

Academy Charter School

School Leader Succession Plan

Succession planning should be a proactive rather than reactive approach to school leadership transition. Succession planning works best when Board members and the School Leaders collaborate in advance to create the conditions for a successful leadership transition, whether or not it is expected in the near future. Some of the steps described here should be revisited annually or as needed.

Communication Plan

In the event of a departure of the current School Leader, the Board President will be the main point of contact. The Board President will call an emergency board meeting to notify all the board members and discuss the next steps. Once the plan of action has been determined, a message from the Board President should be sent to the school's key stakeholders detailing the plan.

Interim School Leader

The Board needs to decide who will be the Board Designee to perform the School Leader's essential duties while the board conducts a search for a new School Leader. There are three options:

1. The board will negotiate with the School Leader that even if the School Leader is leaving, he/she will stay one more year until the board finds the right person to fill the School Leader position.
2. An acting School Leader appointed by the board to provide leadership during the School Leader search process. This might be a School Leader or a Board member.
3. An interim School Leader who will be hired for a year by the Board to provide leadership during the School Leader search process. This interim School Leader might apply and be considered as a candidate for the School Leader position.

Financial Oversight

Having multiple signatories on the school's accounts enables business to continue in the School Leader's absence, only during crisis management, and not at any other time. These signatories might be the Board president, Secretary, or the Treasurer.

Executive Search

While interim management is in place, the Board has the option to work with a search consultant or search committee.

Define the Search

The Board will determine the job description and qualifications of the School Leader. The School Leader Job Description will include but is not limited to the following:

- Reports to the Academy Charter School Governing Board
- Supervises all school personnel, directly and/or indirectly
- To serve as the chief administrator of a school in developing and implementing policies, programs, curriculum activities, and budgets in a manner that promotes the educational development of each student and the professional development of each staff member.
- General Planning: conceptualizes the broad goals of the school and plans accordingly to ensure that procedures and schedules are implemented to carry out the total school program.
- General Coordination: ensures that the school program is compatible with the legal, financial and organizational structure of the school system. The School Leader defines the responsibilities and accountability of staff members and develops plans for interpreting the school program to the community.
- Enhancement of Personnel Skills: provides activities which facilitate the professional growth of the school staff and enhance the quality of the instructional program.
- School Objectives: identifies the annual objectives for the instructional, extracurricular, and athletic programs of the school.
- Curriculum Objectives: ensures that instructional objectives for a given subject and/or classroom are developed, and involves the faculty and others in the development of specific curricular objectives to meet the needs of the school program. The School Leader provides opportunities for staff participation in the school program.
- Establishes Formal Work Relationships: evaluates student progress in the instructional program by means that include the maintaining of up-to-date student data. The School Leader supervises and appraises the performance of the school staff.
- Facilitates Organizational Efficiency: maintains inter-school system communication. The School Leader maintains good relationships with students, staff, and parents.
- New Staff and Students: orients and assists new staff and new students and provides opportunities for their input in the school program.
- Community: encourages the use of community resources, cooperates with the community in the use of school facilities, interprets the school program for the community, and maintains communication with community members.

- Supplies and Equipment: manages, directs, and maintains records on the materials, supplies and equipment which are necessary to carry out the daily school routine. The School Leader involves the staff in determining priorities for instructional purposes.
- Services: organizes, oversee, and provides support to the various services, supplies, material, and equipment provided to carry out the school program. The School Leader makes use of community resources.

Search Committee

The Board will decide whether a Search Committee is needed. The Search Committee will be comprised of 2 Board Members (including the President) and 3 School Staff Members. The Search Committee, may also be used as the Hiring Committee. Note: If more than 2 members of the Board are involved in search meetings, these meetings are subject to the Sunshine Law and must be open meetings.

The Board President will serve as the Head of the Search Committee. The Board President will oversee the search and ensure that involved persons are well trained and well prepared for their task. The Board President ensures that members involved in the search adhere to certain requirements:

- Read and agree in writing to be guided by the Charter Application, vision, and mission of the school in the interview process.
- Agree on the minimum qualifications for candidates selected to be interviewed.
- Affirm a commitment to locating and considering for employment a wide pool of applicants, including qualified minority persons, women, veterans, and disabled individuals.
- Draft and agree on a written job description for the position to be filled.
- Agree on the scope of the search (i.e., internal, local, state, or national.)
- Establish a deadline for the recommendations of the committee.
- Affirm confidentiality and communication guidelines regarding candidates

Job Posting

The job will be posted both internally & externally. The job position can be advertised or posted in various locations, depending on the scope of the search. The wording of the job posting should include the vision and mission statements of the school along with a job description. This juncture is also a great time for the Board to review and firm up the administrative structure and organizational chart of the school. It is imperative for the Board to have confidence in and support the School Leader's decisions. The Colorado Department of Education, the Charter School Institute, and the League of Charter Schools can assist charter schools in posting the job opening on various online and other media. Charter schools must keep copies of all job postings and advertisements. The School can also consider the use of professional executive search firms specializing in education.

Hiring Committee

The Hiring Committee will be comprised of 2 Governing Board members and 3 School Staff Members, chosen by the Board. The Hiring Committee may be the same as the Search Committee. Note: If more than 2 members of the Board are involved in hiring meetings, these meetings are subject to the Sunshine Law and must be open meetings.

Review Applications

Applications will be reviewed by the Board. The Board should review resumes and rate applicants based on the agreed upon selection criteria for the position. A rating form is useful and provides a consistent checklist for Board members to use in evaluating candidates. Board members should be mindful of the tendency to approve of applications that look like their own credentials. Boards should be open to viewing the experience and education of candidates whose background is different from the majority experience. Applicants that do not meet the minimum established criteria should be screened out immediately, keeping in mind that all documentation on candidates may be subject to an open records request. Notification to candidates no longer under consideration should be sent by the President as promptly as possible. See sample notification letters in Appendix below.

Candidates can reasonably be rejected on grounds such as the following:

- Does not have required degree
- Withdrew candidacy
- Not enough experience
- First choice declined
- Second choice
- Third choice
- No teaching or administrative experience
- Not aligned with vision and mission
- Education not complete
- Inadequate communication skills
- References weak
- Poor writing sample
- Poor teaching demonstration
- Failed background check

The remaining candidates may be grouped as strong candidates and as possible candidates with more information needed. After the initial review of resumes, the Board may decide to solicit additional material, including written references or other background. This process can be conducted via telephone interviews. Internal candidates should generally receive the same consideration as all other candidates.

Selection of Candidates to Interview

The Board will select candidates to interview based on the predetermined qualifications. After candidates have been identified, an interview schedule for the Board should be drawn up by the President. A copy of the candidate's resume and any supporting documents, such as

recommendation letters, should be provided in confidence to all individuals who will meet with the candidate. The Board President should ensure a consistent structure for candidates' evaluations by interviewers. The President should also let the candidates know when a decision is expected to be reached and how they will be notified. See sample notification letters in Appendix below.

Interview of Candidates

The Hiring Committee would interview all candidates selected by the Board, and subsequently, make a recommendation to the Board. Interviewing candidates is one of the most important stages in the search and selection process. Two very important things are taking place at this stage: the Board is assessing candidates, and the candidates are assessing the position and the charter school. The Board will devise a list of core questions based on the job-related criteria that will be asked of all candidates. A consistent interview structure for every candidate allows the Board to make the best comparisons, ensures that each candidate is treated fairly, and minimizes unconscious biases. Note: If more than 2 members of the Board are involved in interview meetings, these meetings are subject to the Sunshine Law and must be open meetings. Interviews of candidates are NOT a valid reason to resolve the Board into Executive Session.

The questions should be aimed at discovering what the candidate can bring to the position and the school, and must be limited to issues that directly relate to the job to be performed. There are inquiries that are not permitted because they request or allow use of information that may lead to an unfair or biased decision. See appropriate interview questions in Appendix below.

Selection of Final Candidate

References must be checked before an offer is made, including verification of degrees obtained by the applicant. It is expected that letters of reference will be part of the application. If references are not needed for initial screenings, they should be checked after the candidate is interviewed. A background check available through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation is also indicated for all final candidates. The CBI offers an online background check process at www.cbirecordscheck.com. The CDE should also be contacted to determine whether a candidate appears on the CDE "red flag" list. In addition, the candidate should be asked if there are any previous employment agreements still in effect that would impact his or her candidacy.

Selection of the final candidate is decided by a majority vote of the Board. After the Board has fully discussed the evaluations of all of the candidates, the Board will make a recommendation to the President. This recommendation is usually done in memo form and should include the names of candidates, ranked or unranked. It reviews the search process, including criteria for evaluation, and discusses the strengths of and concerns about each candidate. The Sunshine Law requires that the list of final candidates be made public at least 14 days prior to hiring, and no offer of employment can be made until the 14 days has passed. Once the Board has made a hiring decision, the offer letter should come from the President, who should be the primary contact on behalf of the school with the candidate. In addition, the President should be the "one

voice” of the school in employment negotiations on behalf of the Board. The Board will communicate with legal counsel prior to making an offer of employment in order to avoid any unintended contract or employment at will issues.

Once the successful candidate is identified, the Board President should be authorized by the Board to make the offer of employment, write the written offer, and sign the employment contract. The Board may negotiate the specific terms of the employment contract in Executive Session, but then will vote on the contract in regular session.

Record Keeping

It is a best practice for the charter school to maintain summary information about the search process, the applicants and the hired personnel. The President and Secretary are responsible for ensuring that complete records are kept during the search. As a best practice, search files should be kept for two years from the dates of appointment of the candidate selected. The search files should include the following:

- Position description;
- Actual dated copies of announcements, advertising, and other solicitations for applications and nominations;
- Applications, nominations, correspondence, evaluations, references, and a record of verbal contacts with or about applicants or nominees;
- Minutes for all search related meetings to include selection criteria, decision making, and voting;
- Evaluations of candidates at each step of the interview process, including evaluations of candidates who are interviewed and reasons why candidates were not referred for selection.

Evaluation Process

The new School Leader will be subject to the School Leader Evaluation Plan as outlined in the ACS Policy Handbook and/or the Governing Board Bylaws.

Sudden Departure Plan

The Sudden Departure Plan will follow many of the above steps, while also naming an immediate and temporary successor in order to carry out the regular daily duties of the school.

Sources

- Case Western Reserve University
- CDE Charter School Board President Handbook, Nov. 2010

Appendix

Candidate Letters

Sample Letter of Application Receipt:

Candidate's Name

Address City, State Zip

Dear (insert candidate's name):

XYZ Charter School has received your application for the position of (insert position title) at XYZ Charter School. The Board is beginning to review applications, and plans to have final candidates identified by (insert date).

Thank you for your interest in the continued growth of our school.

Sincerely,

President, Board of Directors

Sample Letter of Request for Interview:

Candidate's Name

Address City, State Zip

Dear (insert candidate's name)

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am writing to follow-up on an earlier correspondence and inform you of the status of the search for (insert position title) at XYZ Charter School. The committee has reviewed your qualifications and would like to invite you to interview with our Search and Hiring Committee. Our Board President will reach out via phone to schedule a time to meet.

Thank you again for your interest in Academy Charter School! We look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

President, Board of Directors

Sample Letter of Application Rejection:

Candidate's Name

Address City, State Zip

Dear (insert candidate's name)

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am writing to follow-up on an earlier correspondence and inform you of the status of the search for (insert position title) at XYZ Charter School. The committee has reviewed the qualifications of a large number of applicants and has identified a shortlist of candidates whose experience we judge to be more suitable to our needs at this time.

We wish you continued professional success, and thank you again for your interest in the position and in XYZ Charter School.

Sincerely,

President, Board of Directors

Acceptable and Unacceptable Interview Questions:

Name

OK: Whether the applicant has worked under another name.

NOT OK: Inquiries about the name that would seek to elicit information about the candidate's ancestry or descent. Inquiries about name change due to a court order, marriage, or otherwise.

Birthplace

See citizenship below.

NOT OK: Birthplace of applicant, spouse, parents, or other relatives.

Citizenship

OK: Statement that employees must be eligible to work in the US

NOT OK: Any inquiries about citizenship.

Residence, Nationality

OK: Place of residence. Length of residence in this city.

NOT OK: Specific inquiry into foreign addresses that would indicate national origin and/or nationality of applicant. Whether applicant owns or rents home.

Age

OK: Can inquire if applicant meets minimum age requirements, or state that proof may be required upon hiring, or that hire is subject to verification of minimum age.

NOT OK: Cannot require that applicant state age or date of birth. Cannot require that applicant submit proof of age before hiring. Any questions that may tend to identify applicants over 40 years of age.

Sex

OK: Inquiry or restriction of employment is permissible only when a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) exists. (This is highly unlikely in a charter school context.)

NOT OK: Any inquiry that would indicate sex of applicant. Applicant's sex cannot be used as a factor for determining whether an applicant will be "satisfied" in a particular job.

Marital and Family Status, Sexual Identity

OK: Whether applicant can meet specific work schedules.

NOT OK: Marital status or number of dependents. Names, ages or addresses of spouse, children, or relatives. Questions about sexual identity, orientation, or preference.

Race, Color, Physical Characteristics

NOT OK: Inquiry as to applicant's race, color of skin, eyes, or hair, or other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color. Applicant's height or weight when it is not relevant to the job.

Disability

OK: Can ask an applicant questions about his or her ability to perform job-related functions, as long as the questions are not phrased in terms which would seek to elicit whether the applicant has a disability.

NOT OK: General inquiries ("Are you disabled?") that would tend to reveal disabilities or health conditions that do not relate to fitness to perform the job. Applicant's height or weight when it is not relevant to the job. It is unlawful to ask an applicant whether he or she is disabled or about the nature or severity of his or her disability.

Education

OK: Applicant's academic attainment.

NOT OK: Date last attended high school (reflects age).

Pregnancy

NOT OK: Any question concerning pregnancy or birth control.

Arrests and Convictions

OK: Asking about conviction of a crime related to job qualification.

NOT OK: Asking about arrests.

Religion

NOT OK: Any question requesting the applicant's religious affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed.

Military Experience

OK: If needed for employment history, you may ask about applicant's military experience in US Armed Forces.

NOT OK: Any question into applicant's general military experience. Any question into type of discharge.

Organizations

OK: Any question into applicant's membership in organizations which the applicant considers relevant to his or her ability to perform the job.

NOT OK: Asking what organizations, clubs, and societies the applicant belongs to that are not relevant to his or her ability to perform the job (political, social, religious etc.).