

Selecting, Reviewing and Supporting the Administrator

An effective board identifies and hires a capable administrator who shares the mission and vision of the school. The board is also responsible for the annual evaluation of the administrator and the setting of professional goals for improvement. Boards support administrators by ensuring that they have the necessary resources to accomplish goals and by conveying confidence in their day-to-day decisions.

Characteristics of a Quality Leader

- Focuses decisions on what is best for students
- Knows how to disaggregate data to make decisions about curricular adjustments and teacher training
- Communicates well with parents, students, faculty, board, and staff
- Recognizes a variety of needs by staff, faculty and students and is willing to find ways to meet their needs
- Incorporates input from stakeholders to provide shared ownership in decision making
- Knows how to effectively delegate tasks and responsibilities
- Leads by example by being highly motivated, accountable, and willing to actively pursue growth opportunities
- Communicates the vision in school staff, faculty, community members, authorizer, and students
- Stays current on educational research and is willing to try new things to meet the needs of students and staff
- Has demonstrated expertise in teaching and learning
- Knows how to inspire and create an effective professional learning community
- Is an excellent manager of people, time, resources, and budgets
- Has experience in and appreciation for the school model/philosophy

The Hiring Process

Given the independence of charter schools, the administrator must be both an instructional and a business leader. They must manage the facility and finances, oversee instructional and operational staff, engage with students, elevate school culture and morale, represent the school to parents and the community, manage conflict, promote the school, ensure the school meets all local, state, and federal laws, encourage academic and professional excellence, and guide the school toward meeting its goals. In short, the administrator guides the school on the path to its mission and vision.

Creating a job description: The board should write a detailed job description for the position and decide how it will interview and select qualified candidates. The job description should include the minimum professional qualifications such as the type of degree, certification, and work experience; and the job duties

including management(budget/finance, personnel), educational leadership (curriculum evaluation, administration of program), communication with parents, the community, and the authorizer, facility maintenance, staff, student performance evaluation, and other tasks.

Forming a search committee: The board may form a committee to develop an employment announcement, strategies for interviewing candidates, and expectations for what is considered a quality candidate. Staff, parents and other stakeholders should provide the committee with recommendations regarding leadership characteristics and interview questions.

Selecting candidates: Recruitment strategies include contacting other charter schools and trusted peers within the education community for candidate recommendations and advertising the position in places that cater to the charter community such as the U.S. Charter Schools network.

Interviewing candidates: It is illegal to ask questions about age, marital status, family planning, religious affiliation, disabilities and should never be addressed in an interview.

- The board/committee should prepare a list of standard questions such as:
- What strengths and weaknesses would you bring to the leadership position?
- What have you or are you doing to address the deficits?
- What is the most satisfying experience in education you have had?
- What has been your experience in teaching and leadership in other schools?
- How has your educational background contributed to where you are today?
- What do you believe are the greatest contributions of charter schools?
- How are charter schools different from traditional public schools?
- What experience do you bring to this position that you believe will be helpful?
- What will you do to help the school to fulfill its mission and vision?
- What concerns you most about taking over the leadership of this school at this time?

Checking references and prior job performance: The board should check with former employers to verify dates of employment and ask questions about the candidate's past performance. Boards may also learn about the applicant by inquiring with individuals who know the candidate, but may not be listed as a reference. If a candidate has been terminated by another school, the board should assume the situation had two sides and ask questions of several individuals involved.