



Carolina School for Inquiry 2010-2011 Board Election Process

The South Carolina Association of Public Charter Schools has overseen board elections for the past two years and will provide this service again this year. This removes any conflict of interest from the process.

Timeline:

- September 3, 2010 Information will be distributed to the public for a call for applications. Each applicant must complete an application. SCAPCS will have these available online for submission/distribution. Links will be created from CSI's site.
- September 7, 2010 Pre-election meeting held to discuss the needs of the school and the call for candidates.
- September 10, 2010 Close of nominations. Acceptance of nominations will be closed at midnight.
- September 14, 2010 All Candidate Information and Application Answers posted online and at the school.
- September 15-17, 2010 Ballots mailed to each parent/guardian and voting open. There is one vote per child enrolled in the school and one vote per employee. Voting this year will be available via e-ballot allowing parents and employees to vote via the internet. For those who do not have access to a computer, they will be able to use computers at the school during school hours. For those uncomfortable with computers, the paper ballots mailed to them may be submitted. Each ballot will have a unique pin number to ensure confidentiality and integrity of the process.
- September 22, 2010 School board members will be announced publicly. New board members will be sworn in at the September board meeting.
- Saturday, October 16, 2010 Mandatory Board training will take place from 9:00-1:00 pm. Provided by the SCAPCS.

Prospective Board Members Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of Public Charter Schools in South Carolina?

According to the law the purpose is:

- (1) improve student learning;
- (2) increase learning opportunities for students;
- (3) encourage the use of a variety of productive teaching methods;
- (4) establish new forms of accountability for schools;
- (5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site; and
- (6) assist South Carolina in reaching academic excellence.

What are the legal expectations for Charter boards?

- S.C. charter law
- Admission of Students (lottery and priority)
- Freedom of Information Act
- Election of Board members
- State Ethics Act <http://ethics.sc.gov/rulesofconduct/>
- **& In accordance with state law, and our bylaws board members can not have any prior convictions or felonies on their record.**

How does a Board function?

The board governs by policy and the administrator (principal or school leader) manages by implementing procedures. The board acts as one body in a quorum at a publically announced meeting. Individual board members or committees do not have the authority to act for the board.

There are four types of policies a charter school governing boards usually consider:

- Policies required by law (e.g. nondiscrimination, sexual harassment)
- Policies required by the charter (e.g. lottery/enrollment)
- Policies that give broader definition to the vision/mission (e.g. educational program philosophy, administrative structure)
- Policies that communicate board decisions (e.g. facility use, withholding diplomas/transcripts/grades)

What is the role of a Charter School's Governing Board? Is it like a PTA?

The Governing Board of a Public Charter School is not like a PTA or School Improvement Council. A Charter School's Governing Board is ultimately responsible for advancing the mission of the school, ensuring the charter is implemented, and that school is financially solvent with long term fiscal sustainability. The governing board must assume the following responsibilities:

- approving terms and conditions of employment agreements and contracts with teachers and non-teaching employees;
- ensuring that teachers, whether certified or non-certified, undergo the background checks and other investigations required for certified teachers, as provided by law, before they may teach in the charter school;
- contracting for other services;
- developing pay scales, performance criteria, and discharging policies for its employees;
- deciding on matters related to the governance of the charter school, including budgeting, curriculum, and facilities; and
- ensuring that the charter school will adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to all public schools operating in the same school district.

What are the revenue sources for charter schools? Where is the money coming from?

Charter schools receive state and federal funds. Schools in local districts receive local dollars, but schools in the SC Public Charter School District do not receive any local dollars. They are the lowest funded district in the country. Charter schools receive no funding for facilities except in Charleston County, per ACT 189. Board fiscal reports - Monthly Monitoring is a MUST:

- Require Reports with MTD, YTD and Budget Variance Figures (% or \$)
- Perform Quantitative Analysis
- Always Ask Questions
- Never Assume "Absolute Expertise"
- Annual Audit Required - it is about \$15,000 on average - make sure you take time to read it and listen to the independent auditor.

Who evaluates the school administrator and staff?

Evaluation should reflect the mission and culture of the school.

- It is the Boards responsibility to evaluate the Principal each year. This process and the

goals and objectives should be determined a year prior to the evaluation or upon hiring.

- It is the Principal's responsibility to evaluate staff and make recommendations for rehire.

What should boards do with all of the student academic growth and achievement data?

Boards should be making data driven decisions based on the needs of the students and the fiscal sustainability of the school. The school administrator will report to the board on:

- Progress on the school's goals and objectives for the charter
- Student growth in assessments, like MAP
- School's South Carolina Annual School Report.

Paying particular attention to:

- Absolute Rating
- Improvement Rating
- Adequate Yearly Progress
- Performance Trends over Time

How much time should I plan on committing to serving on a charter school board?

Effective Charter School Boards are high functioning, diverse teams. They are not positions to merely put on your resume and show up a couple times a year. Most board members spend 10 to 15 hours a month on board related work, research, and committee assignments.

Board meetings are usually once a month and should be no longer than 2 hours. Board members should come to meetings prepared to discuss all agenda items. Boards should be provided agenda items to review about a week before the meeting.

What are some of the common governance problems faced by charter boards in SC?

- Indecision
- Mishandling Conflict
- Nepotism
- Conflict of Interest Policy "worked around"
- Personal Agendas
- Too Much, Too Quick
- Micromanagement
- Overdependence on the Administrator
- Financial Mismanagement
- Overextending Administrators
- Lack of Policy Infrastructure
- Unqualified or Poorly Qualified Board Members
- Founders Syndrome
- Lack of Continuity and Institutional Memory



Ultimately, the board is responsible for ensuring the charter is implemented and all funds are properly expended.