

M CHARTERS

Free. Public. Open to All.

Charter School Succession Planning

Succession in planning rests on these critical principles:

- Changes in school leadership (members of the board and superintendent), key administrators, and teachers are inevitable.
- Continuity of highly effective leadership is important to student learning.
- No position is more important to the long-term success of a school than its head, so the right match is critical.
- Identifying, growing, selecting, hiring, and sustaining the school’s next head are perhaps the most important tasks a board may have.

Some of the Board’s succession planning roles are in blue below.

Transition at every level will happen. Many transitions can be foreseen and planned for. Others may occur on an emergency basis. In either the case the Board should assure that they have taken responsibility for

Position	Planned Change	Unplanned Change
<i>Teachers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building with top teacher preparation institutions • Participation in alternative certification programs • Growing talent from within the community • Identifying, recruiting local talent 	30-60 day emergency plan for every position Action plan with decision points and duties for expedited hiring
<i>Instructional Leaders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying top tier teachers within the current staff • Providing growth and development options for staff • Networking with local and regional schools 	
<i>Principal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying top tier teachers and leaders within the current staff • Providing growth and development options for staff • Networking with local and regional schools • Participating with regional and national education associations 	
<i>Superintendent or CEO</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing Board Policy or Preferences for a culture of sustained, quality leadership. • Budgeting for the financial resources needed to support growing leadership or, • Budgeting for the level of search the board anticipates (internal, local, regional, or national; with or without a search consultant). 	90-day emergency plan for every position Action plan with decision points and duties for expedited hiring

M CHARTERS

Free. Public. Open to All.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building board consensus on the future direction of the school and what its ideal state will be in five, 10, and 20 years. • Developing board agreement on the professional and personal qualities the ideal next head of school will possess. • Defining the skills, expertise, attitudes, and understandings the ideal search committee will possess, and ensuring the board has or will have those people to call upon. • Strategic communications planning. 	
<i>Board Members</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaws or Board Policies answering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any individual Board member term parameters? ○ Any limit on number of terms? ○ Any limit or qualification for serving as a Board Officer? ○ Any limit on any Board Officer terms? ○ Any linkage or progression of Board Officer positions? • Engage volunteers on Board committees • Complete a board talent and characteristics matrix to identify needs • Have a three-year rolling plan for filling expected board openings due to term expirations 	Action plan for filling an unexpired term

Should a Board have terms or term limits for its members?

Charter School boards have been debating the pros and cons of term limits for many years. If your board has not embraced term limits, perhaps the time is now for your board to revisit the topic.

The Pros of Term Limits

- Provide opportunity for the board and organization to work with talented community members who can devote only a few years to board service
- Make it easier to diversity your board, which brings new ideas and new perspectives to the board and its decision-making process
- Enable you to avoid stagnation, tiredness, boredom, and loss of commitment that can sometimes set in when board members serve long terms
- Enable you to avoid the perpetual concentration of power within a small group of people and the intimidation of new members by this dominant group
- When staggered, provide a built-in balance of continuity and turnover
- Allow for rotation of committee assignments
- Raise awareness of and provide opportunities to change and improve group dynamics
- Provide a respectful and efficient mechanism for the exit of passive, ineffective, or troublesome board members
- Enlarge your circle of committed supporters as members rotate off the board
- Enable the board to easily adjust its membership to reflect the organization's changing needs

M CHARTERS

Free. Public. Open to All.

The Cons of Term Limits

- Potential loss of expertise or insight that has benefited the board and organization over time
- Potential loss of organizational memory
- Need for the governance committee to dedicate more time to the identification, recruitment, and orientation of new board members
- Need to dedicate additional time to building the cohesiveness of the board as members rotate on and off the board

On most boards, a term is somewhere between two and six years, with three or four years being the most common term lengths. (Two-year terms are a little short, and terms longer than this might make a potential candidate wary of committing.)

Simply instituting terms gives no expectation that someone will leave at the end of their term. A board member who has finished the term may be given the choice to stay on the board for another term or to step down.

Board terms and any limits should be reflected in the bylaws. It is a simple addition in most cases. “Board members shall serve terms of three years and no member shall serve more than three consecutive terms.”

Putting this into practice can be done by dividing your board into thirds and deem one third of the board to be in their first year of a three-year term, one third to be in their second year, and one third to be in their third year.

If you don't currently have term limits, it shouldn't matter which board member falls into which area. But if you think board members might care, you can draw lots in front of them at a board meeting to make it clear you're not intentionally putting someone at the beginning or end of a term.

Essentially you are creating a “seat” on the board that has a clear term tied to it, regardless of who is in that seat today. If a board member leaves mid-term and you install a new person into that seat, they still have the same term as the original board member.

In this way, no more than one third of the board could decide they are done at the end of their term at any given time. Most likely it will be even less than that, but by staggering terms, you can prevent the organization from having a suddenly overwhelming majority of newbie board members.

Board Officers and Term Limits

Board Officers should be named in your Bylaws – normally President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Officer terms are most often a year or two. Many boards link serving as Vice President a prerequisite for serving as President.

Any limitations on the number of terms in an office should be explicit as well. There is less commonality among Boards on this point. Many, but certainly not all, have a two-term limitation on serving in the role of President.



Should Committees be in our Bylaws?

Your bylaws should identify any standing committees OR the right of the Board to establish committees as necessary. The most common Board committees are Governance, Finance and Student Achievement are the most common. The bylaws should address the high-level organizational issues (formation, board leadership of committees, recommendation powers) and not the detail of operating committees.

The Board should adopt policies outlining the detailed expectations of committees.