

There seems to be a common misunderstanding in the charter school community that the Board of Directors of a charter school non-profit corporation cannot recruit individuals for the school's board of directors.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, **nonprofit boards have a legal and moral responsibility to the organization and its stakeholders** (*in the case of a chartered public school to the students, families and citizens of Minnesota*) **to recruit individuals with the necessary skills, traits and temperament to serve as board members.**

A non-profit corporation cannot effectively operate without good governance – and good governance does not happen without the Board of Directors making it a priority to recruit individuals who will be “great board members”.

The responsibility to recruit individuals for the board rests with the Board Governance Committee. It is incredibly important work because **the effectiveness of governance is based on the people who comprise the board.**

It is incumbent therefore, on the Board Governance Committee to recruit people with the talents, skills, passion and temperament that match the needs of the school. It is central to successful governance.

### **So how does the Board Governance Committee find “Great Board Members”?**

The Board Governance Committee must identify and understand the skills, competencies and traits the board needs at the specific time in the school's history in light of the school's mission, vision and strategic direction.

In an article published in 2016, Jay Love, Co-founder and CEO of *Bloomerang*, an organization that helps nonprofits achieve their mission, proposed that there are 5 key traits of “great board members”

1. True passion for the mission *of the school*
2. Successful record of achievement *in the person's own field of work*
3. Innate ability to work with others
4. Willingness to be fully involved in *the board's work*
5. Knows how to make time available *to fulfill their responsibilities as a board member*

**Great board members** do not fall from the sky, nor do they just walk in to the schoolhouse door, finding great board members requires the never-ending work of the Governance Committee.

The Governance Committee must constantly be on the lookout for capable and competent individuals who might be potential candidates for the board. When they identify a potential individual the Committee has the responsibility to cultivate and nurture the relationship with the individual. Then at the appropriate time the Committee needs to follow a formal process of recruiting them for service on the board.

A process that includes:

- An Informal initial conversation about service on a board
- Face to face meeting with members of the Governance Committee focused on identifying their passion, skills, traits, as well as their knowledge and understanding about education, governance, etc.
- Meeting with the school director about the relationship between the board and the administration

These steps are designed to find out whether the individual has the traits, skills and temperament for service on a board of directors. Not everyone who wants to be a board member has the appropriate traits, skills, or temperament. That is why non-profit boards need to recruit and nominate candidates for the board.

At this point, it is important to make it as clear as possible that the work of recruiting individual is a **group responsibility**, and not the purview of any one individual board member or the school director. There is a danger that if one individual, or the school director has sole responsibility for this task that only like-minded people, or worse, cronies will be recruited, rather than folks with a diversity of thought and independent judgement.

It is also important to note that while a board needs to recruit people to stand for election, school policy should not preclude individuals from putting themselves forward to serve on the board whether through an open nomination process, and or as a write-in candidate on the ballot.

While the election process normally takes place in a prescribed timeframe, the recruiting process is not a one week, or one month process – **it is an ongoing never-ending process** that should be the central focus of a Board Governance Committee’s work.

A charter school board of directors has a responsibility to students, parents, staff, as well as the citizens of Minnesota that the school be governed by *great board members* who have the passion, skills, and temperament to govern the school for the common good.