Strengthening Your Board-CEO Partnership

Working Session
Achievement First Charter Network Accelerator
April 2015

www.BoardOnTrack.com
Framing Thoughts
Framing Thoughts
Definition of a Charter School Board

► Not a collection of well meaning people

Rather…

► A highly effective team, strategically assembled to bring the skills, expertise, temperament and time to govern a multi-million dollar public enterprise.
Framing

Simply put,

A charter is a contract to increase student achievement.

_The contract is given to the board not the CEO_
Governance Grounding Principle

The Board Focusses on Results

CEO focuses on means to get to results
Why are boards so ineffective?
Why Are Boards Ineffective?

The Board’s Contributions

► They are unclear about what they are supposed to do.
► They don’t have “their own work”.
► There are no consequences if they don’t do the work.
► They use the “we’re only volunteers” thing as an excuse for poor performance.
► What is being asked of them is unrealistic.
► The board does not have good time management.
► The board does not have the right leadership.
► Board’s work doesn’t focus on the strategic.
► Lack of data-driven decision making.
Why Are Boards Ineffective?

The CEO’s Contributions

► The CEO does not know how to harness the energy and talent of the board.
► The CEO does not have time to develop and motivate the board.
► For board meetings the CEO does all the work and all the talking.
How Good is Your Board?
How good is your board? How do you know?

- Most boards think they are pretty good.
- But compared to what?
- Excellence should be your bar.
- Showing up, having meetings, creating board packets, taking minutes isn’t excellence – that is just the scaffolding to help you get to excellence.
- Much of excellence has to do with the focus of the board’s time and work.
- As the organization ages you should shift from reactive work to more strategic, long-term work.
**Strategic Not Reactive: Creating the Future**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Yrs Old</th>
<th>% Time Creating the Future</th>
<th>% Time Oversight Here &amp; Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BoardOnTrack
Accelerating Excellence

Membership guides you through a structured organizational development process.

1. Founding Board
   - Focus: 0-2 years out
   - Compliance-driven
   - Build team and systems

2. Sustaining Board
   - Focus: 3-5 years out
   - Performance-driven
   - Achieving charter promises

3. Thriving Board
   - Focus: 5-10 years out
   - Future-driven
   - Consistently exceeding charter promises. Growth & Replication

BoardOnTrack
Guides Your Board to Improve in 4 Key Areas

Engaged Team
• Fully engaged team achieving tangible results
• The right structure and composition
• Succession planning

Systems and Processes
• Strong repeatable, institutionalized systems for compliance, transparency and group accountability

Performance Management
• Exceed charter promises
• Set and achieve annual goals
• Annual evaluation of board and CEO performance
• Continuous improvement loop

Impact
• Deepening and broadening impact

www.BoardOnTrack.com
# Annual Membership

**Designed to Guide Your Board Along the Path to Excellence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Engaged Team</th>
<th>Systems and Processes</th>
<th>Performance Management</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Founding&lt;br&gt;Focus on 0-2 years out</td>
<td>• Right people on the bus&lt;br&gt;• Organized for productive engagement</td>
<td>• Basic systems for compliance, transparency and group accountability</td>
<td>• Board and CEO Goals&lt;br&gt;• Board and CEO Annual Evaluation</td>
<td>• Consistent tracking results against charter promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sustaining&lt;br&gt;Focus on 3-5 years out</td>
<td>• Consistent participation by all&lt;br&gt;• Strong partnership with CEO</td>
<td>• Consistent use of “best practice” systems and processes&lt;br&gt;• Sustainability of systems</td>
<td>• Consistently setting and tracking goals&lt;br&gt;• Consistently conducting effective evaluations</td>
<td>• Consistently meeting and exceeding charter promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thriving&lt;br&gt;Focus on 5-10 years out</td>
<td>• High engagement by all&lt;br&gt;• Leadership succession plans</td>
<td>• Improvement “loop” in place</td>
<td>• Best in class performance measures&lt;br&gt;• Long term focus</td>
<td>• Opportunity to deepen and broaden impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
500+ Charter Schools
Lessons Learned
Big Lessons Learned

The Partnership is Everything

► For your organization to survive and thrive the governance piece is vital

► You can have a great school with a lousy board, but you can’t sustain a great organization with a lousy board

► Eventually the lousy board will do in a great organization
Big Lessons Learned

It Really Should Look and Feel Like a Partnership

► Sure you may be the founder
► Sure they are your bosses
► But the day to day should feel like a partnership
What does that mean: Look and Feel Like a Partnership?

► The Board and CEO relationship feels like team work

► You have a shared vision of excellence; and are clear about the steps the board and the CEO need to take this year to get closer to achieving that vision

► The partnership is built on mutual trust and respect

► You communicate effectively and efficiently

► Communication is tied to a focus on results

► You work as a team to run a multi-million dollar enterprise and bring the professionalism, skills, and temperament that is needed. This is serious business, not “amateur hour”.

www.BoardOnTrack.com
Big Lessons Learned

It Takes Two to Tango

► CEO has a really important role to play in making the partnership work – more of the burden is on you than on the board

► Board also has an important role to play and you need board leadership (Board Chair, Committee Chairs) to make this a priority and back you
Most Important Ingredients
Board-CEO Partnership
Most Important Ingredients

► Right people on the bus (and in the right seats)

► Clear communication
  – Consistent
  – Manageable
  – Focused on results: strategic direction and annual goals
Most Important Ingredients

► Shifting the board work and Board-CEO interactions from reactive to strategic
► Full board engagement
► Use of data to inform and guide decision making
► Board speaks with one voice – one boss for CEO not 9
Key Issues to Unpack

Please refer to results of pre-session survey.
Issues to Unpack
Question #1

Who should be doing what?

Relationship of:

► Individual board members to CEO
► Work of the collective board – committees v. full board

How should this evolve over time?
Issue to Unpack
Question #2

FUNDRAISING

► Who does what?
► Management team? Committee? Full Board?

How should this evolve over time?
Issues to Unpack
Question #3

Connecting Board with Mission
► “Better understanding of significant drivers of our work”

Governance – Management Line
► Define
► How should this evolve over time?
Board Chair – CEO Partnership

► Unique relationship, define
► Who picked the current chair?
► Ideally how should this happen?
Board Chair

Role
► The chair is the senior volunteer leader of the organization who presides at all meetings of the Board of Trustees

Characteristics
► Strong group facilitation skills
► Works well with/complements the CEO
Common Misconceptions or Flaws in Implementation

The Board Chair is NOT

► The CEO’s boss
► The decision maker for the board
► Invested with more power or more of a vote than the other trustees
► The “best name on the letterhead”
Additional Issues to Unpack?
Concrete Tools You Can Use
Questions?
Contact:
Marci Cornell-Feist
CEO & Founder

marci@boardontrack.com
978-772-4867