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BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Development of Governance Standards Pursuant to Assembly Bill 419
DATE: August 27, 2021

Background

Assembly Bill 419 from the 2021 Legislative Session requires each charter school sponsor to establish standards for the governance of sponsored charter schools. SPCSA staff reviewed research on effective boards and examples of governance standards including but not limited to:

- [Silver State Governance](#): A school board training initiative supported by the Nevada Association of School Boards.
- Education Board Partner's [Standards of Effective Charter School Governance](#)
- Center for Public Education's [Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards](#)

Additionally, staff conducted three focus groups with the board members of sponsored schools. Of the 38 charter holders sponsored by the SPCSA, 13 had board members participate in at least one of these focus groups. These focus groups were anchored around three discussion questions:

- What are the most important functions/responsibilities of charter school boards?
- What topics are most important for charter school boards to discuss in board meetings?
- What are the characteristics of effective charter school boards?

Using the information gathered through research and focus groups, SPCSA staff have developed the following *draft* governance standards for review and discussion. SPCSA staff anticipate incorporating feedback from the Authority and the public in a final version to bring to the Authority for consideration at the October 1, 2021 SPCSA board meeting.

Draft Governance Standards

Focus on Student Growth, Achievement and Social and Emotional Wellbeing

- 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 and supportive environment for all students
- Understand academic performance expectations established by the State of Nevada and State Public Charter School Authority
- Regularly monitor progress towards 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
- Commit to the academic success of all enrolled students and the overall academic success of the school

Manage Financial Resources Responsibly

- Annually establish a budget that allocates resources in alignment with the school's goals and strategic plan
- Regularly review financial data and amend the school's budget when appropriate
- Understand financial performance expectations established by the State Public Charter School Authority
- Regularly monitor financial data to ensure the short- and long-term financial health of the school and to monitor progress towards the SPCSA's performance expectations

Ensure Strong Leadership and Effective Partnerships

- Hire school leadership that is committed to the school's model and mission and is capable of achieving results
- Commit to upholding the boundary between governing the school and leading the daily operations of the school
- Hold the school leadership accountable for the daily operations and performance of the school, addressing challenges proactively
- Regularly evaluate the school leader's performance based on established expectations and support their professional development
- Proactively plan for the development of future leaders and plan for succession
- Establish clear, specific contracts with key partners, including EMOs, CMOs, and back-office 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 the established expectations for performance and outcomes

Ensure an Effective, and Well-Run Organization

- Uphold the legal and ethical duties of the school's board and 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.
- Understand organizational performance expectations established by the State Public Charter School Authority
- Regularly monitor operational data to ensure the organizational health of the school and to monitor progress towards the SPCSA's performance expectations
- 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

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 with the school community's best interests in mind
- 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 that are representative of the school community

Act Strategically

- Oversee the development and implementation of the school's strategic plan, which aims to bring to fruition the school's mission and vision
- Establish board committees to further the strategic plan and school goals
- Regularly evaluate the board's effectiveness and engage in meaningful training conducted by independent individuals/organizations
- Recruit and maintain active board members, ensuring compliance with bylaws and statutory requirements for board makeup