

Governance & Academic Excellence Committee

Reports to: The Board of Trustees

Term of Office: One year

Purpose

The governance committee is commissioned by and responsible to the Board of Trustees to

- Assume the primary responsibility for matters pertaining to Board of Trustees recruitment, nominations, orientation, training, and evaluation in accordance with the bylaws of the organization as well as established policies and practices approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Assume the Primary responsibility of evaluating the Executive Director.
- Assume the responsibility of compliance
 - Reporting to Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
 - Massachusetts Open Meeting law
- Measure the academic results of the organization against the goals laid out in the organization's charter, accountability plan, and annual Executive Director goals. For the Academic Excellence Committee, this means measuring organizational outcomes against stated goals for metrics such as:
 - Performance on state tests
 - Performance on nationally normed standardized tests (e.g., the MAP, MCAS, SAT 10, etc.)
 - Performance on interim assessments (e.g., Achievement Network tests, the STEP, the DIBELS, or interim assessments created by the school)
 - Attendance

Responsibilities:

- To notify the Finance Committee of any decisions made that impact on the school finances. Such decisions will be made with a clause stating that they are recommendations and are subject to the school's budget policies and procedures. Depending on the nature of the proposed budget change, related policies and procedures may include approval by the Finance Committee and/or the Board of Trustees
- Board Recruitment & Retention
 - Analyze the skills and experience needed on the Board.
 - Create a short and long-term board recruitment strategy.
 - Work with Board Chair and Executive Director on a succession plan for board officers.
 - Recruit members to serve as members of the Board and develop a slate of trustees for consideration by the membership at the annual meeting in accordance with selection/election procedures outlined in the bylaws.
 - Develop and review annually the procedures for Board recruitment.
 - Develop an orientation and training plan for new trustees.

- Assist in the planning of an annual Board retreat and other deeper strategy sessions as needed.
- Develop and revise a Board member handbook outlining the responsibilities of the Board and Board members, Board policies, and other relevant information.
- Conduct board education as needed.
- Create specific measurable board-level goals for the year as part of the full board planning process.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of board meetings and make recommendations for improvement to the chair and the full board as needed.
- Annually coordinate an evaluation of the full board and individual trustees.
- Annual Board Self-Assessment
- Compliance Issues
 - Reporting to Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
 - Massachusetts Open Meeting law
- Governance
 - Annual review of the Executive Director
 - The board and Executive Director have a clear and shared definition of “academic excellence” for the organization. (It should be written down and understood by all trustees.)
 - The board and Executive Director have a clear and shared sense of how well the organization is currently performing in reaching that definition of excellence.
 - The board and Executive Director agree on what the next steps the organization will take in order to reach that goal of excellence.
 - Understand the promises in the charter and accountability plan and understand how well the organization is currently performing against those promises.
 - Understand what standardized assessments the school administers, what each one assesses, when each one is administered, and how the data from each is used to inform teaching and programmatic changes.
 - Ensure a clear and structured process for updating the Board of Trustees on the organization’s performance on key academic outcomes on a regular basis (at least four times per year).
 - Review academic-outcome data prior to it being presented to the Board of Trustees, it is presented in a comparative context (e.g., against comparable of how the organization has performed in the past, how other schools in the area have performed, and how other high performing schools have performed) so that trustees can assess the organization’s overall strength of performance meaningfully.
 - Work with Executive Director to provide board training, as necessary, to understand how the organization is achieving the board approved goals.

	Executive Director Role	Committee Role
Goal Setting	Develop goals/timeline for reporting on progress towards academic goals and propose them to the committee for discussion and feedback	Review Executive Director’s proposed goals/reporting timeline Ask questions to ensure that the goals are (1) ambitious and (2) achievable. (These judgments are made relative to the organization’s charter promises,

	Present finalized goals/reporting timeline to the full board for approval	other schools' performances, the organization's own past performance.) Recommend finalized goals/reporting timeline to the full board for approval; ensure that all trustees understand goals
Progress Monitoring	Present the committee with data to assess progress towards goals on the agreed upon timeline Present updates on data to full board on agreed upon timeline	Review data to assess progress towards goals on agreed-upon timeline Ask probing questions to better understand the data and help the Executive Director to be thoughtful about the data Help Executive Director to frame data for presentation to the full board
Instructional Decision Making	Select and implement curricula, training, and materials necessary for successful instruction	Sounding board for Executive Director's ideas on how to improve instructional practices and curricula based on student performance data
Staff Oversight	Hire and train all staff Oversee and evaluate all staff	Ensure that Executive Director has created and implemented staff evaluation and feedback procedures Monitor results through annual/biannual staff surveys and through staff retention data

What the Academic Excellence Committee Should **Not Do**

- One of the biggest pitfalls for Academic Excellence Committees is to engage over inputs—the means by which the organization pursues its mission—rather than outcomes—the objective data used to assess how well the organization is meeting its mission. Inputs are management level issues, which should be handled by the Executive Director. Outcomes are what the board should be focused on and governing towards. The best Academic Excellence Committees help Executive Director s set clear goals for the year of outcomes that are related to the mission and then set up checkpoints throughout the year (likely two to four), at which they meet with the Executive Director to monitor progress towards those goals.
- Other activities Academic Excellence Committees should NOT be involved in:
 - Evaluating teachers
 - Selecting, designing, or reviewing the quality of curricula
 - Planning professional development for teachers

- Interacting with teachers or other staff members on a regular basis (i.e., daily or weekly)
- Interacting with families or students on a regular basis (i.e., daily or weekly)
- Presenting themselves as an outlet for staff, family, or student complaints or concerns that have not first been formally addressed to the Executive Director

The committee shall bring to the Board of Trustees recommendations to change the following policies when appropriate.

- Mandatory Criminal Record (CORI) Checks (shared with Staff Recruitment & Retention Committee)
- Bequests, Donations and Gifts
- FRCS Community Standards for Behavior
- Complaint Procedures
- Non-Discrimination
- Family Education and Rights to Privacy

The committee shall manage the following activities.

Composition:

1. This committee is chaired is a member of the Board of Trustees and appointments shall be made at least annually in accordance with the FRCS Bylaws.
2. The clerk/secretary to the committee is a member of the FRCS SLT or Staff

Compliance

1. This committee will meet at least once every other month.
2. The committee shall call additional meetings as needed.