval of records.

SCHOOL has the right to redact electronic mail addresses, telephone numbers or home addresses on the ground that disclosure to the applicant would be contrary to the public interest.

A record stored in a digital format will be shared via email, or by another mutually-agreed upon method if the size of the record prevents transmission via email. The document will be provided in a searchable or sortable format except when it is not technologically or practically feasible to do so or when it is not feasible to permanently remove any information that is excluded from the request without the use of additional software or programming.

For questions related to CORA requests please contact:

Custodian of Records

INSERT EMAIL

INSERT PHONE

Requests to inspect public records must be in writing to the Custodian of Records. Requests may be mailed or emailed to:

SCHOOL

ATTN: Custodian of Records

INSERT ADDRESS

INSERT EMAIL

Adopted: XXX, 20XX

LEGAL REFS.: CRS 24-72-201 et seq.



Appendix 4 - Legal Responsibilities Case Studies

Case Study 1: CORA Request Received by a Board Member

Scenario: A charter school board member receives a Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) request via email from a community member asking for access to recent board communications about the newly adopted school discipline policy decision.

Board Response:

Board members are considered public officials, and communications related to school business, regardless of whether they occur on personal or school accounts, may be subject to CORA. The board member should promptly forward the request to the school leader or designated CORA compliance officer, refrain from deleting any records or responding independently, and work with school leadership to ensure timely, transparent, and legal compliance with the request.

Case Study 2: Serving Students with Disabilities

Scenario: A parent raises concerns during public comment that their child with an IEP is not receiving the services outlined in their plan since transferring to the charter school.

Board Response:

The board should not intervene in individual student matters but must ensure that the charter school is meeting its legal obligations under IDEA, Section 504, and the school's charter contract. If systemic issues are raised, the board should request a report from the school leader and/or special education coordinator to review compliance and service delivery models.

Case Study 3: Informal Chat Turns Into Policy Discussion

Scenario: Three board members (a quorum of the board) are volunteering at the Book Fair. After the event ends, they begin chatting informally in the library. The conversation shifts from logistics to discussing the school's fundraising policy.

Board Response:

Even though the meeting began informally, once the board members began discussing a matter within the board's policy-making authority (fundraising policy), this gathering meets the definition of a "meeting" under Colorado's Open Meetings Law, because a quorum is present and public business is being discussed. Acknowledge the misstep and avoid discussing board business when a quorum is present unless the meeting has been properly noticed. If any decisions or direction were implied, revisit the discussion in a properly noticed board meeting for transparency.



Case Study 4: Email Chain Becomes a Group Discussion

Scenario: A board member emails the full board to add a discussion topic to the upcoming agenda. Other board members reply-all, sharing their thoughts and ideas on the discipline policy.

Board Response:

While the communication started as a logistical email, the thread evolved into a discussion of public business among a quorum, which constitutes a meeting, even though it occurred via email. This “meeting” is now a violation of Open Meeting Law because it was not noticed or open to the public. Board members should not reply-all when receiving emails involving board business. Email communications should be one-way for distribution of information only, or go through the board chair or school leader. Discussion should take place only during a properly noticed public meeting. The board may want to create a policy or guidance document around email communications to prevent future violations.



Appendix 5: Sample Executive Director Job Description

Position: Executive Director**Reports to:** Sample School Board of Directors**Starting Salary Range:** \$ – \$ annually**Wage/Hour Status:** Non-Exempt**Workdays:** Year Round**About Sample School**

Sample School is a public charter school of choice serving approximately 500 K–8 students, located in Denver, Colorado. Founded in 1999, our mission is to... Our vision is to

Position Summary

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall operational management, strategic leadership, and success of Sample School. This includes executing the strategic plan in collaboration with the Board of Directors, overseeing educational programming and business operations, ensuring financial health, and maintaining adherence to policies and procedures.

The Executive Director works closely with the administrative team to ensure high-quality classroom instruction and systems that meet the needs of 21st-century learners. The Executive Director is the sole employee of the Board of Directors and reports regularly to the Board on the conduct, affairs, and operations of the school.

Essential Responsibilities

The Executive Director leads and coordinates the educational, operational, and administrative functions of the school, either directly or through staff. Key responsibilities include:

Vision and Strategy

- Lead the implementation of the school's mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- Provide leadership to ensure academic success and continuous school improvement.
- Work in collaboration with the Board to monitor and achieve long-term goals.

Finance and Business Operations

- Oversee all financial operations and ensure fiscal responsibility, including budget development, financial planning, and annual audits.
- Lead the Finance Committee and ensure transparency in financial reporting.
- Oversee admissions, marketing, and fundraising strategies.
- Ensure policy compliance and effective organizational procedures.
- Supervise facilities management and IT personnel and contractors.
- Ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff.



Staff Management

- Develop and maintain the school calendar and schedules in compliance with CDE requirements.
- Supervise and evaluate key staff, including Assistant Directors, Business Manager, Facilities Manager, Instructional Coach, Enrichment Coordinator, and Office Personnel.
- Ensure regular performance reviews and support professional development.
- Maintain a Staff Handbook aligned with HR laws and district policies.
- Lead hiring, evaluation, and termination decisions as needed, in consultation with the administrative team.
- Promote a culture of growth, support, and professional learning.

Curriculum and Program Management

- Ensure alignment with CDE-approved curricula and assessment tools.
- Oversee program evaluations and implement curriculum changes as needed.
- Ensure discipline policies are consistently and fairly applied.
- Submit required reports to external agencies.

Community Engagement

- Serve as the public face of the school with families, community partners, and the authorizer.
- Communicate emergent issues clearly and promptly.
- Cultivate positive relationships with external stakeholders and maintain awareness of policy shifts affecting charter schools.

Governance

- Serve as the primary advisor to the Board of Directors, keeping them informed on major issues, including budgets, enrollment, fundraising, strategic planning, and policy needs.
- Maintain strong communication with Board leadership and support Board meetings and records.
- Serve as an ex-officio member on the Board and support Board committees and task forces.
- Contribute to fundraising initiatives.

Legal and Compliance

- Ensure compliance with school bylaws and all state and federal regulations.
- Represent Sample School to the charter authorizer and other relevant agencies or organizations.

Facilities Management

- Oversee maintenance and improvements of the school facility to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment.
- Supervise facilities and janitorial teams and ensure alignment with strategic goals.

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Strong strategic thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Exceptional time and resource management.
- Ability to manage complex situations and maintain confidentiality.
- Thorough knowledge of charter school operations and applicable laws.
- Financial literacy and understanding of budgeting and resource allocation.
- Excellent public relations and communication skills.
- Ability to inspire, lead, and support a high-performing team.

Required Education and Experience

- Master's degree in education, business administration, or a related field.
- At least two years of experience in an administrative role in a school or equivalent leadership position in education, government, or the private sector.
- Holds a valid Administrator's License.

Preferred Education and Experience

- Prior experience leading a charter school.
- Classroom teaching experience and a strong understanding of instructional practices.

Desired Personal Attributes

- Strong interpersonal and written communication skills.
- Active listening and conflict resolution abilities.
- Collaborative team member with a passion for education.
- Demonstrates integrity, optimism, and a commitment to continuous growth.

Sample School is an equal opportunity employer.

We do not make employment decisions based on age, race, gender, religion, disability, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. If you require reasonable accommodation during the application or interview process, or to perform essential job functions, please contact our Human Resources Department.



Appendix 6: Sample Interview Timeline

Action Item	Due Date	Complete (Y/N)	Notes
Review Job Description	January	Yes	
Create internal interview questions	January	Yes	
Create/update external interview questions	January		
Meeting with school's hiring manager on process	January		
Advertise for hiring committee	January		
Set up any internal pre-screen interviews	January		
Post job for external applicants (depending upon internal)	January		
Determine most important needs from ED from BOD perspective	January		
Determine hiring committee based on survey responses	January		
Inform committee members of selection	January		
Provide information/training on how to interview	January		
Committee meeting to set norms	January		
Schedule any internal interviews	February		
Discuss internal interviews with committee and determine next steps	February		



Position closes	February		
Complete initial screening/phone screening	February		
Finalists present task to community with opportunity for input	March		
Top 3–5 interviews by committee	March		
Committee meeting to decide on finalists	March		
14-day public finalist posting period begins	March		Required by law
Reference checks	March		
Committee meeting to select recommended finalist	March		
Board meeting – Vote on recommendation in open meeting. Hold an Executive Session to negotiate contract terms.	March		
Extend offer to candidate	March		
Background check	Day after acceptance		
Announcement to community	Day after background check		



Appendix 7: Sample Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself and describe your leadership journey. What experiences have most prepared you for the role of Executive Director at a charter school?

Administration:

1. Reflecting on the Executive Director job description, what do you envision as a typical day in this role?
2. In your opinion, what are the most essential qualities of an Executive Director? Share an example of how you have demonstrated these qualities in past leadership roles.

Leadership:

1. How do you navigate and balance the varying needs and priorities of assistant directors, operational staff, teachers, families, and students?
2. What strategies do you use to earn and maintain the respect of those you lead?
3. How do you create a culture of accountability and high expectations while also ensuring staff feel supported and secure in their roles?
4. What does active listening mean to you, and how do you apply it in leadership and decision-making?

Management:

1. What are the top three areas of focus for effectively managing a charter school?
2. How would you develop and implement a marketing and enrollment strategy that supports both student retention and talent recruitment?

School Climate:

1. What is the Executive Director's role in shaping and sustaining a positive school culture? Describe a time when you positively impacted an organization's culture.
2. Share your philosophy on behavior management. Describe a particularly challenging behavioral situation and how you handled it.
3. How do you ensure effective communication and engagement with all school stakeholders (families, staff, board, authorizers, etc.)?

Standards and Curriculum:

1. What is your familiarity with our school's educational model or instructional philosophy? How does it align with your own beliefs about teaching and learning?
2. How would you use academic data to inform instructional improvement and schoolwide decision-making?
3. Tell us about a time when you led a significant change in an academic program. How did you manage staff buy-in and implementation?



Budget:

1. Describe your experience managing a school or organizational budget.
2. What key considerations would you take into account when developing an annual budget?
3. What strategies or partnerships could you explore to diversify funding and support the school's mission?

Governance/Authorizing:

1. Describe what a healthy, effective working relationship between an Executive Director and a Board of Directors looks like.
2. In your view, is the board a partner, a governing body, a supervisor—or a combination of these? Explain your perspective.
3. How do you define the role of the charter authorizer, and how would you proactively manage that relationship?

Supervision:

1. What key elements would you focus on when evaluating the performance of your direct reports (e.g., Assistant EDs, Business Manager)?
2. How would you coach and support a struggling teacher to help them grow into a strong contributor to the school?
3. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of supervising a charter school, and how would you address it?

What questions do you have for us?

Case Studies

Scenario: Underperforming Academic Program	
Mid-year assessment data reveals that the middle school math program is underperforming compared to state benchmarks. Teachers express that they need more curriculum support, but also say that past changes haven't been well implemented.	
Guiding Questions: ● How would you investigate and respond to this issue? ● What would your approach be to support teachers while driving improvement? ● How would you communicate changes to families and the board?	Listening For: ● Instructional leadership ● Data literacy ● Change management skills ● Collaborative approach to academic improvement



Scenario: Staff Conflict and Leadership Culture

Two veteran teachers have approached you separately to express frustration with your Assistant Director. They claim decisions are being made without staff input, and communication feels top-down and dismissive. The Assistant Director believes they are simply trying to hold staff accountable and maintain structure. Morale is beginning to drop.

Guiding Questions:

- How would you approach this situation?
- How do you balance supporting your leadership team while maintaining staff morale?
- What structures would you put in place to prevent this type of conflict in the future?

Listening For:

- Emotional intelligence and diplomacy
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Commitment to a strong, inclusive leadership culture
- Conflict resolution strategies

Scenario: Challenging Parent Group

A vocal group of parents is challenging the school's disciplinary practices, claiming they are inconsistent and inequitable. They've begun organizing on social media and are planning to speak at the next board meeting.

Guiding Questions:

- How would you approach communication with this parent group?
- What process would you follow to investigate their concerns?
- How do you maintain trust while upholding school policies?

Listening For:

- Community engagement skills
- Ability to listen without defensiveness
- Equitable discipline practices
- Conflict navigation with diplomacy

Performance Tasks
Task: Data-Informed Decision Making

Review a sample set of academic performance data (to be provided—e.g., iReady, CMAS, internal benchmarks) that shows a decline in middle school ELA performance.



Instructions: • Identify key concerns based on the data. • Propose 2–3 concrete actions you would take as Executive Director. • Be prepared to present your interpretation and action plan to the hiring committee.	Assesses: • Data analysis • Academic leadership • Instructional decision-making
---	---

Task: Staff Coaching Role Play Role-play a 15-minute coaching session with a teacher who has solid classroom management but consistently receives low scores in instructional rigor on walkthroughs.	
Instructions: • Interact with a committee member acting as the teacher. • Demonstrate your approach to instructional leadership and staff development. • Emphasize coaching, not evaluation.	Assesses: • Leadership coaching style • Interpersonal and communication skills • Instructional expertise

Task: Vision Setting Presentation Create a 5–10 minute presentation titled: "My Vision for Leading [Sample School Name] Forward" Include your beliefs about school leadership, academic excellence, equity, and community engagement.	
Instructions: • Present to the interview committee (slides optional). • Prepare to answer follow-up questions. • Ground your presentation in your past experience and knowledge of charter schools.	Assesses: • Public speaking • Leadership philosophy • Cultural and mission alignment



Appendix 8: Sample Leader Evaluation Templates

Leader Evaluation Sample #1

Name:

School Year:

Position:

Years in Current Position:

Evaluator/s:

Sources of Data to Inform Evaluation:

- State of the School/Leader's Report
- Survey data
- Academic data (SPF, NWEA, Course Completion, Graduation Rates)
- School visit reflections

Board of Directors Quarterly School Visits:

Date	Board Member Visiting
Q1-	
Q2-	
Q3-	
Q4-	

Leader Evaluation and Goal Setting Process:

- Fall - Leader and Board collaboratively set leader's annual strategic goal(s).
Leader sets personal goal(s).
- Winter - Leader and Board meet for mid-year goal reflection.
- Spring - Leader and Board meet for final evaluation, including final goal reflection and review of evaluation document.
- Throughout the year - Board reflects on the leader's performance through artifact reflection and school visits.



ANNUAL GOAL SETTING:

Goal #1 - Supports a Strategic School Initiative:

Leadership will determine the initiatives for the school year. What will you do to contribute to this initiative? Consider using the SMART goal format to guide the creation of your goal. Specific and Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound)

Goal #1:

Please list the steps that you will take to ensure you are able to accomplish these goals.

Please indicate any assistance that you might need to meet your goals.

Goal #2 - Personal Professional Goal:

How do you as a professional want to grow and develop? Think about skills, pedagogy, and practice. Consider using the SMART goal format to guide the creation of your goal. Specific and Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound)

Goal #2:

Please list the steps that you will take to ensure you are able to accomplish these goals.

Please indicate any assistance that you might need to meet your goals.

Please describe one professional development opportunity you would like to pursue. Be as descriptive as possible and include the price of training and travel, organizations that offer this type of training, and how this training will benefit your professional capacity or the organization as a whole.

III. Mid Year Goal Reflection:

Please discuss how successful you have been in accomplishing your professional growth plan this year.



Please reflect on the skills that you have employed this year to support your growth and/or the growth of our organization.

Please share a specific story about how you demonstrated improvement thus far this year.

Please reflect on your overall performance in carrying out your duties and responsibilities thus far this year.

IV. End of Year Reflection:

Please discuss how successful you were in accomplishing your professional growth plan this year.

Please reflect on the skills that you have employed this year to support your growth and/or the growth of our organization.

Please share a specific story about how you demonstrated improvement this year.

Please reflect on your overall performance in carrying out your duties and responsibilities this year.



End of Year Competency Evaluation

Based on CDEs [Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Principals](#)

QUALITY STANDARD I			
Principals demonstrate organizational leadership by strategically developing a vision and mission, leading change, enhancing the capacity of personnel, distributing resources, and aligning systems of communication for continuous school improvement.			
<i>The Principal:</i>	Does Not Meet	Meets	Exceeds
Collaboratively develops the vision, mission, and strategic plan, based on a cycle of continuous improvement of student outcomes, and facilitates their integration into the school community.			
Collaborates with staff and stakeholders to implement strategies for change to improve student outcomes.			
Establishes and effectively manages systems that ensure high-quality staff.			
Establishes systems and partnerships for managing all available school resources to facilitate improved student outcomes.			
Facilitates the design and use of a variety of communication strategies with all stakeholders.			
COMMENTS:			

QUALITY STANDARD II			
Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and community.			
<i>The Principal:</i>	Does Not Meet	Meets	Exceeds
Creates a professional school environment and foster relationships that promote staff and student success and well-being.			
Ensures that the school provides an orderly and supportive environment that fosters a sense of safety and well-being.			
Commits to an inclusive and positive school environment that meets the needs of all students and promotes the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society			
Creates and utilizes systems to share leadership and supports collaborative efforts throughout the school.			
Designs and/or utilizes structures and processes which result in family and community engagement and support.			
COMMENTS:			



QUALITY STANDARD III			
Principals demonstrate instructional leadership by aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment, supporting professional learning, conducting observations, providing actionable feedback, and holding staff accountable for student outcomes.			
<i>The Principal:</i>	Does Not Meet	Meets	Exceeds
Establishes, aligns, and ensures implementation of a school plan of instruction, instructional practice, assessments, and use of student data that results in academic growth and achievement for all students.			
Fosters a collaborative culture of job-embedded professional learning.			
Demonstrates knowledge of effective instructional practice and provides feedback to promote continuous improvement of teaching and learning.			
Holds all staff accountable for setting and achieving measurable student outcomes.			
COMMENTS:			

QUALITY STANDARD IV			
Principals demonstrate professionalism through ethical conduct, reflection, and external leadership.			
<i>The Principal:</i>	Does Not Meet	Meets	Exceeds
Demonstrates high standards for professional conduct.			
Links professional growth to their professional goals.			
Builds and sustains productive partnerships with key community stakeholders, including public and private sectors, to promote school improvement, student learning, and student well-being.			
COMMENTS:			

Board of Directors' Comments (Please attach if more space is necessary):

Principal's Comments (Please attach if more space is necessary):

Principal's Goals for Following Year (Please attach if more space is necessary):

FINAL RECOMMENDATION:

() Recommend Reappointment () Recommend Non-Renewal

Signature of Evaluator:

Date:

Signature of Principal:

Date:

Principal's Name:

Evaluating Board of Directors' Names:



Leader Evaluation Sample #2

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION		
Executive Director		
Board of Director Leading Evaluation		
Review Period		
Section I. Achieving Goals Directions: Identify Executive Director's overall goals and corresponding results.		
GOALS	RESULTS	Rating E: <i>exceeds</i> M: <i>meets</i> P: <i>partially meets</i> D: <i>Does not meet</i>
Goal 1		
Strategic Goal: ED Goal: Action Steps:	Baseline Data:	Mid-Year Rating: End-of Year Rating:
Goal 2		
Strategic Goal: ED Goal: Action Steps:	Baseline Data:	Mid-Year Rating: End-of Year Rating:
Goal 3		
Strategic Goal: ED Goal: Action Steps:	Baseline Data:	Mid-Year Rating: End-of Year Rating:
Section II. Demonstrating Competencies Directions: Reflect on Executive Director's demonstration of the essential functions based on the job description.		
Essential Function	Reflection	
Vision and Strategy	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:	



Finance and Business Operations	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:
Staff Management	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:
Curriculum Management	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:
Governance	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:
Legal/Compliance	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:
Facilities	Self-Reflection: Board Reflection:
Section III. Summary Assessment, Next Steps, and Professional Development	
Overall Performance Rating (Highlight One) Exceeds Expectations - Meets Expectations - Partially Meets Expectations - Does Not Meet Expectations	
Qualitative Comments: What are the 1-3 most notable areas of strength? • Self-Reflection: • Board Reflection: What are the 1-3 areas for growth or improvement? • Self-Reflection: • Board Reflection: What are the next steps for growth or improvement in terms of the Executive Director's professional development? • Self-Reflection: • Board Reflection:	
Mid-Year Executive Director Signature:	Date:
Mid-Year Board Member Signature:	Date:
End-of-Year Executive Director Signature:	Date:
End-of-Year Board Member Signature:	Date:



Leader Evaluation Sample #3

COLORADO LEAGUE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS										
School Leader Evaluation										
Employee Name					Job Title					
					Executive Director					
Department					Supervisor					
Start Date with Company		Start Date in Current Position			Review Period Start			Review Period End		
Rating System										
Number	Rating	Description								
4	Exceeds	Consistently exceeds the normal expectations for the position; exceeds expected criteria for job duties or competencies; achieves results beyond those expected for the position; at least 80% of the goal was completed.								
3	Meets	Consistently performs all duties of the position in a fully capable manner; meets all expected criteria for job duties or competencies; at least 60% of the goal was completed.								
2	Needs Improvement	Performs many duties in a capable manner; but requires improvement in job duties or competencies to achieve overall satisfactory performance; may require more supervision than expected for assignment; at least 40% of the goal was completed.								
Section 1: Goals										
Annual Goals					Comments			Supervisor Rating		
					[Supervisor comments here]			Met		
					[Supervisor comments here]			Met		



						[Supervisor comments here]				Met
						Best Fit Description				0
Section 2: Job Duties										
Job Duties						Comments				Rating
Strategic Leadership - Develops and articulates a clear-shared vision and mission for high student achievement. - Establishes organizational goals consistent with Mission, and ensures understanding by all staff. - Leads the Board to develop strategic plans, policies, and directives. - With principal, creates Board and SAC agendas and attends all meetings. - Facilitates opportunities for student voice within the school's strategic plan - Develops and updates the School Profile. - In collaboration with Principal, write and submit UIP for feedback to Board, SAC, and CDE										Met
External Development Leadership -Establishes corporate partnerships and community connections to benefit the school. -Cultivates a positive partnership with the school district. -Leads the Charter Renewal process including writing and submitting the application. -Create and execute a student marketing and recruitment plan.										Met
School Culture and Equity Leadership -Facilitates tours for prospective parents and schedules open house days. -Promotes community engagement with and for the benefit of the school										Met
Human Resource Leadership -Acquires, develops, and retains outstanding leadership staff members. -Sets clear performance expectations and manages performance of principal. -Supports the professional growth of the principal. -Supports the principal in the creation of performance plans for staff not meeting expectations which may include termination or non-renewal.										Met



Managerial Leadership -Collaborates with the CFO to create and manage the school budget. -Adheres to Board-approved fiscal policies and procedures. -Works with the Board to strategically secure new streams of revenue and to develop a fundraising plan. -Identifies and applies for grants that align with program needs. -Researches and identifies potential savings or cost cutting possibilities that do not negatively impact the program. -Manages major contracts including Health Insurance Service Contracts (spring) and building lease.										Met	
						Best Fit Description				Met	
Section 3: Competencies											
Competency & Description						Comments				Rating	
Collaboration: Works collaboratively with other team members both within and outside of program area and team. Seeks input of others when making decisions and keeps others adequately informed about their work and decision-making. Offers assistance and support to team members.						[Supervisor comments here]				Met	
Continuous Learning: Assesses own strengths and weaknesses. Pursues training and development opportunities. Seeks and applies feedback to improve performance. Shares expertise with others. Strives to continuously build knowledge and skills.						[Supervisor comments here]				Met	
Initiative: Sets and achieves challenging goals. Takes appropriate action without direction and seeks solutions to problems instead of simply identifying problems. Follows up to ensure that projects/assignments are brought to completion despite obstacles.						[Supervisor comments here]				Met	
Innovation: Develops innovative approaches and ideas. Displays original thinking and creativity. Generates suggestions for improving work. Meets challenges with resourcefulness.						[Supervisor comments here]				Met	
Organizational Support: Supports organizational goals and values. Contributes positively to building a team culture. Puts success of organization above own interests.						[Supervisor comments here]				Met	
Quality & Quantity of Work: Completes work on time and within budget. Demonstrates accuracy and thoroughness. Monitors work to ensure all work is high quality.						[Supervisor comments here]				Met	
						Best Fit Description					
Section 5: Feedback											
1. Overall Areas of Strength (to be completed by Supervisor)											



[Supervisor comments here]									
2. Overall Areas to Improve <i>(to be completed by Supervisor)</i>									
[Supervisor comments here]									
3. How Can The Board Support the ED further									
[Supervisor insights here]									
Section 6: Signatures									
Employee			Date		Supervisor			Date	
President			Date		Other (Optional)			Date	
Employee signature acknowledges receipt of review and does not necessarily indicate agreement. If Employee disagrees with any of the information contained above, Employee understands that Employee may submit a written statement explaining his or her position. This document may be placed in your personnel file.									



Leader Evaluation Sample #3

Principal & Assistant Principal Evaluation						
Name:		Role:				
Evaluator:		Date:				
Quality Standard I: Principals demonstrate organizational leadership by strategically developing a vision and mission, leading change, enhancing the capacity of personnel, distributing resources, and aligning systems of communication for continuous school improvement.	Level 1 Not Met	Level 2 Partially Meets	Level 3 Meets	Level 4 Exceeds	Level 5 Advanced	Comments
A: Principals collaboratively develop the vision, mission, and strategic plan, based on a cycle of continuous improvement of student outcomes, and facilitate their integration into the school community.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	
B: Principals collaborate with staff and stakeholders to implement strategies for change to improve student outcomes.	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	
C: Principals establish and effectively manage systems that ensure high-quality staff.	[11]	[12]	[13]	[14]	[15]	
D: Principals establish systems and partnerships for managing all available school resources to facilitate improved student outcomes.	[16]	[17]	[18]	[19]	[20]	
E: Principals facilitate the design and use of a variety of communication strategies with all stakeholders.	[21]	[22]	[23]	[24]	[25]	
Quality Standard II: Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and community.	Level 1 Not Met	Level 2 Partially Meets	Level 3 Meets	Level 4 Exceeds	Level 5 Advanced	Comments
A: Principals create a professional school environment and foster relationships that promote staff and student success and well-being.	[26]	[27]	[28]	[29]	[30]	
B: Principals ensure that the school provides an orderly and supportive environment that fosters a sense of safety and well-being.	[31]	[32]	[33]	[34]	[35]	
C: Principals commit to an inclusive and positive school environment that meets the needs of all students and promotes the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.	[36]	[37]	[38]	[39]	[40]	
D: Principals create and utilize systems to share leadership and support collaborative efforts throughout the school.	[41]	[42]	[43]	[44]	[45]	
E: Principals design and/or utilize structures and processes which result in family and community engagement and support.	[46]	[47]	[48]	[49]	[50]	
Quality Standard III: Principals demonstrate instructional leadership by aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment, supporting professional learning, conducting observations, providing actionable feedback, and holding staff accountable for student outcomes.	Level 1 Not Met	Level 2 Partially Meets	Level 3 Meets	Level 4 Exceeds	Level 5 Advanced	Comments
A: Principals establish, align, and ensure implementation of a district/BOCES plan of instruction, instructional practice, assessments, and use of student data that result in academic growth and achievement for all students.	[51]	[52]	[53]	[54]	[55]	
B: Principals foster a collaborative culture of job-embedded professional learning.	[56]	[57]	[58]	[59]	[60]	
C: Principals demonstrate knowledge of effective instructional practice and provide feedback to promote continuous improvement of teaching and learning.	[61]	[62]	[63]	[64]	[65]	
D: Principals hold all staff accountable for setting and achieving measurable student outcomes.	[66]	[67]	[68]	[69]	[70]	
Quality Standard IV: Principals demonstrate professionalism through ethical conduct, reflection, and external leadership.	Level 1 Not Met	Level 2 Partially Meets	Level 3 Meets	Level 4 Exceeds	Level 5 Advanced	Comments
A: Principals demonstrate high standards for professional conduct.	[71]	[72]	[73]	[74]	[75]	
B: Principals link professional growth to their professional goals.	[76]	[77]	[78]	[79]	[80]	
C: Principals build and sustain productive partnerships with key community stakeholders, including public and private sectors, to promote school improvement, student learning, and student well-being.	[81]	[82]	[83]	[84]	[85]	



Professional SMART Goal	Level 1 Not Met	Level 2 Partially Meets	Level 3 Meets	Level 4 Exceeds	Level 5 Advanced	Comments
Professional SMART Goal	[86]	[87]	[88]	[89]	[90]	
Measure of Student Learning	Level 1 Not Met	Level 2 Partially Meets	Level 3 Meets	Level 4 Exceeds	Level 5 Advanced	Comments
School Performance Framework	[91]	[92]	[93]	[94]	[95]	
Fall to Spring Growth NWEA Reading	[96]	[97]	[98]	[99]	[100]	
Fall to Spring Growth NWEA Language	[101]	[102]	[103]	[104]	[105]	
Fall to Spring Growth NWEA Math	[106]	[107]	[108]	[109]	[110]	
DIBELS Fall to Spring Growth K-5	[111]	[112]	[113]	[114]	[115]	
Overall Level Ratings	Overall Level Ratings		Percentage		Overall Calculations	Comments
Quality Standard I				0.175	0.175	
Quality Standard II				0.175	0.175	
Quality Standard III				0.175	0.175	
Quality Standard IV				0.175	0.175	
Professional Smart Goal				0.05	0.05	
School Performance Framework				0.05	0.05	
Fall to Spring Growth NWEA Reading				0.05	0.05	
Fall to Spring Growth NWEA Language				0.05	0.05	
Fall to Spring Growth NWEA Math				0.05	0.05	
DIBEL Fall to Spring Growth K-5				0.05	0.05	
Overall Level Rating					1	
Next Steps for Growth:						
Employee's Signature: _____						
Supervisor's Signature: _____						
Date: _____						

** Used with permission from New Summit Charter Academy.



Appendix 9: Sample Leader Professional Improvement Plan (PIP)

School Leader Performance Improvement Plan

Principal:

School:

Date:

Supervisor:

PIP Timeline:

Areas for Growth:

Improvement Goal 1

- Performance Measure/Indicator:
- Goal 1:
- Strategies/Action Steps:
- Support/Resources Needed:
- Target Date/Evidence of Completion:
- Supervisor Comments:

Improvement Goal 2

- Performance Measure/Indicator:
- Goal 2:
- Strategies/Action Steps:
- Support/Resources Needed:
- Target Date/Evidence of Completion:
- Supervisor Comments:

Improvement Goal 3

- Performance Measure/Indicator:
- Goal 3:
- Strategies/Action Steps:



- Support/Resources Needed:
- Target Date/Evidence of Completion:
- Supervisor Comments:

The principal and supervisor will sign the Improvement Plan to indicate that the goals have been shared, discussed, and agreed upon.

Supervisor:

Date:

Principal:

Date:

Completion of Improvement Plan

The principal has completed the improvement plan: ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Unsatisfactory

Consequence(s) for unsatisfactory performance:

- ☐ Continue on an improvement plan.
- ☐ Continue on an improvement plan with more intensive support.
- ☐ Recommendation for dismissal.
- ☐ Other _____

Supervisor Comments:

The principal and supervisor will sign the Completion of the Improvement Plan to indicate that the final improvement plan results have been shared and discussed.

Supervisor:

Date:

Principal:

Date:



Appendix 10: Sample Emergency Succession Plan Template

Short-Term Contingency Plan for Temporary or Unexpected Absence of CEO

Instructions & Template¹²³

Instructions

Use the following template to draft your organization's short-term contingency plan in the event of a temporary or unexpected CEO absence.

1. **Define the Circumstance.** Define the circumstances under which the Board should use this short-term contingency plan.
2. **Identify Interim Designee.** Identify the person who will assume the role of the Interim CEO. This candidate should ideally be on the Executive Team and should be asked and accept this responsibility before being named in the plan.
3. **Identify Back-Up Designee.** Identify a back-up interim CEO who can step up in case of unforeseen circumstances. This candidate should ideally be on the Executive Team and should be asked and accept this responsibility before being named in the plan.
4. **Determine Short-Term Responsibilities Reassignments.** Define the key responsibilities the CEO performs and how the Interim CEO will carry out these functions during the CEO's absence, including the support required.
5. **Identify Development Needs.** List specific areas for development interim and back-up designees need to focus on to assume the Interim CEO role.
6. **Set Decision Making Guardrails.** Clearly state the limitations to key decisions the Interim CEO must abide by in the CEO's absence.
7. **Outline Communication Plan re: Temporary Change of Leadership.** Identify the key stakeholders who must be informed of the temporary change in leadership, who is responsible for communicating the change, and what the timeframe is for the communication.
8. **Articulate Temporary Reporting Structure Changes.** Decide how the temporary reporting structures might change. *For example, if the COO is named as interim, determine who will perform the COO's responsibilities and be responsible for their direct reports.*

¹²³ This template was created by The Charter School Growth Fund.



Template

Interim CEO: In the event of **[DEFINE THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE BOARD SHOULD ACTIVATE THIS PLAN]**, **[INSERT NAME]** will assume the role of Interim CEO, and **[INSERT NAME]** is the **first back-up candidate**. The leadership team, board, and staff will support the Interim CEO according to the plan below, until such time as the board selects a permanent replacement, or the CEO returns.

Key CEO Responsibilities	Contingency Plan	Development Needs for [Interim Name] & [Back-Up Name]
Executive Leadership Team Management	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •
Strategic Plan Implementation	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •
Internal & External Stakeholder Management	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •
Board Management	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •
Fundraising	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •
Functional Areas Oversight	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •
Other	Interim CEO supported by [INSERT ROLE] : •	[INSERT INTERIM NAME] : • [INSERT BACK-UP NAME] : •



Assumptions about Key Decisions in CEO Absence:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Communication Plan re: Temporary Change of Leadership

Key Stakeholder	Responsible for Communicating	Timeline
Board		
Staff		
Families & Students		
[INSERT AUTHORIZER]		
[INSERT FINANCIAL PARTNERS]		
[INSERT LOCAL POLITICIANS]		
[INSERT OTHER STAKEHOLDERS]		

Temporary Reporting Structure Changes

-
-
-



Appendix 11: School Leader Hiring, Oversight, and Evaluation Case Studies

Case Study 1: A Well-Loved Leader Struggling with Finance and Goals

Scenario: Principal Morgan has been with her charter school for seven years. She is deeply respected by staff, beloved by students, and trusted by families. Under her leadership, school culture is strong and enrollment is steady. However, in recent years, the school has failed to meet key academic growth targets, and the financial outlook is increasingly precarious due to some unexpected facilities expenses. The board is concerned but hesitant to intervene, worried about damaging the relationship with a leader who has been so central to the school's success.

Board Response:

- Conduct a leadership evaluation focused on growth-oriented feedback.
- Pair Principal Morgan with an executive coach who has experience in finance or academic improvement.
- Reassess the school's leadership structure. Is it time to hire a Director of Operations or a finance manager?
- Establish clear, measurable improvement goals, with timelines, and regular check-ins between the board chair and leader.
- Celebrate strengths while addressing gaps. A leader can be both appreciated and held accountable.

Case Study 2: Hiring a Leader Who Will Need Support

Scenario: After a thorough search, the board hires Mr. Diaz as the next school leader. He is a dynamic former assistant principal with a strong instructional background and deep ties to the local community. While his potential is clear, the board knows he lacks experience with facilities, budget management, and charter compliance. The board is excited but aware that Mr. Diaz will need significant support to succeed in his new role.

Board Response:

- Assign a formal mentor or coach with charter school leadership experience.
- Establish a clear onboarding plan, including training in financial management and compliance.
- Create a 90-day plan with achievable goals to build early momentum and confidence.
- Identify key staff (e.g., a strong operations manager) who can complement the leader's skill set.
- Schedule regular touchpoints between the board chair and Mr. Diaz to assess progress and provide support.



Case Study 3: Sudden Medical Leave Triggers Emergency Succession Plan

Scenario: Dr. Taylor, the long-time school leader of Horizon Charter School, suddenly informs the board that she must take an immediate medical leave and will be unavailable for the remainder of the semester. Dr. Taylor is a seasoned and effective leader who has managed many aspects of the school personally, including academic oversight, compliance, and family engagement. Unfortunately, while she had started drafting an emergency succession plan, it was never finalized or formally adopted by the board.

The board is caught off guard. Staff and families are anxious, and key deadlines related to state reporting, enrollment projections, and assessments are approaching. The board must act quickly to stabilize the school, ensure continuity of operations, and communicate with stakeholders.

Board Response:

- Review available documentation from Dr. Taylor's draft plan.
- Assign board members to key tasks (e.g., staff communication, stakeholder updates, interim leadership interviews).
- Break down the school leader's job description into functional areas.
- Temporarily assign tasks across multiple staff members to avoid overburdening any one individual.
- Consider contracting with a part-time charter consultant or retired leader to support compliance and reporting needs.
- Begin drafting a full emergency succession plan for future scenarios.



Appendix 12: Sample Grievance Policy

Policy 10.2 - Grievance Process

A. SCHOOL believes that parent, student, and staff concerns, complaints, or grievances should be addressed in a timely manner. To that end, the Board has adopted the following process to address concerns, complaints or grievances about staff members or about other parents and/or students. Retaliation or retribution is prohibited for grievances made in good faith.

B. SCHOOL and its administration welcome constructive criticism whenever it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational program or management of our school. SCHOOL requires that all parties must communicate in a respectful and non-accusatory manner, honoring the school rules; keep the issues from becoming personal attacks and stay to the point of the concern. Parents shall comply with the Parent Code of Conduct.

1) Individuals should first attempt to resolve issues directly with the party or parties involved.

2) Should that attempt fail to produce a satisfactory resolution or complete answer to the issue, written contact with the administration shall be the next step - beginning with the individual's supervisor if he/she is a staff member, which shall include details regarding the attempts that have been made to settle the problem with the staff member. Grievants need to address concerns and difficulties according to SCHOOL's organizational structure, through all appropriate levels of administration, i.e. Assistant Principal, Principal. The administrator shall acknowledge receipt of the communication in writing within two (2) school days. A formal response in writing to the grievant's written communication shall be sent within seven (7) school days. The administrator, at his or her discretion, may set up a meeting with the grievant and may invite other involved parties to be present.

3) Should the issue continue to receive unsatisfactory resolution or incomplete answers after following the process described above, the grievant may contact the SCHOOL's Board President in writing, not to exceed two pages, detailing the issue to be resolved, prior attempts at resolutions, responses to those contacts, and the desired resolution.

4) The Board President will determine whether the matter is a policy issue that is in the purview of the Board or if the complaint warrants Board review of administrative action. The Board President shall acknowledge receipt of the communication in writing within five (5) school days. A formal response in writing to the grievant's written communication will be sent within ten (10) school days. If it is determined to meet the qualification for Board review, the President will determine the accessibility of all interested parties to be present at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, and add it to the agenda. The Board will request the administrator(s) to provide a written summary of the issue and will gather the information necessary to review the matter. The Board reserves the right to conduct all or a portion of the meeting relating to the issues raised by the grievant in executive session should they meet the requirements for the same,



unless the parties specifically waive in writing any rights for confidentiality. Parents and/or staff members may be present during portions of the executive session, at the determination of the Board.

5) The Board will attempt to resolve the issue in a timely manner. However, if an issue requires additional research and deliberation, the Board will, to the best of its ability, give a timeline for resolution. The majority decision of the Board shall be final.

6) No grievance shall be recognized by SCHOOL unless it is presented in writing at the appropriate level within 30 days after the aggrieved person knew, or should have known, of the act or condition on which the grievance is based, and if not so presented, the grievance will be considered waived.

References: 2018 Charter Contract, Section 3.4

Adopted:



Appendix 13: Signals of Success and Signals of Struggle Chart

Leadership ¹²⁴		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Leading School Improvement	<u>Successful School Improvement:</u> The leader develops a detailed plan with ambitious goals and a clearly articulated action plan for improvement. Improvement strategies are evidence-based. The leader provides regular reports and evidence of progress. The leader possesses the organizational influence to build urgency and motivate change.	<u>Inability to Execute Improvement:</u> The leader lacks the desire or skill to create a rigorous plan for school improvement. An improvement plan may be created at the beginning of the year but is never revisited. No tangible evidence of progress is provided. The leader may have a plan but struggles to motivate staff to make changes.
Leadership Responsibilities	<u>Distributive Leadership:</u> Leadership equally distributes major responsibilities, decisions, and projects. External support is brought in when needed.	<u>Overextended Leadership:</u> Few leaders, maybe just one, take on most of the responsibilities and projects, and leaders struggle to accomplish all of them.
Feedback and Growth	<u>Collaborative Leadership:</u> Possesses humility and a growth mindset. Open to feedback and willing to try new ideas suggested by others. Recognizes the importance of collaboration and seeks outside help when needed. Fosters meaningful connections with stakeholders.	<u>Insular Leadership:</u> Defensive or suspicious of new ideas. Resistant to feedback. Inability to ask for or receive help when needed. Distrust in external experts or advisors, seeing them as threats. Struggles to build relationships with staff, parents, board members, community, and/or authorizer.

Governing Board		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Board Member Skill Sets	<u>Complete Skills:</u>	<u>Incomplete Skills:</u>

¹²⁴ Murray, K. (2025). *Dashboard Indicators to Board Action Chart*.



	Board members have diverse skill sets covering all major categories (i.e., governance, finance, real estate, HR, education, community relations, marketing, and stakeholder engagement). Board members contribute diverse experiences & perspectives. Conflicts of interest are disclosed if they exist.	The board lacks specific skills to effectively monitor and maintain accountability in all major categories. Board members have similar perspectives or backgrounds, which may lead to groupthink. Conflicts of interest (e.g., friends with the school leader) may interfere with discussion and decision-making.
Board Deliberation	<u>Active deliberation:</u> A variety of viewpoints are evident. Certifying and probing questions are asked. Ideas are respectfully challenged. Board members are engaged in the business of the school and take time to deliberate to ensure the best decisions are made.	<u>Lack of deliberation:</u> Limited discussion and short board meetings may indicate a lack of genuine interest in the school's business. Board members may feel uncomfortable voicing a dissenting opinion. The board easily accepts what the school leader wants to do.
Board Strategy	<u>Proactive Board:</u> Proactively removes barriers and anticipates school needs through regular policy creation and revision. Creates three-to-five-year financial projections and plans for significant expenditures. Determines the strategic direction over the next three to five years. Engages in a regular strategic planning process, leading to key objectives and deliverables linked to the school's vision and mission.	<u>Reactive Board:</u> Reactively addresses issues as they become evident. Has no long-term financial plan and budgets year-to-year. Lacks a long-term strategic vision and plan for the school. Plans year to year. Crosses into management by focusing on day-to-day decisions.

Finance and Operations		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Student Enrollment	<u>Stable or Growing Enrollment:</u> Meets or exceeds annual enrollment goals. Stable enrollment enables the school to maintain ongoing operations and meet its mission. Growing enrollment allows for increased staff or programs.	<u>Low or Decreasing Enrollment:</u> Does not meet annual enrollment goals. Enrollment is not sufficient to maintain ongoing operations. Steady or sudden decreases in enrollment. Student enrollment may be stable, but student retention may be low. The school is constantly



	Student retention is high. Future enrollment projections are examined for long-term planning.	replacing exiting students with new students. Future enrollment projections are ignored.
Budget Management	<u>Managed Budget:</u> Budget decisions are made with board and leadership deliberation. Line item percentages generally meet the recommendations of 9-15% of the overall budget dedicated to facilities/utilities and 65% devoted to salaries/benefits. Budget decisions are based on data, including sound revenue and enrollment projections, involve multiple stakeholders, include contingencies, and are aligned with required timelines. The board regularly monitors key financial reports (i.e., budgets to actuals, cash flow, income statement, and balance sheet)	<u>Inadequate Budget Management:</u> Budget decisions are made by one person at the school, often the school leader. Facilities and salary costs are higher than recommended and unsustainable. Budget decisions lead to overspending, high debt, inefficiencies in operations, and, ultimately, the inability to afford basic needs. The board does not regularly monitor key financial reports.
Financial Controls	<u>Comprehensive Policies and Procedures:</u> There are strong internal controls in place that are consistently followed. A comprehensive, board-adopted financial policies document is in place and followed by the board and school leadership. The school has clear protocols for regularly reviewing and revising financial policies and procedures.	<u>Weak Policies and Procedures:</u> Internal controls are absent, making the school susceptible to financial errors, risk, abuse, and fraud. The board relies on trust or assumes the policies are being followed instead of systematically verifying that they are. Policies lack clarity around the separation of duties or purchase processes, for example, or are outdated. Policies are not regularly reviewed and revised.

Talent		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Staff Retention	<u>High to Average Staff Retention:</u> At or above Colorado's average 77% staff retention rate Attrition is primarily due to unavoidable causes	<u>Low Staff Retention:</u> Staff retention rate below Colorado's average Mid-year departures Leadership departures Multiple staff departures simultaneously
Staff Capacity	<u>Responsive Staffing:</u> All staff have job descriptions that reflect	<u>Reactive Staffing:</u> Staff are expected to fulfill multiple roles



	high-impact and realistic responsibilities. Staff are certified or have experience in their positions. Staffing matches student and school needs.	without adequate training or support. Staff are asked to teach or work in positions where they lack experience or certification. Key personnel to meet student and school needs are lacking.
Staff Development	<u>Meaningful Staff Development:</u> Staff are regularly and comprehensively evaluated. Staff are engaged in ongoing PD to meet their needs and the needs of students. Staff participate in job-embedded learning (i.e., coaching, mentoring, peer observation). The board conducts a rigorous leadership evaluation process annually.	<u>Insufficient Staff Development:</u> Staff are only evaluated once a year or not at all. Staff do not receive PD, or the PD topics are irrelevant to the needs of students and staff. Staff do not participate in job-embedded learning. The board does not regularly evaluate the school leader, or the process for evaluation is not rigorous.

Culture		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Student Culture	<u>Positive Student Culture:</u> Students feel safe, supported, and engaged in the school community. Clearly defined expectations for student engagement and behavior are understood by students and staff. Student behavior infractions and disciplinary actions are stable or decreasing. Student attendance is stable and high. Behavior management policies and procedures are clearly communicated and consistently followed.	<u>Negative Student Culture:</u> Students feel threatened, excluded, or discouraged. Student engagement and behavior expectations are low, are unclear, or don't exist. Student behavior infractions and disciplinary actions are sharply increasing. Student attendance is declining. Behavior management policies and procedures do not exist, are unclear, and/or are not followed.
Staff Culture	<u>Positive Staff Culture:</u> The existence of collective teacher efficacy - the belief that teachers will positively impact students. A welcoming and supportive environment characterized by collaboration and respect. Staff successes are celebrated. Clear and consistent communication exists among staff.	<u>Negative Staff Culture:</u> Teachers have "given up" or are acting out of fear to produce student results. Isolated, divided, or fear-based staff culture. Staff are unrecognized or unappreciated. A lack of communication structures creates confusion and distrust.



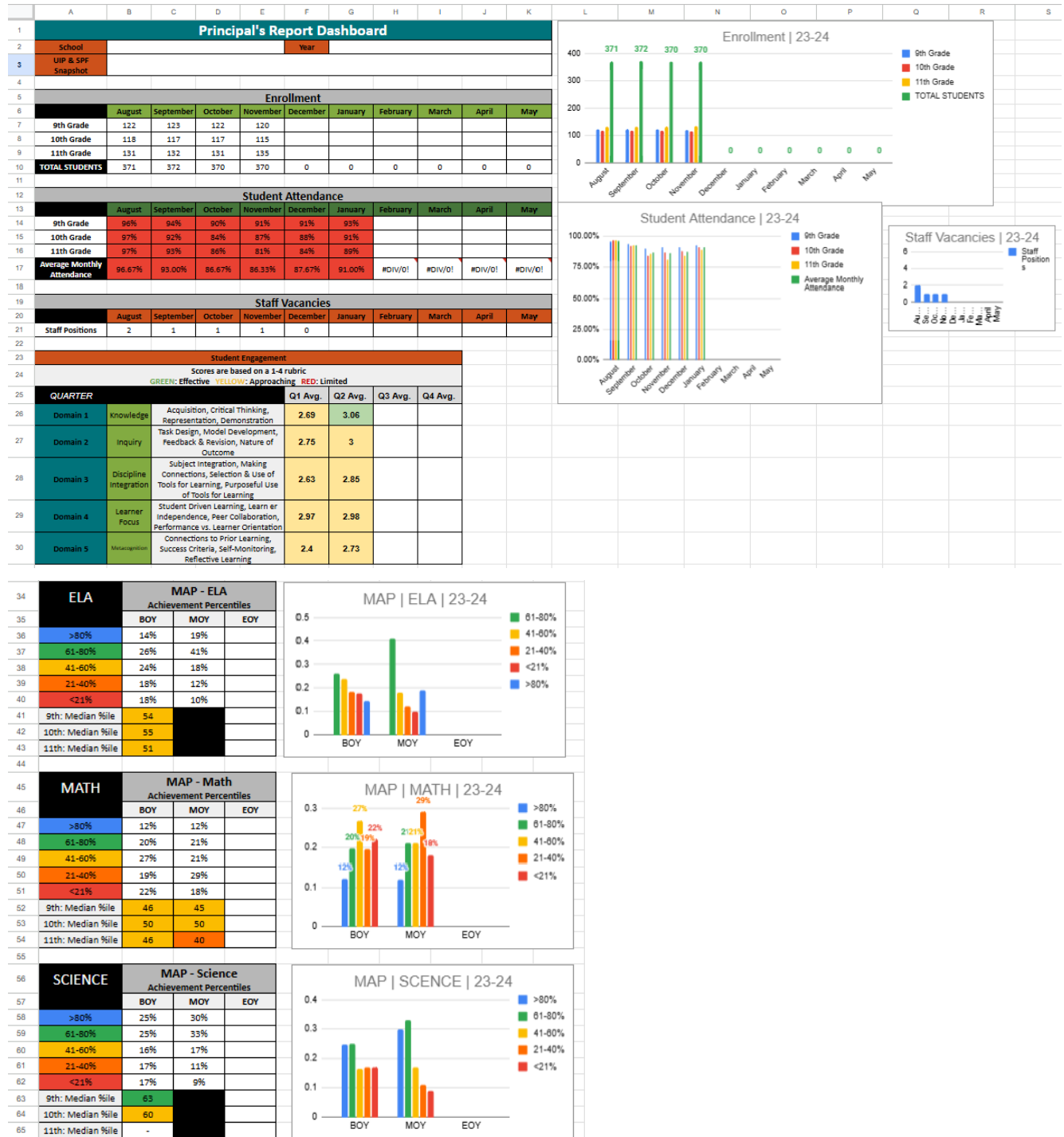
Community Culture	<u>Positive Community Culture:</u> Intentionally builds family and community relationships. Encourages family and community involvement in the school. Families are seen as partners. Clear and consistent communication exists between the school and families and the school and the community.	<u>Negative Community Culture:</u> Weak family and community relationships. Shutting out family and community involvement. Lack of communication structures or intentionally keeping information from families and the community.
-------------------	--	--

Instruction		
Metric	Signal of Success	Signal of Struggle
Academic Progress	<u>Progress Towards Academic Goals:</u> Outcomes are consistently high across the school in growth and achievement. Students are making progress across subgroups (i.e., ELL, students of color, FRL). Students are engaged in their learning/	<u>Lack of Progress Towards Academic Goals:</u> Outcomes are inconsistent across the school. Students are not making progress across subgroups. Students are not engaged in their learning.
Quality Resources	<u>High Quality Curriculum & Assessments:</u> A unified curriculum is used across grades and subjects. A variety of assessments are used to inform instruction. Systems are in place (i.e., PLCs or data teams) that require teachers to use data.	<u>Inconsistent Curriculum and Assessments:</u> Lack of a unified curriculum. Too many or too few assessments are used. Staff do not use, or do not know how to use, the data to inform instruction. The school lacks data systems.
Systems of Support	<u>Continuum of Supports for Students:</u> A continuum of supports exists for students with varied needs (i.e., intervention, MTSS, SPED, ELL, GT, social emotional). The school makes system changes when needed to support students (i.e., scheduling, staffing, remedial courses, tutoring). Staff have high and clear expectations for all students.	<u>Little Support for Students:</u> Support for students with varied needs is lacking, and students continue to fall further behind. The school maintains the same systems and hopes for different results. Staff have high expectations for some students, or expectations are low or unclear.



Appendix 14: Sample Data Dashboard

Used with permission from Minga Education Group.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
1	Principal's Board Report			Month:							
2											
3											
4	September '23 Enrollment			372							
5	September '23 Student Attendance										
6	Current Staff Vacancies			1							
7	Leadership Areas of Focus			Aligned Work and/or Reporting Topic	Status	Details/Comments/Updates					
8	Each month the school leader will report out on the most significant work, topics and needs from the last month. Items will align to the following leadership framework, as it outlines the dimensions of effective school leadership. Not all dimensions will be reported on monthly and the school leader will select to report on elements that are most relevant and timely based on current events within the school and time of the school year.										
9	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP										
10	Vision and Mission School leadership aligns core values, priorities, and improvement strategies to a school vision and mission that focuses on aspirational and equitable outcomes for all students. Ensures every member of the community is clear on their role and responsibility in realizing the vision.										
11	Continuous Improvement School leadership uses data and stakeholder involvement to diagnose problems, identify priorities, strategically plan and implement improvement strategies, and monitor/adjust for efficacy.										
12	Instructional Leadership The principal is the primary instructional leader who establishes an instructional focus through an effective Instructional Leadership Team, distributive leadership, and strong systems that promote an instructional focus.										
13	Influence for Results School leadership functions as an influential change agent by ensuring strong and effective communication, adapting to change, modeling core values and practices, and establishing a commitment to equity.										
14	TALENT MANAGEMENT										
15	Staff Recruitment & Retention The school implements equitable processes that support the recruitment and retention of a diverse and high quality professional staff.										
16	Professional Development Instructional staff members and school leadership participate in intentional, continuous, and high-quality professional learning that prepares teachers and leaders to be successful with the school's model and demographics.										
17	Coaching & Evaluation The school implements transparent supervision evaluation, and coaching processes designed to define and improve professional practice, instruction, and student success.										
18	INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE										
19	Rigorous Instruction Educators plan rigorous instruction based on a curriculum that is aligned to Colorado Academic Standards and grade-level expectations and effectively deliver it using evidenced-based instructional strategies to raise student achievement.										
20	Assessment Systems & Data Culture Leaders and teachers use multiple data sources and consistent, high-quality assessment practices to guide school, department, grade-level, and classroom decisions.										
21	Systems for Student Support Students whose needs are not met through best-fit instruction are systematically and equitably identified through an embedded problem-solving process and are provided multiple opportunities to learn and improve their performance.										
22	Time & Resource Allocation The school designs a schedule and allocates resources in ways that ensure students have adequate access to grade-level instruction and intervention/advancement and promotes the mission and instructional model.										
23	CULTURE & CLIMATE										
24	Family & Stakeholder Engagement School leadership initiates and sustains activities which result in meaningful family and community engagement, support, and ownership of the school.										
25	Engaging Learning Environment The school's environment reflects the mission and vision, is conducive to high levels of achievement, and promotes active and sustained student engagement.										
26	Positive & Inclusive School Climate The school functions as an safe and inclusive learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence and belonging for all students and staff.										
27	AUTHORIZER UPDATES										
28	Information relevant to compliance with authorizer expectations, submissions, etc.										



Appendix 15: Navigating Risk Case Studies

Case Study 1: Risk Assessment

Scenario: The charter school board completed a risk assessment to identify, evaluate, and prioritize risk in the following areas.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Rating	Risk Level
Declining Enrollment	4	4	16	Extreme
Leadership Turnover	3	5	15	High
Cybersecurity Breach	2	4	8	Medium

Create a prioritized mitigation plan to address declining enrollment, leadership turnover, and a cybersecurity breach.

Board Response:

Extreme-Risk: Declining Enrollment

Mitigation: Launch a targeted community outreach campaign, improve website and marketing materials, and monitor monthly enrollment data on the board dashboard.

High Risk: Leadership Turnover

Mitigation: Establish a succession plan, improve onboarding and leadership coaching, and conduct stay interviews with key staff.

Medium-Risk: Cybersecurity Breach

Mitigation: Conduct a cybersecurity audit, train staff on phishing awareness, and purchase cyber liability insurance

Case Study 2: Media Request

Scenario: The board chair receives a call from a local news outlet regarding an alleged bullying incident involving a 7th-grade student. The reporter states that the student's parent has made a public post on social media alleging that their child was physically assaulted during recess and that the school has not taken appropriate action. The post has already gained traction online, with dozens of shares and emotional responses. The reporter asks for a statement and confirmation of the school's handling of the situation. What steps should the board chair and subsequent people take?



Board Response:

The board president contacts the school leader, who convenes the Crisis Communication Team, which includes the board president, legal counsel, and the communications lead. The team reviews the facts of the incident and the school's response. The team consults legal counsel to determine what information can be disclosed publicly, especially regarding minors and disciplinary records. The team creates a list of approved talking points, which are used to create a media statement that is shared with the reporter. Staff receive the talking points and are instructed not to speak to the media individually. Leadership schedules a meeting with the affected family to provide support.

Case Study 3: Missed Financial Oversight

Scenario: The board meets monthly, and financial reports are presented by the business manager. At each prior meeting, the board received unaudited financial statements and cash flow projections, which were often accepted without discussion or question. Board members are generally unfamiliar with financial terms and indicators, and assume that if the business manager raised no red flags, the school is operating within its budget. In April, the board receives news that the school may not have sufficient cash on hand to make payroll for the last months of school. After digging into the financials, it was discovered that the budget had not been updated since January, and there were several significant financial developments since then. The cash flow projections provided by the business manager were not accurate. What steps should the board take to improve its financial oversight to mitigate future risk?

Response:

The board can institute monthly finance subcommittee meetings requiring cash flow reports, budget-to-actuals, and balance sheets at each board meeting. The board can participate in additional board financial training, including reading financial statements and understanding fund balance requirements. The board can create a financial dashboard that summarizes key financial indicators.

Case Study 4: Discipline Policies in Question

Scenario: The school is served with a lawsuit filed by a group of parents represented by a civil rights organization. The lawsuit alleges that the school's discipline practices violate federal civil rights laws, resulting in unlawful suspensions and removals from class, and a lack of proper procedural safeguards and parent notification. How will the board respond?

Board Response:

In response to the lawsuit, the board should retain legal counsel to guide the school through the legal process and ensure compliance with applicable laws. The board may initiate a comprehensive audit of all discipline policies and practices, including a legal review and input from key stakeholders such as families, staff, and students. Special attention should be given to



reviewing policies related to due process for suspensions and removals. To strengthen oversight, the board should develop a data dashboard that tracks disciplinary actions over time, enabling the board to monitor trends and identify potential patterns of concern, such as excessive suspensions or disproportionate impacts on specific student groups.



Appendix 16: Financial Oversight Case Studies

Case Study 1: Financial Crisis and Payroll Risk

Scenario:

Colorado River Charter School is a small charter school serving 250 students. In the middle of the school year, the school experiences a series of unexpected expenses: a major HVAC failure costing \$60,000, legal fees from an ongoing personnel issue, and higher-than-anticipated special education service costs. These expenses were not included in the original budget or contingency planning.

As a result, CRCS's cash flow is significantly strained. The school's business manager informs the board treasurer that without immediate intervention, the school may not be able to meet payroll within the next two pay periods.

At the upcoming board meeting, this issue is presented for full discussion. What might be the board's response to this situation?

Board Response:

The board must ensure the school fulfills its legal obligation to pay staff. Failure to do so could result in lawsuits, staff resignations, and reputational damage. The board and school leader should communicate openly with staff about the situation, without causing panic, and provide a timeline for resolution.

The board should request a detailed cash flow report to assess exactly how short the school is and when the shortfall will impact payroll. Work with the school leader and business manager to explore options such as:

- Drawing from board-approved reserve funds
- Short-term loans from the school's authorizer or financial institution
- Deferring non-essential expenses
- Emergency fundraising (if feasible)

Adjust the current budget to reflect actual conditions and submit a revised version to the authorizer if required.

To prevent this from occurring in the future, the board should increase financial oversight and monitor financial status weekly until the crisis is resolved. Once resolved, the board should require regular financial updates at each board meeting, including updated cash flow, forecasts, and spending reductions.



Case Study 2: Overreliance on Variable Income**Scenario:**

The board is reviewing the proposed budget and realizes it assumes the school will receive two large grants that have not yet been secured. If the funding does not come through, the school may face a deficit.

Board Response:

Request that the administration present a contingency budget that excludes the grant funding and outlines spending adjustments. Direct the Finance Committee to flag and monitor any budget lines tied to variable income. Strengthen board policy to require contingency planning for all unconfirmed or variable income sources in future budgets.

Case Study 3: Passive Financial Review**Scenario:**

At monthly board meetings, the financial report is included in the agenda, but it is quickly approved with little to no discussion. Only the board treasurer seems to understand the details, and most members rely on them to raise any concerns.

Board Response:

Schedule a dedicated financial training session at an upcoming board meeting to build all members' understanding of key documents. Encourage active engagement by including time for Q&A on financial statements during each meeting. Require the Finance Committee to provide a brief summary or analysis of financial trends prior to each board meeting to support discussion.

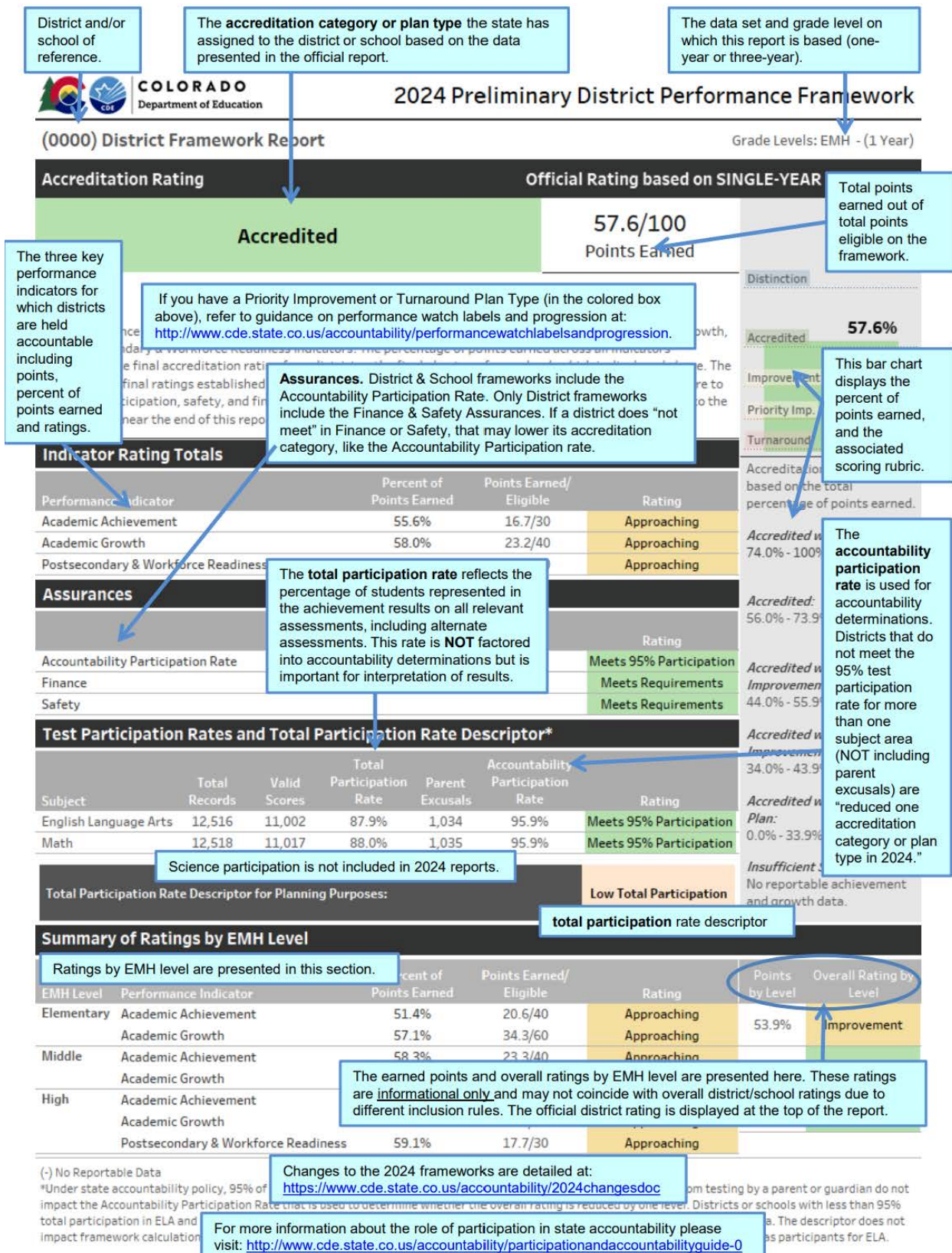


Appendix 17: Sample School Assessment Schedule

Assessment	Purpose	Who Takes It	Administration Window	Data Available
DIBELS 8th Edition	Screen and monitor early literacy skills	K–3 students	BOY: Aug 26–Sep 6 MOY: Jan 6–17 EOY: May 5–16	Immediately after entry
ACCESS for ELLs	Assess English language proficiency for ELs	English Learners (K–8)	January 13–February 14	May
Interim Assessments (i-Ready Diagnostics)	Progress monitoring and instructional planning	K–8 students	Fall: Sep 16–20 Winter: Jan 21–24 Spring: Apr 21–25	Within 24–48 hours
State Assessment (CMAS)	Summative assessment of grade-level standards mastery	Grades 3–8	March 31–April 25 (state-determined)	June (Preliminary), August (Final)
Progress Monitoring (CBMs)	Monitor growth of at-risk students	Students on intervention plans	Biweekly or monthly	Immediately
End-of-Course Exams	Measure mastery of course content	K-8 students	Varies by course and semester	At most, 2 weeks after administration



Appendix 18: CDE's 2024 Annotated Framework Report



Count represents number of students for which the district is accountable (continuously enrolled students).

Percentile rank reflects the performance of the identified group relative to the performance of all students across schools statewide.

2024 Preliminary District Performance Framework

(0000) District Framework Report Elementary School - (1 Year)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT Previously Identified for READ Plan is only at the elementary level.

Includes relevant alternate assessment results.

A dash ('-') in any cell indicates no data is available for the presented metric.

Multilingual Learners: include NEP, LEP, and FEP students. Also, newly arrived MLs are included.

Indicates grade level of report and the data set on which this report is based (one-year or three-year).

Mean scale score represents the average of valid scores across grades for the identified group.

CMAS science achievement results are again included in fall 2024 frameworks.

Student Group	Count	Participation Rate	Mean Scale Score	Percentile Rank	Pts Earned/ Eligible	Rating
All Students	3,952	94.9%	739.6	50	6/8	Approaching
Previously Identified for READ Plan	778	94.8%	704.3	-	0/0	Does Not Meet
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	1,338	98.4%	731.1	31	.5/1	Approaching
Minority Students	804	97.9%	719.9	9	.25/1	Does Not Meet
Multilingual Learners	442	88.5%	706.3	1	.25/1	Does Not Meet
Students with Disabilities	3,993	94.9%	733.2	46	4/8	Approaching
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	1,540	95.8%	720.4	18	.5/1	Approaching
Minority Students	1,986	96.2%	723.1	23	.5/1	Approaching
Multilingual Learners	840	97.7%	713.9	8	.25/1	Approaching
Students with Disabilities	444	88.3%	707.9	2	.25/1	Approaching
CMAS - Science All Students	1,307	93.2%	731.7	47	4/8	Approaching
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	495	95.0%	718.6	22	.5/1	Approaching
Minority Students	642	94.9%	721.3	26	.5/1	Approaching
CMAS - Science All Students	1,307	93.2%	731.7	47	4/8	Approaching
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	495	95.0%	718.6	22	.5/1	Approaching
Minority Students	642	94.9%	721.3	26	.5/1	Approaching
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	*	18.5/36	Approaching

ACADEMIC GROWTH All growth data in the performance framework reports is based on the cohort-referenced growth methodology.

Subject	Student Group	Count	Median Growth Percentile/Rate	Pts Earned/ Eligible	Rating
CMAS - English Language Arts	All Students	2,464	50.0	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	938	48.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	1,240	49.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	525	49.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	261	38.0	.5/1	Approaching
CMAS - Math	All Students	2,473	48.0	4/8	Approaching
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	940	44.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	1,248	45.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	536	42.5	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	261	41.0	.5/1	Approaching
English Language Proficiency	English Language Proficiency	984	42.0	1/2	Approaching
	On Track to EL Proficiency	1,003	56.4%	1/2	Approaching
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	16/28	Approaching

Student with Disabilities includes students with IEP only (not 504s).

ELP On-track points are awarded here.

This page displays the performance indicator data for the elementary school level. For the 1-year report, calculations are based on 2024 state assessment results. Multi-year reports include 2023 through 2024 results.

Total growth performance by elementary level including points earned and points eligible along with final indicator rating.

Academic Achievement: mean scale scores represent outcomes for designated subjects and student groups; participation rates included on this page count parent excusals as non-participants. Cut-scores for the CMAS Science metric were re-normed based on 2024 results.

Academic Growth: median student growth percentiles and percentages of students on track to meet targets represent outcomes for designated subjects and student groups.

For additional information regarding Academic Achievement and Academic Growth points, cut-points, and ratings, refer to the scoring guide at the end of this document.

Changes to the 2024 frameworks are detailed at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2024changesdoc>

Multilingual Learners describes students that are Non-English Proficient (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP), and Fluent English Proficient (FEP) - Monitor Year 1, Monitor Year 2, Exited Year 1, & Exited Year 2.

3

(*) Not Applicable; (-) No Reportable Data





Unique annotations are only presented here for the middle school grade level. See page two for annotations applicable across all grade levels of the framework report.

Performance Framework

(0000) District Framework Report

Middle School - (1 Year)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Subject	Student Group	Count	Participation Rate	Mean Scale Score	Percentile Rank	Pts Earned/Eligible	Rating
CMAS - English Language Arts	All Students	3,568	88.8%	743.1	58	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	1,373	89.7%	732.1	30	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	1,803	91.3%	734.9	36	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	693	93.9%	724.6	16	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	372	82.2%	708.2	1	.25/1	Does Not Meet
CMAS - Math	All Students	3,600	89.1%	728.1	41	4/8	Approaching
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	1,396	90.6%	716.9	16	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	1,840	92.2%	718.9	19	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	724	95.4%	710.6	6	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	369	81.3%	702.1	1	.25/1	Does Not Meet
CMAS - Science	All Students	1,105	83.9%	733.2	52	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	445	86.6%	723.9	30	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	571	87.8%	725.3	33	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	228	93.1%	716.5	17	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	108	77.3%	709.1	8	.25/1	Does Not Meet
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	*	*	21/36	Approaching

ACADEMIC GROWTH

Subject	Student Group	Count	Median Growth Percentile/Rate	Pts Earned/Eligible	Rating
CMAS - English Language Arts	All Students	3,239	50.0	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	1,268	51.0	.75/1	Meets
	Minority Students	1,671	53.0	.75/1	Meets
	Multilingual Learners	664	52.0	.75/1	Meets
	Students with Disabilities	334	45.0	.5/1	Approaching
CMAS - Math	All Students	3,232	49.0	4/8	Approaching
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	1,274	48.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	1,678	48.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	666	49.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	329	40.0	.5/1	Approaching
English Language Proficiency	English Language Proficiency	339	49.0	1/2	Approaching
	On Track to EL Proficiency	347	14.7%	1/2	Approaching
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	16.75/28	Approaching

This page displays the performance indicator data for the elementary school level. For the 1-year report, calculations are based on 2024 state assessment results. Multi-year report calculations are based on 2023-24 state assessment results.

Academic Achievement: mean scale scores represent outcomes for designated subjects and student groups; participation rates included on this page count parent excusals as non-participants. Cut-scores for the CMAS Science metric were re-normed based on 2024 results.

Academic Growth: median student growth percentiles and percentages of students on track to meet targets represent outcomes for designated subjects and student groups.

For additional information regarding Academic Achievement and Academic Growth points, cut-points, and ratings, refer to the scoring guide at the end of this document. Additional resources are available at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/accountabilityresources>.

Changes to the 2024 frameworks are detailed at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2024changesdoc>

Multilingual Learners describes students that are Non-English Proficient (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP), and Fluent English Proficient (FEP) - Monitor Year 1, Monitor Year 2, Exited Year 1, & Exited Year 2.



(0000) District Framework Report

High School - (1 Year)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Subject	Student Group	Count	Participation Rate	Mean Scale Score	Percentile Rank	Pts Earned/ Eligible	Rating
CO PSAT - Reading & Writing	All Students	2,124	79.5%	482.8	68	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	705	79.8%	430.7	19	.5/1	Approaching
	Students	1,023	80.9%	443.7	29	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Learners	294	83.5%	384.5	1	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	140	70.1%	394.0	2	.25/1	Does Not Meet
CO PSAT - Math	All Students	2,143	79.5%	457.4	61	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	718	79.8%	417.1	19	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	1,041	80.9%	426.6	27	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	311	83.5%	387.5	1	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	140	70.1%	391.8	4	.25/1	Does Not Meet
CMAS - Science	All Students	634	46.7%	733.6	48	4/8	Approaching
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	232	60.6%	721.3	18	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	348	54.8%	721.7	18	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	123	70.2%	705.1	1	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	39	52.6%	712.1	5	.25/1	Does Not Meet
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	*	*	20.5/36	Approaching

ACADEMIC GROWTH

Subject	Student Group	Count	Median Growth Percentile/Rate	Pts Earned/ Eligible	Rating
CO PSAT/SAT - Reading & Writing	All Students	1,844	46.0	4/8	Approaching
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	557	41.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Students	852	41.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Learners	253	39.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	83	39.0	.5/1	Approaching
CO PSAT/SAT - Math	All Students	2,607	52.0	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	839	46.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Students	1,260	46.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Learners	373	39.0	.5/1	Approaching
	Students with Disabilities	144	43.5	.5/1	Approaching
English Language Proficiency	English Language Proficiency	277	49.0	1/2	Approaching
	On Track to EL Proficiency	289	16.3%	1/2	Approaching
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	16/28	Approaching

This page displays the performance indicator data for the elementary school level. For the 1-year report, calculations are based on 2024 state assessment results. Multi-year reports include 2022 through 2024 results.

Academic Achievement: mean scale scores represent outcomes for designated subjects and student groups; participation rates included on this page count parent excusals as non-participants. Cut-scores for the CMAS Science metric and the digital PSAT/SAT and CMAS Science metrics were re-normed based on 2024 results.

Academic Growth: median student growth percentiles and percentages of students on track to meet targets represent outcomes for designated subjects and student groups.

For additional information, see the [Academic Achievement and Growth Framework](#) document. Additional resources are available at [https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2024changesdoc](#).

Multilingual Learners description: 1, Monitor Year 2, Exited Year 2

Changes to the 2024 frameworks are detailed at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2024changesdoc>

(*) Not Applicable; (-) No Reportable Data





2024 Preliminary District Performance Framework

(0000) District Framework

The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness indicator is applicable to the district and high school frameworks only.

High School - (1 Year)

POSTSECONDARY AND WORKFORCE READINESS

Subject	Student Group	Count	Best Rate	Rate/Score	Participation Rate	Pts Earned/Eligible	Rating
CO SAT - Reading & Writing	All Students	1,085	*	524.1	80.4%	3/4	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	299	*	461.4	79.6%	.5/1	Approaching
	Minority Students	504	*	479.9	81.2%	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	128	*	409.7	79.6%	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	48	*	411.7	62.3%	.25/1	Does Not Meet
CO SAT - Math	All Students	1,100	*	496.5	80.4%	3/4	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	309	*	435.8	79.6%	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Minority Students	518	*	458.8	81.2%	.5/1	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	143	*	400.2	79.6%	.25/1	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	48	*	387.1	62.3%	.25/1	Does Not Meet
Dropout Rate	All Students	10,831	*	1.4%	*	6/8	Meets
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	2,929	*	3.4%	*	1/2	Approaching
	Minority Students	4,901	*	2.6%	*	1/2	Approaching
	Multilingual Learners	1,193	*	5.9%	*	.5/2	Does Not Meet
	Students with Disabilities	704	*	1.1%	*	1.5/2	Meets
Matriculation Rate	All Students	1,198	*	59.3%	*	2/4	Approaching
	2 YEAR	*	*	28.3%	*	0/0	-
	4 YEAR	*	*	35.2%	*	0/0	-
	CTE	*	*	11.6%	*	0/0	-
	MILITARY	*	*	1.7%	*	0/0	-
	POSTSECONDARY PROGRAM	*	*	1.7%	*	0/0	-
Graduation Rate	All Students	1,250	6yr	88.3%	*	6/8	
	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	555	5yr	81.1%	*	1/2	
	Minority Students	614	5yr	83.2%	*	1/2	
	Multilingual Learners	249	5yr	75.1%	*	1/2	
	Students with Disabilities	56	6yr	78.6%	*	1/2	
TOTAL	TOTAL	*	*	*	*	30.75/52	Approaching

A new 'postsecondary program' pathway is now included in 2024.

ASCENT students are included within the on-time (4-year) grad rate.

Points are assigned at the 'all students' level only for matriculation. Individual pathways are presented for information only.

REFERENCE TABLE: DISAGGREGATED GRADUATION RATES

Student Group	4-Year Rate	5-Year Rate	6-Year Rate	7-Year Rate
All Students	72.5%	86.6%	88.3%	85.2%
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible	66.3%	81.1%	78.7%	73.8%
Minority Students	69.1%	83.2%	82.5%	75.8%
Multilingual Learners	52.9%	75.1%	70.5%	59.6%
Students with Disabilities	59.7%	74.4%	78.6%	67.1%

The 'best of' graduation rate is used for point determinations.

CO SAT: represents the average score for all students. Participation rates count parent excusals as non-participants. For the 1-year report, calculations are based on data from 2021 through 2023.

Dropout Rates: represent percentages of students enrolled in grades 7-12 for districts and 9-12 for schools at any time during the year who left and did not subsequently enroll in another Colorado school. 1-Year calculations are based on the 2023 End of Year (EOY) data submission. Multi-year reports include 2021 through 2023 records.

Matriculation Rates: represent percentages of high school graduates with a qualifying credential, enrollment, or enlistment status in a Career & Technical Education (CTE) program, a 2- or 4-year institute of higher education, a branch of the military, or a postsecondary program. Beginning in 2024, high school graduates who were enrolled in ASCENT, P-TECH, or TREP programs (i.e., Postsecondary Program) during their 5th year of high school count as successes. 1-Year calculations are based on data from 2021 through 2023.

Graduation Rates: represent percentages of high school graduates who earned a diploma or equivalent credential within the designated time frame. 1-Year calculations are based on data from 2021 through 2023. Multi-year reports include 2021 through 2023 records. AYGs designate Anticipated Years of Graduation, which are defined as four years after the year that students initially enroll in 9th grade. Calculations for 1-Year and Multi-Year reports are based on data for students with AYGs between 2021 and 2023.

For additional information about ratings, refer to the scoring guide on the last page of this report. Additional resources are available at

<http://www.cde.state.co.us>

Changes to the 2024 frameworks are detailed at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2024changesdoc>

Multilingual Learners describes students that are Non-English Proficient (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP), and Fluent English Proficient (FEP) - Monitor Year 1, Monitor Year 2, Exited Year 1, & Exited Year 2.

(*) Not Applicable; (-) No Reportable Data



This page reflects the scoring guide for 2024 district and school performance framework calculations.

Draft Scoring Guide for 2024 District/School Performance Frameworks					
Performance Indicator	Measure/Metric	Rating	Point Value		
Academic Achievement & ELP On Track Growth	The district or school's mean scale score (or percent On Track) was**:		All Students	Each Disaggregated Group	ELP On Track Growth
	see tables below for actual values				
	• at or above the 85th percentile	Exceeds	8	1.00	2.0
	• at or above the 50th percentile but below the 85th percentile	Meets	6	0.75	1.5
	• at or above the 15th percentile but below the 50th percentile	Approaching	4	0.50	1.0
	• below the 15th percentile	Does Not Meet	2	0.25	0.5
Academic Growth	Students Previously Identified for a READ Plan (bonus point)			1 bonus point	
	• CMAS ELA Mean scale score at or above 725 (Approaching Expectations cut-score)				
	Median Growth Percentile was:		All Students	Each Disaggregated Group	ELP
	• at or above 65	Exceeds	8	1.00	2.0
	• at or above 50 but below 65	Meets	6	0.75	1.5
	• at or above 35 but below 50	Approaching	4	0.50	1.0
Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	• below 35	Does Not Meet	2	0.25	0.5
	Mean CO SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) scale score was**:		All Students	Each Disaggregated Group	
	• at or above 354.7	Exceeds	4	1.00	
	• at or above 301.3 but below 354.7	Meets	3	0.75	
	• at or above 458.0 but below 301.3	Approaching	2	0.50	
	• below 458.0	Does Not Meet	1	0.25	
	Mean CO SAT Math scale score was**:		All Students	Each Disaggregated Group	
	• at or above 344.6	Exceeds	4	1.00	
	• at or above 488.0 but below 344.6	Meets	3	0.75	
	• at or above 439.9 but below 488.0	Approaching	2	0.50	
	• below 439.9	Does Not Meet	1	0.25	
	Dropout Rate: The district or school dropout rate was (of all schools in 2017):		All Students	Each Disaggregated Group	
	• at or below 0.5%	Exceeds	8	2.0	
	• at or below 2.0% but above 0.5%	Meets	6	1.5	
				1.0	
				0.5	
	Ma				
	• at or above 61.1% but below 73.8%	Meets	3		
	• at or above 46.8% but below 61.1%	Approaching	2		
	• below 46.8%	Does Not Meet	1		
	Graduation Rate and Disaggregated Graduation Rate (Best of 4-, 5-, 6-, or 7-year):		All Students	Each Disaggregated Group	
	• at or above 95.0%	Exceeds	8	2.0	
	• at or above 85.0% but below 95.0%	Meets	6	1.5	
	• at or above 73.0% but below 85.0%	Approaching	4	1.0	
	• below 73.0%	Does Not Meet	2	0.5	

All cut scores are consistent with those used during 2023. However, CDE is planning to re norm cut-scores for the digital PSAT/SAT and CMAS Science based on 2024 results.

Academic Achievement: Mean Scale Score by Percentile Cut-Points									
The Academic Achievement Indicator reflects achievement as measured by the mean scale score on Colorado's standardized assessments. The presented targets for the Achievement Indicators have been established utilizing baseline year data.*									
	English Language Arts & EBRW for CO PSAT			Mathematics			Science (Draft)		
Percentile	Elementary	Middle	CO PSAT	Elem	Middle	CO PSAT	Elem	Middle	High
15th percentile	722.3	724.1	423.3	719.1	716.3	413.0	713.4	714.6	720.2
50th percentile	739.3	740.1	461.1	734.3	731.2	448.4	733.1	732.5	734.4
85th percentile	755.9	757.3	505.0	751.9	746.2	491.0	750.2	748.8	745.4

Percent of Students On Track for ELP Growth Targets			
Percentile	ELP On Track Growth		
	Elem	Middle	High
15th percentile	51.7%	8.9%	12.1%
50th percentile	64.1%	18.0%	21.1%
85th percentile	76.3%	31.5%	29.8%

Total Possible Points by Performance Indicator			
Indicator	Total Possible Points	Elementary/Middle	High/District
Achievement	36 points (8 per subject for all students, 4 per subject by disaggregated group)	40%	30%
Growth	28 total points (8 per subject for all students, 4 per subject by disaggregated group, 2 for ELP growth, 2 for ELP On Track Growth)	60%	40%
Postsecondary Readiness	32 total points (16 for graduation, 4 for matriculation, 16 for dropout, 8 per CO SAT subject)	not applicable	30%

Out-Points for Each Performance Indicator		
Achievement:	Cut-Point: The district or school earned...of the points eligible.	
Growth:	• at or above 87.5%	Exceeds
Postsecondary Readiness:	• at or above 62.5% but below 87.5%	Meets
	• at or above 37.5% but below 62.5%	Approaching
	• below 37.5%	Does Not Meet

Out-Points for Plan/Category Type Assignment			
Total Framework Points	District	School	Accreditation Category/Plan Type
	74.0%	not applicable	Accredited w/Distinction (District only)
	56.0%	53.0%	Accredited (District) or Performance Plan (School)
	44.0%	42.0%	Accredited w/Improvement Plan (District) or Improvement Plan (School)
	34.0%	34.0%	Accredited w/Priority Improvement Plan (District) or Priority Improvement (School)
	25.0%	25.0%	Accredited w/Turnaround Plan (District) or Turnaround Plan (School)

* School data used as baseline: 2016 for CMAS & CoAIR ELA & Math (g3-8). 2019 for CO PSAT & CoAIR EBRW/ELA & Math (g9-10). 2023 for ELP On Track to Proficiency Growth as planned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. November 16, 2023

** Changes to the 2024 frameworks are detailed at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2024changesdoc>



Appendix 19: UIP Progress Tracker Template

SCHOOL NAME
Unified Improvement Plan Progress Tracker

Major Improvement Strategy #1	
School Year SMART Goal:	

Action Steps	Progress	Next Steps

Major Improvement Strategy #2	
School Year SMART Goal:	

Action Steps	Progress	Next Steps

Major Improvement Strategy #3	
School Year SMART Goal:	

Action Steps	Progress	Next Steps



Appendix 20: Academic Performance Case Studies

Case Study 1: SPF Red Flag

Scenario: Your school just received its new School Performance Framework (SPF). The school has dropped from a “Performance Plan” to a “Priority Improvement Plan.” CMAS data shows flat academic growth in math and declining achievement for English learners. How might the board respond?

Board Response:

Request a detailed presentation from the school leader on the SPF data and contributing factors. Ensure the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) addresses English learner performance and math instruction. Ask for interim assessment data to monitor improvement efforts quarterly. Reassess board-level academic goals and update the dashboard to include English learner achievement.

Case Study 2: Upcoming Renewal

Scenario: Your school’s charter contract is up for renewal in 18 months. While academic achievement is improving slightly, academic growth remains low, particularly for students with disabilities and students of color. How might the board respond to ensure the school is prepared for its upcoming renewal?

Board Response:

Ensure the UIP includes root cause analysis and specific strategies targeting underperforming groups. Ask for mid-year check-ins on interim data and intervention effectiveness. Revisit charter performance benchmarks in the contract to ensure the board understands what is required for renewal. Encourage leadership to apply for relevant CDE improvement grants or contract with external supports if needed.

Case Study 3: Curriculum Misalignment

Scenario: Teacher and parent feedback suggest that the current ELA curriculum is outdated and lacks support for struggling readers. Recent READ Act assessment results show 45% of K–3 students are reading significantly below grade level. How might the board respond?

Board Response:

Ask the school leader whether the ELA curriculum is READ Act compliant and if it aligns with current state standards. Ensure the school initiates a curriculum review process. Request updates at each phase of the curriculum review, including evidence of stakeholder engagement. Review and approve the final curriculum selection when presented. Ask how professional development and implementation will be supported and tracked.



Appendix 21: Sample Board Meeting Agendas

Jefferson Academy - Board Agenda | January 21, 2025

Mission Statement:

The mission of Jefferson Academy is to help students attain their highest academic and character potential through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program.

Vision Statement:

Jefferson Academy envisions a community of parents, teachers, students and educational and business leaders working together to create a learning environment that engenders academic achievement, growth in character, and the love of learning, resulting in responsible, productive citizens.

Agenda for the Joint Board of Directors of Jefferson Academy A Colorado Non-profit Corporation

In Person: Held at Jefferson Academy Secondary
11251 Reed Way, Broomfield, CO 80020

Zoom Link: [Join the virtual meeting of the Board of Directors](#)

Start Time: 6:00 pm

Agenda Item	Who	Action	Time	End Time
-------------	-----	--------	------	----------

Preliminary				
A	Call to Order	Chair		6:00 pm
B	Welcome to Guests			
C	Roll Call			
D	Pledge of Allegiance			
E	Approval of Agenda	Board	Vote	0:05
F	Public Comment			0:10

*Public Comment - PLEASE READ:

The Board has determined that public comment will be held at the beginning of all meetings for the following reasons:

- It is essential for Board members to hear and consider all public comment prior to making decisions on agenda items so that the Board members are informed of the views of the public participants.
- An agenda is posted in advance of every Board meeting. Every effort has been made to add additional detail to the agenda items to help public participants understand what will be discussed at the meeting in order for participants to better shape and present their comments. Please take note if a topic says Vote, Discuss or Discuss/Vote.
- Having public comment at the beginning of the meeting allows for a designated, clear, and transparent opportunity when public comment may be provided on any of the agenda items. It also provides participants a chance to voice their concerns, issues, and ideas without being obligated to sit through what can be a very lengthy meeting of non-related topics.
- The regular monthly meetings are designed to allow the Board to conduct the policy business of the school and to do so in an efficient manner. For this reason, it would not be feasible from a time perspective to distribute public comment throughout the agenda.



Jefferson Academy - Board Agenda

January 21, 2025

Your voice is important! We encourage all members of the public to review this agenda in detail in order to provide public comment to Board members at the beginning of each meeting so that Board members can better represent our members. **The Board appreciates and encourages all public comments and respectfully requests that individuals turn their cameras ON and keep their comments as brief and concise as possible (2 to 3 minutes) to allow time for everyone to participate.**

Consent Agenda					
The JA Board has adopted a consent agenda. The consent agenda consists of committee reports and the Executive Director report. All Board members have received these reports prior to this meeting and can pull an item out of the consent agenda when those items need further discussion during the agenda discussion at the beginning of this meeting. The following items are included in this month's consent agenda:					
• PTO Report • Boosters Report • School Accountability Committee • Policy & Governance • Facilities Committee • Capital Development Committee/ JA Foundation			• Communications Committee • Neighborhood Committee • Finance Committee • Principal Reports • Executive Director's Report • Meeting Minutes (Restricted until approved)		

General Agenda					
Items moved to the front of the agenda at the time of the meeting due to presenters					
Items moved from the consent agenda to the general agenda for further discussion					

A Informational					
In an effort to gain a more in-depth perspective of each of our campuses and programs, the Board invites presentations from principals and faculty to discuss day-to-day activities occurring in the buildings and highlight special projects and programs.					
1	Principal Presentation: JA Secondary	RS	Informational	0:10	6:25 pm
3	Student Withdraw Update	BF, RS, AT, SS, CM	Informational	0:10	6:35 pm
4	General Executive Director update	TM	Information	0:10	6:45 pm
5	Community Cares Project	TB	Information	0:10	6:55 pm



Jefferson Academy - Board Agenda

January 21, 2025

Jefferson Academy has identified four strategic pillars with focus areas. The strategic portion of the agenda is centered around these pillars. The Jefferson Academy Strategic Plan 2024-2027 can be accessed at www.jajags.com.

B	Strategic					
1	Strategic Plan- Successful Students, Talented Team, Connected Community, Financial Fortitude					
a	2024-2027 Strategic Plan Update	TM	Informational	0:10	7:10 pm	
b	Review and endorse the operational structural overview of rigor at JA and core values (check in to ensure the principles of academic rigor and core values are working for the schools and programs)	Board; BF, RS, AT, CM, SS TM	Discuss	0:10	7:20 pm	
C	General Board Governance					
1: General						
a	Review Class Size	BF, RS, TM	Discuss/Vote	0:10	7:30 pm	
b	Board elections May 2025 (2 seats)	JL	Discuss	0:05	7:35 pm	
c	Doing Business As (DBA) Adoption	TB	Discuss/Vote	0:10	7:45 pm	
2: Committees						
a	Update from committee leads on committee activities	Board	Informational	0:05	8:00 pm	
D	Policy					
1	Membership Committee Bylaw/Policy Update	FQ/AV	Informational	0:15	8:15	
E	Task-Oriented					
1	Approve minutes from November 19, 2024 meeting (Restricted until approved)	Board	Discuss/Vote	0:05	8:20 pm	
2	Action Items	Board	Discuss	0:05	8:25 pm	
3	Board communication to parents (Top 5)	Board	Discuss	0:05	8:30 pm	
F	Executive Session					
	Executive Session pursuant to C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(f) for the purpose of discussing personnel matters - Review Ex. Dir. performance	Board	Discuss	0:15	8:45 pm	
Adjournment - Estimated						





SkyView Academy is committed to preparing students to be lifelong learners and honorable leaders of tomorrow.

SkyView Board Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, October 23, 2024 at 5:00 pm

SkyView Academy
6161 Business Center Dr.
Highlands Ranch CO, 80130

Agenda:

1. **SkyView Academy Board Meeting** 5:00 - 5:15
 - a. Call to Order
 - b. Acceptance of Agenda & Board Packet
 - c. Pledge of Allegiance
 - d. Mission and Vision
 - e. Celebrations - Good Things
 - i. AP Honor Roll
 - ii. MS/HS New Teachers
 - iii. Audit/Data Pipeline
2. **Public Comment** 5:15 - 5:20
3. **Consent Agenda** 5:20 - 5:25
 - a. Minutes - [September 18th meeting minutes](#)
 - b. Dashboard*
 - c. Financials*
 - d. Policies Reviewed by Committee - no changes needed
 - i. Attendance
 - ii. Graduation
4. **Leadership Reports* - Discussion** 5:25 - 5:30
 - a. Director of Finance, Operations & HR - Lisa Jarvi
 - i. Enrollment - Melissa Sorenson
 - ii. FY2024 Audit - Hinkle & Associates
 - b. Lower School Principal (PK-5) - Paula Harrison
 - c. Upper School Principal (6-12) - Javier Negrón
 - d. Head of Schools - Janet Worley
5. **Advisory Committee Reports - (as needed-bold items only) - Discussion** 6:30 - 6:50
 - a. Building Corporation
 - b. Foundation
 - c. Finance Committee - Adam Fiedor
 - d. School Academic Accountability Committee - Chris Coberly
 - e. Governance Committees
 - i. Election Committee - Mark McLaughlin
 - ii. Policy Committee - Shannon Cosart
 1. [PK-12 Enrollment](#)
 2. [Student Fees](#)
 3. [PK-8 Uniform](#) - table until November
6. **Decisions (Vote)** 6:50 - 7:00
 - a. Leadership-Janet Worley
 - b. **Advisory Committees**
 - i. **Policy Committee Recommendations:**



1. PK-12 Enrollment Policy
 2. Student Fees Policy
 3. PK-8 Uniform Policy - table until November
- c. Board
7. Upcoming Agenda Items for Future Meetings - FYI Only
 - a. Foundation Reports - November, February, May
 - b. Policy Committee Reviews - monthly September-April
 - c. Financial Committee Reviews - October, January, April
 - d. Election Committee - as needed October-March
 - e. SAAC - quarterly
 8. Executive Session (as needed)
 9. Work Session
 - a. Board Accountability Discussion
 - b. Strategic Plan Review
 10. Adjournment

** Items with supporting documents included in the Board packet.*

Board Statement on Public Comment:

The Board appreciates everyone who plans to make a public comment tonight. We thank you for being here, and welcome both your concerns as well as any positive thoughts. One of the 'Duties of Care' that Board members agree to is to speak with 'One Voice,' therefore, while the Board will not be able to engage in any dialog about your comments tonight, your comment is part of the public record and the Board can refer back to it if necessary at any time in the future. Each person who signed up to make a public comment is allowed up to three (3) minutes to speak and will be signaled with a raise of the hand as their time limit approaches. This is not to be rude, but so the meeting can continue in a reasonable amount of time.

We do have a grievance process outlined in the parent/student handbook, which all families acknowledge they have read when turning in the signature page during registration. The Board welcomes comments related to the scope of typical Board governance which include things that pertain to the SVA community as a whole and school policies which can all be found on SVA website. Comments related to personal matters or the daily functioning of the school should be directed to the appropriate staff member. If you are unsure who this is please start with your principal. If statements are made that pertain to topics related to the daily functioning of the school you may be asked if you have followed the steps in the handbook prior to making a public comment and/or be redirected during the meeting. Statements about individuals should be handled privately and will not be tolerated during public comment. It is important to note that the Board may act on comments that fall under the scope of Board governance and these topics may be placed on an upcoming agenda which is always posted on the school's website prior to every Board meeting.

If you have any questions about the Public Comment process, please write to us at: board@svak12.org.



BOARD MEMBER LIST	7/11/2013	8/8/2013	9/12/2013	10/10/2013	11/14/2013	12/12/2013
T. Anderson	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
M. Price	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Present
J. Garcia	Absent	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
R. Henderson	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
D. Nunez	Present	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present
C. Yi	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Absent
A. Harrison	N/A	N/A	Present	Present	Present	Present
J. Davis	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present

AGENDA ITEM	PURPOSE	ACTION	WHO	MATERIALS	TIME
Opening Business (6:00 - 6:10 pm)					
Approval of Agenda	Review	Vote	T. Anderson	Agenda	2 min
Approval of Minutes	Review	Vote	T. Anderson	11/14/xx and 11/15/xx Minutes	2 min
Public Comment	Information	None	T. Anderson		2 min
Board Business (6:10 - 6:20 pm)					
New Board Member Candidate	Review	Vote	T. Anderson	K Smith Resume/Statement of Interest	5 min
Appointment of Board Secretary	Review	Vote	T. Anderson		5 min
Authorization (6:20 - 6:30 pm)					
Charter contract with CSI	Review	Vote	J. Davis	Draft charter contract with CSI	10 min
Committee Updates (6:30 - 7:05 pm)					
Facilities & Finance Committee	Discuss	Vote	J. Garcia	Committee Report; Financial policies and procedures; Revised Budget	15 min
Governance Committee	Review	None	T. Anderson	Committee Report; Draft Board Handbook; Committee Communication Protocol; Retreat update	10 min
Development, Outreach, Communication, Marketing	Discuss	None	R. Henderson/ A. Harrison	Committee Report	5 min
Health & Wellness Committee	Discuss	None	T. Anderson	Committee Report	5 min
Committee Development (7:05 - 7:20 pm)					



Review and approval of committee descriptions and goals: --Academic Committee --Youth Leadership Council	Review	Vote	D. Nunez M. Price	Committee Descriptions/Plans: --School Accountability Committee --Youth Leadership Council	15 min
Advisory Board Meeting Update (7:20 - 7:35 pm)					
Meeting Debrief, Reflections, Next Meeting Date	Discuss	None	J. Davis	Advisory Board Meeting Notes	15 min
Other Business (7:35 - 7:56pm)					
Approval of offer of employment – J. Adams	Discuss	Vote	T. Anderson	Employment Agreement	5 min
Student Recruitment Plan	Discuss	None	J. Davis	Draft Student Recruitment Plan	10 min
Board Updates of Social/Professional Media sites – FB, LinkedIn, etc.	Discuss	None	T. Anderson	None	5 min
Annual CO Charter Schools Conference	Discuss	None	T. Anderson	http://www.coloradoleague.org	1 min
Next Steps (7:56 - 8:00pm)					
Next Board Meeting - agenda items?	Discuss	None	T. Anderson		2 min
Meeting Debrief	Discuss	None	T. Anderson		2 min



Appendix 22: Sample Annual Board Calendar

All board meetings will include time allocated for the following tasks:

- Public comment
- Monthly dashboard reporting
- Monthly financial reporting
- Student celebration

Month	Key Board Tasks ¹²⁵
August	Academics • Review state assessment results • Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) review Enrollment • Current enrollment (including all student groups) • Waitlist update • If enrollment is less than projected, ask School Leader to develop plan and have periodic updates (every 2 weeks) through October Count • Board support for student recruitment Staffing • Review report on staffing (counts, ratios, experience, openings) Culture • Participation in school events • Family engagement plan Board • Review year in the charter contract • Strategic Plan review • Ensure completion of any board member onboarding • Review board operating procedures and attendance expectations • Sign annual board agreement, if applicable • Ensure board webpage is up to date (contact information, calendar, participation link for meetings, etc.) • Establish school leader goals, evaluation process

¹²⁵ Charter School Institute. (n.d.). *Sample board meeting calendar and focus questions*. CSI.



	• Confirm that all new charter school board members take, sign, and file an oath of office after their appointment/election. The oath should be submitted to the County Clerk Office of the County where the person was elected or appointed. Finance • Review previous year end financial report (July 1 – June 30)
September	Academics • School Performance Framework (SPF) review • Progress in carrying out UIP • Update on Fall interim assessment results • School accountability committee update Enrollment • Student Demographics Overview • Enrollment Update • Board support for student recruitment Staffing • Staff retention Culture • Participation in school events Board • Review Annual Nondiscrimination Training Finance • Review annual financial audit from previous fiscal year • Board passes resolution if school qualifies to submit a request for audit exemption
October	Academics • Update on Fall interim assessment results • CARS report review • Review UIP before submission Enrollment • Final October Count Update Culture • Participation in school events Board • Review of board terms and new board member recruitment plan, if applicable Finance



	• Review quarterly financial report July - Sept"
November	Culture • Participation in school events
December	Academics • Progress in carrying out UIP Staffing • Mid-year check-in w/ staff Culture • Participation in school events • Student absentee rates • Mid-year school culture survey results, if applicable • Mid-year family engagement update Board • Mid-year strategic plan review Finance • Board receives update on PPR adjustments related to changes in Funded Pupil Counts and/or changes in PPR • Board receives proposed budget amendments
January	Academics • Review mid-year assessment data • School accountability committee update Enrollment • Update on Intent to Enrolls for next year Staffing • Review staff PD plan • Update on employee intents to return for next year Culture • Participation in school events Board • Mid-year school leader evaluation and progress toward school leader goals • Discuss school leader compensation structure and evaluation for next year Finance • Review quarterly financial report Oct - Dec • Board must pass resolution to adopt any amendments to the current year's Budget by January 31st"
February	Academics • Review mid-year assessment data



	Enrollment • Update on Intent to Enrolls for next year • Update on Lottery or Waitlist Staffing • Update on employee intents to return for next year • Review vacant positions • Start recruiting staff Culture • Participation in school events Board • Approve next year's school calendar • Finalize school leader compensation structure and evaluation for next year Finance • Board begins discussions and priority setting for next year's budget
March	Academics • Progress in carrying out UIP/plan for updating UIP Enrollment • Reenrollment numbers • Waitlist Staffing • Update on vacant positions • Interviewing/recruiting Culture • Participation in school events • Finalize and administer the administrative, family, and staff surveys Finance • Review proposed budget for upcoming year
April	Enrollment • Reenrollment numbers • Waitlist Staffing • Update on vacant positions • Finalize staff offer letters /agreements Culture • Participation in school events • Review administrative, family, and staff survey results



	Finance • Review quarterly financial report Jan – March • Review proposed budget for upcoming year
May	Academics • ACCESS results (if applicable) • Fall to Spring interim data review • School accountability committee update Staffing • Update on vacant positions • Staff retention Culture • Participation in school events • Family engagement annual update Board • Finalize next year's board meeting schedule • Review insurance coverages and make updates, as applicable • Establish plan for policy review/updates, as needed • New board member onboarding, if applicable Finance • Performance pay discussions • Review proposed budget for upcoming year
June	Academics • Overview of updates to UIP Staffing • Update on vacant positions • Staff retention Culture • Participation in school events Board • Board self-evaluation and needs assessment • Strategic Plan review • Annual Board retreat and goal setting for next school year • Final school leader evaluation (or sooner) Finance



	• Finalize performance pay • Review year-end financials
--	---



Appendix 23: Sample Quarterly SAC Year-at-a-Glance

	<u>Item</u>	<u>Manager</u>
<u>FALL</u>	Determine and publish meeting schedules and solicit community members. Identify a member to facilitate communication with the board (typically the Chair).	Officers
	Review the SPF and related data from the prior school year; begin to provide input on the UIP for the school. (Priority Improvement and Turnaround Schools: publicize the SAC meeting to discuss strategies for the UIP.)	Chair and Principal
	Review the results from the preceding climate and culture goals and develop revised goals for the current school year. Discuss any school safety issues raised by staff, students, parents, and community.	Chair and Principal
<u>WINTER</u>	Finalize and submit UIP, School Annual Report, Climate and Culture Goals, and assurances of SAC membership and meeting schedules/minutes.	Chair and Principal
	Review and advise school fee sheets for upcoming school year.	Chair and Principal
	(Priority Improvement and Turnaround Schools: Publicize a public hearing to review a written Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan.)	Principal
	Receive a progress report from school staff on the progress of the UIP for the current school year.	Principal
	Provide input on the prioritization of expenditures of moneys as requested by the board.	Chair and/or Principal
<u>SPRING</u>	Determine school spending priorities for the upcoming school year. Provide Principal with recommendations on draft budget.	Chair and Principal
	Discuss school improvement plan progress with SAC and discuss any adjustments made to plan during the school year based on student achievement data; SAC can provide feedback about progress of plan and suggest adjustments to the UIP (review current data from interim measures and implementation benchmarks).	Principal and Faculty
	If appropriate, review rules of operation and elect new officers for the upcoming school year.	Chair



Appendix 24: Sample Committee Job Descriptions

SAMPLE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

General Purpose

The governance committee is commissioned by and responsible to the ABC Charter School Board to assume the primary responsibility for matters pertaining to Board recruitment, nominations, orientation, training, and evaluation in accordance with the school's bylaws, as well as established policies and practices approved by the Board.

Appointments and Composition

1. Appointments of the chair and members of the Board Governance Committee shall be made annually by the President of the Board with the advice and consent of the Board in accordance with the Bylaws.
2. The chair of this committee shall be a member of the Board of Directors, typically the Board President.
3. One other member of this committee shall be a member of the Board.
4. Additional committee members may be appointed based on the skillset needed to carry out committee responsibilities.

Responsibilities

1. Analyze the skills and experience needed on the Board.
2. Create a short and long-term board recruitment strategy.
3. Work with Board Chair and School Leader on a succession plan for board officers.
4. Recruit members to serve as members of the Board and develop a slate of potential candidates for consideration by the membership at the annual meeting in accordance with selection/election procedures outlined in the bylaws.
5. Develop and review annually the procedures for Board recruitment.
6. Develop an orientation and training plan for new Board members.
7. Assist in the planning of an annual Board retreat and other deeper strategy sessions, as needed.
8. Develop and revise a Board Member Handbook outlining the responsibilities of the Board and Board members, Board policies, and other relevant information.
9. Conduct board education, as needed.
10. Create specific measurable board-level goals for the year as part of the full board planning process.
11. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of board meetings, and make recommendations for improvement to the chair and the full board, as needed.
12. Annually coordinate an evaluation of the full board and individual board members.
13. Report to the Board at regular meetings of the Board in a manner determined by the Board.
14. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the Board.

SAMPLE FINANCE COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

General Purpose

The Finance Committee shall be responsible for oversight of the fiscal matters of ABC Charter School. The Finance Committee is commissioned by and responsible to the Board of Directors.



It has responsibility for working with the School Leader to create the upcoming fiscal year budget; present budget recommendations to the Board; monitor implementation of the approved budget on a regular basis and recommending proposed budget revisions; recommend to the Board an auditor to perform an annual third-party financial audit; oversight of the annual audit; and recommend to the Board appropriate policies for the management of the school's assets.

Appointments and Composition

1. The members of the Finance Committee shall be the Treasurer of the Board who shall serve as chair, the Board President, and any other board members appointed by the Board President with the advice and consent of the Board in accordance with the bylaws.
2. The School Leader and Office Manager shall be members of the Finance Committee.
3. Additional committee members may be appointed and need not be members of the Board.

Responsibilities

1. Prepare an annual budget for the charter school in collaboration with the school leader.
2. Also in collaboration with the school leader, develop and annually revise a five-year financial forecast and develop long-range financial plans based on the forecast.
3. Arrange for an annual audit to be provided to the Board.
4. Provide oversight of the procurement process.
5. Review monthly financial statements and variances from budget, and recommend action to the Board, as appropriate.
6. Create specific measurable board-level goals for the year as part of the full board planning process.
7. Develop and implement a board-level training program to ensure that all trustees (especially those without a financial background) can be effective stewards of the school's financial resources.
8. Report to the Board at regular meetings of the board in a manner determined by the Board.
9. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the Board.

SAMPLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

General Purpose

The Development, Fundraising, and Marketing Committee is commissioned by and responsible to the Board to assume the primary responsibility for identifying and recommending strategic fundraising, marketing, and outreach goals.

Appointments and Composition

Members of this committee shall be members of the Board of Directors, subject to the conditions stated by the bylaws. Additional committee members may be appointed and need not be a member of the Board of Directors.

Responsibilities

1. Recruit committee members to provide committee with representation of expertise in the areas of development, fundraising, outreach, and marketing.
2. Develop a plan for the four different areas of responsibility with a strategic eye for the interconnectedness between them.



3. Identify measurable goals in each of the three areas of funding: Federal/state grants, Private Foundation grants, Individual donors
4. Coordinate with Finance committee to provide monthly reports
5. Annually evaluate effectiveness of committee and objectives it has committed to.
6. Create Development Code of Conduct that aligns with school's mission and values.

SAMPLE HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

General Purpose

The Health and Wellness Committee shall be responsible for addressing health and wellness within the school to meet the school's mission. The Health and Wellness Committee is commissioned by and responsible to the Board. It has responsibility for addressing the eight components of Coordinated School Health (health education; physical education; health services; nutrition services; counseling, psychological, and social services; healthy school environment; health promotion for staff; and family/community involvement.)

Appointments and Composition

1. The members of the Health and Wellness Committee shall be any board member with interest and experience in the areas of health and wellness, with the advice and consent of the Board in accordance with the bylaws.
2. The school's health educator, , school nurse, physical education teacher, school social worker, and a staff member from partner agencies shall be members of the Health and Wellness Committee.
3. Additional committee members may be appointed and need not be members of the Board of Directors.

Responsibilities

1. Develop a thorough plan to address an integrated approach to the eight components of Coordinated School Health, which includes specific, measurable school-level goals related to health and wellness to evaluate the efficacy of the plan.
2. Implement and monitor the board-approved plan.
3. Analyze the data and make changes, as needed, or at least once per year (at school year end.)
4. Solicit student and staff feedback related to health and wellness; identify opportunities for improvement.
5. Coordinate with the School Accountability Committee, as needed, for continuity.
6. Report to the Board at regular meetings of the board in a manner determined by the Board.
7. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report on same to the Board.

SAMPLE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

General Purpose

The School Accountability Committee (SAC) is commissioned by and responsible to the ABC Charter School Governing Board. The SAC assumes primary responsibility for working with the School Leader to define academic excellence, ensuring that all board members know the charter promises that were made to the community and the authorizer, and devising clear and consistent measures to monitor these goals. The SAC will also ensure compliance with C.R.S.



§22-11-401 and 402 by making recommendations to the board regarding allocation of resources, creation of academic goals, progress made towards academic goals, and school improvement strategies.

Appointments and Composition

Members of this committee do not need to have an academic background. The best SAC members are those who are very analytical, are great at digesting data, and ask good questions. Appointments of the chair and members of the SAC shall be made annually by the president of the Board with the advice and consent of the Board and the School Leader and in accordance with the bylaws. In compliance with C.R.S. §22-11-401 and 402, committee membership includes the following:

1. A member of the Governing Board.
2. The School leader
3. A teacher representative.
4. Three parents or guardians of students at the school, one of which shall be selected by the SAC members to serve as Chair of this committee, per C.R.S. §22-11-401(2).
5. A member of an organization of the school's parent/teacher association or student government organization
6. A community member from the local business community.

Additional members may be appointed in accordance with C.R.S. §22-11-401(1) and need not be members of the Governing Board.

Responsibilities

The School Accountability Committee is a governance function, not a management function. However, the School Leader has a great deal of input into the work and composition of this committee. The committee's main role is to assure that academic excellence is defined, that the board approves annual goals to attain academic excellence, and reporting on the school's progress in attaining these goals.

1. Define and continue to refine what academic excellence means for ABC Charter School.
2. Ensure that all board members understand the key charter promises made to the community and the authorizer.
3. Work with school leadership to set annual academic achievement goals, to be presented to and approved by the full board.
4. Work with the school leader to devise clear and consistent ways to measure progress towards stated goals.
5. Work with the school leader to share with the board annual successes, barriers to reaching academic excellence, and strategies to overcome these barriers.
6. Arrange for board training on issues related to academic oversight and academic achievement, as needed.
7. Create specific measurable board-level goals for academic oversight as part of the full board annual planning process.
8. Report to the Board at regular meetings on progress made towards academic goals using a dashboard template. Include, when needed, recommendations on allocation of resources or school improvement strategies.
9. Provide input in the annual budget process, as well as any significant financial decisions, to ensure allocation of resources aligns with the school's mission, vision, and annual goals.
10. Conduct an annual satisfaction survey to parents/guardians, students, and staff.
11. Provide support and input on academic issues as requested by school administration.
12. Annually evaluate its work as a committee and the objectives it has committed itself to and report to the Board.



Appendix 25: Sample Committee Action Plan

Governance Committee 24/25 Action Plan

Members: (Must consist of a board member and school administrator. May also include parents and other staff.)

- Chair/Board Member:
- Administrator:
- Parent/Guardians(s):
- Staff:

Meeting Schedule: 1st Friday of the month

Strategic Plan Priority Alignment:

General Purpose

- The governance committee is commissioned by and responsible to the Charter School Board to assume the primary responsibility for matters pertaining to Board recruitment, nominations, orientation, training, and evaluation in accordance with the school's bylaws, as well as established policies and practices approved by the Board. The governance committee will also support the ED and staff regarding curriculum review that Excel is considering adopting.

Action Plan		
Goal	Deadline	Status
Review Bylaws	August	
Review Policies (The School & The Board)	October	
Conduct Board self-evaluation and set goals based on results	November	
Review Board Election Calendar of Events and Execute Board Election	January	
Analyze the skills and experience needed on the Board	February	
Begin planning Annual Board Retreat	March	
Revise Board Member Handbook	April	
Train new Board members	June or as needed	

Meeting Agendas and Notes:



Appendix 26: Sample Declaration of Candidacy Form

The following example is based on a Declaration of Candidacy Form used by Highline Academy charter school. It can be modified to meet a school's mission, values, and unique needs.

ABOUT THE BOARD

ABC Charter School's Board of Directors is a governing board. As such, it sets short- and long-term goals for the school, measures the school's progress against those goals, and evaluates the principal's performance with those goals in mind. The Board's decisions are guided by ABC's mission and vision, rather than personal interest. The Board is not involved in day-to-day operations of the school, such as instructional decisions or teacher evaluations — that is the principal's job as ABC's administrator. We currently are seeking candidates who have passion for ABC's unique mission and vision, and can support in advancing our strategic efforts. We welcome applications from candidates with robust connections in the community; skills and expertise that will complement the current Board, including solid organizational, strategic, and/or financial skills are desired. We seek diverse backgrounds to reflect the schools we serve including those with Spanish speaking skills.

ABOUT THE NOMINATING PROCESS

Completing this "Declaration of Candidacy Form" is the first step in the process of joining ABC's Board. The form invites you to tell the Board about yourself, what excites you about ABC School, and your interest areas as they relate to the school's governance. The Board's Nominating Committee — which consists of Board members, ABC staff members and an ABC parent not on the Board — will review your completed form, and determine next steps, including scheduling a time to meet with you. A background check will also be performed, as required (Authorizer), and the Committee may also speak with the references you provide. The Committee's job is to ensure candidates "reflect the qualities, qualifications and diversity" needed at the Board level to help ABC move forward effectively. The Committee will make a recommendation to the full Board as to whether you should be appointed as a new board member in the forthcoming term. Appointments are then made by a vote of the full Board. (If you do not receive a favorable recommendation from the Nominating Committee, you can secure a full Board review by petitioning the parent/guardian community and receiving signatures from no less than 10% of ABC's households. See by-laws for more information.)

NAME: _____

SECTION 1: General

Please note that the information included in Section 1 may be shared with the parents/guardians of children enrolled at ABC Charter School.

Relevant Experience and/or Employment: List pertinent professional, volunteer, and board of directors, or advisory community board experience (or attach brief resume).

Strengths: What strengths will you be able to bring to the Board? What area(s) of expertise/contribution do you think you can make?

Mission: Explain what the ABC Charter School mission means to you. How do you think you could help support it? Further it?



Reason for Serving: Why do you wish to serve on the Board? What do you hope to accomplish as a Board member?

Challenges: In your view, what are the biggest challenges facing ABC Charter School, and how do you believe ABC should address them?

Governance Experience: If you have previously served on or worked with a governance board, describe the governance structure. Did you find this experience to be a positive or a negative one? Why?

Are you a ABC parent or guardian? If so, how many children do you have enrolled in the school?
How many volunteer hours have you completed this school year?

Are you willing to attend a board meeting during the nominating process?

SECTION 2: Interest & Experience in Specific Governance Areas

Please note that the information included in Section 2 may be shared. The Board does not expect candidates to have interest or experience in all areas, but some leadership role in a professional and/or volunteer capacity is desired.

Governance Area	I'd like to take a leadership role on this.	I'd like to play a supportive role on this.	This area does not interest me.	I have prior experience in this area.
Financial Oversight: Budgeting, auditing, banking, investments				
Fundraising: Grant writing, foundation relations, personal solicitation				
Facility Planning: Engineering, construction management, real estate				
Community Relations: Marketing, community organizing, legislative relations				
Compliance: Legal issues, Authorizer or State regulations, charter school regulations				
Accountability: Data evaluation toward goals and benchmarks				
Strategic Planning: Setting long-term goals, ensuring their feasibility and implementation				
HR: Hiring, compliance, evaluating performance in areas such as: organization effectiveness, succession planning, leadership development				



Administrative: Maintaining records, scheduling, meeting facilitation				
Inclusive Excellence: Multicultural education, cultural competency, equity, diversity initiatives				

SECTION 3: Contact Information

Please note that the information included in Section 3 will not be shared.

Address: Email Address(es):

Daytime Phone: Evening Phone: Cell Phone:

SECTION 4: Eligibility Requirements

Please note that the information included in Section 4 will not be shared.

Circle Yes or No:

- Are you related to any employee of ABC? Yes / No If so, who?
- Are you related to any current Board Member of ABC? Yes / No If so, who?
- Are you willing to sign the Board Member Agreement upon appointment to the Board? Yes / No

SECTION 5: Criminal History

Please note that the information included in Section 5 will not be shared.

Regulations require that charter school board members undergo a criminal background check. Since reaching the age of 18, have you been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor? If YES, please provide all relevant circumstances, including the date, location, offense and disposition.

SECTION 6: Further Disclosure

Please note that the information included in Section 6 will not be shared.

Please provide details of any real or perceived conflicts of interest, and any other disclosures pertinent to serving on the ABC Charter School board.

SECTION 7: References

Please provide contact information for at least two references who are not related to you, at least one of whom should be a professional or volunteer source. We will ask these individuals questions about your work ethic and general character. Information in this section will not be shared. For each reference list the individual's name, relationship to you (for example, boss, friend, etc.), email address, and phone number.

SECTION 8: Affirmation

I commit to upholding the mission and vision of ABC Charter School.

Signature

Date

Completed applications may be returned to the front office. To forward applications by email, or for questions about board-level service (ABC's Board, Board Committees, Advisory & Policy Board), please contact: johndoe@abccharterschool.org.



Appendix 27: Sample Board Orientation Process

Task	Purpose	Type of Orientation
Review general information on charter schools.	To become familiar with charter school structure and the charter school landscape in Colorado.	Independent reading.
Work through CDE's Online Board Training Modules or another comprehensive charter school board training.	To become familiar with best practices in charter school governance.	Independent self-paced participation.
Review the school's charter application and current contract.	To learn about the school's founding principles, as well as understand its current operating agreement (for which the board is responsible) with the authorizer.	Independent reading with follow-up meeting with School Leader and Board President to answer any questions.
Review the board's by-laws and current policies.	To understand the guidelines by which the board must operate and govern itself.	Small group: Board President, School Leader, and other new board members.
Review minutes from the last 12 months of board meetings.	To understand the work over the board in recent months.	Independent reading.
Review the board's current budget and year-to-date actuals, as well as most recent audited financial statements.	To fully understand the school's financial situation and prepare to participate actively in budget planning and financial oversight as a board member.	Small group: Board Treasurer, Business Manager or School Leader, and other new board members.
Review the board's current strategic plan or goals.	To fully understand the school's priorities for planning purposes.	Independent reading followed by meeting with School Leader and Board President.
Review the school leader's job description and evaluation tool.	To understand what can be reasonably expected of the school leader and to prepare to participate in the annual evaluation of the school leader.	Independent reading followed by meeting with School Leader and Board President to answer any questions.
Review the school's annual report, recent newsletters, and/or other information publicly available about the school	To become familiar with the type of information being shared by the school with the general public.	Independent reading.
Spend a couple hours at the school visiting classrooms.	To gain understanding of the school culture and educational program so the board member can speak to those aspects of the school with external audiences.	Arrange with school leader.
Review the school's state School Performance Framework report and Unified Improvement Plan (if applicable).	To fully understand the school's performance, including strengths and weaknesses, and current strategy for school improvement.	Small group: School Instructional Leader and other new board members.



Appendix 28: Sample Board Self Evaluation

This example, based on a self-evaluation created by Board Source,¹²⁶ is broken into sections aligned with the board's key responsibilities and also has a section that focuses on individual self-evaluation.

1- Strongly disagree 2-Somewht disagree 3-Somewhat agree 4-Strngly agree

	1	2	3	4
RESPONSIBILITY 1: Determine the School's Mission and Purpose				
1.1 All board members are familiar with the school's mission and vision statements.				
1.2 The current mission and vision statements are appropriate for the school's role in the next three to five years.				
1.3 The board's policy decisions and the school's programs and services reflect the mission.				
RESPONSIBILITY 2: Select and Support the School Leader and Review His or Her Performance Periodically				
2.1 The written job description clearly spells out the responsibilities of the school leader.				
2.2 The board respects the responsibilities distinct to the school leader.				
2.3 The board conducted its last search for a school leader in a professional and competent manner.				
2.4 The board assesses the school leader in a systematic and fair way on a regular basis.				
RESPONSIBILITY 3: Approve and Monitor the School's Programs and Services				
3.1 The board is knowledgeable about the school's current programs and services.				
3.2 The board knows the strengths and weaknesses of each major school program.				
3.3 The board periodically considers adopting new programs, and modifying or discontinuing current programs.				
RESPONSIBILITY 4: Ensure Adequate Resources				
4.1 The board understands the fundraising strategy for the school.				
4.2 The full board contributes personally in financial support of the school on an annual basis.				

¹²⁶ More information about Board Source is available on their website: www.boardsource.org



	1	2	3	4
4.3 Board members actively ask others in the community to provide financial support to the school.				
4.4 The board has a clear policy on the individual board members' responsibility to raise money.				
RESPONSIBILITY 5: Ensure Effective Fiscal Management				
5.1 The board discusses thoroughly the annual operating budget of the school before approving it.				
5.2 The board takes advantage of the budget process to consider the most effective allocation of limited resources.				
5.3 The board receives financial reports on a regular basis that are understandable, accurate, and timely.				
5.4 The board requires an annual audit and considers all recommendations made in the independent auditor's report and management letter.				
RESPONSIBILITY 6: Engage in Strategic Planning				
6.1 The board focuses much of its attention on long-term significant policy issues rather than on short-term administrative matters.				
6.2 The board has a strategic vision of how the school should be evolving over the next three to five years.				
6.3 The board periodically engages in a strategic planning process that helps it consider how the school should meet new opportunities and challenges.				
RESPONSIBILITY 7: Carefully Select and Orient New Board Members				
7.1 The board has an effective process to identify the qualification and expertise that new board members should bring to the school.				
7.2 The board's composition reflects the diversity of the students.				
7.3 The board cultivates and recruits candidates who possess the qualities needed to strengthen board composition.				
7.4 The board provides new members with a comprehensive orientation to board responsibilities, the school's programs and services, and administrative procedures.				
7.5 The board has established policies for length of board service and rotation of board members.				
RESPONSIBILITY 8: Understand the Relationship between Board and Staff				



	1	2	3	4
8.1 The respective roles of the board and staff are clearly defined and understood.				
8.2 A climate of mutual trust and respect exists between the board and the school leader.				
8.3 The board gives the school leader enough authority and responsibility to lead and manage the school successfully.				
8.4 The board has adopted adequate policies for staff selection, training, promotion, and grievance procedures.				
RESPONSIBILITY 9: Enhance the School's Public Image				
9.1 The board has approved an effective marketing and public relations strategy for the school.				
9.2 Board members promote a positive image of the school in the community.				
9.3 The board understands who can serve as the official spokesperson for the school.				
RESPONSIBILITY 10: Organize Itself so that the Board Operates Efficiently				
10.1 Board members are familiar with the bylaws and charter contract.				
10.2 The board regularly reviews its policies, procedures, bylaws, and charter contract.				
10.3 Board members receive clear and succinct agendas and supporting written material sufficiently prior to board and committee meetings.				
10.4 The agendas of board meetings focus on substantive issues appropriate for board consideration.				
10.5 Board members have adequate opportunities to discuss issues and ask questions.				
10.6 Board meetings are reserved for strategic discussions, not information sharing.				
10.7 Current committee structure contributes to board productivity.				
10.8 Committee assignments reflect the interests, experience, and skills of the board members.				
10.9 Each committee has a stated purpose and an annual plan of work.				
10.10 Policies regarding committee assignments offer adequate opportunities for leadership development.				
RESPONSIBILITY 11: Ensure Sound Risk Management Policies				
11.1 The board has approved a policy to enable the school to manage and reduce risks to a tolerable level.				



	1	2	3	4
11.2 The board has an adequate amount of liability insurance to cover board members and staff in the event of lawsuits filed against them as individuals or against the school as a whole.				
11.3 The board periodically reviews all of the insurance carried by the school to ensure that it is adequate, meets the requirements of the charter contract, and is competitively priced (e.g., directors' and officers', general liability, workers' compensation, etc.).				
INDIVIDUAL SELF-EVALUATION				
1. I understand the school's mission and vision.				
2. I support the mission and vision.				
3. I have a good working relationship with other board members and the school leader.				
4. I am knowledgeable about the school's philosophy of education, major programs, and services.				
5. I follow trends and important developments in education and charter school policy.				
6. I assist in fundraising by, for example, identifying prospective donors, personally asking others to make a contribution, or signing thank-you letters to contributors.				
7. I give or get an annual financial gift to the school in an amount that is personally meaningful.				
8. I read and understand the school's financial statements.				
9. I act knowledgeably and prudently when making recommendations about how the school's funds should be invested or spent.				
10. I focus my attention on long-term and significant policy issues rather than short-term administrative matters.				
11. I recommend qualified individuals with relevant skills and experience as possible nominees for the board.				
12. I prepare for and participate at board committee meetings, as well as other activities of the school.				
13. I willingly volunteer and use my special skills to further the school's mission.				
14. I complete all assignments in a responsible and timely manner.				



	1	2	3	4
15. I take advantage of opportunities to enhance the school's public image by periodically speaking to leaders in the community about the work of the school.				
16. I respect the confidentiality of the board's executive sessions.				
17. I respect and support board decisions when made, even if I was a dissenting vote when the decision was made.				
18. I speak for the board or school only when authorized to do so.				
19. I suggest agenda items for future board and committee meetings.				
20. I advise and assist the school leader when my help is requested.				
21. I avoid burdening the staff with requests for special favors.				
22. I ensure that any communication with staff other than the school leader does not undermine the relationship between the school leader and the staff.				
23. I avoid, in fact and in perception, conflicts of interest that might embarrass the board or school and disclose to the board in a timely manner any possible conflicts.				
24. I am heard and considered when I give my opinions and views.				
25. I find serving on the board to be a satisfying and rewarding experience.				



Appendix 26: Meetings and Members Case Studies

Case Study 1: Board Stagnation

Scenario: Summit Charter School's board has remained largely unchanged for the past five years. While the members are deeply committed and experienced, the board has not conducted a self-evaluation in three years and has not participated in any formal professional development during that time. Recently, board meetings are running long and often veer off-topic. How might the board respond?

Board Response:

The board should schedule a formal self-evaluation using a tool that assesses both individual and collective performance. Results should be compiled and reviewed during a dedicated session (e.g., at a board retreat). Implement mini-trainings at monthly meetings to reset meeting expectations and develop board knowledge on topics of need indicated in the self-evaluation. Complete the the "Plusses and Deltas" exercise to reflect on meeting practices and set actionable goals for improvement.

Case Study 2: Growing Pains

Scenario: Trailblazer Academy is experiencing rapid enrollment growth and is planning to expand to a second campus within two years. The current board is made up of five founding members who are passionate about the school but have limited experience with facilities expansion, finance, or strategic planning. Recognizing the need for new expertise, the board agrees to add two new members, but struggles with how to recruit and select the right candidates. How might the board respond?

Board Response:

Create a standing governance committee responsible for board recruitment, orientation, and evaluation. Task the committee with defining a recruitment process and vetting potential candidates. Use a board matrix to identify skills gaps (e.g., finance, facilities, legal). Seek candidates who bring both technical expertise and philosophical alignment. Post board openings publicly. Invite candidates to apply who may be a good fit from the personal networks of current board or staff members. Hold structured interviews to ensure equity and transparency.

Case Study 3: Public Comment Challenge

Scenario: During the last board meeting at North River Charter School, the board voted on a controversial policy adjusting the school's start and end times. Nearly 30 individuals signed up to speak at public comment. However, the school had no written policy or formal structure for public comment. No time limit was announced, and some spoke for over 8 minutes. One parent used the time to accuse a teacher of bias and demand their removal. One board member decided to respond to a speaker, which led to a heated back-and forth. The meeting ran an hour over. How might the board respond?



Board Response:

The board should create a well-defined and appropriate structure for hearing public comment. This may include how to sign up, what is appropriate to share during public comment, the expectation that the board will not respond, and the amount of time an individual may take for public comment (i.e., 3 minutes).

Case Study 4: Committee Chaos

Scenario: Horizon Peak Charter School has a highly engaged board of directors, and over time, it has created eight standing committees to address various areas of oversight and planning. Each committee meets monthly and expects school leadership to attend, provide reports, and respond to follow-up action items. In recent months, board members have begun to feel burned out by the constant stream of committee meetings and reports. The Executive Director is also showing signs of frustration. She is spending over 20 hours per month preparing for and attending committee meetings, in addition to preparing for regular board meetings and leading the day-to-day operations of the school. Many feel they are stretched too thin, and that there is significant duplication and misalignment between committee work. How might the board respond?

Board Response:

The board should consolidate committees doing like work. Some committees can shift to time-limited task-forces. Create a clear purpose for each committee, aligned to strategic priorities, and accompanying goals and action plan. Designate a single point of contact (e.g., committee chair) for each committee to communicate with the school leader. To avoid staff burnout, the board may consider requiring committees to submit staff requests in writing and in advance, with the board chair or Executive Director approving what is reasonable.



Appendix 27: Public Comment Guidance (CSI)

Guidance on Public Comment

The Colorado Open Meetings Law (COML) does not require a “public comment” period or any other form of public input during a public meeting. Rather, the purpose of the COML statute is to allow the public to observe, not necessarily to participate. CRS § 24-6-401.

However, most charter boards choose to provide the opportunity for public comment during regularly scheduled board meetings. When choosing whether your board will offer public comment (or when reviewing your board’s existing practice for public comment), it is important for the board chair, as well as all board members, to be aware of the established process and to implement it with fidelity.

Some suggested elements of the guidelines might include the following, which could be posted on the Board’s website.

- **Registration and Identification:** Prior to the meeting, establish an accessible sign-up process for individuals who wish to make public comments. Require that speakers provide their name and affiliation, if any, for the record.
 - Example: an online form can serve as a tool to collect the information of those signing up for public comment.
- **Time Allotment:** Set a reasonable time limit for each speaker to ensure that the public comment session remains within a manageable timeframe.
 - Example: 3-minutes per speaker on a first come, first serve basis based on the registration form, not to exceed a total of 30 minutes in a regularly scheduled board meeting.
- **Civility and Respect:** Emphasize the importance of maintaining a respectful tone during public comments. Prohibit personal attacks, offensive language, or disruptive behavior. Implement measures, such as a warning system, to address violations of decorum.
- **Moderation and Facilitation:** The Board (or board chair’s designee if the chair is unavailable) should act as a moderator or facilitator to manage the public comment session. The board chair should ensure adherence to the established guidelines and intervene if necessary to maintain order.
- **Response to Comments:** Clarify that the board may not engage in extensive discussions during the public comment period. Refer the public to the school’s grievance policy if appropriate.
- **Accessibility:** Explore options for virtual participation to enhance accessibility for community members. Provide clear instructions on how individuals can participate remotely.
- **Recording and Documentation:** Consider recording public comments for official documentation. Consider making the recordings or transcripts publicly accessible to promote transparency.



- **Continuous Evaluation:** Regularly review and, if necessary, revise these public comment guidelines to address emerging needs and ensure effectiveness.
- Introducing Public Comment During the Meeting

Many board chairs make a statement introducing the public comment portion of the meeting along the lines of the following:

As part of the Board's commitment to transparency and community engagement, we are now turning to public comment. Persons wishing to participate in public comment are required to sign up ahead of time so the board can allocate appropriate time to the public comment section of the agenda. The Board welcomes public comments on matters within the jurisdiction of the board. This is an important opportunity for community members to share their perspectives and concerns with the board.

1. *Those seeking to provide public comment are required to sign up ahead of time. [Include registration details here.]*
2. *Each speaker will be allotted [3 minutes] to ensure that as many individuals as possible can address the board, and groups will be allotted [10 minutes]. Please be mindful of this limit when preparing your comments. Public comment will be limited to a total of [30 minutes.]*
3. *The board values your input and will listen attentively to all comments. However, it is important to clarify that the board will not engage in discussions or debates during the public comment period. In addition, the board will consider your comments thoughtfully and respectfully, and we request that your comments be thoughtful and respectful as well.*
4. *Comments should not name individual students or staff members. This measure is in place to protect the privacy of these individuals within our community. If you have specific concerns about a student or staff member, we encourage you to address those matters privately with the appropriate school personnel following our grievance policy.*

Your cooperation in adhering to these guidelines ensures an efficient and respectful public comment session.

