

## **For Higher Expectations for Charter School Boards**

For most of the history of chartered public schools in Minnesota (and across the country) one of the biggest challenges has been the governance of schools.

Originally in Minnesota, the board of every chartered school was composed of a majority of teachers who taught in the school, thus ensuring that teachers really were in charge of both the academic program and the operation of the institution. A decade ago in response to a number of factors, the charter school law was changed to allow for different governance models – a teacher majority board, a parent majority board, a community majority board, or a non-majority board – but all boards must have teachers, parents and community members on the board.

At the same time that these different board governance models were enacted, the Legislature also enacted a requirement that members of chartered school boards take training on the board's role and responsibilities, employment practices, and financial management within 12 months of being seated on the board. It also mandated annual training but left what that training should be for boards to decide depending on the board's needs.

What is clear a decade later is that training has contributed to improved overall governance, but governance of many schools is still a significant challenge. There are a number of reasons for this challenge including:

- As a non-profit organization, the task of recruiting volunteers to serve on boards is difficult work.
- Often, expectations for volunteers are not exceedingly high – there are those who believe and express that you cannot really expect too much from volunteers.
- Many of the volunteers who serve on chartered school boards have little or no experience on governance boards, or other experiences that translate to service on a board.
- Many chartered school boards do not have job descriptions, written expectations, or an on-boarding process for new members, or plans for the annual training of board members.

**SO, IT IS TIME - to raise the expectations for charter school boards. It is time for action.**

1. Every chartered school board should have a written job description and expectations for board members, and utilize those in recruiting new members and evaluating the performance of the board.
2. Every chartered school board should have a formal on-boarding process to provide new members with the background of the institution's history, challenges, opportunities and the process and procedures of how the board itself works.
3. Every chartered school board should have an annual plan for the ongoing education and training of individual board members and the overall board.
4. Every chartered school board should have a board development committee whose job is to facilitate the identification and recruitment of potential board members, oversee the on-boarding and annual education/training processes, and annual retreat of the board.

**It is time – for higher expectations for chartered school boards.**