





Charter School Governing Body Governance Training



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Overview

- 1) Why is "Good Governance" Important
- 2) Assembly Bill 419 (2021)
- 3) The SPCSA's Governance Standards
<https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/Grocers/211001-Governance-Standards-2021-10-01.pdf>
- 4) Conclusion and Questions

Why is “Good Governance” Important?



“If you’ve seen a charter school that was clearly advancing on its mission and increasing academic achievement, you can be certain that a **high performing board** is hard at work in partnership with the school leader. If you’ve seen a charter school failing to achieve its goals, however, chances are an underperforming board is behind the scenes. *Time and again, there is an irrefutable connection between the effectiveness of the [charter school’s board] and the success of the school.*” National Alliance, Governance Best Practices (*link at the end of this presentation*).

- Good boards = good schools
- Charter school boards are in many ways the “publicly facing” part of a charter school
- As a member of a charter school governing body, ***you are a party to a legally binding contract (the charter contract) with the State of Nevada***, meaning you are responsible for and the steward of taxpayer education dollars, and you are responsible for ensuring academic outcome for students at your charter school



NRS 388A.224: Assembly Bill 419 (2021)

Assembly Bill 419, Section 3, now codified as NRS 388A.224, contains three requirements:

1. Charter school sponsors – such as the SPCSA – must establish **governance standards** for sponsored charter schools
2. **Training** regarding the governance standards must be provided by the charter schools' **sponsor** or **another organization approved by the charter school sponsor**
3. Each member of a charter school governing body (the charter school's board) must participate in training regarding the charter school's sponsor's governance standards **before the charter school opens** (for new charter schools) and **at least every three years**

Note that the SPCSA *recommends* that governance training be provided to charter school board members annually or biannually, and that newly appointed charter school board members receive training prior to their first meeting, including governance training (NRS 388A.155 related to the SPCSA board)

Assembly Bill 419 (2021): <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/81st2021/Bill/8051/Text>

Organizations seeking to provide the training required by Assembly Bill 419 can submit a request to the SPCSA to be approved here: https://charterschools.nv.gov/ForSchools/Governance_Standards/



Governance vs. Compliance

Governance

- How the board governs the school through board meetings, planning, policies, and decisions.
- Examples:
 - Participation and engagement of board members
 - How effectively the charter school board functions
 - The content of charter school board meetings and how effective the charter school board is at meeting its goals

Compliance

- If the board is following required laws and regulations. Compliance requirements are the bare minimum, which charter schools **MUST** comply with.
- Examples:
 - Board structure: Charter School Board Composition (NRS 388A.320(1) and (2))
 - Board meeting structure:
 - Quarterly Board Meetings (NRS 388A.320(5))
 - Open Meeting Law (NRS Chapter 241)
 - Public Records Act (NRS Chapter 239)



Purpose of Governance Standards

“The governing body of a public charter school is responsible for ensuring the **success of the school and its students**. While the school leadership and staff manage the **day-to-day responsibilities of operating the school**, the **governing body is ultimately accountable to the charter school sponsor for academic achievement of students, effective organizational practices, and strong stewardship of public funds**. These Governance Standards describe the standards by which the State Public Charter School Authority defines **strong charter school governance**. Public charter schools sponsored by the State Public Charter School Authority should use these standards as a north star for evaluating **board effectiveness and guiding board member development**.” SPCSA’s Governance Standards.

The SPCSA's Governance Standards for SPCSA-Sponsored Charter School Boards



1. Focus on Student Growth, Achievement, and Social and Emotional Wellbeing
2. Ensure an Effective and Well-Run Organization
3. Manage Financial Resources Responsibly
4. Commit to Long-Term Success
5. Ensure Strong Leadership and Effective Partnerships
6. Operate in Service of your School Community



The SPCSA's Governance Standards (approved at the SPCSA's October 1, 2021 board meeting):

<https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/Grocers/211001-Governance-Standards-2021-10-01.pdf>



1 Focus on Student Growth, Achievement, and Social and Emotional Wellbeing?

- Understand academic performance expectations established by the State of Nevada and State Public Charter School Authority
- Commit to the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional success of all enrolled students and the overall academic success of the school
- Set ambitious and attainable goals for student academic growth and achievement that aim to ensure the success of all students
- Establish objectives for student social and emotional wellbeing that aim to ensure an inclusive, positive, and supportive environment for all students
- Regularly monitor progress toward internal goals and objectives as well as statewide performance expectations
- Analyze student growth, achievement, and wellbeing data by student group (race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, etc.) in order to identify and act on disparities in student performance and experience
- Use data to inform decisions



What does this mean?

Is the charter school board focused on the **growth, achievement, and social and emotional wellbeing of all students?**

- Does the charter school board understand Nevada’s Department of Education’s Nevada School Performance Framework (the Star Ratings)?
- Does the charter school board understand the SPCSA’s academic framework?
- Does the charter school board understand the consequences related to these frameworks?
- Is the charter school board regularly discussing the charter school’s performance under these frameworks?
- Is the charter school board discussing the underlying measures and indicators of these frameworks, broken down by grade level and demographics?
- Does the charter school board understand and regularly discuss interim (iReady, MAP) and state assessment data (SBAC, ACT)?
- Has the charter school board set short- and long-term goals related to these frameworks?
- Is the charter school board regularly discussing the social and emotional wellbeing of students and examining data regarding the social and emotional wellbeing of students?
- Is the charter school examining data for possible disparities between student groups and proactively addressing any identified disparities?
- Is the charter school board using academic and social and emotional wellbeing data to inform the charter school board’s decisions?



2 Ensure an Effective and Well-Run Organization

- Understand organizational performance expectations established by the State Public Charter School Authority
- Uphold the legal and ethical duties of the school's board; ensure that the board meets all compliance and reporting requirements
- Uphold legal requirements for charter schools under state and federal laws and regulations and comply with the terms of the charter contract.
- Regularly monitor operational data to ensure the organizational health of the school and to monitor progress towards the State Public Charter School Authority's organizational performance expectations
- Establish and uphold school and board policies that protect the organization, its students, and employees
- Ensure the school has strong operational plans for facilities, food services, transportation, security, and emergency preparedness
- Ensure all board meetings are conducted in accordance with Nevada's Open Meeting Law and that the board operates in accordance with the school's bylaws



What does this mean?

Is the charter school board ensuring that the charter school is an **effective and well-run organization**?

- Is the charter school board regularly monitoring and discussing the charter school's compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations?
- Does the charter school board understand the SPCSA's organizational performance framework?
- Does the charter school board regularly review data to understand performance against the SPCSA's organizational performance framework?
- Is the charter school board familiar with the school's charter contract?
- Is the charter school board trained on Nevada's Open Meeting Law?
- Does the charter school board understand and regularly review and revise the charter school's bylaws?
- Does the charter school board ensure regular review and updates to the school's emergency plans?
- Does the charter school board regularly review employee policies and handbooks?
- Does the charter school board regularly review student policies and handbooks?



3 Manage Financial Resources Responsibly

- Understand financial performance expectations established by the State Public Charter School Authority
- Annually establish and manage to a budget that allocates resources in alignment with the school's goals and strategic plan
- Regularly review financial data and adjust the school's budget or operations as appropriate
- Establish and uphold financial policies and procedures that protect the school's resources
- Regularly monitor financial performance to ensure the short- and long-term financial health of the school and to monitor progress towards the State Public Charter School Authority's performance expectations



What does this mean?

Is the charter school board ensuring that the charter school is **managing financial resources responsibly**?

Public charter schools are the recipient of millions of dollars in state and federal monies earmarked for education. The charter school's board is ultimately responsible of ensuring that the charter school is spending these monies in accordance with state and federal law, and these monies are being spent wisely.

- Does the charter school board understand the SPCSA's financial framework?
- Does the charter school board regularly review data to understand performance against the SPCSA's financial performance framework?
- Does the charter school board review and understand the charter school's budget?
- Does the charter school board ensure alignment between the school's strategic plans and the annual budget?
- Does the charter school board receive regular updates regarding the financial position of the school (ex. budget to actual reports)?
- Does the charter school board regularly review financial policies and procedures to ensure proper financial controls?



4 Commit to Long-Term Success

- Oversee the development and implementation of the school's strategic plan, which aims to bring to fruition the school's mission and vision
- Understand the State Public Charter School Authority's strategic plan and priorities and work to create alignment between the Authority's goals and the school's goals
- Establish board committees to further the strategic plan and school goals
- Regularly assess the board's effectiveness in meeting these Governance Standards and achieving strategic goals
- Engage in meaningful board training conducted by independent individuals/organizations
- Maintain an engaged board, ensuring compliance with all bylaws and statutory requirements for board members
- Proactively plan for potential board member transitions and ensure effective onboarding for new board members



What does this mean?

Is the charter school board committed to and planning for long-term success?

- Does the school have a strategic plan?
 - When was the strategic plan last updated?
 - When was the last time the board discussed the school's strategic plan?
- Has the charter school board reviewed the SPCSA's strategic plan?
- Does the charter school have appropriate subcommittees of the charter school's board?
 - Academic
 - Financial
 - Leadership (charter school board continuity and school leadership)
- Does the charter school board conduct an annual self-assessment?
- Is the charter school's board's self-assessment in alignment with the SPCSA's Governance Standards?
- Does the charter school board have a plan to fill board vacancies?
- Does the charter school board regularly engage in board training and ensure that new members receive training?



5 Ensure Strong Leadership and Effective Partnerships

- Hire school leadership that is committed to the school's model and mission and is capable of leading staff and students to achieve strong results and meet established goals
- Commit to uphold the boundary between governing the school and leading the daily school operations
- Hold school leadership accountable for the operations and performance of the school, addressing challenges proactively
- Regularly evaluate school leader performance based on established expectations; encourage and support their professional development
- Proactively plan for the development of future leaders and for succession
- Establish clear, specific contracts with key partners, including Educational Management Organizations, Charter Management Organizations, and back-office service providers, that set clear expectations for expirations, termination, performance, and outcomes
- Hold partners accountable for their services and performance, addressing challenges proactively
- Regularly evaluate partnerships based on established expectations for performance and outcomes



What does this mean?

Is the charter school board ensuring that the charter school has **strong leadership and effective partnerships**?

- Do charter school board members have a clear understanding of the charter school board's role versus that of the charter school leadership?
- Does the charter school board regularly evaluate the charter school's leader?
- Does the charter school board have a clear succession plan for the charter school leadership?
- Does the charter school board understand the roles and responsibilities of vendors/partners, including Educational Management Organizations or Charter Management Organizations? Are these roles and responsibilities clearly codified in contracts or memoranda of understandings?
- Does the charter school board regularly review and evaluate the vendors/partners, including Educational Management Organizations or Charter Management Organizations?
- Are vendors/partners, including Educational Management Organizations or Charter Management Organizations held accountable for their services and performance?



6 Operate in Service of your School Community

- Ensure that the school's board meetings and its members are accessible to the school community, including parents, teachers, and students
- Develop and consider school policies and critical decisions transparently and in collaboration with the school community
- Establish effective communication systems and proactively seek robust input and feedback from the school community
- Collaborate with stakeholders to address concerns and challenges
- Seek to achieve and maintain board members and school staff that are representative of the school



What does this mean?

Is the charter school board ensuring that the charter school is **operating in service of the charter school's community?**

- Do students, parents, teachers, staff members, and members of the charter school's community know how to contact the charter school's board members?
- Are students, parents, teachers, staff members, and members of the charter school's community encouraged to participate in board meetings?
- Are the charter school's policies transparent and accessible to the public?
- Does the charter school board ensure that students, parents, teachers, staff members, and members of the charter school's community are involved in significant decisions?
- Does the charter school board regularly seek feedback from the school community?
- Do charter school board members seek out opportunities to engage with the school community (ex. events, school visits, etc.)?
- Does the membership of the charter school's board reflect the charter school's community?

Sample Charter School Board Agendas



Sample Board Agenda 1

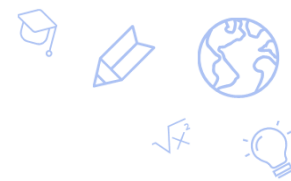
- Call Meeting to Order
- Public Comment
- **Discuss and possibly approve charter contract amendment request**
- Public Comment
- Adjournment

Sample Board Agenda 2

- Call Meeting to Order
- Public Comment
- Consent Agenda
 - Finances
 - **Budget**
 - **Contracts**
 - **Lease Agreements**
- Academic Progress Report
- Charter Contract Amendment Request
- Approval of Auditing Firm
- EMO Contract Renewal
- Public Comment
- Adjournment

Sample Board Agenda 3

- Call Meeting to Order
- Public Comment
- Consent Agenda
 - **Budget**
 - **Articulation Agreement**
 - **Facility Lease**
 - School Calendar
 - COVID Mitigation Plan
- Principal's Report on Q3 Academic Goals
- Discussion and possible approval of HR Director
- Discussion and possible approval of Employee Leave Policy
- **Board Recruitment**
- Public Comment
- Adjournment



What does Good Governance look like?

Foundational Knowledge

- Are charter school board members familiar with the role of Nevada's Department of Education, the SPCSA (as they relate to SPCSA-sponsored charter schools), and local school districts?
- Are charter school board members knowledgeable about the differences between a **traditions district public school, and public charter schools?**
- Are charter school board members familiar with the terms and conditions contained in the **charter school's charter contract?**
- Are charter school board members familiar with **charter school laws and regulations?**
- Are charter school board members familiar with Nevada's Department of Education's **Nevada School Performance Framework** (the Star Ratings), and the **SPCSA's academic, organizational, and financial performance frameworks?**



What does Good Governance look like?

Engagement

- Are charter school board members involved with the **charter school's community**?
- Is the board chair / vice chair / president / vice president involved in **drafting the agendas**?
- Do board members have an opportunity to **request items be placed on the agenda** for discussion?
- Have board members reviewed any **supporting materials** prior to the board meeting?
- Are **supporting materials** provided to board members sufficiently in advance of board meeting to allow board members to review the materials?
- Do board members ask pertinent **questions during board meetings**?
- Do board members ensure that the head of the charter school and charter school staff **follow up in response to any questions**?



What does Good Governance look like?

Meaningful & Impactful Content

- Is the charter school board discussing and acting on items that are meaningful and impactful to the students and school community?
- Is the board setting a vision for the school and constantly working towards improvement?
- Is the board discussing important issues that arise in the school and community?



Recap

- Assembly Bill 419 from the 2021 Legislative Session, now codified as NRS 388A.224, requires that:
 1. Charter school sponsors must establish governance standards for sponsored charter schools
 2. Training regarding the governance standards must be provided by the charter schools' sponsor or another organization approved by the charter school sponsor
 3. Each member of a charter school governing body must participate in training regarding the charter school's sponsor's governance standards before the charter school opens (for new charter schools) and at least every three years
- Why is good governance important?
 - The governing body of a charter school is ultimately accountable to the charter school sponsor for academic achievement of students, effective organizational practices, and strong stewardship of public funds.
 - “Compliance” is not the same as “good governance”
 - Good governance = good charter schools

Potential First Steps

- Place the SPCSA's Governance Standards on an upcoming charter school board agenda and discuss
- Place the Nevada School Performance Framework and the SPCSA's Frameworks on an upcoming charter school board agenda and discuss
- Place the charter school's social and emotional learning curriculum on an upcoming charter school board agenda and discuss
- Review the charter school's strategic plan at an upcoming board meeting and discuss
- Other ideas?



PURPOSE

The governing body of a public charter school is responsible for ensuring the success of the school and its students. While the school leadership and staff manage the day-to-day responsibilities of operating the school, the governing body is ultimately accountable to the charter school sponsor for academic achievement of students, effective organizational practices, and strong stewardship of public funds.

These *Governance Standards*, developed in alignment with Section 3 of Assembly Bill 419 from the 81st Session of the Nevada Legislature, describe the standards by which the State Public Charter School Authority defines strong charter school governance. Public charter schools sponsored by the State Public Charter School Authority should use these standards as a north star for evaluating board effectiveness and guiding board member development.

STANDARDS

1 Focus on Student Growth, Achievement, and Social and Emotional Wellbeing

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Resources

- SPCSA's Governance Standards: <https://charterschools.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/CharterSchoolsnvgov/content/Grocers/211001-Governance-Standards-2021-10-01.pdf>
- SPCSA Governance Resources: https://charterschools.nv.gov/ForSchools/Governance_Standards/
- Nevada Association of School Boards: <https://www.nvasb.org/>
- National Alliance for Public Charter Schools: <https://www.publiccharters.org/>
- Governance Best Practices for Highly Effective Charter School Boards: <http://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/migrated/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Paper-Governance-Best-Practices-for-Highly-Effective-Charter-School-Boards.pdf>
- Assembly Bill 419 (2021): <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/81st2021/Bill/8051/Text>
- NRS 388A.224
- NRS 388A.320-323 (Charter School Governing Bodies)
- NAC 388A.035; 520-530 (Charter School Governing Bodies)

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Questions

