

Identifying Indicators of Distress in the Blue Haven Charter School Case Study

Leadership

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Mismatched leadership competencies to context	Leader's inability to gain respect/trust of staff or families	☐
	Leader's inability to respect/trust staff	☐
	Leader's failure to demonstrate instructional leadership as necessary; for example, by taking minimal interest or time in classroom instruction	☐
	Leader's failure to manage time efficiently and appropriately	☐
	Core school operational or instructional tasks drop in quality	☐
	Leader is unable to create or maintain effective teams	☐
Inability to sustain leadership	High or increased leader turnover	☐
	Lack of leadership pipeline development	☐
Lack of leadership	Leader is unable to make decisions	☐
	Lack of academic and organizational leadership	☐
	Decreased frequency or quality of communication with authorizer or delays responding to authorizer requests	☐
	Leader is not present at the school for significant amounts of time or to the extent that staff work or school functions are negatively impacted	☐
	Leader is not accessible to families, board, or authorizer	☐

Governing Board

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Inability to convene the board	Failure to recruit or retain sufficient and appropriate membership based on bylaws	☐
	Failure to recruit or retain sufficient depth and diversity of expertise necessary for successful board governance	☐
	Low or decreasing attendance at board meetings	☐
	Minimal knowledge of the school's mission, core operations, or improvement status	☐
Board's inability to hold school leaders accountable	Poor relationship between board and school leaders	☐
	Inadequate review of school leaders' decisions	☐
Inadequate board capacity to govern	Board does not demonstrate strong governance oversight	☐
	Board members fail to engage with the school	☐
	Board members fail to engage with the community	☐
	Board members do not have requisite content expertise related to core board functions, such as academics, school finances, and school operations	☐

Operations

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Breakdown in compliance and reporting functions	Lack of process and procedures for operational decision-making among school leadership and the board	☐
	Lack of compliance with relevant reporting requirements (i.e., applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter) to the school's authorizer, state education agency, district education department, and/or federal authorities	☐
	Evaluation showing the charter holder's annual audit reporting packages do not reflect sound operations	☐
Failure to be responsive to market needs	Decrease in student enrollment	☐
	Decrease in actual enrollment compared to projected enrollment	☐
	Poor reputation in community, decreasing reputation, or lack of a reputation	☐
	Poor community engagement policies or practices	☐

Finance

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Failure to properly manage finances	Unclear budgeting/reporting process	☐
	Debt default (i.e., the school is in default of loan covenant[s] and/or is delinquent with debt service payments)	☐
	Poor near-term financial viability: ¹	
	• Falling or variable student enrollment	☐
	• Low unrestricted days of cash on hand	☐
	Poor financial sustainability measures:	
	• High debt-to-asset ratio	☐
	• Low or negative cash flow	☐
Misappropriation of funds	Lack of checks and balances in financial decisions among the board and/or school leadership	☐
	Mismanagement of financial systems	☐

Talent

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Hiring challenges	Poor/lowered qualifications of hires	☐
	Lack of key personnel to meet student needs (i.e., social workers, counselors)	☐

¹ Authorizers hold slightly different thresholds in determining distress around near-term financial viability and financial sustainability indicators. The bullet points represent examples of distress thresholds by one authorizer.

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
High teacher turnover/Loss of specialized	High or increased staff turnover	☐
	High turnover or churn of specialized staff, such as special education, EL certified teachers	☐
	Staff turnover in the middle of the school year	☐
Decreasing teacher capacity	Poor qualifications of hires	☐
	Lack of support for staff (professional development, coaching)	☐

Culture

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Poor student and family connection to school	Frequent or increased parental complaints regarding the school, leader, and/or staff	☐
	Lack of meaningful communication with families	☐
	Decreased or low student attendance; low attendance for particular student subgroup(s)	☐
	High or increased disciplinary incidents; high or increased disciplinary incidents for particular student subgroup(s)	☐
Inhospitable professional culture	Staff do not see themselves as part of a team	☐
	Decrease in staff meetings/collaboration opportunities	☐
	Decrease in teacher attendance	☐

Instruction

Indicator of Distress	Evidence of Indicator in Practice	Schools in My Portfolio Have Exhibited Evidence of This Indicator (check all that apply)
Poor or declining assessment outcomes	Poor alignment of goals, vision, and mission to meet students' needs	☐
	Lack of differentiation to address specific student needs	☐
	Large or growing gaps between student subgroup outcome data (i.e., state assessments)	☐
Lack of focus on instruction	Lack of clear expectations for staff and students	☐
	Lack of teachers using data and school assessment system to inform instruction	☐
Lack of cohesion or alignment in curriculum	Poor/lack of alignment of standards, curriculum, assessments	☐
	Teacher pedagogies inconsistent with the school's mission	☐