



THE HIGHMARK NEWSLETTER

Ethics & Integrity

Discipline

Empowerment & Accountability

Quality

Teamwork

Agility

Vice President's Message



At Highmark, we love what we do, and that's what makes this company great.

Our mission statement of "Impacting lives of students, teachers, and communities" is WHY we do what we do.

Highmark drives educational excellence by developing customized facility solutions while exceeding the expectations of our employees, schools, partners, and investors.

Holding each other to our company values is important to us and we seek to partner with those that do the same.

Say it. Mean it. Live it.
Plan it. Work it.
In it together.
Do it Once. Do it Right.
Own it.
Love it.

In the heart of our operations, we continually work on how to improve the school's experience with Highmark, our partners, and investors. Understanding the unique aspects of what every school has to offer, we take on the responsibility as real estate developers very seriously, as the facility plays a huge part in the school's success.

It's not just about the land or building...

There many different pieces that must come together to make a facility development work like finding the right financing fit or the best contractor for each market. We're also ready for surprises like working with difficult municipalities or even union strikes!

We've been doing this for over a decade. We love what we do and why we do it.

Happy 2018 everyone!

Lana Nichols
Vice President Operations & Finance



Colorado Military Academy - Colorado Springs, CO

School Spotlight Colorado Military Academy

Colorado Military Academy (CMA) Charter School held a ribbon cutting for its brand new campus in August at an event that was attended by hundreds of parents, staff, prospective students, as well as state and local dignitaries. The ceremony was punctuated by speeches by Colorado State Senator Owen Hill, and CMA* Board Chair Joyce Schuck, a brass band performance by the United States Air Force Academy Band, and an impressive performance by the Youth Cadet Squadron.

For its facility, the school used an existing 80,000 square foot building, previously used by a military contractor. The construction work was performed by Faurot construction, based out of Boulder Colorado. The building and the surrounding land will allow for potential school expansions in the future.

The school is located just outside the gates of Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs Colorado and is the first K-8 military charter school in the state. The curriculum offers hands on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) with a military focus on discipline and respect. The school looks to fill a need for good quality education in the area. While children of military families make up a large part of the student body, the staff also has a strong military influence, where 90% have military affiliation with all branches of the military represented.

"We want leaders of uncompromising character," said Executive Director Reggie Ash, who also happens to be the former base commander of Peterson Air Base.

The school opened its doors for its first day of classes on August 28, 2017 with more than 500 students and a strong waiting list.

Questions about reporting requirements? Email questions and reports to Kelsy@highmarkschools.com

Highmark 2017-'18 Development Activity by State

The 2017-'18 school year brings exciting new development including new partners and expansions on previously completed facilities.

CALIFORNIA

College Prep Middle School
La Mesa -- New Build

COLORADO

Liberty Tree Classical Academy
Falcon -- New Build

NEW JERSEY

Central Jersey College Prep
New Brunswick -- New Build

NEW YORK

FLACS II-B

Bronx -- New Build

Barkai Yeshivah Jewish School
Brooklyn -- New Build

American Dream School
Bronx -- New Build

Hebrew Learning Academy
Brooklyn -- New Build

NORTH CAROLINA

Bradford Preparatory High School
Charlotte -- New Build

Carolina Charter School
Angier -- New Build

Davidson Charter Academy
Lexington -- New Build

UTAH

Capstone Classical Academy
Pleasant View -- New Build



Bradford Preparatory High School
North Carolina



Davidson Charter Academy
North Carolina



Family Life Academy Charter School II-B
New York

www.highmarkschools.com



Board Best Practices Part 2 of 3

David Frank

Highmark continuously works to bring our school partners the most relevant and up-to-date expertise in the field. We seek out best practices, leading experts, and leading guidance within the ever-changing landscape. One area that is crucial to school success is effective board governance. As such, Highmark monitors school governance and operations as part of both our initial due diligence with new schools and our ongoing reporting with our existing portfolio. We utilize resources from around the country to ensure that we incorporate industry standards and are excited to be bringing you a three part series on board governance. Through multiple perspectives from leaders who are authorizers, school leaders, national trainers, and board members themselves, we hope that you can glean vital information and stimulate engaging dialogue.

In October 2017, Highmark asked David Frank, currently the Executive Director for Charter School Office at New York Education Department to weigh in on Charter School Board Governance. David's expertise on public policy, regulatory issues, education, and evaluation has been instrumental in helping to foster an environment that supports high-quality public schools for all students. Developing systems and support to establish new schools, support and replicate existing high-quality schools, and close those not meeting applicable standards. The foundation, and constant theme, of his work has been researching and introducing best operational, financial, oversight, and pedagogical practices from New York City, State, and across the country.

HM: What do you view as the main purpose and function of a charter school board?

DF: Charter schools board of trustees engage in governance of the school that include, but is not limited to the following:

- Setting strategic direction;
- Developing goals for the organization;
- Hiring the school leader (management);
- Evaluating the school leader based on the outcomes-based metrics aligned with the accountability standards of the charter and its

authorizer;

- Ensuring that the terms of the school's charter are being implemented through conversations and the presentation of data-dashboards with school management;
- Ensuring that the school has adequate fiscal resources;
- Evaluating the needs of the board and recruiting accordingly and/or providing professional development for board members to grow and learn; and
- Handling issues from stakeholders and ensuring they are adequately addressed.

HM: Is there an ideal board composition? If so, what is it and why?

DF: There is not an ideal board composition other than as determined through a rigorous needs assessment. Often there are reoccurring themes for necessary skills (e.g. education, evaluation, finance, legal, real estate, etc. . .). But if a board makes a well-reasoned, evidence-based argument for why skills are, or aren't, needed, as an authorizer, we would accept the determination of the board.

HM: Describe and provide examples of governance vs. management.

DF: Governance is the process by which a group directs strategy, gathers resources, hires to implement, evaluates implementation, assesses need, and re-engages in the process after a broad evaluation (think of this as an iterative cycle). Management takes direction from the governance body, implements based on the plan, brings on and directs human capital to implement, reports on progress towards established goals to the governance body, brings ideas on how to obtain successful outcomes to the governance body, and directs day-to-day functioning, be it academic, operational, or fiscal.

HM: How does the board evaluate the board itself, the school leader, school performance, and if applicable, a management company?

DF: Each board is unique, but it should start the evaluation process with the performanc-

framework by which its authorizer will evaluate it. These metrics should be objective, observable, measurable, and include academic, operational, and fiscal outcomes. The evaluation should be done on a routine basis and made into a transparent set of goals/standards available to all stakeholders. The board should measure itself and the school continually against authorizer standards and should insist on organizational change at all levels if these standards are not being met in a timely manner as set forth by the board (often, the timeline for implementation is pre-determined by the charter term). The way a board evaluates itself, its school leader, and, when applicable, its management company is the same: embrace the authorizer's performance framework.

HM: What is the board's role in establishing and maintaining a healthy authorizer relationship?

DF: The board sets the tone of the entire organization. High-capacity boards invite the authorizer to discuss its accountability framework and effective practices that the school can learn from. They proactively share the successes and struggles of the school in an open, transparent, manner in order to learn and grow. If the school has a plan on how to address areas of growth, a good authorizer will welcome the conversation and appreciate the honesty; it's one of the best indicators of board capacity. A high-capacity board will insist on being privy to management/authorizer conversations and will be open to feedback from the authorizer. The board should insist on the school's management team being in constant communication with the authorizer regarding legal and regulatory requirements.

HM: What are the telltale signs of a highly functioning board, and conversely, a struggling board?

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HM: What are the most important policies the board should have in place?

Policies on the evaluation of school management/comprehensive service providers with clear strategies for addressing failures to meet and evaluative standards are the most important thing a board can do. It is also important to have strong fiscal policies and procedures in place that are living breathing documents. Schools that are operating in a fiscally strong manner can best ensure that adequate resources are being developed in a strategic manner to support students when and where they are needed.

HM: What types of board training are most effective/useful? What do you recommend when transitioning from a founding team to a governing body?

DF: Authentic training that builds off of a robust needs assessment is desirable. Board trainings should be ongoing and include all members of the board. When possible, they should be based on a problem of practice and not just the theoretical. Training should not continually be about onboarding new members. Boards should develop a strong on-boarding program for new members that is separate from training. As a school grows from a planning team, to a new board, to a mature board, their training should similarly mature and change. If it's going to be effective in helping the board go from good to great, board training should solve for identified needs and should solve a problem or address an issue/roadblock. Too many board trainings are on regulatory compliance. While this can be a helpful refresher from time to time, boards should focus on a growth mindset and delve into pertinent topics like strategy development, better evaluating student outcomes, and how to set themselves apart from an increasingly crowded marketplace in order to find their educational niche to best serve students when other options have failed.

The best way to go from a founding board to a governing body is to conduct meaningful needs assessment. Determine if the right people are on the bus and in the right place. Determine if the current strategic vision is what is needed in the next phase of the school's lifecycle, or develop one if needed. If I had to recommend two trainings for charter schools boards they would be:

- How do we take the evaluations we are doing of ourselves and our management team to the next level and;
- Change management.

Lastly, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Boards at all stages of their lifecycle should be visiting boards of similar schools and boards

of schools that they aspire to be. Boards can reach out to their authorizer for suggestions on exemplars to visit if necessary.

HM: What is the biggest challenge for a board?

DF: The biggest challenge for any board is asking hard questions about relevance:

- Are we the right people to move this organization forward?
- If not, how do we get the right people?
- Is our chosen school leader the right person for the job?
- Is he or she getting the results needed to prepare our children for college or careers and our school for renewal?

When the answers to too many of these questions is no, we have seen that low-capacity boards refuse to take action. Nobody wants to admit failure. Change is hard. We hope that in the interest of fostering great outcomes for children, if things aren't quite working out, our boards will tackle these tough questions and engage in change management at the board and school-leader level.

HM: Why would an individual choose to serve on a board?

DF: Serving on a charter school board is one of the most important things an individual can do to effect positive change for students traditionally at risk for academic failure. Serving on a charter school board is hard, usually thankless, and requires an immense time commitment. The reward however is, through effective governance, providing a medium for children to beat the odds, escape the vicious cycle of poverty, and better themselves and their community. Few other governance opportunities can directly impact a community like a charter school.

Responses were nominally edited where necessary.



David Frank
Executive Director
Charter School Office at New York State
Education Department

"We all know that education, more than anything else, improves our chances of building better lives."

-Nelson Mandela



Colorado Military Academy
Colorado



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