

# Navigating Your Board Role Effectively



*The Governor John Engler*

**Center for  
Charter Schools**



**BoardOnTrack**

# What We'll Cover

- Framing Thoughts
- Who is on your Governance Team?
- Understanding Governance & Management
- Mini Case Studies
- Board Roles & Responsibilities
- Questions



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Chief Governance Officer

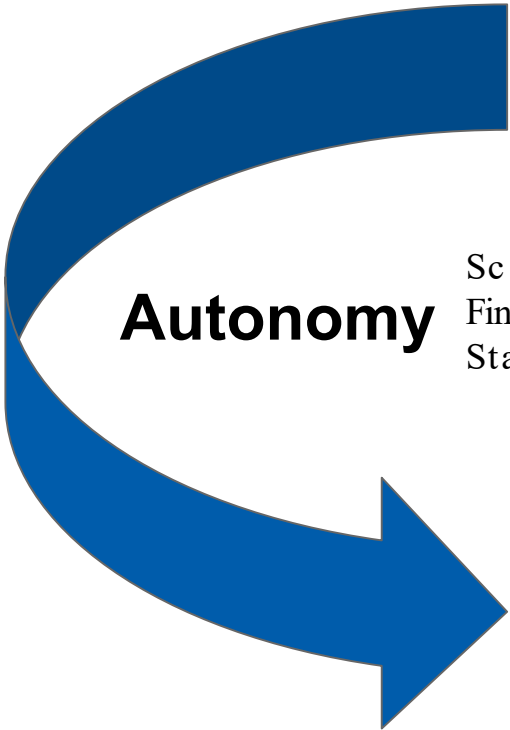


**We help charter school boards  
deliver exceptional results.**

Why does your  
board exist?

# Governance Board - Authorizer

Authorizer  
(CMU)



School Program  
Finances  
Staffing

Mission  
Org. Sustainability  
Student Outcomes



Charter School  
Board

# What is a Charter Board?

A charter board is more than a group of well-meaning volunteers leading a school.

## Rather...

It's a highly effective team,  
strategically assembled,  
to bring the skills, expertise, temperament, and time,  
to govern a multimillion-dollar public enterprise.

# School Board Evolution





Where does your team  
fall on the continuum?

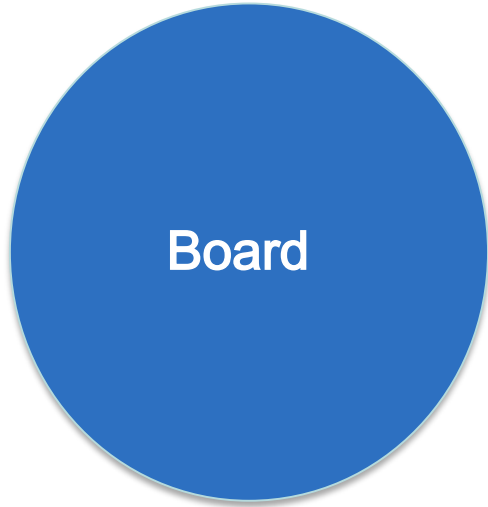
# More Than the Board:

Who's on your  
governance team and  
what do they do?

# Governance Balancing Act

- Charter organizations are led by two equally important sides of the coin: the board and the Leadership
- This collective group -- both sides of the coin -- have overlapping yet distinct responsibilities for ensuring the success of the organization
- Great governance teams find an appropriate balance between the two sides
- Many organizations make the mistake of letting this relationship get out of balance

# Governance is a Team Sport!



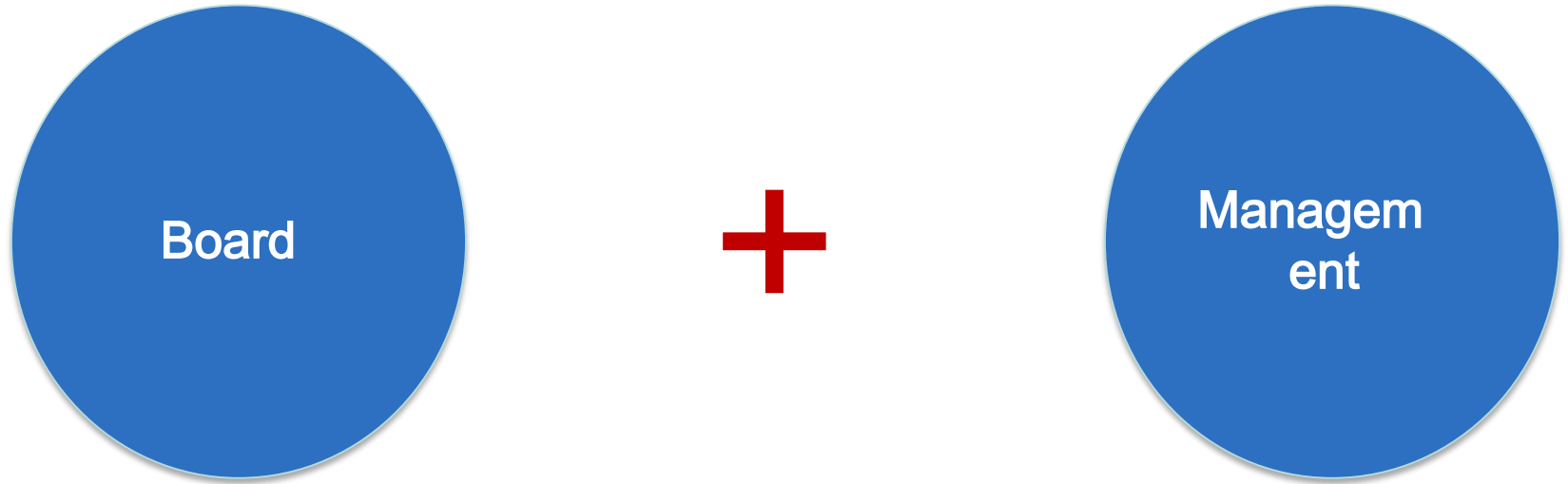
## Voting trustees and their designees

Includes non-voting committee members

## School Leader & Staff

Staff who support the board's operations or strategic work; including the CFO, Chief Academic Officer, & Development Director

# Team Approach Example



**Budget Development &  
Approval**

# Team Structure: The Board

## The Board

- Full voting board members
- Large enough to do substantive committee work between full board meetings
- Committees are aligned to strategic goals
- Non-voting board members on committees

## Board Leadership

- Board Chair
- Chair of Governance Committee
- Committee Chairs

# Team Structure: Management

## The CEO

- Leadership devotes time to grow and sustain governance team

## C- Suite Support & Leadership

- Staff assigned to and clear on their roles to support and sustain effective committee work
- Principa l/ Leadership Team
- Business Manager
- Development Director, Community Relations, Grants, etc .

# Role of Board Chair

- The Board Chair is **the** chief volunteer leader of the organization
- They're responsible for facilitating and empowering the work of the board
- The most important skill of any Board Chair is to be fantastic at running group processes
- Fostering a strong, supportive, collaborative relationship with the charter leadership is key



# Role of the School Leadership & Staff

- This is the most difficult role in building and maintaining the governance team
- The board is only as good as the staff
- The leadership has to walk a tightrope, taking direction from and serving at the pleasure of the board while also being a leader to the board
- Committees need direct, expert support from staff to be successful
- The C-suite is critical to making up the governance team

# **Governance vs. Management**

# Board & Leadership

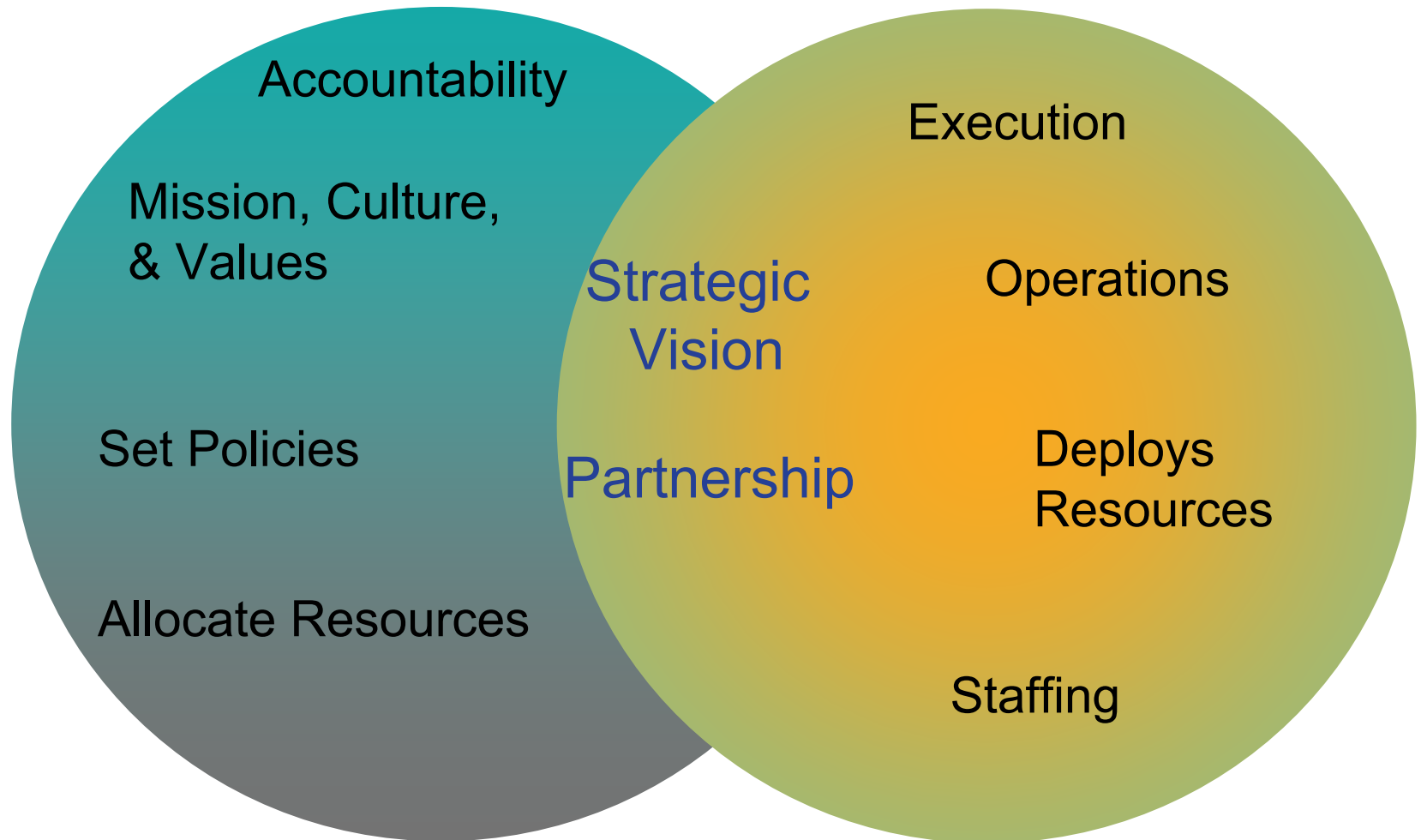
Conceptually: boards govern & Leadership manages

- **Governance** = all about planning & creating the framework for great work to be done
- **Management** = all about executing & supporting the strategic vision
- Boards provide leadership and strategy
  - ◆ Focus on the 'Big Picture'
  - ◆ Steer clear from day-to-day decisions and execution

**Boards** focus on **results** .  
**Leadership** focus on **means**.

# Governance

# Management



# Mini Case Study

For 3 years in a row your board has had an aggressive fundraising goal. And for 3 years in a row the board has struggled to hit their portion of the target. 2 of the 3 years the CEO hit their fundraising target. Finally, the organization is financially able to hire a Director of Development. He is 6 months into the job and the board is feeling very dissatisfied with his performance. When pushed on the topic the CEO has defended the staffer. Tension is mounting.

- Where is the governance - management line?
- Who gets to decide about senior staff performance?
- What is the CEO's role? What is the board's role?

# Mini Case Study #2

It is June, and the CEO is giving the board a wrap - up of the school year. The board is shocked to hear that 60% of the teachers are not going to return next year.

## Consider:

- What is the role of the CEO and the management team?
- What is the role of the board?
- What information, if any, would you want to know?

# Mini Case Study #3

Due to a national pandemic, the school's management and administration have been working together to establish learning plans. One legal requirement is that the ABC Board must solicit public comment from the parents of students enrolled at ABC Academy on a monthly basis.

Jonathon, a parent of a student at ABC Academy, has just been appointed to the Board. He recognizes the time staff have dedicate to these learning plans and decides to help with the process by soliciting feedback from parents and legal guardians after school while he is picking up his kids and share the information with the board via email prior to each board meeting to save time.

## Consider:

- Is this part of Jonathon's role as a board member? What is the role of the board? What is the role of administration and management?
- Where is the governance – management line?

# Indicators of a Great Governance Team

- Collaboration of the full board, committees, CEO, and management team feels like a well-oiled machine
- Everyone knows who's responsible for what
- Team tackles difficult topics
  - ◆ Board is able to openly, respectfully, and productively engage in tough conversations. Tough topics aren't swept under the rug
  - ◆ Trustees have a strong enough relationship with colleagues (board and staff) to ask tough questions of each other
- Team role at meetings
  - ◆ Multiple board members and staff give reports and presentations, not just the CEO



# Board's Roles & Responsibilities

# Key Board Responsibilities

- Determine the mission and purpose of organization and keep it clearly in focus
- Select, support, and monitor performance of school leadership
- Ensure adequate resources for the mission
- Maintain fiscal responsibility and accountability
- Determine, monitor and strengthen the academic programs and services

# Key Board Responsibilities

- Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability of the organization
- Recruit, orient, and train governance board members
- Be an ambassador of your organization in the community

# CEO Support & Evaluation

## Key Tasks

- Give and receive feedback against stated goals throughout the year
- Manage end-of-the-year CEO Evaluation
- Partner with the CEO to document CEO Evaluation and next year's goals

## Common Misconceptions

- This is a once a year event
- Their role in helping board speak with one voice
- The full board doesn't participate in Support & Evaluation

# Want More Info?

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