

# Top 10 Mistakes Made By Charter School Governing Boards

1. Individual board members acting as if they have authority to make decisions (including the Board President).
2. Conducting illegal meetings by not properly posting a meeting, taking action in a workshop or executive session, or discussing inappropriate topics in executive session.
3. Approving a budget that is not based on realistic projections.
4. Meeting too often and for too long.
5. Failing to keep corporate records, such as the charter application, contract, bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, meeting minutes, etc., in a safe location where people can use them (this includes student academic achievement records).
6. Micromanaging or failing to focus on what matters most.
7. Agreeing to capital financing terms that overextend the charter school's budget (this is usually done by projecting student enrollment too high).
8. Neglecting the board's responsibility to create and to govern through board policies.
9. Failing to communicate with relevant constituencies (e.g. parents, authorizer).
10. Terminating the principal because "there must be a better principal out there somewhere."



# Best Practices of Charter School Governing Boards

1. A clearly delineated, written governance structure with only one staff person reporting to the board.
2. Ongoing board training based on identified needs plus orientation and mentors for new board members.
3. Once a month, properly posted meetings focused on leading the charter school in alignment with the vision and mission statements.
4. Zero tolerance for email discussions or decision-making.
5. Less than half of the business meetings have an Executive Session.
6. Involved future board members on subcommittees or projects in order to acquaint them with the work of the school and give the current board an idea of how that individual would conduct themselves as a board member.
7. A strategic plan to guide them in meeting long-term and short-term goals.
8. A board subcommittee that develops the school budget, financial policies and procedures and an internal/external audit process.
9. Board packets individual board members receive a week before the meeting.
10. A board policy manual that is easy to understand and clearly communicates the board's values.
11. A focus on outcomes rather than process.
12. Individual board members that network with key individuals in the community and monitor charter school legislation.
13. A proactive rather than reactive mindset.
14. An understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses.
15. A practice of evaluating itself at least annually.
16. A standard board calendar with items that are addressed on a regular basis.
17. Efficient, productive meetings.
18. A practice of using Roberts Rules of Order to conduct meetings.
19. Financial checks and balances that provide for good oversight of public funds.
20. Individual board members always learning about charter school or education issues.