



Prospect
Leadership
Group



Board Retreat
March 8, 2025



- **Lifelong educator:** 28 years at Neighborhood House Charter School in Dorchester, including 11 years as Executive Director
- **Former Board Member:** Cambridge-Ellis School, Chair of Strategic Planning Committee
- **Parent of teens:** Lily (17) and Charlie (15)
- **Dog mom:** Biscuit (5) and Bean (7 months)
- **Aspiring gardener:** Got any tips for me?
- **How I'm feeling coming into today:** energized!

Please share:

- Your name
- Your role(s), how long you've served, other AMSA affiliations (eg. parent, staff, alum, etc.)
- Something your fellow Board members might not know about you
- A word or phrase that captures how you are feeling coming into today

Then “popcorn” it to someone who hasn’t yet introduced themselves.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Connection 
2. Review and Reflect on Previous Week's Discussion
3. Review and Discussion of Board Roles & Responsibilities

Break

4. Board Goal Development
5. Action Planning
6. Close

Proposed Norms

- Be present and engaged
- Share the air
 - In small groups consider using “*NOSTUESO*” - **No One Speaks Twice Until Everyone Speaks Once**
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
- Assume the best intent; take responsibility for impact
- What’s said here stays here; what’s learned here leaves here
- Accept and expect a lack of closure

Key Takeaways

- 1) **GENERATE** and **DISCUSS** key takeaways from last week.
- 2) **IDENTIFY** the key messages that we need to communicate to the AMSA community.



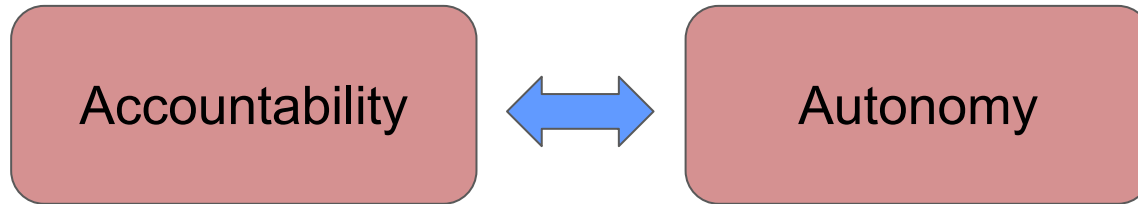


Objectives

- 1. Deepen understanding of the Board's role**
2. Agree upon goals for the Board
3. Develop plans to execute on goals
4. Determine how the Board's goals will be made transparent to the community

Understanding Accountability in a Charter School

A charter school is a public school that is governed by a board of trustees and operates independently of any school committee under a five year charter granted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.



The primary function of the Board of Trustees is accountability.

According to DESE:

“As public agents authorized by the state, the members of the board of trustees of a charter school are responsible for governing the school and hold the charter for the school, as it is granted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). A strong board defines the mission of the school, develops school policies and changes them when appropriate, hires qualified personnel to manage the school's day-to-day operations and holds them accountable for meeting established goals, and formulates a long-range plan and charter school accountability plan that will ensure the school's continued stability.”

Charter School Performance Criteria: Governance

Legal and Fiduciary Responsibilities

- comply with bylaws
- appropriately oversee charter school administration, financial health, progress toward meeting academic and other goals without managing the day-to-day operations of the school
- hire, evaluate, and remove (if necessary) qualified personnel to manage day-to-day operations and hold them accountable for meeting specified goals

Culture of Collaboration

- maintain clear and well-understood systems for decision making and communication
- foster open, deliberate, and thorough discussions that facilitate and ensure public accountability

Focus on Improvement

- engage in strategic and continuous improvement planning
- set and regularly monitor progress relative to priorities and goals aligned with the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy
- ensure clear processes for board and school leadership succession
- regularly review disaggregated student data to ensure that the school's academic program is a success for all students

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TURN and TALK:

Share a phrase that stands out to you and explain why.

**How does this align with your experience of the role the AMSA Board has played?
Where are there opportunities for growth?**

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Governance vs. Management

Definitions

- Merriam Webster:
 - **Governance:** the act or process of governing or overseeing the control and direction of something (such as a country or an organization)
 - **Management:** the conducting or supervising of something (such as a business)
- More practical version:
 - **Governance** refers to the strategic oversight and decision-making by the Board of Trustees, ensuring the organization adheres to its mission, complies with legal standards, and remains a viable organization.
 - **Management**, on the other hand, involves the day-to-day operations, including implementing policies and overseeing staff to achieve the organization's goals and objectives.



Getting in the Right Lane



Adapted from Education Board Partners

Balance Between Governance and Management

RESPONSIBILITIES	DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY
STRATEGY (WHAT) Effective Board Governance Leader & Board Evaluation School Growth School Mission School Sustainability	Board's Decision School Leader Advice
Student Achievement Legal Compliance Budget and Enrollment Strategic Plan Goal Setting Setting Annual Leader Goals	Shared Decisions: Board and School Leader
OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT (HOW) Day-to-day Policies & Procedures Growth Implementation Resource Allocation School Culture Staff Hiring, Evaluation, Separation Agreements	Board Advice School Leader Decision

Role of the Board vs. School Leader

Governance/Board	Management/Executive Director
• Oversight function	• Implementing, planning, organizing, directing
• Assumes responsibility for the school's student achievement results	• Produces student achievement results
• Evaluates and supports School Leader/ED	• Evaluates and supports school staff
• Leads process and sets short and long-term goals for board and approves leader's goals	• Works in partnership with the board to establish both individual and school-wide goals
• Recruits, interviews, and votes to add new board members	• Supports board recruitment process, interviews candidates, and provides feedback
• Evaluates and reports out on effectiveness of the board	• Provides input into effectiveness of the board
• Facilitates board meetings	• Actively participates in board meetings

Board's Role in Accountability



What stakeholders are you accountable to?

Board's Role in Accountability

Accountability...

To whom...

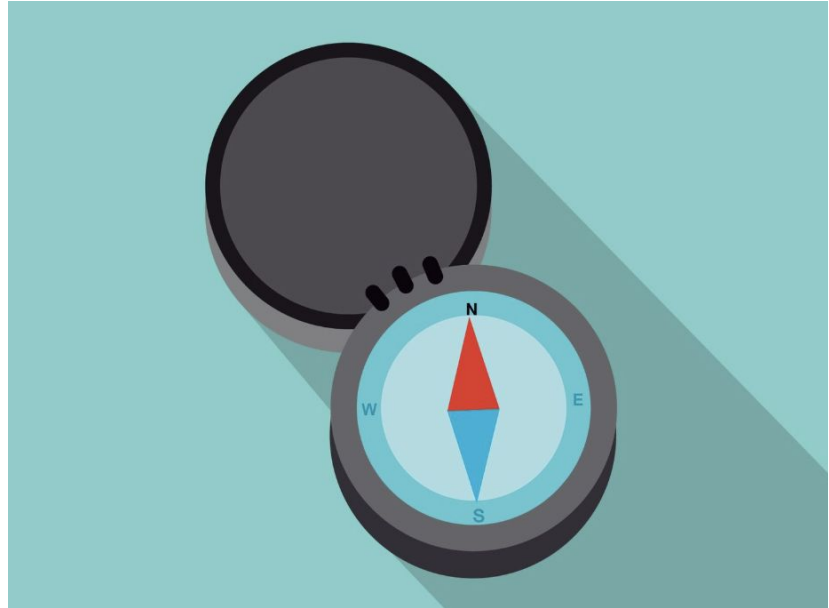
- Students
- Families
- Staff
- Peers - other charter schools, boards, and supporters
- The Board of Education, on behalf of the taxpayers of Massachusetts

Through...

- DESE inspections
- Your Accountability Plan
- Your annual audit
- Your MCAS scores
- Your graduation, discipline, attendance rates (and other pre-defined data)
- Your school's enrollment
- Reputational elements (social media, community reputation, public perceptions)

Board's Role in Accountability

Effective boards
have the right
orientation



Case Studies

- Framework for discussion / analysis:

What should be the Board's role in this scenario?

Directions:

1. Pair up
2. Review case study text
3. Discussion, using framing question above
4. One pair shares
5. Group discussion: Agree? Disagree? Questions? Complicating factors?

Case Study 1: Curriculum Changes

A small group of concerned caregivers attends a recent Board meeting and during the public comment period shares that they want changes made to the curriculum for next year. Specifically, they share that they feel that their children need access to more AP and dual-enrollment classes than are currently being offered. They assert that their kids and many others are being put at a disadvantage for college admissions due to a lack of rigor in the curriculum.

What should be the Board's role in this scenario?

Case Study 2: MCAS Results

Recently released MCAS results show an increase in the percentage of students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in math for students in grades 6 through 8, including subgroups. The scores outpace those of the district.

The results also reveal that the percentage of students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in ELA for grades 6 through 8 has dropped for the 2nd consecutive year. Scores for high needs students and students with disabilities are even lower. For the first time, the district has outperformed the school in this area.

What should be the Board's role in this scenario?

Case Study 3: Budgeting

In reviewing year-to-date financials with school, the finance committee learns that school leadership plans to re-allocate funds in the budget line for field trips toward purchasing a new ELA curriculum that is highly rated by DESE and aligned with the Science of Reading. Some members of the committee are concerned about this change, worrying that students always cite field trips as an important factor in choosing the school. The issue is flagged as one that should be discussed with the full board at its next meeting.

What should be the Board's role in this scenario?

Case Study 4: Staff Departures

Four students and eight parents attend the June board meeting. During the public comment portion of the meeting, each one uses their time to share how sad they are (and for some, how disappointed they are) that Ms. Johnson is leaving the school. All label her an exceptional educator. Some comments focus on other recent departures and wonder why the school can't keep its best teachers. Prior to the meeting, two of five board members received calls from friends with students in the school about this teacher's decision not to return.

What should be the Board's role in this scenario?



TIME FOR
A BREAK!

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Key Areas of Board Responsibility

- Adherence to mission
- Long-term strategy
- Financial oversight
- Academic achievement
- School leader hiring, supervision and evaluation, and if necessary termination
- Legal and regulatory

Goal Development

- In small groups, brainstorm potential Board goals.
- Consider...
 - the role of the Board in school governance.
 - key takeaways re: AMSA's strengths and challenges that emerged from last week's retreat.

Use index cards to jot down ideas for goals. When your group has settled on 2 - 3 ideas, write them up on a piece of chart paper.



Goal Development

S



SPECIFIC

M



MEASURABLE

A



ACHIEVABLE

R



RELEVANT

T



TIME-BOUND

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Action Planning

Some questions to consider:

- What are the actions required to meet this goal? Are there smaller milestones that will be possible to track?
- When do those action steps need to be taken? Consider the annual cycle of board and committee meetings.
- What resources or support will you need to meet this goal?
- Who will be responsible for these action steps? Is it the work of a committee or the full board?

Reminder: Use the Parking Lot to make note of important ideas and questions that will need to be addressed at a different time.

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Please share a word or phrase that captures how you are feeling as we wrap up our time together today.



Contact Information

- Kate Scott: katenscott7@gmail.com
- Julia Bowen: julia@prospectleadership.com

DESE Resources

- [Board Governance and Charter Amendments](#)
- [Board of Trustees Training](#)

MCPSA Resources

- Robert Carpenter, Director of School Supports, Governance: rcarpenter@masscharterschools.org
- [MCPSA Board Governance Tools and Resource Guide](#)

Organizations Dedicated to Governance

- [School Board Partners](#)
- [Board on Track](#)