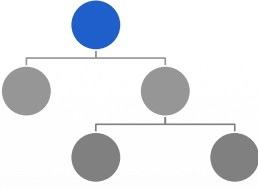


Legal, But Not Local:
Ensuring Accountability and Local Engagement for CA CMOs



Welcome to our session. While you wait for the session to start, please take 3 minutes to complete the worksheet on your chair.

Harmssen Consulting CharterBoardPartners

Legal, But Not Local:
Ensuring Accountability and Local Engagement for California CMOs

Kate Essex, Charter Board Partners
Hilary Harmssen, Harmssen Consulting



CharterBoardPartners
great boards for great schools

March 28, 2018

Today's Topics

1	Welcome and Introductions
2	Framing the Challenge
3	Presenting the Opportunity
4	Tools to Take Home

Harmssen Consulting CharterBoardPartners

Framing the Challenge

Charter Governance in California

- California law around charter school governance is vague and allows for varying governance structures
 - Especially as it relates to Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)
- For charters operating as public, non-profit, public benefit corporations, the charter authorizer is entitled to a representative on the corporation's board of directors
- Charter petitions must address how the governance structure of a charter school fosters parental involvement

Harmssen Consulting



CharterBoardPartners

Community Involvement and "Local Control"

- **Local control has become a hot-button issue across the state**
 - Districts often cite local control (or lack thereof) as one justification for denial
 - Arguing that only local structures can provide parents access to the decision-making process of the school
 - Many CMOs have found effective ways to foster meaningful community and parent involvement without the creation of a local board
- **Authorizer "requirements" vary**
 - Many allow parents, teachers, paid staff to sit on boards
 - The imposition of Government Code 1090 by some authorizers restricts board membership to uninterested parties only (no teachers or other staff)

Harmssen Consulting

CharterBoardPartners

Continuum of Typical Governance Models



Harmssen Consulting

CharterBoardPartners

Challenges to Local Governance Structures



- o Lack of diversity
- o Disengagement, scheduling, and managing the delivery of information
- o Clear understanding of roles/responsibilities between board, staff, and local and national/regional boards
- o Effective meeting management skills
- o Fundraising
- o Connecting and aligning multiple, local boards under one CMO

Harmssen Consulting

CharterBoardPartners

Case Study: Managing Change at the Local Level

Great Schools CMO runs a cluster of schools in the LA metro area, with two schools in Orange County. The OC schools have a local board, at least on paper, but it has sat dormant for years, with no real responsibilities. Members are listed on the website but none of them have attended a meeting in over a year.

Great Schools is concerned about academic performance at the two OC schools, which serve a much higher percentage of low income students than the LA campuses. The CMO decides to test an controversial new academic program at both of the OC schools, a decision that is announced abruptly and met with resistance and anger from the parents and staff. The members of the local board are suddenly flooded with messages asking them for explanation and accusing them of allowing the CMO to “experiment” on the two poorest schools in the network. The local press catches wind of this story and suddenly Great Schools is in the news, with families threatening to withdraw their children.

Turn and Talk:

How could the CMO & local board have approached this differently?

What should they do from here?

Harmssen Consulting
CharterBoardPartners

Presenting the Opportunity

Effective Means to Foster Community Engagement

- Parent/community advisory councils
- Dedicated board seats for parents or community members
- Meaningful use of board meeting time to include community voice
- Board working groups that include parents/community members (non-voting)
- Communication!
- What else?



Harmssen Consulting
CharterBoardPartners

Benefits of Local Leadership

- Input from key stakeholders (staff, parents, community leaders) can strengthen programming and increase participation
- Communities feel included in the school's efforts (we do it together v. *they* do it to us)
- Changes at the CMO level can be vetted first for local impact before finalized
- Local support for the CMO's growth can help fuel the opening of more schools in that area
- Programming issues are spotted and addressed faster (i.e. a core piece of the model needs to be adapted in this particular region to better serve a high ELL population)
- Local support during critical moments such as charter renewal help make the case for the school's continuation

Harmssen Consulting

CharterBoardPartners

What to Consider

1. How will local oversight be structured (501(c)3 vs. unofficial entity)?
2. How will members be decided?
3. What will the local board's role be? Will it have decision rights?
4. If not, what will be the local board's core responsibilities?
5. How often will the local board interact with the CMO board or other boards?
6. How will the roles be communicated to the community?

CharterBoardPartners

Case Study: Growth and Local Input

14

Blue Skies is a CMO with three schools in the Bay Area. Lisa, the founding principal of the first Blue Sky school moved to San Diego and decided to open a Blue Sky school in her new town.

Now that she is working on building her organization, she is realizing that the community has little access or understanding of the Blue Sky leadership structure. She is very concerned about being seen as an outsider or giving the impression that she is trying to keep the school's governance "behind a curtain," but her families are not going to drive 8 hours to attend the board meetings.

As she prepares to approach the CMO team in San Diego about the idea of forming a local board, she starts making a list of the questions she needs to ask.

Turn and Talk:

If you were Lisa, what clarifying information would you want to gather in order to determine the best way to leverage local input?

Harmssen Consulting

CharterBoardPartners

Tools to Use

Governance Structure Depiction Exercise

Local Involvement Rubric

Roles and Responsibilities Worksheet

Wrap Up

Any insights gained from this session?

Outstanding burning questions?

Thanks for coming!

Hilary Harmssen

hjharmssen@gmail.com

650-796-2483

Kate Essex

kessex@charterboards.org

202-588-1133

CharterBoardPartners
