

# GOLDEN CHARTER ACADEMY

## BOARD GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

*This handbook reflects the governance team's work on the development of a framework for effective governance. The intent of this document is to put into place norms, procedures, and protocols that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in an effective manner while maintaining the focus on students and learning. This is a living document that will be reviewed by the governance team on an annual basis to ensure that it is an effective tool.*

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

## **BOARD GOVERNANCE TEAM**

### **Board of Directors**

**Term 2022-2023**

- Ed González, Chair
- Keshia Thomas, Vice Chair
- Brad Huff, member
- Scott Barton, member
- Ruthie Quinto, member
- Bard Devore, member
- Isaiah Green, member

### **Chief Executive Officer/Head of School**

- Robert Golden

**DRAFT**

## **VISION**

We envision a school community that works together to equip our students to excel academically and utilize their skills to make changes in the environment at the local, state, national, and even international level.

## **MISSION**

Our mission is to inspire powerful young minds.

## **CORE VALUES**

1. The future we want to create includes a community of leaders who have strong shared beliefs and values that all students have the ability to learn at high levels and the expectations of our organization/school to meet or exceed that level.
2. The future we want to create includes a community of leaders who are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data and use it to drive continuous improvement.
3. The future we want to create includes a community of leaders who have a collaborative relationship and establish a strong communication structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district-wide student learning and achievement goals.
4. The future we want to create includes a community of leaders who are knowledgeable, ethical, responsible, critical thinking, and engaged members of society.
5. The future we want to create includes a community of leaders who utilize research-based, varied, differentiated and effective instructional practices to ensure all students learn at high levels.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

1. All students build depth of understanding in core concepts through an equitable, cohesive preschool & TK-8 grade education program.
2. Our inclusive school environment cultivates students who are responsible, compassionate, and engaged citizens.
3. Our work culture supports sustainability and values continuous growth of teachers, staff, and administrators.
4. Parents are valued partners who strengthen our schools and programs.
5. Organization leaders, in collaboration with community partners, sustain a high-quality learning experience for all students.

## **EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization: the actions of an individual, a group coming together to govern, and the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.

In a charter governance, the Board and the CEO/Head of School work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to:

- Maintain a Unity of Purpose
- Agree on and govern within appropriate roles;
- Create and sustain a positive governance culture; and
- Create a supportive structure for effective governance

Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school organization and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.

## **MEETING NORMS**

- Make sure each member's voice is heard.
- Turn off cell phones or put on vibrate.
- Be present and prepared.
- Honor time; be effective and efficient.
- Be respectful and civil when engaging in discourse.
- Keep confidential items confidential.
- Operate with trust.
- Stay on task.
- Assume good intentions.
- Put aside personal issues.
- Filter out the business of adults and focus on students.

## **GOVERNANCE TEAM PRACTICES**

*As a Governance Team, we commit to...*

### **Placing Something on the Agenda**

- Board members may request that an issue be placed on a Board agenda for discussion without extensive staff work. After the discussion, the Board

may direct the CEO/Head of School to prepare materials for a deeper Board discussion and/or to take action at a future Board meeting.

- The Chief Executive Officer/Head of School will endeavor to provide at least one week's notice of a topic being agendaized for discussion
- The Chief Executive Officer/Head of School will work with the Board Chair to ensure that the Board has an opportunity to discuss significant issues before they appear as an action item.

### **Board Meeting Agendas**

- When a significant or high-profile item is brought to the Board for action, the CEO/Head of School shall present a summary of the perspectives and issues considered in arriving at the recommendation.
- When an item with revisions is brought to the Board for action, the CEO/Head of School shall inform the Board of the revisions.
- The Board will receive the agenda, complete with all attachments, at least 72 hours before a Board meeting.
- Board members will endeavor to submit their Board packet questions to the CEO/Head of School by 8:00 a.m. on Monday mornings. Questions may be communicated via email or voice mail.

### **Use of Study Sessions**

- Study sessions will be developed throughout the year to ensure coverage of both timely and urgent issues which require extensive discussion before a possible Board action is taken.
- Study sessions will be organized with a brief staff presentation followed by Board discussion. Presentation materials will be provided to the Board with the meeting materials three days prior to the study session.

### **Handling complaints from the community**

- The Board and CEO/Head of School are committed to having parent/staff complaints handled as close to the source as possible.
- Board members will refer complainants back to the appropriate teacher or principal and also notify the CEO/Head of School. If the complainant has already been to those levels, the Board member will refer the complaint to the CEO/Head of School.
- A Board member forwarding a complaint will not be perceived to be endorsing the complaint.

- The CEO/Head of School or designee will respond in a timely way to the complainant, investigate the complaint, and communicate back to the complainant and the Board member in order to close the loop.

### **Individual Members' Request for Information**

- In order to ensure that all Board members receive the same information and to keep the CEO/Head of School informed of Board members' questions and concerns, requests for information shall come to the CEO/Head of School's Office. The Board member will receive the information, and it will be included in periodic updates.

### **Surprises**

- The CEO/Head of School commit to sharing information with each other in order to avoid surprises to any member of the governance team.
- The CEO/Head of School can be reached by email and cell phone.

### **Maintaining Confidentiality**

- The Board, CEO/Head of School and Cabinet members agree to maintain the confidentiality of all Closed Sessions and privileged communication as required by Education Code. Such matters are those relating to personnel issues, litigation, real property negotiations, and labor negotiations.
- The periodic updates are not confidential; however, they should not be shared with others without a Request for Public Information made through the CEO/Head of School's Office. Everything that is confidential will be clearly marked as such—whether by fax, email, or mail.

### **Board Member Role in Public**

- School and community invitations for Board members to attend events will be coordinated through the CEO/Head of School's Office. The CEO/Head of School's Office staff will provide details for Board members regarding costs and expectations for attendance.
- Board members will be introduced at all school events unless they are attending only as a parent or spectator. When in doubt, the administrator in charge will ask the Board member whether they wished to be introduced.
- Board members will make the administrator in charge of an event aware of their attendance when they arrive.

### **Clearly Communicate and Establish Priorities**

- The CEO/Head of School will establish annual priorities that will be used to evaluate him/her and measure the school's progress toward its goals.

### **School Visits**

- Board members will work with the CEO/Head of School to coordinate school visits to observe firsthand the instructional program and school operations.

### **Handling the Media**

- All Board members will refer contacts by the media to the CEO/Head of School. The CEO/Head of School shall be designated as the school's Public Information Officer (PIO).
- The CEO/Head of School shall contact all Board members to inform them of the content of the communication.

## **GOVERNANCE TEAM PROTOCOLS**

### **Purpose**

The Board of Directors is the educational policy making body for the charter school. To effectively meet the organization's challenges, the Board and the CEO/Head of School must function together as a governance team. To ensure unity among team members, effective operating procedures or protocols must be in place. There are general protocols and those that are specific for the Board and the CEO/Head of School.

### **General – The Board and Chief Executive Officer/Head of School will:**

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
2. Value, support, and advocate for public charter schools and public education.
3. Operate openly with trust integrity and transparency.
4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility, dignity, and respect while honoring the right to disagree with each other.
5. Govern within the Board-adopted policies and procedures.
6. Define and respect the difference between administration and policy-making and respect the roles of each.

7. Keep confidential matters confidential. Uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from Board meeting Executive Sessions; keep all conversations taking place in Closed Session absolutely confidential.
8. Keep communication open and courteous; agree that email and text messages should not be used to address personnel matters nor resolve governance team issues.

**Board Members will:**

1. Work with all members of the Board and the CEO/Head of School to become a team devoted to students; be dedicated to making all members of the team successful.
2. Act with dignity, and understanding the implications of demeanor and behavior.
3. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents, and the community.
4. Focus on policy making, planning and evaluation for student success.
5. Communicate a common vision.
6. Commit to attend all Board meetings in person unless prevented so by an emergency of some type. When attendance is not possible, Board members will notify the Board Chair of the situation. If the Board Chair is not available, the Vice Chair will be notified.
7. Understand authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individual Board members.
8. Support decisions of the majority after honoring the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.
9. Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the CEO/Head of School and staff.
10. Acknowledge individual requests for reports and projects will be directed only to the CEO/Head of School.
11. Participate in establishing annual expectations; review its protocols and practices
12. Objectively evaluate the CEO/Head of School's performance and provide appropriate feedback.
13. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness; review its protocols and practices.

14. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance.
15. Communicate directly with the CEO/Head of School whenever a question or concern is raised by a staff member, student, parent or community member.
16. Contact the CEO/Head of School whenever contacted by the media regarding an incident, event, or agenda item.
17. Communicate directly with the CEO/Head of School prior to Board meetings to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items; honor the "no surprises" rule.
18. Communicate one-to-one with the CEO/Head of School when an individual concern arises; do not allow a matter to fester.
19. Cast a vote on all matters except when a conflict of interest arises.
20. Listen to and recognize individual constituents and special interest groups while understanding the importance of using one's best judgment to represent all members of the community.
21. Visit the school site a minimum of four times a year and attend school functions, as time permits, but avoid interrupting instruction or interrupting employees at work.
22. Represent the organization, when possible, by attending community functions.
23. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.

**The Chief Executive Officer/Head of School will:**

1. Work toward creating a team with the Board dedicated to students.
2. Work with the Board to establish a clear vision and mission, core values and strategic goals for the organization.
3. Communicate the common vision and mission, core values and strategic goals.
4. Recognize that the relationship between the Board and the CEO/Head of School requires support from the organization's management team.
5. Understand the distinction among Board, the CEO/Head of School, and staff roles, and respect the role of the Board as the representative of the GCA community and as makers of policy.
6. Accept leadership responsibility and be accountable for implementing the vision, mission, goals, and policies of the school.
7. Prepare preliminary goals annually for the Board's consideration.

8. Provide data to the Board members so data-driven decisions can be made.
9. Make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board as appropriate.
10. Communicate with Board members promptly and effectively.
11. Inform the Board prior to critical information become public; apprise all Board members in a timely manner of any major incident or when they may be called on to answer or explain.
12. Distribute information fully and equally to all Board members.
13. Provided information requested by one Board members to every Board member as appropriate.
14. Distribute the Board agenda in a timely fashion and with enough time for Board study, and clarify information prior to scheduled meetings.
15. Never bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to a Board member or cabinet member.
16. Provide requests for additional information through a Board update, special report, Board agenda items, or as a Board workshop.
17. Present major decisions initially as a discussion item, then place it on the next Board agenda for action.
18. Treat all Board members professionally.
19. Communicate with individual Board members to determine if concerns exist prior to a possible problem developing, and respect the right to disagree with each other.
20. Keep the Board informed regarding significant issues and/or serious situations to honor the “no surprises” rule.
21. Bring to the attention of the Board matters that affect relationships.