

# QUICK GUIDE TO Board Self-Evaluation

Wise boards take the time to regularly evaluate their performance. They want to understand the areas where they are effectively governing and the areas in which they still need to improve. Board evaluations are important because they hold the board accountable, they give the board an opportunity to have an honest discussion about what is working and where improvements need to be made and they help the board to make better decisions by helping the board to focus on its underlying philosophies and goals.

The most effective way to create accountability is to model the way. Therefore, it's important that the board evaluate its own performance on a regular basis. When you set aside time to evaluate your performance, some of the areas you will want to review include your success in implementing the mission and goals found in your charter contract, your process for strategic planning and communication and your ability to govern effectively.

### Important Elements

Charter school boards benefit from participating in both formative and summative self-evaluations. Charter school governance is strengthened when boards make a regular habit of reflecting on how they are doing. One way that boards can do this is by setting aside time on their regular agenda to reflect on important questions. Listed below are examples of questions boards can discuss. The board can select a couple of questions to reflect upon at each meeting. The board should also conduct a summative self-assessment once a year. A list of example summative assessments is provided under the "Sample Assessment Tools" section. It is also good practice to include a way for individual board members to evaluate their own performance as part of the summative assessment.

Board members should clearly understand the evaluation criteria. It is a good idea to share the summative self-assessment tool the board is using with members so they are reminded about their roles and responsibilities and how quality governance is being defined. Any self-assessment tool your board selects should include all the important areas of governance such as knowing and supporting your school's mission and contract, strategic planning, evaluating academic performance, managing fiscal resources, communicating with school staff and the community, building board capacity, running effective meetings, and evaluating school leader performance.

The goal of any evaluation that the board conducts is to improve board performance and drive change. Once the board has identified areas of weaknesses it should develop a plan for improvement. It should define strategies for improving its governance and then commit to implementing those strategies.

### Sample Assessment Tools

- Charter Schools Development Center: <http://ow.ly/7qxF50B8F0P>
- Colorado Charter School Institute: <https://resources.csi.state.co.us/governance-needs-assessment/>
- New York City Charter School Center:  
<https://www.nyccharterschools.org/resources/board-assessment-tool>
- North Dakota School Boards Association (NDSBA):  
<http://ndsba.org/resources/form.schoolboardselfevaluation.pdf>

## Sample Formative Assessment Questions

1. Does our board understand why our school exists and the market that we are trying to serve? Is our board effectively serving our market?
2. Does our board have a strong relationship with its authorizer? Does our board understand our school's charter contract and are we working to meet the goals of the contract?
3. What steps are we taking as a board to strengthen our school academically and financially?
4. Does our board discuss student achievement on a regular basis? Are board members familiar with the state's academic reports and accountability systems?
5. Does our board receive and review accurate and comprehensible key financial reports on a regular basis? Do our board members understand how to interpret financial statements?
6. What steps is our board taking to effectively orient new members?
7. Does our board have policies that define the proper boundaries of individual board member authority?
8. Has our board developed a calendar that lays out key topics and deadlines by month?
9. Are our board meetings run efficiently and effectively?
10. Does our board follow Open Meetings Act requirements?
11. Does our board manage or govern the school?
12. Does our board spend more time discussing processes or outcomes?
13. Does our board spend more time discussing trivial or vital issues?
14. Do all board members have an opportunity to contribute or are certain board members dominating the conversation?
15. Does our board have a strategic plan and is it following that plan?
16. Does our board allocate regular time on the agenda to developing its skills and knowledge?
17. How well is our board fulfilling its duty of oversight, loyalty and obedience?
18. Does our board speak with a unified voice?
19. Has our board provided the school's executive with clear performance expectations? Does our board evaluate the performance of the school's executive against those expectations?
20. Does our board have a contract with an educational management company and does our board evaluate the performance of the management company on a regular basis? Are there any issues that need to be addressed?
21. Does our board reflect on its performance on a regular basis?
22. What steps has our board taken to articulate the great things are school is doing for kids with our community, the legislature and the media?
23. Is our board actively involved in raising funds for the charter school?
24. Has our board complied with the Texas charter school board training requirements?
25. How much time do we, as a board, spend each meeting talking about student performance?