

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

March 2026 Board Communication

❖ Continuous Learning Mindset

Michigan law requires public schools to provide continuous learning and professional development opportunities to its teachers and school leaders. The benefits of gaining new knowledge and skills translate into improved classroom instruction, better student engagement and enhance learning outcomes.

Ferris State University elevates that concept by requiring school board members to model a culture of continuous learning. Board members need to be well-informed of best practices and standards to effectively govern a school district. New board members need to establish foundational knowledge, while more seasoned members need ongoing education to stay current and refine their higher-level governance expertise.

Regardless of how long someone has been serving on a school board, there are always new things to learn, new laws being enacted, new challenges to address and new problems to solve. Individual members should assess their level of competencies, as it relates to the role and responsibilities of governing a school, and seek out professional learning topics that best suit their needs.

Although we collaborate with other authorizers to bring you relevant school board governance webinars, there are other ways boards and individual board members can gain helpful guidance, material information, practical advice and beneficial knowledge. Below are several options.

Board Professional Development Activity	Description/Example	Number of Activity Credits Awarded
Full Board Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board Retreat• Strategic Planning Meeting• Book Study	Two activity credits
Individual Board Member Watches CSO Board Member Training Video via Epicenter	Examples of Video Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational Goals• Freedom of Information Act• Open Meetings Act• Charter Contract• Finances	.25 activity credits per board member per video
Individual Board Member Attends FSU CSO Sponsored Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Webinar• In-person Session• Interactive Zoom Session	One activity credit per board member per session
Individual Board Member Attends Meeting of Another Public Governing Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighboring School Board Meeting• City, County or State Public Meeting	One activity credit per board member per meeting
Individual Board Member Attends Educational Workshop/Conference/Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any workshop, conference or webinar related to board governance, charter schools or education (e.g. sponsored by MAPSA, NCSI, MASB or NACSA)	One activity credit per board member per workshop or conference

To meet Ferris State University's continuous learning standards, each school board must complete three professional development credits annually, with at least two board members participating in those activities. When you attend a professional development session, please share key takeaways with the rest of the board—whether through a brief written summary or a short update at a meeting. Sharing your insights strengthens our culture of continuous learning and builds the collective knowledge of the board, which in turn supports more informed and effective governance. Research consistently shows that high-functioning school boards—those that stay informed, collaborate, and continuously develop—contribute to improved student outcomes.

❖ Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

The next webinar in the 2025-2026 board professional development series is [Evaluating Contracts: Tools for Accountability](#). It is scheduled for Tuesday March 10th at 7pm. Evaluating contracts and holding parties accountability are critical functions of the school board.

School boards review contracts that range from snow removal and roof repair services to educational service provider agreements and charter contracts. Some contracts may require an RFP (Request for Proposal) process. Regardless of what type of contractual relationship the school/board pursues, boards have a fiduciary duty to protect public funds, set expectations, measure performance goals and abide by legal requirements.

For more information and best practices about evaluating contracts by using effective evaluation tools and learning about the RFP process, please register for this session. Board members, look for an email invitation from AirWin Educational Services with registration information.

In case you missed the previous virtual board professional development sessions, below are links to the recordings. If you would like a copy of a presentation or handouts, please contact Sharon Hopper at SharonHopper@ferris.edu.

[Navigating Your Role as a New Board Member](#)

[Leading with Purpose: Mission-Driven Decision-Making](#)

[Strategic Oversight vs Micromanagement](#)

[Data-Driven Governance for Student Achievement](#)

[Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight](#)

❖ CSO Support

The CSO team is conducting its semi-annual review of your school and board's performance in the areas of academic progress, fiscal solvency, operations/governance and legal compliance. Our discussion focuses on your support indicator data in each area, along with the established measures, metrics and targets.

By reviewing your support indicator data, we identify areas of success to celebrate, as well as areas requiring improvement or targeted professional development. This comprehensive data analysis allows us to determine what support and/or resources the CSO team can offer to further enhance your school and board's ability to meet the established targets.

Following this review, your FSU Field Representative will share key takeaways with school leadership and the board. By fostering this collaborative dialogue, we ensure all stakeholders are empowered to implement data-driven improvements effectively to better support student outcomes.

❖ Important Date

March 10, 2026 – Board Professional Development Webinar [Evaluating Contracts: Tools for Accountability](#)

❖ Important Epicenter Deadlines

March 1, 2026 – Annual Education Report

March 16, 2026 – Board Candidate Application (for consideration at the 5/8/2026 FSU BOT meeting)

❖ **New Transparency Requirements Specific to Public School Academies**

Beginning this school year public school academies are required to post on their website, no later than November 1st of each year, the average salaries of instructional and support staff. The requirements apply to both staff directly employed by the academy and those employed by the educational service provider. The intent is to promote transparency and accountability regarding employee compensation. This disclosure must include:

- Average salary for new teachers (less than 5 yrs. of certification)
- Average salary for veteran teachers (5 or more yrs. of certification)
- Average salary for support staff (paraprofessionals, food service workers, bus drivers, literacy coaches)

If the school has fewer than five teachers in either category, the average salary for all teachers must be reported.

❖ **Standard Transparency Requirements**

Along with the above transparency requirements, Michigan law also requires public schools to maintain other essential information on their websites. This includes:

- Accreditation status
- Name of authorizing body
- Name of primary educational service provider
- Teacher evaluation information
- Administrator evaluation information
- Deficit elimination plan
- Staffing plan for providing literacy services
- Financial reporting, auditing, budgeting and accounting practices
- Annual crime and safety report
- Educational service provider agreement
- Charter contract
- Common school calendar
- Yearly progress status under the No Child Left Behind Act
- Freedom of information act policy
- Non-discrimination and Title IX notice
- Board meeting notices
- Board meeting calendar
- Online course catalog access
- Special education service policies
- Grade and building level maximums
- Informational notice of best practices for storing firearms
- Annual budget and budget revisions
- A chart of personnel expenditures
- A chart of all expenditures
- Current collective bargaining agreement
- Health care benefits plan
- Annual financial audit
- Policy governing the procurement of supplies, materials and equipment
- Accounts payable check register or a statement of total expenses
- Total salary and benefit costs of each employee whose salary exceeds \$100,000
- Dues paid to associations
- Lobbying expenses
- Identification of all credit cards, authorized users and credit limit
- Costs, purpose and destination associated with superintendent's out-of-state travel
- Annual pupil accounting audit

❖ **Board of Directors Question Toolbox**

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office is happy to provide you with a few questions to help further your conversations this month. The question focus could come from one or more of our four School Support Pillars: Academics, Fiscal, Operations, and Compliance.

Please note that this is meant as a reference, some items may not apply to all schools, and that there are many questions a board member may choose to ask. If you have questions, please reach out to your Field Representative or the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office.

We will focus on Pillar #3 Operations:

- How does the school exhibit a positive climate and promote a sense of belonging for staff? For students?
- What are the expectations regarding board member attendance at board meetings? How is consistent participation ensured?
- What are the retention rates for teaching, support staff and administrative staff for the past 3 years?
- Are there any safety or security concerns the school is currently addressing? What is the remediation plan and timetable?

❖ **Any Questions?**

You may contact your FSU Field Representative or Sharon Hopper if you have any questions regarding this Board Communication. Important and/or urgent information that cannot wait until the next Board Communication will be sent to you by email.