



**PULLMAN PUBLIC  
COMMUNITY FREE  
MONTESSORI K-9**

## Pullman Community Montessori

### PCM Board Meeting

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#### Date and Time

Tuesday March 23, 2021 at 5:00 PM PDT

#### Location

All board meetings are open to the public. Meetings begin at 5:00 PM PST the fourth (4th) Tuesday of each month. Public comment is a standing agenda item at each monthly meeting. Items will be addressed by the board according to the Meeting Agenda posted 48 hours prior to each meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81114151249?pwd=amNWYWJKTVhuVVdQMmJyU3hrR3ZJZz09>

Meeting ID: 811-1415-1249

Password: 1156

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**PCM's Mission:** to prepare all students to reach their full potential for future success in high school, college, career, and life, using the rich resources of our community.

**PCM's Vision:** to serve as an instrument of change, helping to progress our education system to better meet the needs of students, families, and educators. We nurture students to be self-empowered lifelong learners, global citizens, environmental stewards, and compassionate and collaborative leaders, bringing positive changes to their communities and the world!

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#### Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>I. Opening Items</b>			<b>5:00 PM</b>
<b>A. Record Attendance</b>		John Cassleman	1 m

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>B.</b> Call the Meeting to Order	Discuss	John Cassleman	1 m
<b>C.</b> Approve Minutes - 2/23/20	Approve Minutes	John Cassleman	2 m

Please thoroughly review minutes and have any amendments typed and ready to put into the chat.

<b>D.</b> Building our Board Muscles: SCENARIO	Discuss	John Cassleman	10 m
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**Reminder for Scenarios:**

Examining and discussing scenarios is a good way for boards to grow and stay ahead of issues. Don't get lost in the details of the scenario. These are hypotheticals that other boards have dealt with. Keep in mind Governance vs Management and how you feel the board should collectively APPROACH solving the problem presented (not the minute details of how the problem will be solved or the ultimate decision)

**SCENARIO**

TBA

<b>E.</b> DEI and Anti-racism Commitment	Discuss	Laylah Sullivan	3 m
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Review next full board training with Dr. Scott. Address questions.

**II. Public Comment 5:17 PM**

<b>A.</b> Making Public Comments	FYI		15 m
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Welcome! If you would like to make public comment you will be called on in the order you logged in/arrived. We generally allow 5 minutes for presentation of personal comments/questions/concerns/grievances. These should be shared with the board in writing in advance of the board meeting for us to better address you consideration. Please email to board@mypcm.org or submit in paper form to the PCM office in Gladish Community and Cultural Center. You should receive confirmation of receipt of your written statement within 48 hours of submission.

**III. LEADER Team Update 5:32 PM**

<b>A.</b> January Update	FYI	Laylah Sullivan	8 m
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	Purpose	Presenter	Time
Review the LEADERS Team Update (changing format).			

**Verbal emphasis will be on enrollment and hiring.**

**IV. Committee Updates 5:40 PM**

Please read through committee reports/minutes and come with questions. Committee chairs will not provide updates unless there is a motion or key items to address. Please communicate with committee chairs or the head of school in advance of the meeting if you have questions.

<b>A.</b>	LESC (Leadership Evaluation & Support Committee)	Vote	Beverley Wolff	10 m
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Trustees should access the 3/15 LESC notes and review prior to the board meeting.

<b>B.</b>	DC (Development Committee)	FYI	Nomin Batmunkh	3 m
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Trustees should review the 3/17 meeting minutes on board on track.

<b>C.</b>	GC (Governance Committee)	FYI	John Cassleman	3 m
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Trustees should access the 3/1 and 3/15 GC notes and review prior to the board meeting.

<b>D.</b>	FC (Finance Committee)	Vote	Aubree Guyton	3 m
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Trustees should access the 3/16 FC notes and review prior to the board meeting.

**V. Compliance 5:59 PM**

As agreed in our [Charter School Contract](#) with the Commission, PCM must meet a list of pre-opening conditions on the proposed deadlines to be able to open. I recommend occasionally each Trustee should read back through the [Statement of Assurances](#) (found in the Compliance folder linked in the footer). This provides a condensed view of what we've agreed to.

Please review the [pre-opening checklist](#). Our HOS will provide a short report on progress.

<b>A.</b>	HOS Update on pre-opening conditions	Vote	Laylah Sullivan	5 m
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We have met all our pre-opening conditions to date. We have also completed almost all of April's conditions. Trustees will check in with each other on commitments outlined by the member tasks list.

**CRITICAL**

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Training Series (<i>this is also a grant requirement for WA Charters</i>)</li> <li>• Attendance of Commission Trainings</li> <li>• Completion of F1 Personal Financial Disclosure</li> </ul>			
<p><b>B.</b> March 22 Commission Board Training Update</p> <p>Tentative presenters: John, Dorrie, Aubree</p> <p>Trustees in attendance will provide a synopsis of the training. Meeting materials are included in the packet.</p> <p>List of the <a href="#">pre-opening conditions</a></p>	Discuss	John Cassleman	15 m

**VI. Other Business 6:19 PM**

<p><b>A.</b> Planning Year Dashboard is Here</p> <p>WA Charters has modified the operating year dashboard to fit the remainder of the planning year. We will spend a short time reviewing.</p>	Discuss	Laylah Sullivan	5 m
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**VII. Closing Items 6:24 PM**

<p><b>A.</b> Adjourn Meeting</p>	Vote	John Cassleman	1 m
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**Grounding Docs:** [Board Norms-We are LEADERS too-Structure and Responsibilities Overview](#), [PCM Logic Model](#), [EEMPS Rubric](#), [School-Wide Reflective Practice Inventory](#), [Bylaws](#)

**Resources:** [Compliance Folder](#), [Planning Year Board Calendar](#), [Planning Yr Financials Considerations](#), [OPMA Resources](#), [App Board Commitments & Background](#), [Seat & Committee Descriptions](#), [Org Charts](#), [Board Member Application Full Packet](#), [Prospective Board Member Questionnaire](#)

# Coversheet

## Approve Minutes - 2/23/20

**Section:** I. Opening Items  
**Item:** C. Approve Minutes - 2/23/20  
**Purpose:** Approve Minutes  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:** Minutes for PCM Board Meeting on February 23, 2021

APPROVED



**PULLMAN** **PUBLIC**  
**COMMUNITY** **FREE**  
**MONTESSORI** **K-9**

## Pullman Community Montessori

### Minutes

#### PCM Board Meeting

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##### **Date and Time**

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##### **Trustees Present**

A. Guyton (remote), B. Wolff (remote), C. Hill (remote), D. Main (remote), J. Cassleman (remote), N. Batmunkh (remote), T. Franklin (remote)

##### **Trustees Absent**

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None

**Ex Officio Members Present**

L. Sullivan (remote)

**Non Voting Members Present**

L. Sullivan (remote)

**Guests Present**

Kara Lowe

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**I. Opening Items**

**A. Record Attendance**

**B. Call the Meeting to Order**

J. Cassleman called a meeting of the board of trustees of Pullman Community Montessori to order on Tuesday Feb 23, 2021 at 5:06 PM.

**C. Approve Minutes - 1/26/20**

C. Hill made a motion to approve the minutes from PCM Board Meeting on 01-26-21.

B. Wolff seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

D. Main Aye

C. Hill Aye

T. Franklin Aye

A. Guyton Aye

N. Batmunkh Aye

B. Wolff Aye

J. Cassleman Aye

**D. Building our Board Muscles: SCENARIO**

**E. DEI and Anti-racism Commitment**

**II. LEADER Team Update**

**A. January Update**

Lottery process completed.

### III. Committee Updates

#### A. LESC (Leadership Evaluation & Support Committee)

LESC reported out on the first evaluation cycle of the HOS.

B. Wolff made a motion to to share the Board consensus on the HOS's mid-year appraisal with PCM's commission contact.

T. Franklin seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

#### B. DC (Development Committee)

#### C. GC (Governance Committee)

Committee considering how to help the process of the board

- Simplify the agenda content
- Recommend that the committees not report verbally at board meeting - report by minutes unless a motion being brought
- Send questions ahead of the board meeting, may be able to be answered without needing to be brought to a vote
- Recommend that committee questions be sent to the chair of the committee

#### D. FC (Finance Committee)

A. Guyton made a motion to The FC proposes the Board adopt this Financial Policies & Procedures Manual as the base policy for PCM.

B. Wolff seconded the motion.

Reminder to the board that the Financial Policies & Procedures Manual is a living document that will be revisited.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

A. Guyton made a motion to approve the January financials.

T. Franklin seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### IV. Other Business

#### A. REPORT - New School Board: Onboarding Session 1

Clara, Travis and Bev attended and reported out on the Onboarding Session 1

#### B. PCM-Gladish Master Lease

B. Wolff made a motion to Motion to approve the recommendation as written by the HoS: I recommend that the PCM Board of Trustees grant me the latitude within limits to finalize the lease agreement (barring any substantive changes proposed by any party) and present to John Cassleman to sign on behalf of the PCM Board of Trustees.



A. Guyton seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### C. Construction Contracts

D. Main made a motion to approve the recommendation as written by the HoS: I recommend that the PCM Board of Trustees grant me the latitude within limits to finalize negotiations and secure the aforementioned contractors with the condition that I stay within budget and seek final council with RAZA, WCSD, and Apex Law. .

T. Franklin seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### D. Loan

T. Franklin made a motion to approve the recommendation as written by the HoS: I recommend that the PCM Board finalize questions around this so when RAZA presents their approved and underwritten contract I can present it and a quorum can convene and vote within as little as 2 days (this is following a review by myself and APEX and assuming what is presented is closely aligned to what is in the LOI).

N. Batmunkh seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## V. Closing Items

### A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

C. Hill

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**Grounding Docs:** [Board Norms-We are LEADERS too-Structure and Responsibilities Overview](#), [PCM Logic Model](#), [EEMPS Rubric](#), [School-Wide Reflective Practice Inventory](#), [Bylaws](#)

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# Coversheet

## January Update

**Section:** III. LEADER Team Update  
**Item:** A. January Update  
**Purpose:** FYI  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:** PCM Pre-Opening Meeting (3-11-21) (UD for Board).docx



## PRE-OPENING MONTHLY MEETING FORM

School: PCM	Date: 3/11/21 <b>UD for board</b> 2/21	Time: 1:00 PM
<b>Meeting Logistics</b>		
Meeting Location: ZOOM		
School Attendees: Laylah Sullivan (HOS)	WACSC Staff: Kara Lowe	
<b>Objective</b>		
To provide pre-opening charter school with a status update regarding compliance reporting and Commission updates, and engage in a dialogue regarding general pre-opening school updates (i.e. facilities, staffing, prospective enrollment, etc.), pre-opening progress of calendar items, and school specific updates.		
<b>Monthly Submission Review</b>		
Items Due: (MARCH) 15th <a href="#">School Location</a> -- <b>submitted on time</b> 31st <a href="#">Board Disclosure Forms</a> 31st <a href="#">Board Membership</a> 31st <a href="#">Board Resumes</a> 31st <a href="#">Board Training</a> 31st <a href="#">Lease/Facility Agreement</a> 31st <a href="#">Proof of 501(c)(3) Status</a>		
Upcoming Items: (APRIL) 15th <a href="#">Evidence of Uniform Accounting Systems that Comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)</a> 15th <a href="#">F1 Personal Financial Disclosure Statement for Board Members</a> 30th <a href="#">Charter/Nonprofit Agreements</a> 30th <a href="#">Evidence of 50% Enrollment</a>		
Compliance Notes:		
<b>Topics for Discussion</b>		
<b>Hiring/Staffing Updates</b>		
Notes: Lower elementary teacher in final stages (final demo next week). Will likely make offer after. <b>(update....this candidate dropped. The move was too much at this time)</b> . Have high quality candidate app for OE....moving to phase 2 next week. Have had inquiry about standalone K but no apps yet. Number of inquiries for classroom interventionalists (but won't open until end of March beg of April). Inquiring whether PSD has a nurse that needs a 0.22 or 0.25 appointment. <b>No, so we'll post and use ESD 101 services if necessary.</b>		
<b>School Facility/ Physical Plant Update</b>		
Notes: We have an all-parties (RAZA, Gladish, PCM) agreed upon lease and NDA. All will be signed at closing at the end of the month. Pending items are city approval of plans ( <b>final revisions submitted 3/21 AM</b> ), and maximum price contract with sprinkler contractor an GC ( <b>in final form...presenting to contractors</b> ). All are poised to start work first part of April. Can't sign lease until all paperwork from RAZA is in, due to legal obligation. Laylah to supply letter from Gladish with statement of assurances. Should be complete by early April. Laylah would like to set up site visit for June. But please avoid July 14 <sup>th</sup> . Certificate of Occupancy will take place room by room as stated in Charter Application.		
<b>Curriculum Development</b>		



Notes: NCMPS will have all cross maps updated and completed for K-5<sup>th</sup> by the July 1 deadline. Will be delivered in excel format. TSS will upload to transparent classroom in early July. NCMPS has an MOU with Transparent Classroom to set up their own portal access to sample lessons and cross maps but won't be ready until next summer. Working with TSS to design and prep teacher scaffolding and rubrics for place-based projects. Curriculum review will be done at pre-opening site visit.

**Professional Development**

Notes:

**COMPLETED**

- (Tami) Completed Upward Bound Training today (K-5 Leadership track) 2/11
- (Tami) - The Together Leader (wrapped up 2/24)
- (Tami) Stewards' Forum, by Public Montessori in Action (wrapped up 2/9)
- (Tami) - (Offered by Build Excel Sustain) Developing Exemplary Operations and Systems – Feb 22, 2021, 12pm – 4pm and Feb 23, 2021, 12pm – 3pm
- Leverage Leadership Workshop - School Culture (spring) -- Tami will take all 2 in spring (Obs & Feedback, Data Meetings) Laylah retaking Obs & Feedback
- Laylah - NCMPS Superintendent Meeting 3-4-21

**ONGOING**

- Racial Equity Workgroup (WA Charters)--ongoing but major conflicts with schedule.
- TSS Project Planning Workshops
- Haring Foundation weekly meetings (PBIS & MTSS support).
- TSS semi-monthly meetings and monthly workshops
- NCPMS semi monthly meetings
- \*Teton Science Schools Place Network & National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector are model fidelity partners.*

**FUTURE (MC will join)**

- (Offered by Build Excel Sustain (party replace residency))
  - Effective Professional Development and Live Coaching – April 26, 2021, 12pm – 4pm and April 27, 2021, 12pm – 3pm
  - \*\*Several of the NCMPS classes will be repeated with the MC to drive discussion and planning.*
  - Child Study Training
  - Montessori Coaches Training

\*Summer PD will be done onsite not yet called out in list.

**Prospective Enrollment**

Notes: All 68 have accepted offer and we have 3 pending. Biggest areas of growth is K and few seats available in 3, 4, and 5. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> full....2 on waiting list for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 on waiting list for 2<sup>nd</sup> 68 represents committed to attend but not completed enrollment. As of March 10<sup>th</sup> all enrollment packets have been made available. Using phases for completion-vaccines, residency (Aug.)

4 are in offered status (2 K, 1 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1 5<sup>th</sup>)

Team is putting additional recruiting steps into action.

**Family and Community Engagement**



WASHINGTON STATE  
**Charter School Commission**  
 STUDENTS • INNOVATION • TRANSPARENCY

Notes: great volunteering efforts by families (feedback on reg forms, distribution of welcome packets). Our families are excited and are talking. Working on 'staying connected' calendar of interactions between now and August. LOOM is our new friend in this environment. Has been great for families for answering questions in a personal way and have them follow with a visual reference. Very helpful for an extra personal touch for families. Did a facility tour through LOOM as well. We are signed up for the Family fair in first part of April (all people that would have been set up will have bags that will be distributed on schools behalf). Will table at Walmart and Grocery outlet. Going to see if the CAC (Community Action Center) has some opportunities for us to talk or be featured now that things are opening back up. Building a list of volunteer and well and volunteer projects for families (will post on our website).

**Board Updates**

Notes: Committee are doing well and working with more confidence. Next full board DEI training w/ Dr. Scott is in April. May test racial equity group tracks for development outside of meetings.

**Policy Development**

Notes: we are following [these recs](#) for policy development. We have approved

- Enrollment Policies & Procedures,
  - Financial Policies & Procedures Manual (FPPM),
  - Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy & Procedure
- Slightly modified form WSSDA.....
- 4220 Complaints Concerning Staff or Programs
  - 5011 Sexual Harassment - Staff
  - 5010 Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action

**Fundraising Updates**

Notes: applied for \$2K libraries grant (let us know in May), applied for \$3K garden grant Whole foods Foundation (May too), applying for NSVF grant (due EOM, lets us know if have interview in May). Looking at applying to Salad Bar Grant (accepted year round) and Bee grant (on hold till fall 2021) as long as you can find a farmer to house hives you can be involved. Launching Donor Door campaign next week (we are business of the month with chamber and want to put it out while we are business of the month), finishing case for support. Will have teachers apply for classroom project specific funding (build into our culture) and classroom pet grant. **DONOR DOOR CAMPAIGN has launched!**

**Conditional Approval/Heightened Oversight Updates (If Applicable)**

Notes:

**Miscellaneous**



**Next Steps**

- Kara to work with Oversight team to see if we can see if we can set up Pre-Opening walkthrough late June.
- Laylah to provide a letter from Gladish with a statement of assurances for Lease requirement of March 15 (Lease should be signed and completed by early April).
- Kara review nonprofit charter agreement and see what is expected as a deliverable.

# Coversheet

## March 22 Commission Board Training Update

**Section:** V. Compliance  
**Item:** B. March 22 Commission Board Training Update  
**Purpose:** Discuss  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:** Board Scenarios 03222021.pdf  
Charter Board Engagement Agenda.03222021.pdf  
Five Dysfunctions of Charter School Boards.pdf

## New School Board Onboarding – March 22, 2021

### Board Scenarios

- 1) Due to unforeseen staffing changes, the school finds itself in a position where it feels the needs of certain students with disabilities are not being met according to their respective IEPs. As a result, members of the school leadership team have notified families that they cannot meet the needs of their students and those students have been unenrolled from the charter school. The board has received a Notice of Inquiry from the Commission detailing the above allegations.
- 2) During regular monitoring, the Commission identified a large expenditure for legal services. Upon further inquiry it is determined that the expense was related to the termination of an employee that stemmed from an incident of inappropriate conduct between a paraeducator and a student. The board was not made aware of the incident when it occurred nor was the Commission. The board has received a Notice of Inquiry from the Commission detailing the above allegations.
- 3) The school is leasing a facility from a religious entity. During weekdays the facility operates as a school, but in the evenings and on the weekends a variety of religious activities take place. The Commission has received a complaint from a parent alleging that religious material and iconography are routinely left up/visible during the school day. The board has received a Notice of Inquiry from the Commission detailing the above allegations.

### Discussion Questions

- What are your first steps as a board upon receiving the Commission's Notice of Inquiry?
- What sections of the charter contract are germane to this scenario? Why?
- What policies and practices can the board employ to prevent or mitigate the proposed issue in the first place?
- When and how should the board be communicating as a group; with the school leader(s); and with the Commission?



# CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD ONBOARDING AGENDA

Monday, March 22, 2021 | 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/3605849272>

Dial (646) 558-8656

Meeting ID 360 584 9272

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**Purpose:**

Build upon the last engagement with an eye towards developing strong school-Commission partnerships.

**Goals:**

- 1) Build and Deepen Relationships – Clarify roles and learn how the Commission is here to help your school be successful
- 2) Understand the Charter Contract – Clarity contractual obligations and expectations and learn how to use the document as tool to manage your school and communicate with the Commission
- 3) Understand Oversight and Intervention – What the board can expect from the Commission in terms of oversight – both generally and when there are challenges/problems

**Agenda**

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review                        | <b>4:30 – 4:40 p.m.</b> |
| 2. Pre-Opening Conditions Calendar – Upcoming Submissions          | <b>4:40 – 5:00 p.m.</b> |
| 3. Charter Board Scenarios   | <b>5:00 – 5:30 p.m.</b> |
| <b>3.1</b> Small Group Breakout                                    |                         |
| <b>3.2</b> Large Group Discussion                                  |                         |
| 4. Guest – Joan Hsiao – Former Rainier Prep Board and Staff Member | <b>5:30 – 5:55 p.m.</b> |
| 5. Identify Next Steps and Close                                   | <b>5:55 - 6:00 p.m.</b> |

**Pre-Read Materials**

- 5 Dysfunctions of a Charter School Board – Brian Carpenter
- Charter Board Scenarios and Charter Contract
- Pre-Opening Conditions Calendar





# THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF CHARTER SCHOOL BOARDS

by

Brian L. Carpenter  
CEO

National Charter Schools Institute

## Overview

Bestselling author and executive business consultant Patrick Lencioni is on to something. In his book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, he explains why business teams of all kinds fail. More importantly, he explains what they need to do to succeed. Though I haven't yet met Lencioni, I credit him with the idea for the title of this essay.

The idea of writing something about school board dysfunctions has been percolating in my mind for some time. As a superintendent of schools in the private sector for twelve years and as a charter school board member the past several years, I have often had a front row seat to the dysfunctional things school boards do. Not that board dysfunction is limited to schools: I have also witnessed dysfunctional behavior as a member of other governing boards. All told, my hands-on experience—or should I say, my seats-on experience—with boards presently totals something in excess of twenty years.

During these years, I've sat through lengthy board discussions about such important things as the color of trim for new offices, how teachers should approach the controversial issue of Santa Claus, and whether a particular student deserved a detention. I've seen shouting matches and power plays that would make Machiavelli blush (and here I should note that names in this paper have been changed to protect the guilty). One board on which I served as superintendent was so divided that one-half of it threatened to sue the other half. And if such provincial behavior weren't depressing enough, I've also

seen boards that were flat-out incompetent. In another organization, failure by the board to provide proper financial oversight resulted in an embezzlement case involving the executive director and the FBI. Extreme, yes, but it illustrates how serious problems can arise when boards don't function properly.

Years of such observations have led me to conclude that boards have common dysfunctions. The purpose of this paper is to improve the performance of charter schools by helping board members understand what some of those common dysfunctions are and how to avoid or remedy them.

I'd love to claim originality of thought here, but much of what I will say has been written or said by others—often better than I could write or say it. Nevertheless, my desire is for this brief piece to ignite passion in charter school board members to commit themselves to making their boards into models worthy of imitation. For further study, I strongly recommend reading the works of Patrick Lencioni and John Carver, both of whom are listed in the references section of this paper.

Finally, I'd like to dedicate this paper to my friend and mentor, Dr. Bruce Lockerbie. Bruce is chairman and founder of Paideia, an agency that works with schools, churches and nonprofit organizations that want to improve their leadership. Thank you, Bruce, for your years of wise counsel and for being the first to provoke serious thought in me on the subject of effective school board leadership.




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“there is one thing  
that all boards have in  
common ... *They do  
not function.*”  
(original emphasis)

Peter Drucker

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## The Thing Charter School Boards Have In Common

One of my favorite quotes about board dysfunction comes from the late business genius, Peter Drucker. In one of his many outstanding books on leadership, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, he asserted that “there is one thing that all boards have in common ... *They do not function.*” (1974, p. 628) (original emphasis).

As a charter school board member that can be a hard pill to swallow. After all, you have the best of intentions, you volunteer your time and skills, and you are probably successful in your other roles in life. You may even serve on several other boards. But the assertion that all boards do not function, coming as it does from the luminous Drucker, suggests that we ought to ask ourselves what would make him say that.

One need not consult the Oracle of Delphi to understand why—especially anyone who has served on a charter school (or other) board for any length of time. The dysfunction is obvious. Think about it: What does the typical charter school board meeting look like?

First, it generally meets monthly, which is way too often. When enough board members are present for a *quorum*—or as I like to say, a *quarrel*—the meeting is called to order. The chair then asks if everyone had a chance to review the minutes and the financial statements. Most board members will then peruse them for the first time. A resolution to adopt them will be passed—though many board members don’t know how to read and interpret financial statements.

Next, depending on the order of the agenda, the board will discuss old business, new business, and other business (as opposed to just *business*). It will spend several hours rehashing and reviewing decisions that already have been made by the school leader. It may discuss adopting policies about which it generally has insufficient training and knowledge (e.g., does your school have a good AHERA policy?). The board will listen attentively to administrative presentations about field trips, essay winners or other feel-good information. Finally, as the meeting winds toward the end, no issue that any single board member wants to raise is considered inappropriate or out-of-bounds. At some point, usually near exhaustion, the board will adjourn, only to repeat the process next month, and the next month, and so on.

Some boards meet between meetings through committees. Often, these committees do little more than reach a foregone conclusion or serve as a smokescreen or end-run tactic.

What is the result of all this largely pointless activity? Charter schools which fail to perform the very thing for which they were created: *student achievement*. Some charters aren’t even rivaling the achievement of their nearby local districts.

With whom does the ultimate responsibility for this failure lie? The legal conclusion is inescapable: Regardless of whether the school is self-managed or the management is contracted through a service provider, the final responsibility rests with the board of directors.

This being the case, it’s time to consider how to avoid the five dysfunctions of charter school boards.



## Dysfunction #1

### Managing vs. Governing

The difference between managing and governing a school is like the difference between coaching an NFL football team and owning one.

Although it's not a perfect analogy, in football, a coach is hired by the owners to run the team—and he's held accountable on the basis of the team's performance. There is no such thing as a successful coach without a winning team.

With perhaps a notable exception or two, the owners of the team do not tell the coach which plays to call or otherwise how to do his job.

In charter schools, the board governs for an owner. But who is the owner? Obviously, the board doesn't own the school as with a football team owner. And it isn't the management company, even if it owns the building. It is *the public* who ultimately owns charter schools.

Thus, charter school boards govern schools in the sense of a trust. This is why board members are sometimes referred to as trustees—people who control something on behalf of the owner. Charter school trustees have the authority to govern the school on behalf of the public.

The management of a school functions similar to a football coaching team. Management in a school has direct supervision of the teachers, staff and students. Management should possess the expertise necessary to run the school on a day-to-day basis. The head administrator should be evaluated by the board as to how well he or she is achieving the objectives of the board, just as a football coach is evaluated according to the objectives of the owner. In essence, the board says *what* it

wants; the management determines *how* to achieve it (within board-defined limits).

Whenever a board performs the roles, tasks or responsibilities of management, it becomes dysfunctional.

Consider the following example from a conference I attended a few years ago. A board member in the audience boasted to the rest of the group (mostly other board members) that individual board members in his school conducted teacher evaluations. That's as dysfunctional as it is misguided. School board members aren't usually qualified to evaluate teachers anymore than Wendy's board members are qualified to evaluate restaurant employees.

Even if occasional charter school board members are qualified to do so, performing the role of management puts the board at risk of alienating the school faculty and staff, as well as potentially inviting the entrance of a union (see Carpenter, 2006)—an occurrence the board will likely regret.

Instead of evaluating, hiring and firing personnel, choosing curriculum, selecting test instruments and reviewing routine student discipline matters—all of which are management functions—the board should prescribe the outcomes it wishes to achieve, establish (through policies) the boundaries in which the outcomes are to occur and then hold the management accountable by evaluating those outcomes.

For boards that need further help defining governance responsibilities, I recommend the book, *Boards That Make a Difference* (Carver, 2006). It unpacks the mystery of how to cease managing and start governing.

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## Dysfunction #2 Misappropriating Board Authority

Too often, charter school board members mistakenly believe that the authority which the board possesses to govern the school is possessed by each board member individually. It is not. Some board members go so far as to behave as if what they want accomplished individually is the same as what the board wants accomplished. A friend who is an authorizer told me of a comical example of this: A board member ordered the school leader to install a bicycle rack because she wanted her child to ride a bike to school.

In schools in which I’ve served, *individual* board members have:

- Telephoned me at home (sometimes on weekends) to dispute student discipline matters involving children of their friends
- Spent or encumbered school funds on pet projects without board authorization
- Directed traffic and staff at school drop-off/pick-up time without being asked to do so
- Authorized fundraising
- Polled teachers for opinions about the strategic direction of the school

Quite thankfully, renegades such as these are usually just one person on a board. Even so, one board member who thinks he or she possess the authority of the board—especially if he or she happens to be the chair—can interfere with the effective governing of the entire board (Kissman, 2006).

Such individuals often give di-

rectives to school leaders, form cliques, interfere with management, raise issues at the board level that arise from personal agendas, and/or pose as the spokesperson for the staff or parents or some segment thereof.

In reality, the only time a board member possesses authority is when he or she is sitting in a board meeting, as part of the whole board, or when he or she has been duly appointed to act on behalf of the board (such as, being part of a committee—something that should be used sparingly, if at all, since board committees diminish the board’s ability to hold the CEO accountable) (Carver, 2006).

In contrast to individuals running around the school imposing their own agendas, a functional board speaks with one voice. It does this only when it passes a resolution (regardless of the actual vote count).

Individual board member opinions which may be stated in board meetings are not binding on the school’s administration. How could they be? No matter how talented, there is no superintendent that can simultaneously satisfy multiple individuals with conflicting opinions.

Devising proper lines of authority and requiring that individual board members adhere to them by casting them as board policy can go a long way toward eliminating “loose cannon” problems. Also, new board members should receive an orientation which explains the governing philosophy of the board.

Lastly, waste no time as a board in removing an individual board member who consistently refuses to abide by the policies of the board to act and speak as one. Schools run better without such members.



### Dysfunction #3

## Creating “Revolving Door Accountability”

*Prior to selecting a CEO, the board should decide what is to be accomplished by the school. Board expert John Carver refers to these accomplishments as “Ends,” defined as those things that are to be accomplished, for whom and at what cost. (Carver, 2006).*

Only once the board knows what it wants, is it in a position to search for someone whom it may hold accountable to achieve it.

A good starting point for determining ends is for every board member to read the contract that exists between the board and the organization that approves it to operate and receive state funds (i.e., its authorizer or sponsor). These contractually agreed-upon outcomes should be the minimal basis of CEO accountability.

What is more often the practice, however, is that a board hires a CEO without any forethought as to how he or she is to be held accountable. As my friend Bruce Lockerbie says, oftentimes the first job evaluation the CEO gets in such cases is written on a pink-slip. The board then repeats the process with its next CEO, thereby creating a “revolving door” to the school leader’s office. This is board caprice, not accountability, and it is highly detrimental to building a good school.

Beyond those outcomes which the board is contractually obligated for the school to achieve (the very essence of the charter school idea), the board should develop additional policy objectives that are consistent with the mission and vision of the

school. The CEO should then be delegated with the necessary authority to achieve them. True accountability comes from assessing the school’s performance against the pre-defined outcomes.

Besides student achievement, which is clearly the primary deliverable for any charter school leader, the board should also ensure that school finances are being appropriately handled. Every board should receive regular financial statements including balance sheet, statements of cash flow, and income and expense.

It is also advisable for the board to hire *its own* auditor to periodically review these statements and to conduct an annual audit.

If you think this is too expensive, I can assure you it is a bargain compared to dealing with the occasional crooked CEO who steals money, as happened in an organization on whose board I once served. Few of us on the board expressed concern about not receiving good financial reporting until it was too late.

And it’s not just embezzlement against which the board should guard. The board also needs to protect the school from incompetent management which can cause a school to close due to insolvency. For a sobering example of this, read the California Charter Academy story in chapter four of *Hopes, Fears, & Reality* (Lake, Hill, 2005).

Finally, if you have a talented CEO who is accomplishing what the board has defined, show your appreciation to him or her. You’ll be doing your school a favor since it is well-known that talented school leaders are in short supply. Keep the door to the CEO’s office voluntarily locked—from the inside.

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“kids in your school will live with the education they’re getting from you for the rest of their lives. Isn’t it worth at least half of the board’s regular meeting time to discuss how well the school is providing that education?”

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## Dysfunction #4 Wasting Time on Administrivia

I don’t recall where I first heard the word “administrivia.” Someone coined it to refer to the thousand-and-one details involved in running a school. I like the word because it captures so well, the tendency of school boards to spend unbelievable amounts of time on insignificant things, or at least things that are far less significant than student achievement.

A former superintendent friend once told me that in his observation, school boards spend 75 percent of their time talking about things that really don’t matter. By the time they’re two hours into this bog, board members are too tired to devote even 15 minutes to talk about improving student performance. This same friend says that if charter schools invert this model and spend 75 percent of every meeting wrestling with the difficult issues of student performance, charter schools would become the most successful schools in the country.

What issues do boards waste their time on, if not discussing student performance? Well, the sky really is the limit. Here’s a sample of discussions I’ve endured:

- Paint colors on exterior classroom doors
- Filling secretarial positions
- Content on classroom bulletin boards
- Cheerleader skirt length
- Selecting a contractor to repaint an exterior sign
- Extra-curricular activities
- Recess protocol
- Tennis court resurfacing

- Restroom usage schedules
- Field trip details

For boards seeking not to waste time on administrivia, I recommend three things.

First, establish a baseline for your board by having someone keep a minute-by-minute running summary of how the board spends its time during two or three regular meetings. Put the findings into one of two columns. One column is for minutes spent on student achievement. The other column is for everything else. Compare the two columns. If your board is spending less than half its time on student achievement, the board is wasting time on administrivia. (Obviously, there are other important topics that boards need to discuss, but they shouldn’t consume half of a typical meeting.)

Second, read Patrick Lencioni’s book, *Death by Meeting*. It contains some excellent lessons about the structure of meetings. Although the book is geared toward management meetings (not to be confused with board governance meetings), some of Lencioni’s ideas and insights are applicable to charter school boards.

Finally, exercise the discipline of taking the long view of things. Ask yourselves as a board if “xyz” issue is going to be of any importance in five years. If it isn’t, delegate it to the CEO and move on.

Student achievement will always pass this litmus test because kids in your school will live with the education they’re getting from you for the rest of their lives. Isn’t it worth at least half of the board’s regular meeting time to discuss how well the school is providing that education?



## Dysfunction #5 Failing to Develop Its Own Capacity

There was a time when a school board could do its job with little or no expertise required. A hundred years ago, if you could read and cipher, you probably would have been considered well-qualified to help govern a school.

Not anymore.

These days, schools are complex organizations. The list of things about which charter school board members should have a working knowledge include, but are not limited to, the following:

- No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)
- Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Sizeable amounts of state-level public school code including your state's charter school requirements
- Financial reporting
- Contractual agreements
- Funding, building, and maintenance of school buildings
- Employment law
- Management companies
- Student achievement and performance measures
- Good governance
- Policy development
- Negotiating skills
- Union tactics
- The politics of school choice
- Marketing

The above sample of items illustrates just how complex the charter school sector is. Regardless, board members have the responsibility to know this stuff. What to do?

The functional board recognizes that it needs to develop itself. To do so, it devotes time in its board meetings and resources for that purpose. It may watch an informative program, discuss a book or invite an outside expert to present information. Board members should also seek to educate themselves outside board meetings by attending an occasional seminar and by staying informed of broader charter school trends.

This doesn't mean that every charter school board member should possess the same depth of knowledge as the school leader. That would be absurd.

It does mean, however, that board members should recognize that they cannot govern properly without a certain level of understanding. It is completely legitimate for boards to invest time and reasonable amounts of school funds necessary to acquire it.

On the charter school board on which I currently serve, the board devoted time for several months to discuss a book on governance which everyone agreed to read. We also regularly invite our school leader to educate us on various issues involving student achievement.

If you're reading this as a charter school board member, that's a good indicator you take your role seriously. But if others on your board aren't developing their knowledge through further training, discussions and reading, their negligence will impede effective governance.

The references at the end of this paper are a good place to start. Pick a resource and resolve as a board to begin spending a few minutes each meeting discussing it. This action alone would improve most boards.

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“A hundred years ago, if you could read and cipher, you probably would have been considered well-qualified to help govern a school. Not anymore.”

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## References & Recommended Resources

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### ***From the CEO of the National Charter Schools Institute***

Affiliated with Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan since its inception in 1995, the National Charter Schools Institute is committed to advancing quality in the charter school sector through publications, conference presentations and tailored technical assistance to charter schools.

If you found this publication meaningful, I invite you to visit our Web site at [www.NationalCharterSchools.org](http://www.NationalCharterSchools.org) where you will find similar monographs on a variety of topics including board governance, administrative leadership, evaluating research and more—all free of charge. As long as proper attribution is given, you're welcome to print and distribute as many copies of these as you like.

If you would like to discuss the prospect of board governance training or other kinds of technical assistance, please e-mail me at [bcarpenter@nationalcharterschools.org](mailto:bcarpenter@nationalcharterschools.org), or call the Institute at (989) 774-2999 (Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, EST).

Finally, any feedback you might wish to suggest to improve this, or any of our publications, would be valued.



Brian L. Carpenter