

Intro to Aspen Board Service

Aspen Academy Charter School



What you should know before you join

What is a Charter School?

Authorizers

What does a Board do?

What does that actually mean?

Decision Making of a Board

Ready to join the Board

What is a Charter School in MN?

- Charter schools are independent PUBLIC schools of choice for parents and students. The first charter schools in the nation opened in Minnesota in 1992.
- Charter schools are open to all students and offer unique educational programs where students can expect to receive a quality education based on results. The primary purpose of charter schools in Minnesota is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement.
- Charter schools do not charge tuition. They employ licensed teachers and offer programming for students requiring special education services. Charter school students are required to take state assessments.

Charter Schools and Authorizers

Charter schools are organized under Minnesota Statutes 2022, Chapter 124E. To serve students in Minnesota, a charter school must have an authorizer. Authorizers can be school boards or intermediate school district school boards, other education districts, charitable organizations, institutions of higher education, nonprofit corporations subject to Chapter 317A, or single purpose authorizers. An authorizer:

- Provides oversight of charter schools in the areas of academic, operational, and financial performance;
- Evaluates the academic, operational, and financial performance of charter schools in its portfolio;
- Determines the terms for charter school contract renewals; and,
- Reviews proposed changes to charter schools in its portfolio, such as site and grade expansions (including early learning programs), site changes (if applicable), and more.

Friends of Education is Aspen Academy's Authorizer and has been since originally approved in 2008. Aspen is currently in the middle of a 5 year renewal and has received a 5 year renewal the last two renewal cycles. 5 years is the longest contract period Friends of Educations provides.

Aspen has a great relationship with Friends of Education!

What are the basic legal duties/requirements of a Charter School Board?

Charter school boards are the entity that is legally charged with governing a charter school and are ultimately responsible to its community.

Charter school boards govern by adopting a mission, vision, and goals and adopting policies.

Subd. 6. **Duties.** The board of directors shall decide and is responsible for policy matters related to operating the school, including budgeting, curriculum programming, personnel, and operating procedures.

Subd. 7. **Training.** Every charter school board member shall attend annual training throughout the member's term. All new board members shall attend initial training on the board's role and responsibilities, employment policies and practices, and financial management. A new board member who does not begin the required initial training within six months after being seated and complete that training within 12 months after being seated is automatically ineligible to continue to serve as a board member. The school shall include in its annual report the training each board member attended during the previous year.

Subd. 8. **Meetings and information.** (a) Board of director meetings must comply with chapter 13D governing open meetings.

So what does that actually mean?

The Board is the oversight entity that governs the school. The Board has one employee, the school's Director/Head Leader. The Board does not manage the day to day operations of the school. The Board ensures that the day to day operations are adhering to the school policies through reports from the school leader, through staff survey data at school leader evaluation times, through presentations from school staff, and through open communication with school leadership at committee meetings.

It is important that the Board do the following

- Ensure that the school adheres to state laws.
- Make certain that public funding rules are followed.
- Make decisions consistent with the school's charter and contract.

These important responsibilities occur in official meetings of the charter school board of directors, presumably, conducted with decorum and respect.

<https://centerforschoolchange.org/publications/minnesota-charter-school-handbook/governance/>

Decision Making

Be aware, that the “buck” stops with you as a school board member—the day-to-day decisions will be made by your administrator and staff members.

You should not “micromanage” the school. That would undercut staff authority and responsibility and stifle initiative. Still, school board members are responsible for the overall direction and functioning of the school.

Major areas for school board decisions include:

- Arranging for an appropriate facility.
- Approval of the school’s budget.
- Monitoring the school’s revenues and expenditures on a regular basis.
- Interviewing and hiring the administrator (only the head school leader).
- Formal vote of approval on staff employment.
- Monitoring performance of the director and assuring evaluation of other staff (done by the admin team).
- Establishing policies (with admin input).
- Approving contracts for goods and services.
- Monitoring the progress of the school’s program (through data presentations and admin reports).

The “work” of the board is done in regular meetings, both committee and monthly board meetings where motions are approved.

I am ready to run for the Board, now what?

In the early part of the calendar year, information will be sent out to all teachers, staff, parents/guardians about the upcoming election that is usually held in May.

Teacher Board Member terms are 2 years
Community Board Member terms are 2 years
Parent Board Member terms are 3 years

Elected terms begin on July 1 and run until June 30 of their ending year.

All interested need to apply by the deadline to be considered for the election and qualify for the spot at the time of the election (such as you must be the parent of a currently enrolled Aspen student at the time of application, not just the parent of an incoming student for the following school year).

Very basic time commitment if elected.

- 1 general Board meeting a month plus preparation (reading all materials in the board folder)-4-5 hours a month
- 1-2 committee meetings a month plus preparation- 1-2 hours a month
- Keeping up on Board communications via email- 1 hour a month

Thanks!

Reach out to the Board
Chair and Governance
Committee for more
information on applying to
join the Board of Aspen
Academy.