

Connecting the Dots

Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships



Nora Flood, Colorado League of Charter Schools
Jen Dauzvardis, Peak to Peak Charter School

Session Description

The role of the charter school board is simple: ensure successful implementation of vision and mission, support school leadership, and ensure fiduciary viability. Successful board members can clearly articulate how their roles appropriately align with every action they take and every relationship they develop. This session will explore how best governance practices build and protect the long-term sustainability of the institution.

8:45

Anticipatory Set:

Re-read the session description, if you need to.

Set an intention for your learning today. Based on what you've just read...

Do Now: Make a T-chart

What is our board doing well?	Where does our board have room for growth?
•	•
•	•
•	•

8:48

Anticipatory Set:

...continued.

Make a T-chart, on the back of the first page in your packet.

On one side, “What our board is doing well,” on the other, “Where does our board have room for growth.”

- Turn to a person near you, introduce yourself, share your chart
- Poll for similarities
- Discuss

Nora and I work with a lot of boards and we see similar patterns.

We discussed the need for a workshop like this because it is so hard to draw clear lines and “connect the dots”

We need a common definition, and a clear connection to the work we are doing as board members.

Your job for the rest of this session is to listen for the places where you can “connect the dots”

Your packet is a note catcher. What will give this session meaning is the way you connect it to what you are doing well, and how you can leverage that for the areas of growth.

If you have a brand new board, listen to the patterns and examples

NORA?

Essential Question

How do the key roles of the board drive board behavior and focus?

Objectives

- To define the role of the board.
- To build a compelling case for aligning board action and responsibilities to the defined board roles.
- To make connections between board responsibilities and the relationships impacted by board and board member actions.

Primary Roles of the board:

- Ensure successful implementation of vision and mission
- Support school leadership
- Ensure fiduciary viability

8:52

Here they are.

All roads lead to these three roles, and not the other way around.

If we can keep these three pivotal to training and our regular board work, we set a framework and a mindset for staying on track.

Let's explore each one in detail now.

The role of the board is...

Ensure the Successful Implementation of the Vision and Mission

The responsibilities you have and the actions you take to fulfill the role are...

The relationships impacted are...

8:55

This is the framework we are going to follow for each of the three roles... the role, the responsibilities and actions, and the relationships

Break this apart (sentence diagramming)

Ensure - the action (doesn't mean you are implementing)

Successful Implementation - define success with KPIs

Vision - Point B

Mission - Point A (define the terms so that you can develop the KPIs)

NORA?

Ensure Implementation of the Vision and Mission

The responsibilities you have and the actions you take to fulfill the role are...

- Have and use a strategic plan
- Focus board discussion and decision-making
- Ensure adequate resources
- Enhance the school's public image
- Communicate with stakeholders, *as a board*

9:00

- Have and use a strategic plan
 - Assess mission driven key performance indicators
 - Assess academic performance of students
 - Have and agreed upon way to measure success
 - Define and share what success will look like
- Focus board discussion and decision-making appropriately
 - Make sure board agenda items are selected
 - 1) because they have been appropriately escalated and
 - 2) because they align with the strategic plan, mission and vision, or one of the key roles of the board
 - 3) because they are part of "ensure," not the work of "implement"
- Ensure adequate resources
 - Through fund development programs
 - Through the charter contract negotiations
 - Through performance expectations (external contracts)
 - Through advocacy
- Enhance the school's public image
 - Speak positively
 - Know your content
- Communicate with stakeholders *as a board* (not individuals)

- Establish protocols and stick to them
- Give board members key phrases to use
- Practice! Use scenarios. Anticipate questions.

NORA?

Ensure Implementation of the Vision and Mission

The relationships impacted are...

- Students
- Parents and guardians
- School administration
- School staff members and teachers
- The authorizer
- The public community and taxpayers
- School sponsors and supporters

9:08

Pretty much everyone, but let's prioritize it a little bit.

Make the connection from board action, to student impact; from board decision to anticipated student outcome.

Students, parents, and guardians are your consumer. They bought your product.

Admin, staff, and teachers. They are our think tank, our designers and engineers, and our manufacturing plant. They are the heart and soul and, let's face it, the brains of the operation.

The authorizer is like the IRS. Be nice and stay clean, or you'll be audited.

School sponsors and supporters, your venture capitalists.

Let's talk about the public community and the taxpayers for a moment. These folks have the potential to be anyone of the above at any time.

NORA?

Before we go on... Take a moment to capture any thoughts you may have before we go on to the next role.

The role of the board is...

Support School Leadership

The responsibilities you have and the actions you take to fulfill the role are...

The relationships impacted are...

9:09

Break it down...

Support - sometimes this means physically holding them up or at least providing crutches

- make sure we define support, what admin can expect, and what they can't
- how often, what tools, what consequences, what celebrations

School Leadership - define that. too

- is it one leader, is it the full board, is there a team, who reports to whom

NORA?

Support School Leadership

The responsibilities you have and the actions you take to fulfill the role are...

- Select and hire the lead administrator
- Create a job description for the lead administrator
- Evaluate the lead administrator
- Have a succession plan
- Have a written hiring process in place

9:10

- Select and hire the administrator (the overall role is support “school leadership,” but the responsibilities and actions tie to the “lead administrator”.)
 - have an org chart that defines who that is
 - make sure the process aligns with our mission and goals, and will result in a hire who is aligned
 - communicate the non-negotiables in your hiring process
- Create a job description
 - what is fair, what is doable
 - does the administrator have a voice
 - where does the board end and the school leader begin, where is the blend
- Evaluate the administrator
 - again, does the administrator have a voice
 - agree to the tool for evaluation in advance
 - let the process be deep and meaningful
 - where does the board’s expertise benefit or fail the process
- Succession plan
 - engage with the administrator to understand the whole-school succession plan

- what are the long-term benefits of a succession plan
 - when was the last time you worked on one, reviewed it, assessed the value
- Have a written process in place
 - be ready, like a boyscout

NORA?

Support School Leadership

The relationships impacted are...

- School administration
- School staff members and teachers
- Future board members

and

- All stakeholders also impacted by the implementation of the vision and mission

9:18

Critical relationships affected are:

- Admin - obvious
- Lead team - think about that succession plan
- Staff and teachers - stability, stability, stability
- Future boards - what work are we obligating or leaving to future boards

NORA?

Before we go on... Take a moment to capture any thoughts you may have before we go on to the next role.

The role of the board is...

Ensure Fiduciary Viability

The responsibilities you have and the actions you take to fulfill the role are...

The relationships impacted are...

9:20

Break it down -

Ensure - there it is again

Fiduciary - legal, ethical, financial

Viability - life, vitality

What kind of life do we want our school to have?

in terms of public education

in terms of financial health

in terms of legal standing

NORA?

Ensure Fiduciary Viability

The responsibilities you have and the actions you take to fulfill the role are...

- Maintain the school's legal status
- Follow Open Records and Open Meetings laws
- Identify, recruit, and train board members
- Assess the board's performance
- Adopt and review written policies

Continued...

9:25

- Legal status - pretty straight forward
- Open Records/Open Meetings - as a public governing body
 - we accept this responsibility the moment we accept public funds
 - we have a membership to whom we are responsible
 - we have a taxpayer to whom we are responsible
- Identify, recruit, and train board members
 - directly to viability
 - how will our board maintain its strongest conditioning, training (just like an athlete, who will live longer)
- Assess the board's performance
 - how will we know if we don't get a check-up
 - what will the stakeholder's voice be
 - how often, when, with what tools and resources
- Adopt and REVIEW policies
 - this will keep our conversations at a high level
 - build it into the calendar

More on the next page...

NORA?

Responsibilities continued...

- Negotiate and lead the charter renewal process
- Use legal counsel whenever appropriate
- Approve, review, and monitor the budget
- Understand and review financial statements, reports, and audits
- Establish adequate financial controls
- Follow Financial Transparency laws

9:32

- Negotiate charter renewal
 - life, life, life
 - directly impacts budget, program, relationships, image
- Use legal counsel
 - where are we vulnerable, exposed
 - why wouldn't you

Now some of the financial obligations...

- Approve, review, and monitor the budget
 - requires training, probably from staff at the school
 - at a board level, not line by line
 - what will be our indicators of success
 - where are we taking a calculated risk
 - what results should we expect to see by making these budgeting priorities
- Understand and review statements, reports and audits
 - does everyone on the board know and appreciate what this means
 - have a finance committee and trust them as the experts in the room
- Financial controls

- when we know and understand these, we can move quickly to “Ensure”
- Financial Transparency
 - this is the law, this is where we show our financial viability, our “health”
 - like the news report when the president goes to the doctor for a checkup

NORA?

Ensure Fiduciary Viability

The relationships impacted are...

- The authorizer
- The public community and taxpayers
- School sponsors and supporters
- The local and national charter school community

and

- All stakeholders also impacted by the implementation of the vision and mission

9:40

Once more, we come to relationships

- The authorizer cares because money makes the world go 'round
- Taxpayers - they are why we have standards, it is a low bar
- Your venture capitalist again
- At a much larger scale, we have a collective responsibility to not become a statistic

NORA?

Before we go on... Take a moment, one more time, to capture any thoughts you may have before we go on to the next role.

Essential Question

How do the key roles of the board drive board behavior and focus?

9:47

Objectives

- To define the role of the board.
- To build a compelling case for aligning board action and responsibilities to the defined board roles.
- To make connections between board responsibilities and the relationships impacted by board and board member actions.

Now you connect the dots...

- Revisit the T-chart you created at the beginning, make revisions and based on any best practices you have heard in the presentation.

or (if you weren't here at the beginning)

- Complete the T-chart on the second page of the packet, and reference any notes you've taken during the presentation.

What is our board doing well?	Where does our board have room for growth?
•	•
•	•
•	•

9:50

Let's take just a few moments to revisit the T-chart as a way of closing this session. Two minutes of independent work, then we will Q and A until we run out of time.

Thank you!

Nora Flood
nflood@coloradoleague.org



Jen Dauzvardis
jen@CPDcolorado.org

10:00