

A stylized graphic of fire in shades of red, orange, and yellow, with a dark grey background. The fire is depicted as a series of flowing, flame-like shapes that rise from the bottom of the frame. The overall aesthetic is modern and abstract.

Stop Putting out Fires and *GOVERN!*

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Learning Objectives

- Gain insight and tools to effectively manage and support your school leader
- Learn how to become more proactive and less reactive
- Understand how asking the right questions makes a difference

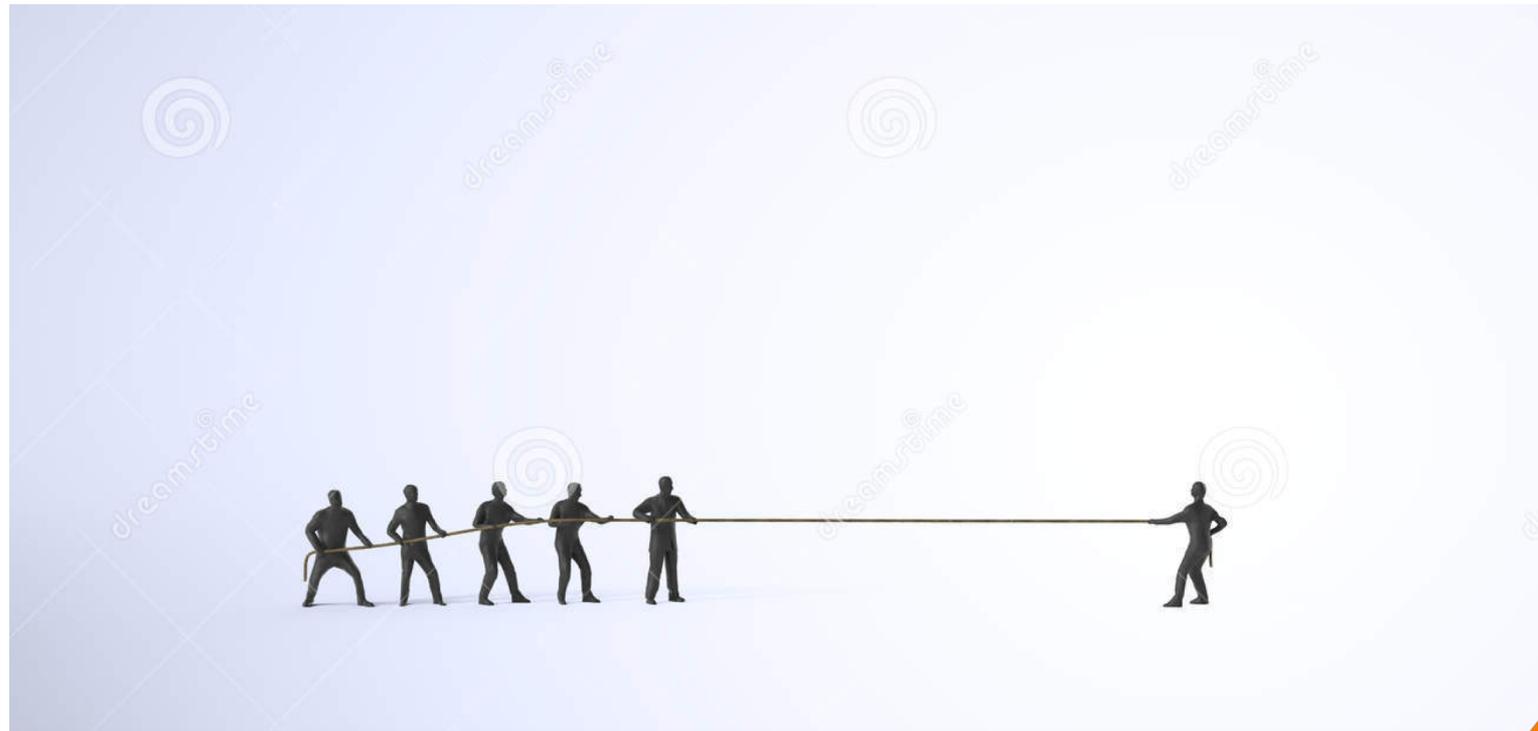


Common Governance Challenges

- Working proactively instead of reactively
- **Lack of understanding of actual organizational performance**
- Roles and responsibilities
- **Leader oversight, management, and support**
- Transparency
- Fiduciary duty violations
- Effective committees
- Understanding contractual obligations
- On-boarding
- Succession Planning
- Board member attendance / accountability
- Use of achievement data
- Strategic goal setting



Effective Leader Management



Drawing the line between Governance and Management...

- Every school issue is a board issue at some level (policy) and a school level (operational)
- For example, the board is responsible for setting policy on fiscal controls, but the controls are executed by staff

As a board, your role is to delineate between the board and leader aspect of problems that arise as you mitigate risk on behalf of the charter school.



Effective Leader Management

- Many boards suffer from:
 - short-term bias – over focus on near term issues
 - reactive stance-reactive rather than proactive mode
 - leaky accountability – relating in an official capacity to staff members other than the top executive
 - diffused authority – lack of role clarity
 - watch dog posture – suspicion is applied to all issues big and small
 - complete overload
- The path to better governance lies in better human relations, *especially between the board and the school leader*
- Boards need to separate large and small issues and refine the ability to prioritize based on risk, **and then fully mitigate the risks**



Leadership Support and Accountability



Leadership Support and Accountability: *Best Practice Perspective*

- Is the leader's role properly designed?
- How well does the board understand the leader's position and job duties as they relate to the leader's capacity?
- The leader and board chair should have a mutually supportive dynamic
- Ensure that a fair evaluation system is in place with constructive, documented feedback, the entire board is responsible for this, not just the lead evaluators



The mission of Scholars of Excellence Charter School (SECS) is to **teach critical thinking skills in a collaborate STEM environment**. At SECS, students are designers of their learning. The founding board chair at SECS, launched the school four years ago, and there have been three leaders in four years. One principal left on her own, while one was non-renewed and the current leader has a strong higher education background with no K-12 experience.

The board chair contends that the high turn-over rate is due to leaders not being aligned to the mission and vision of the school. The current leader is struggling with compliance issues and has missed key deadlines that will cause the school to miss points on the authorizer's performance framework. The founder, along with other board members, believe that this principal should be non-renewed, but there have been no written corrective action plans. The board contends that since the principal is an "at will" employee they can be dismissed at any time, with or without cause and that documentation is *not as necessary* in a right-to-work state. The founder believes she can do a better job leading the school and plans to step down and assume the principal's position.

What actions should the board have taken to prevent this situation?

What are the policy implications?

What should their next steps be?

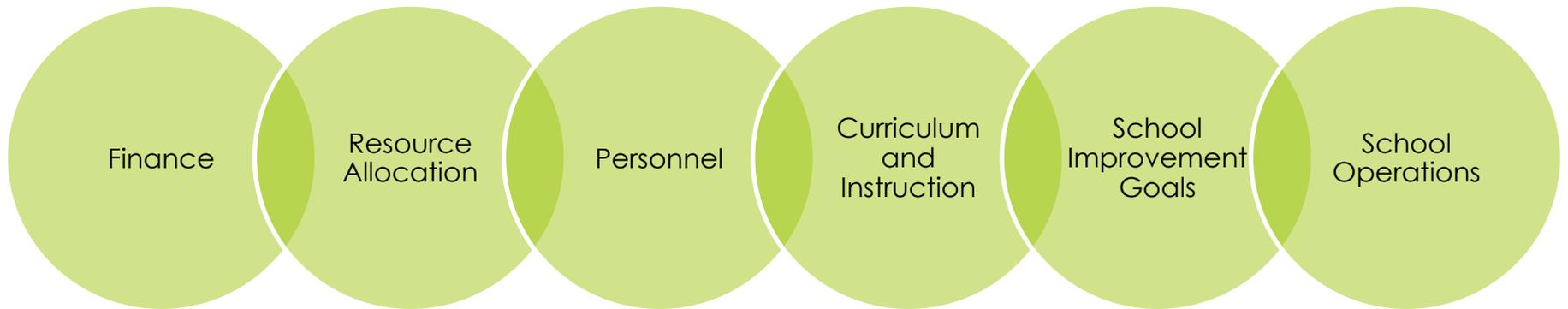
Case Study #1



Asking Effective Questions



Make Decisions About "Something"



Effective Boards Ask Effective Questions



Vision

What is success for our school?



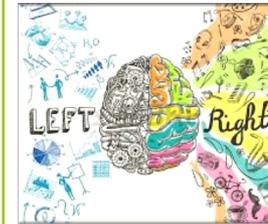
Process Driven

How do we achieve success?



Collaborative

Who/What should manage the steps towards success?



Analytical

Does the data measure success or failure?



Transparent

How can we improve?

Academic and Organizational Improvement



Create a culture of inquiry that encourages robust debate and consideration of alternative options.



Asking Effective Questions: Key Concepts

- ❑ Inventory Governing Board expertise areas
- ❑ Plan and attend relevant trainings
- ❑ Receive and READ reports prior to meetings
- ❑ Own the areas of authority
- ❑ Ask probing questions, but also listen actively to responses
- ❑ Be direct
- ❑ Asking tough questions is the key to mitigating risk



Scholars United Academy (SUA), is a charter school that currently serves students in grade 6-8, with a project-based learning instructional approach. The school has been in operation for 4 years, and tends to make academic growth inconsistently across content in a few grade bands according to its benchmark assessment, NWEA MAP. The previous school year's academic results on the state assessment are as follows:

% of Students Proficient or Above	Reading	Math
6 th Grade	39%	18%
7 th Grade	34%	37%
8 th Grade	43%	46%

The Governing Board of SUA is comprised of 9 voting members; 4 parents, and 5 community members. The Principal, Karen, is an ex-officio member of the board. Expertise available includes finance, facilities, higher education, non-profit governance, grant writing, and legal counsel. The Governing Board prides itself on trusting the Principal and therefore positions themselves to approve any item that the Principal brings forth. The meetings typically last no longer than one hour.

During the Board Meeting, Karen presented the Academic Report, focusing on the winter NWEA MAP results. Attached is a snapshot of the 6th grade MAP math results that were presented and the correlating dialogue.

Is there anything additional the Board members should have asked or considered during this report?



Questions



Thank you!

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