

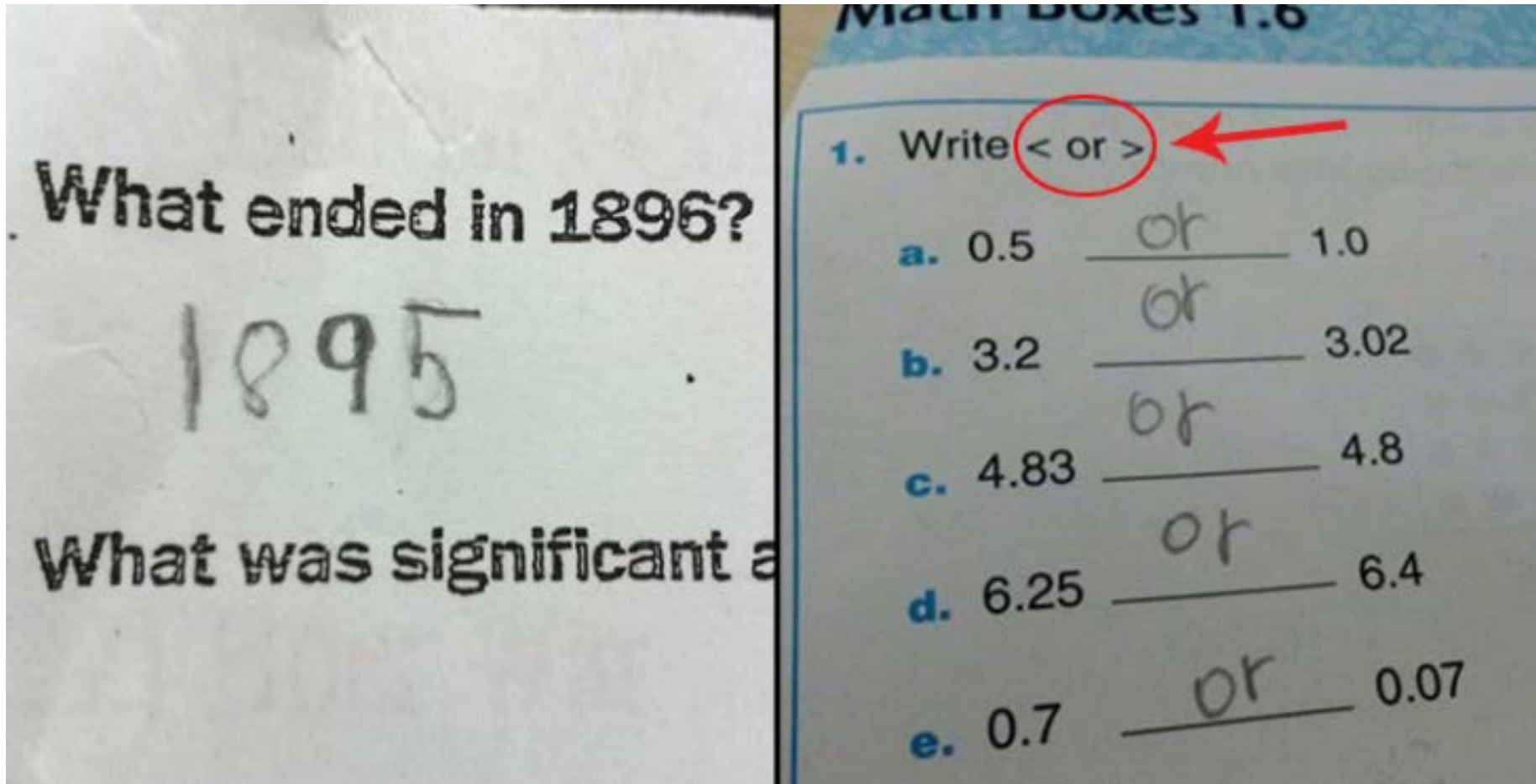


# THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF CHARTER SCHOOL BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

*If you want to go fast, go alone.  
If you want to go far, go together.*  
African Proverb

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# Don't Forget To Focus On The Kids!



# You Must Enjoy Your Students!!

Name six animals which live specifically in the Arctic.

Two polar bears  
~~Three~~ four seals

# Objectives

1. Charter School governance and the role of Board of Directors:  
(#1, #3, #6, #7, #9, #10)
  - Board of Directors view = 1000 feet
  - ESP Central Office = 100 feet
  - Building Leader = 10 feet
  - Teachers = 1 foot
  - Kids = Ground!
2. Contract and connections with the Authorizer (#5, #10)
3. Selecting, contracting with, overseeing, changing, evaluating, etc. vendors (#7, #8, #9)
4. The Board as a public leadership team (#5, #6, #10)
5. Leading academic improvement from the top (#2, #5, #8)
6. Working with other entities (#2, #5, #6)
7. Short- and long-term planning – prep for strategic planning, indicators for success, stakeholders, etc. (#3, #4, #7, #8, #9, #10)

# Charter School Governance and the Role of Board of Directors

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- The Charter Contract
- How does the Board separate “recommendations” from others and Board discussions, research, motions and public legal decision?
- Can the FSU Board of Trustees defend their decision to renew your contract? **Objective data vs. subjective opinions**
- Vision, Mission, Core Values – are they still accurate?
- Capacity of the Board to govern well – how self sufficient is your Board? How do you research/discuss/agree?

# Charter Schools Through the Eyes of the Public

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- Media and effect on the “masses” – press reports are the only source of info for many citizens
- Michigan charter schools lumped in with national charter schools
- Reports – you can find positive ones (Credo) and you can find negative ones (Detroit Free Press)
- Charter Schools:
  - Cherry picking
  - Not providing special education
  - Don't follow same rules
  - ESPs only purpose is to make money and “for-profit” academy boards!!?
  - Successful ESPs/charter schools not in urban, high poverty areas and not grades 9-12
  - On and on

# Charter Schools Through the Eyes of the Public

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- MEA, MPSERS, NCSI, MDE, ISDs, MAPSA, NACSA, National Alliance of Charter Schools, resident LEA- all have opinions/rules about PSAs
- My opinion: each charter school is like each traditional public school – some are working and some are not – using all sorts of metrics
- Each Board must focus on their own school's positives and negatives

# Non-Negotiables, Legal, Ethical Mandates

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- Review “Non-Delegable Board Functions”
- You direct the big picture of a charter school as **one body**
- You are a public Board and must follow all “public” mandates
- You are responsible for millions of publicly funded dollars
- Only a public school board can hold district and building codes
- You are responsible for the same activities as any other school board with a few exceptions, **but you need to defend why you exist.**
- There has been one Top to Bottom list for all public schools. Now?



# Non-Negotiables, Legal, Ethical Mandates

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- You are a non-taxing entity
- You hire and contract with vendors
- You must know what is going on without micromanaging
- You need help from:
  - Lawyers
  - Accountants
  - Academic gurus
  - Intermediate school districts
  - Consultants
  - Technology vendors
  - Michigan Department of Education
  - Ferris State University Charter Schools Office
  - Others

# Current Contract and Connections with the Authorizer

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- Your charter contract is a legal agreement between Ferris State University Board of Trustees and your Board (not the ESP)
- Compliance/oversight
- Keeping current goals/mandates and amendments
- Board/staff training and other authorizer requirements
- Reauthorization/revocation – do you clearly understand the metrics/thresholds/timelines/rubric?
- What is the federal and State mandated “Most important factor in the decision of whether or not to renew your contract?” MCL 380.503 Sec 6(h)

# Vendors – Selecting and Working Day to Day

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- Authorizer's legally (and logically) required contract actions
- Separate and clearly understand charter and vendor contracts – terms, lengths, RFPs, Board control
- Full service vs. partial services
- Did this Board originally select the ESP vendor?
- Contract review, modifications, services provided, who evaluates, costs per service, contractual performance metrics that clearly improve academic performance
- **How do you evaluate other vendor services? ESP and other vendors**
- What happens if you change a major vendor?
  - Authorizer's perspective
  - personnel
  - public funds purchased what
  - What entity owns what
  - facility/maintenance/reporting/technology, etc.

# Media Release – Anti-Charter Advocates – Public View

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- What do the headlines say?
  - George’s school services ESP listed as a priority school
  - George’s school services ESP students score last on the MStep test
  - George’s school services ESP teacher slaps student
  - George’s school services ESP Board being investigated for misuse of public funds
- NO, NO, NO! They replace “George’s school services” with the name of your charter school
- Rarely do anti-charter advocates address ESPs – they research, question, play watchdog, investigate, etc. charter school board, staff and student performance and issues
- ***Bottom line – the Board owns the outcomes, data and decisions!***

# Vendor Reminders/Discussion Points

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- Your ESP is not your only vendor. You must ensure your selection/evaluation process is defensible for all entities that the Board uses public funds to pay
  - Snow removal
  - Food service
  - Lawn maintenance
  - Substitute teachers
  - Etc.
- Does the Board or your ESP select/evaluate vendors?
- Do you know the length of your vendor contracts?
- Selecting and dismissing staff – especially teaching and administration
  - **Has your attorney reviewed your procedures so you cannot be accused of “directly employing” staff** (MPERS, unemployment, Michigan employment security commission, wrongful dismissal lawsuits, etc.)?
  - What are you liable for and what are your ESP’s liabilities?

# The Board as a Public Leadership Team

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- What does it mean to be a public servant? (Board Meetings At-A-Glance)
- Public meetings, Open Meetings Act, FOIAs, legal decisions (Board Meetings At-A-Glance)
- Charter contract mandates:
  - Bylaws
  - Articles of Incorporation
  - Terms and Conditions
  - Schedules
  - Amendments
  - Etc.
- Media and marketing – reputation, communications, honesty, press releases, strategic information, etc.
- Which legal responsibilities can be delegated? **Which ones do you decide to delegate? Are the decisions increasing student performance or other goals?**
- Basically, with the exception of taxes, MPERS, unions/bargaining and elections, **you need to do what the local Board of Education does and your school needs to do what the local traditional public school does.**

# The Board as a Public Leadership Team

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- Have you attended a traditional Board of Education meeting?
- Local Relationships:
  - Intermediate School District
  - Local Board of Education
  - Businesses
  - Law Enforcement
  - Foundations
  - Media
  - Vendors
  - Government
- Appearances of conflicts of interests, private vendor profits with public monies, inaccurate or incomplete information, can anyone make data say what they want?
- As a public entity using public monies – why were you created? Mission/Vision, what makes you better (not just different), how do **YOU** know your charter school is working?
- Personnel – public assumption is the staff is **YOUR STAFF**. Do you have any control over your front line people? Over their benefits/salaries, evaluations, assignments, etc.?
- MPERS Information

# How is Your Board Operating vs. How Do You Want It to Operate?

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- Are you a cohesive unit or usually split in factions or individuals?
- How do you merge **individual opinions** with **strong Board decisions**? **How do stakeholders view a 4-3 vs. 7-0 decision?**
- Discuss compromise, “Good of the school”, taking decisions down to the student level while still looking at the big picture.
- Is your Board efficient? Effective? Transparent?
- Think procedures and outcomes – academic, fiscal, compliance, facility, governance, etc.
- Review and decide to use all tools at your disposal!!
  - Consultants
  - ISD
  - Authorizer reports
  - Michigan Department of Education PSA unit
  - Board members’ skills
  - ESP information/reports, etc.



# How is Your Board Operating vs. How Do You Want It to Operate?

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- Epicenter has many features. Which ones are the Board using now, if any?
  - Board meeting information
    - Current financial information
    - Compliance Data
    - Meeting information (agenda, calendar, etc.)
    - ESP Contract
- Like a data warehouse that can replace lots of paper copies!

# Leading Academic Improvement from the Top

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- What are your measurable student performance expectations in the charter contract? Do they match the ESP contract goals? **Ongoing ESP academic reports to the Board.**
- Authorizer academic mandates
  - Top to Bottom has played a big role- **What is next?**
  - Scorecard – **Will now be the Transparency Dashboard**
  - Comparison data
  - Required and other assessments
  - Reauthorization and School Support- **Does the Board know?**
- Improvement/growth vs. achievement/proficiency
- Scaled scores – how many questions are your kids getting correct compared to other kids in the area, state, nation, etc.
- **How often are you seeing and hearing student created deliverables? Do you see work from other schools?**

# Leading Academic Improvement from the Top

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- Other indicators of rigor:
  - Test scores
  - Performance after students leave the charter school
  - Articulation
  - Visits to and from other educators
  - Scorecards/Top to Bottom
  - Competitions
  - Dual/shared programs
- Good report card/honor roll data and poor standardized test scores. High percentage of students enroll in college but most need remediation and few complete. Academy data shows your exit grade “did really well academically”- but most students struggle at the next level. GREAT TIMES TO ASK QUESTIONS!!!

# Leading Academic Improvement from the Top

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- If you know your measurable expectations, do you have the right people on board?
- Are your vendors capable of helping you achieve your goals? With current set up or with modifications? Are ESPs adult employment agencies?
- You must have the right building leadership!
- How much time do you spend with your principal? Do you know him or her?
- How much time do you spend in school? Do the teachers and students know you are a board member?
- Vendors like to use the phrase “Staff **assigned** to your **charter school**”. What do you do when you clearly see poor staff performance? Dance of the lemons? Tough decisions!

# Where Are We Headed with Required Assessments?

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- Remember: “The most important reason to reauthorize?” **From Slide 9**
  - What does that mean on the MStep and College Board assessments?
  - How do you compare to local LEAs and Michigan averages in growth and achievement?

**Always look at both, question both, and expect positive results in both – achievement usually takes more time!**

- **Always remember both the NWEA MAP (national perspective) and MStep/College Board (state data/comparisons)**

# Where Are We Headed with Required Assessments?

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- Think in terms of positive, flat, or negative slopes. Ferris needs to be able to defend why a charter school exists at reauthorization time!
- Detroit Public Schools Community District has many schools. We sometimes need to find a building or two in the same area or who serve similar students? Ferris also uses “resident” and “composite” data.
- Data for thought: if Ferris mandated high schools to have Michigan average SAT scores, we would have one high school open!
- Mandated 50% proficiency on MStep - one K-8 academy would be reauthorized! Still good goals!!

# Working with Other Entities

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- Local transportation groups
- Local education opportunities
  - YMCA
  - Churches
  - Arts
  - Music
  - Museums
  - Sports
- Intermediate School Districts – connections
  - Special education
  - Technical education
  - State reporting
  - Professional Development
  - Grants

How do your students perform at the next level? HOW DO YOU KNOW? (surveys, data collections, reunions, etc.)

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# Working with Other Entities

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- K12 and Higher Education
  - Student teachers
  - Dual enrollment
  - Summer programs
  - Post charter school performance data, if charter school is not pre-K-12, you must work with schools that **send or receive your kids** – communicate, share real data, what can help your kids before or after they attend your charter school!
- Authorizer – know the roles, mandates, clear expectations
- Michigan Department of Education – field reps, special education, state reporting, PSA unit
- Do you represent your academy and Ferris State University in a positive and professional way?



# Short- and Long-Term Planning

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- Nothing improves if there are no actions!
- Quick wins/short-term measures of success – especially if Board has not been seen as a key player. It is hard to make a decision that 100% of stakeholders will agree with! Do what is right and what you can defend with data, research, communication, law, etc. **Board decisions – not member decisions!**
- Policies/stakeholder input/transparency
- School Improvement Plans
- Annual Reports – use the **Contract Performance Report**
- Use data to create Action Plans
- Short-time actions and indicators of success
- Long-term strategic planning and goals
- Take plans to the student levels

# Adult Allies

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- Each student and charter school board need objective allies. Who are yours?
  - Authorizer
  - Michigan Department of Education
  - PSA Unit at Michigan Department of Education
  - MAPSA
  - National Charter School Institute
  - Michigan Association of Charter School Boards
  - Consultants/Vendors
  - Local benefactor

# Closing Summation and Reminders

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- Charter School governance and the role of Board of Directors
- Contract and connections with the authorizer
- Selecting, contracting with, overseeing, changing, evaluating, etc. vendors
- The Board as a public leadership team – not individuals
- Leading academic improvement from the top
- Working with other entities
- Short- and long-term planning – priorities/pay dividends
- Work with, believe, expect good advice from your field representative. If not – talk with the CSO Director.

# How Important is the Board's Job?

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**“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”**

– Frederick Douglass