

September 2025 Board Communication

❖ Protecting Student Records: A Key Role for PSA Boards

Student records are the cornerstone of a student's academic history—proof of coursework, grades, and graduation. When a public school academy (PSA) closes or loses access to data, ensuring that these records remain intact and accessible is critical.

While boards are **ultimately responsible** for maintaining student records, they may lack the capacity or oversight to do so effectively. As a result, valuable student data can be lost or become inaccessible.

There's good news: A recent survey of PSAs in authorizer portfolios found that **100%** now use robust SIS platforms capable of managing transcripts, graduation records, and cross-platform storage. This provides a strong foundation for protecting student records—**and boards are in a key position to ensure that the right steps are taken.**

How Boards Can Help

Most PSA boards already adopt a set of standard policies, including:

- **A Student Records Policy** – Which requires procedural guidelines for storing and retaining records, including authorization for electronic reproduction.
- **A Disaster Recovery Plan Policy** – Which directs schools to create, test, and maintain a disaster recovery plan, including data backup protocols and reciprocal agreements with other, external organizations, for recovery support.

To strengthen record retention practices, boards are encouraged to take the following actions:

- Ensure that the above policies are incorporated into your formal board policy manual.
- Add a review of these policies as a standing agenda item for an annual board meeting, and require the School Leader or Educational Service Provider (ESP) to report annually that:
 - All student records are up to date, including course completions and graduation information.
 - Data has been backed up and is accessible at a designated off-site location.
- Ensure this information is documented in board meeting minutes.

By proactively reviewing policies and verifying practices with the ESP or school leader, boards can help safeguard student records and ensure that students can access their academic histories long after graduation—even if their school no longer exists. Maintaining the integrity of student records isn't just a compliance issue, it's a commitment to students and their future. Your leadership makes all the difference.

❖ Legal Requirements

The Board of Directors of a public school academy are required by Michigan law to collect, maintain and make available to the public all of the following information concerning the operation and management of the school:

- ★ Copy of the Charter Contract
- ★ Copy of Management Contracts or services contracts
- ★ Copy of Board Policies
- ★ List of all board members that include name, address and term of office
- ★ Board meeting agendas and minutes
- ★ Budget and budget amendments
- ★ Copy of bills over \$10,000 or more
- ★ Quarterly financial statements
- ★ Management letter issued with the annual financial audit
- ★ Current list of teachers and school administrators that include their individual salaries
- ★ Copies of the teaching or school administrator's certificates/permits of current teaching and administrative staff
- ★ Evidence of compliance with unprofessional conduct checks and criminal background and records checks for all teachers and administrators
- ★ Curriculum documents and materials given to the authorizing body
- ★ Proof of insurance
- ★ Copies of facility leases or deeds, or both, and any equipment leases
- ★ All health and safety reports and certificates, including those related to fire safety, environmental matters, asbestos inspection and food service

❖ New Legal Requirements

Effective April 2, 2025 Michigan law, MCL 380.503(6)(q), requires the name of the authorizing body and the primary educational service provider must appear on all of the following:

- ★ Unless prohibited by a local ordinance or local zoning authority, signage that is on the PSA's property and is erected, repaired or installed after the effective date
- ★ Promotional materials that are created, modified, or distributed on or after the effective date
- ★ The footer of the school's website pages
- ★ The school's application that a student must submit to enroll in the school

❖ 2025-2026 CSO Competitive Grant Program

Since its inception in 1997, the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office has provided resources to the University's authorized public-school academies in numerous ways. Our mission statement sums up that commitment:

By implementing quality oversight, the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office focuses on student growth and achievement, offers professional learning opportunities, and provides relevant resources to its public-school academies.

Consistent with our mission, the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office is pleased to announce that all FSU-authorized academies are eligible to apply for a competitive grant of up to \$20,000 for the 2025-2026 academic year. The grant may be used for one of four "bucket" areas: Safety and Security, Extra Curricular Activities, Staff Professional Development or Other Projects. The total amount of funds for the grant program offered by the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office is **\$400,000**.

Here is some specific information:

- Academies must complete the CSO Competitive Grant Request Application outlining the project, anticipated cost, and rationale for the project. The completed application is submitted in Epicenter no later than November 15, 2025.
- Grant requests may be for any amount up to, but not exceeding \$20,000 to fund specific projects not covered by the Academy's general fund. The grants are not meant to supplant general budget money, but to enhance offerings or projects that the Academy would not be able to fund otherwise.
- The grant must benefit academy students and/or staff.
- Academies may apply for more than one grant, but must use a separate application for each request. Award amounts are cumulative, no academy will be awarded more than \$20,000 in total funding.
- Academies will be notified of their grant status no later than November 29, 2025. Grant awards will be disbursed with the December 2025 State Aid payments.

❖ **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.

As we start the new school year, we will focus on Pillar #3 Operations:

- Have we met our projected enrollment?
- How are we supporting the school leader and teacher morale in the opening weeks of school?
- Review the staffing plan. For any open positions, what is the plan to fill them?
- Do our schools have all the supplies needed to be successful this year?
- Are all summer maintenance/renovation projects complete? Were any additional projects identified for work during the school year?

❖ **Important Epicenter Deadlines**

September 1, 2025 – MICIP Continuous Improvement Plan
September 1, 2025 – Annual Inventory of Capital Assets
September 1, 2025 – Board Calendar on Academy's Website-Certification of Completion
September 1, 2025 – Board of Directors Policies on Academy's Website-Certification of Completion
September 5, 2025 – Educational Entity Master District or School Update
September 30, 2025 – Emergency Drills Schedule – Certification
September 30, 2025 – ESP Information Policy Requirement
September 30, 2025 – Integrated Pest Management Plan-Annual Notice
October 1, 2025 – Annual Verification of Non-Profit Corporation Status
October 1, 2025 – Name of Authorizer and ESP on Signs, Promotional Materials, Website and Enrollment Application-Certification of Completion (**new requirement**)
October 20, 2025 – Board of Directors Application (for 12/11/2025 FSU BOT meeting)

❖ Important Dates

October 2, 2025 – Count Day

October 3, 2025 – FSU Board of Trustees meeting

❖ 2025-2026 Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

This year eight Michigan charter school authorizers, including Ferris State University, contracted with Angela Irwin from AirWin Educational Services to facilitate a board professional development webinar/Zoom series, *Governance Growth: Strengthening Boards, Empowering Schools*. This series will include six GoToWebinars and three interactive sessions via a Zoom platform. Each session will be recorded and the link will be provided to board members in future Board Communications. The dates, topics and delivery platform are as follows:

Date	Topic	Delivery Platform
September 9, 2025 Tuesday 6pm	Navigating Your Role as a New Board Member	Zoom
October 14, 2025 Tuesday 6pm	Leading With Purpose: Mission-Driven Decision Making	GoToWebinar
November 11 2025 Tuesday 6pm	Strategic Oversight vs. Micromanagement	GoToWebinar
December 9, 2025 Tuesday 6pm	Data-Driven Governance for Student Achievement	Zoom
January 13, 2026 Tuesday 6pm	Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight	Zoom
February 10, 2026 Tuesday 6pm	Growth Planning: Expanding Impact, Not Just Enrollment	GoToWebinar
March 10, 2026 Tuesday 6pm	Evaluating Contracts: Tools for Accountability	GoToWebinar
April 14, 2026 Tuesday 6pm	Strengthening Governance and Management/School Leader Partnerships	GoToWebinar
May 12, 2026 Tuesday 6pm	Strengthening School Board/Authorizer Partnerships	GoToWebinar

A formal invitation from Angela Irwin - AirWin Educational Services will be emailed to board members. The invitation will include a brief description of the session and registration instructions.

❖ In-Person Board Professional Development Opportunities

In addition to our virtual board training series, we are thrilled to offer board members in-person board professional development opportunities this Fall. Again, we partnered with seven other authorizers to bring you these opportunities. Angie Irwin will deliver a formal presentation and facilitate a breakout session/table discussion. Dinner will be provided. Below is information regarding those sessions.

Date	Topic	Location
October 9, 2025 Thursday 4:30pm – 8:00pm	Welcome to Charter School Board Service	TBD
October 23, 2025 Thursday 4:30pm – 8:00pm	Leading With Purpose: Role of the Board President and Vice President	Voyageur Academy 4366 Military Street Detroit, MI
October 28, 2025 Tuesday 4:30pm – 8:00pm	Charter School Boards: Reflect, Recommit, Reimagine	TBD

Board members, be sure to check your email for registration and other information about these in-person, interactive professional development opportunities.

To strive for governance continuous improvement, boards are required to complete three credits per academy year by two or more board members. Credits are awarded after the board member shares with the full board at a public meeting 2-3 takeaways about the professional development session they attended.

❖ **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.