

Holding Staff and Management Accountable

State Charter Schools
Commission of Georgia



Gregg Stevens
Deputy Director
General Counsel

Role of a Charter School Governing Board

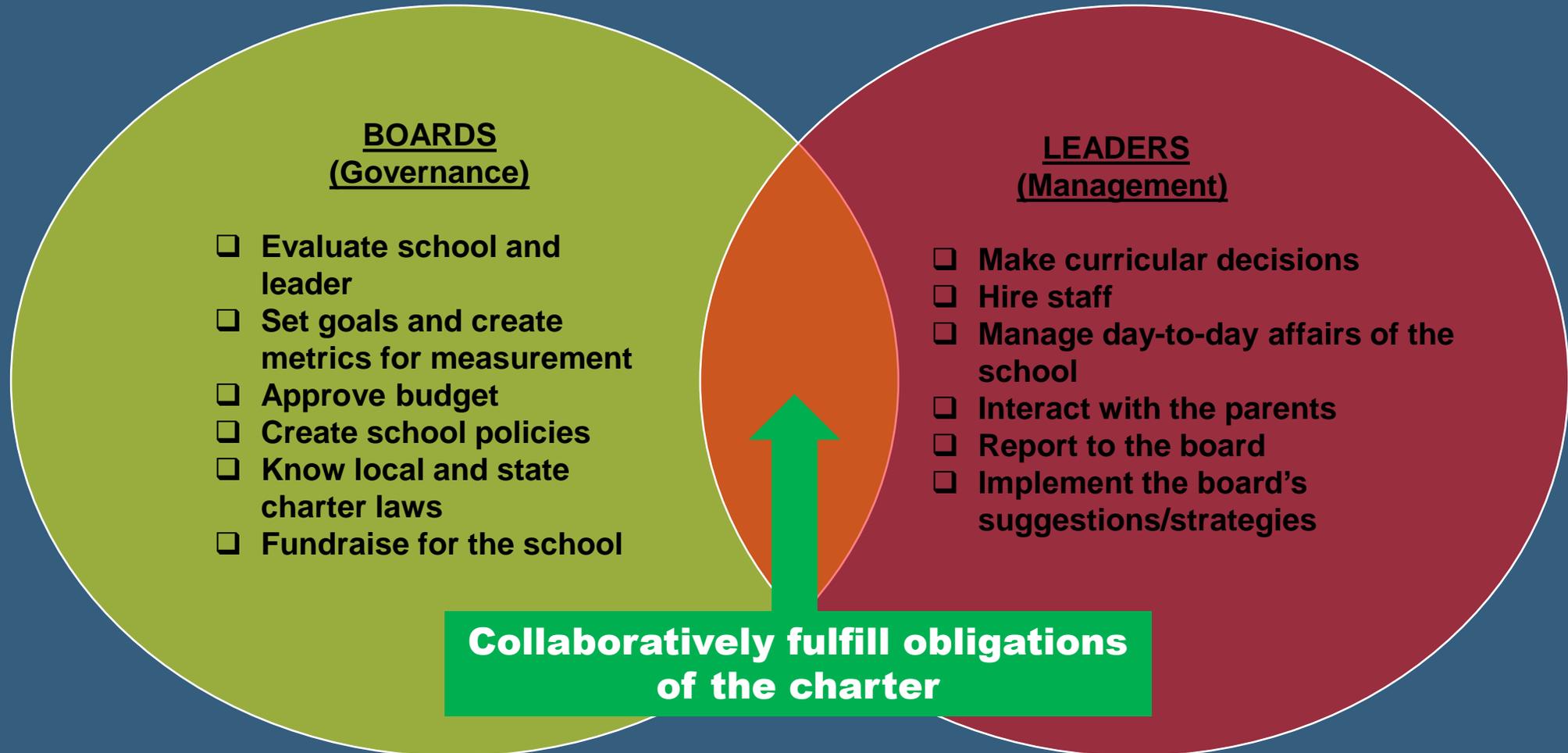
- A state charter school governing board is responsible for the vision-setting, policymaking, and oversight of a Local Educational Agency expected to provide a high-quality education to students with a multi-million dollar budget of public funding.

Role of the Board Member

- Board members have no authority outside the board as a whole.
- Board members should not be carrying out the functions of school staff.

The Dance of Governance and Management

EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT



Fiduciary Duty

- A state charter school governing board has a fiduciary duty to the school – its students, staff, and community. Each member of a state charter school governing board must independently exercise his or her judgment with care, loyalty, and obedience.

Has this Board fulfilled its fiduciary responsibilities?

- Happy Charter School hired a proven leader to open the intensely-awaited HCS campus.
- The leader was highly-educated with years of success at previous schools.
- As a new charter school, HCS hired the leader to control both the academic and financial affairs of the school.
- Four years later, the board's financial affairs committee notices some strange charges, withdrawals, and transfers in the school's main account.
- Within months, the school must close as the leader stole \$1.2 million in cash and assets from the school.

Charter Contract

- The charter contract for a state charter school is between the SCSC and the school's governing board. As a result, the school's governing board is responsible for the responsibilities and obligations therein.

Is this Board fulfilling its contractual obligations?

- Lucky Charter School's board receives monthly reports from the school leader. These reports are both in written and oral format with the written report provided a few hours prior to each meeting.
- The reports focus on class attendance, student morale, student progress in course grades and staff morale.
- In January, the LCS board chair is copied on the school's monitoring letter that states that the schools is noncompliant for: having no special education policies or procedures; failing to complete its federal comprehensive improvement plan; missing every data collection deadline to date; failing to respond to SCSC communications, and other various findings.

Substantive Control

The Governing Board shall exercise substantive control over such areas as personnel decisions, financial decisions, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, and school operations. The Governing Board's substantive control over curriculum and instruction expressly includes reviewing, revising, and applying adjustments to its curriculum, instructional methods, educational programs and operational procedures to ensure that the school's educational model is aligned to Georgia state standards and the needs of its students and community.

Is this Board demonstrating substantive control?

- Merry Charter School hired their leader and delegated the review and performance of all subordinate staff to her. The MCS policy for staff evaluations states “The Superintendent shall have the authority to make all personnel decision as he or she deems appropriate.”
- After two years of poor academic, financial, and operational performance, the LCS decides to terminate the leader.
- Following her termination and after speaking with the school’s assistance principal, the LCS board chair discovers that the previous leader made inconsistent personnel decisions that resulted in: class sizes enlarged to accommodate mid-year dismissals, inexperienced personnel in key operational roles; a new (and inexperienced) testing coordinator two weeks prior to state testing; and similarly situated employees treated to different levels of discipline.

What Should be Expected of a Charter Leader?

- While the Governing Board must exercise substantive control over the school's mission, vision, and allocation of resources, it is the School Leader's responsibility for the implementation of the governing board's directives.
- In turn, the governing board must hold the school leader accountable for fulfilling the governing board's directives.

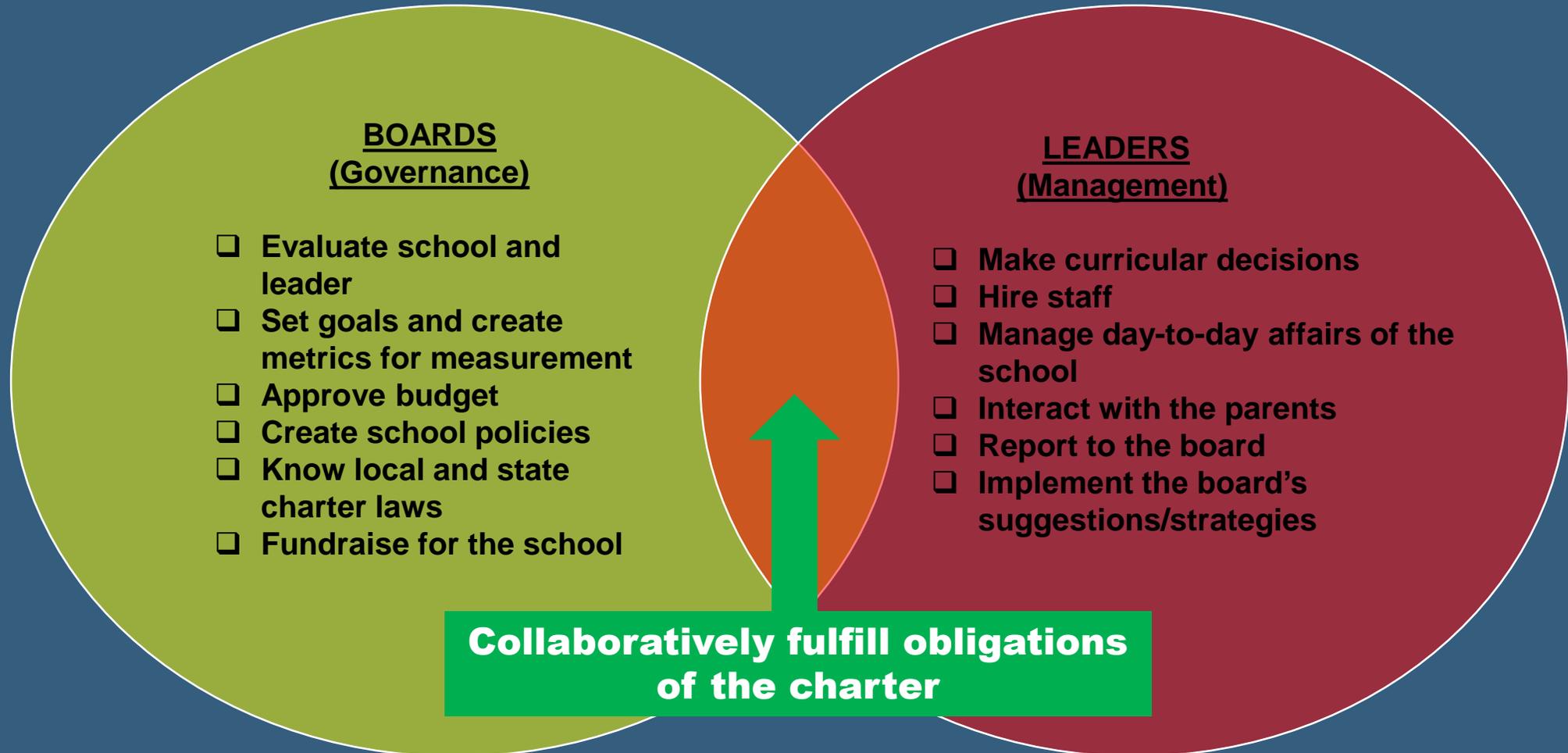


To do this effectively, the board must have consensus about the knowledge, skills, and traits it believes exemplify effective leadership!

What were the flaws in this Board's approach in managing its school leader?

- Solidarity Charter School recently terminated its school leader after an extended period of disagreement between the board and the leader.
- SCS did not have a contract or employment agreement with the school leader.
- Following the termination of the school's leader, the governing board conducted a national search for a replacement. There is no other current administrator at the school.
- Additionally, once the board reviewed the affairs the school after the school leader left, they discovered the school leader increased his salary by 20% without board approval and contracted with his wife to provide facility services to the school.

So again, a clear and mutual understanding between Boards and their Leader is critical



Why is Staff Accountability Important?

- Promotes compliance with the school's contractual performance expectations.
- Creates a positive and consistent school culture . . . for students, staff, and parents
- Minimizes risk . . . to students, staff, and the institution

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System Leader Keys Effectiveness System (TKES/LKES)

- TKES/LKES are Georgia's standardized tools to assess teacher and leader effectiveness.
- Each tool is one aspect to be considered in holding leaders and staff accountable for performance.

Holding the School Leader Accountable

- Holding School Leaders Accountable requires:
 - Engaging in board meeting discussion;
 - Staying abreast of new information from the SCSC, GaDOE, and other agencies;
 - Listening to parents and stakeholders;
 - Trusting in the School Leader – but verifying that trust is warranted.

Key Component of Leader Expectations: Understanding the LEA

- Each state charter school must operate as a school district.
- Operating as an LEA requires:
 - An emphasis on data reporting and accuracy.
 - Dedication to serving all students regardless of cost.
 - Specific financial management and reporting.
 - Personnel and business management.

An effective school leader must demonstrate he or she can effectively implement systems and processes to ensure the school meets all obligations of an LEA.

Key Component of Leader Expectations: Understanding SCSC Expectations

- To help boards understand their obligations and responsibilities, the SCSC clearly outlines its expectations in the areas of academics, operations, and finances within the SCSC accountability tool: the *Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF)*.

An effective school leader must demonstrate that he or she is aware of its accountability expectations and actions necessary to meet those expectations.

Critical Components of Accountability: Monitoring and Adapting

- Capable governing boards monitor the school's progress and performance – **which is inextricably intertwined with school leader performance** – and make adjustments necessary to improve performance.
- Depending on the school's performance, capable governing boards direct and demand action from the school administration.
 - This may include a variety of academic interventions, financial resource allocation, operational remediation, and all combinations thereof.

Inextricably (adverb):
in a way that is impossible to disentangle or separate

Key Component of Leader Expectations: Holding Subordinate Staff Accountable

- An effective school leader must demonstrate that he or she consistently **monitors** school staff's performance and makes changes when necessary.
- An effective school leader must continually **evaluate** staff's ability and capacity to enable the school to meet its legal and contractual obligations.

Monitor (verb):
observe and check the progress or quality of (something)
over a period of time; keep under systematic review.

Evaluate (verb):
to determine the significance, worth, or condition of;
usually by careful appraisal and study

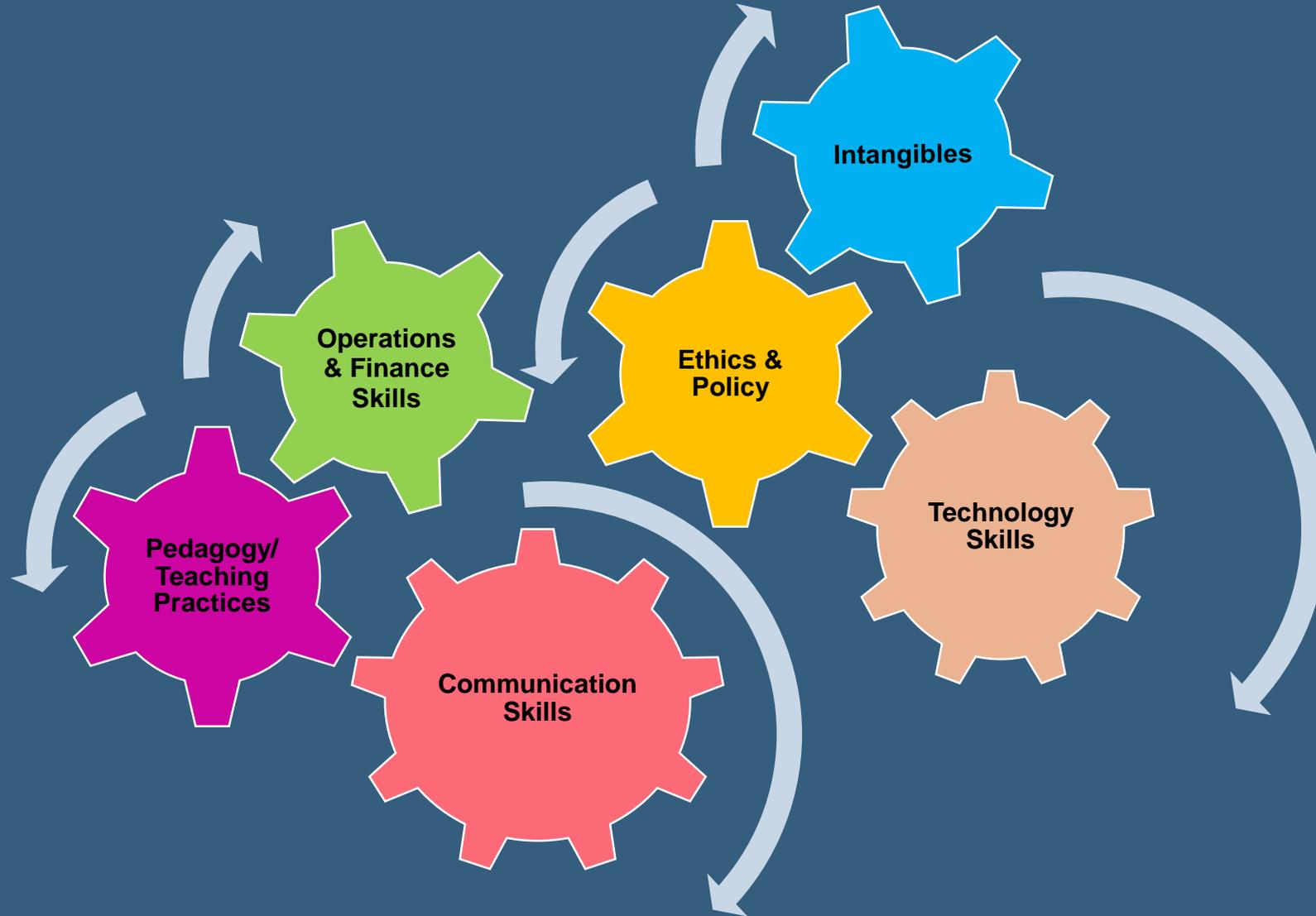
Monitoring Staff Performance

- Monitoring staff performance – those staff members that do not report directly to the board – should be the responsibility of the school leader and administration.
- The governing board should ensure that school administration adheres to school policies, but should NOT micro-manage specific decisions.
- **However, the board *must* establish clear policies and procedures for evaluating staff performance including:**
 - What factors of performance are to be evaluated and how often;
 - What standards of performance are necessary for remediation or termination;
 - A specific process for remediation and termination.

Tools to Monitor Staff Performance

- Engaged board members understand that accountability for performance includes a variety of data, including:
 - TKES/LKES
 - Academic Performance – particularly as measured by the SCSC CPF
 - Financial Performance – particularly as measured by the SCSC CPF
 - Operational Performance – particularly as measured by the SCSC CPF
 - Adhering to board policy and procedures
 - Carrying out board directives
 - Ethical obligations
 - Listening to parents and stakeholders

Monitoring & Evaluating Staff Performance



Monitoring & evaluating staff is a dynamic, interpersonal, ongoing process.

It is hard work!

Is it an “art” . . . or a “science”?

Is it “personal” . . . or “impersonal”?

Is it about institutional success . . . or professional growth?

Remediating Poor Performance

An effective, *and defensible*, approach to addressing unsatisfactory staff performance includes:

- Document specific incidents of an employee's poor performance!!!
 - It's not enough to simply tell your employee that they need to improve.
- Put yourself in the right frame of mind:
 - Remember, you're talking to your employee about their poor performance. You still want them to contribute.
- Know the person you're talking to:
 - Each employee has a unique personality.
- Speak with your worker privately:
 - Whatever you do, don't hold a discussion about poor performance in a public setting.

Remediating Poor Performance

An effective, *and defensible*, approach to addressing unsatisfactory staff performance includes:

- Be timely:

- Take action right away so that your employee can return to form sooner.

- Listen to what your employee has to say:

- There may be perfectly understandable reasons for a temporary dip in performance.

- Be clear with what your expectations are:

- The last thing you want is to talk only to have important points misunderstood.

- Document the discussion(s)!!!

- Provide a follow-up note or letter to the employee and **start/maintain a chronology.**

Effectuating Termination

- **DOCUMENT EVERYTHING & MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY**
 - Hiring Process
 - Policies
 - Discipline
 - Termination
 - Exit Survey
- **Consider Timing**
- **Have a plan!!!**

Questions

