



## THE JOB OF A BOARD SECRETARY

### THIS MAY BE YOUR BOARD'S MOST IMPORTANT POSITION

Last week I attended one of my ten or so monthly board meetings and watched as the board at this school elected a new secretary, replacing a board member whose term was expiring. After the meeting, the newly elected secretary came to me with a common request, “Can you tell me what the secretary’s job is?”

In my eight years consulting with charter school boards, I’ve been asked that question several times, but I’ve never created a “Job Description” about it. It would be too simple, because the job of a good board secretary can be summed up in one sentence: Organize and maintain the board’s records and documents.

The job’s importance is inversely proportional to its simplicity to describe. Without good records, the board’s institutional memory is only as good and long as the people serving on it. A good secretary is like having a historical insurance policy. The institutional knowledge kept in a complete set of board documents can help boards stay consistent and consistently focused on the school’s mission and charter. Having a good secretary is vital to a well-functioning board.

Many board members dislike the idea of serving as the secretary because of the perceived time constraints. But it’s not time that is needed to do the job well so much as good organization. Organizing documents takes a little front end work, and then basic maintenance. And a good setup, once in place, is easy to transfer as new people take on the responsibility.

#### Tip 1: Forms

Take all board action using consistent forms. When adopting a new policy or hearing a proposal for action, there should be a cover sheet on which the proposal is explained (filled out by the proposer) and where any action taken can be noted. (You can see and download a sample by clicking [here](#).)

#### Tip 2: Track Changes

When amending policies or other documents, use the Track Changes feature in most word processors so everyone can see what is being deleted, added, or changed.

#### Tip 3: Hard and Soft Copies

Keep multiple binders that contain the official record of the board. One binder for foundational documents (charter, by-laws, articles of incorporation), one for adopted policies, one for meeting records (agendas, minutes, proposals)—this one gets bigger over time and may be multiple binders, actually. Lastly, a binder for everything else.

In addition to the binders, keep electronic copies organized the same way. Backup the electronic copies regularly on school servers (instead of relying solely on the secretary’s laptop) so they can be easily transferred when a new secretary is appointed.

#### Tip 4: Policy hierarchy

Number your policies by topic. Keep them organized for easy reference. Most organizations do this, though it is something most learn by experience. Charters, which often adopt policies as needed as they go, can borrow a hierarchy or templates from those schools that have already learned. You can see a sample Table of Contents for a comprehensive policy manual by clicking [here](#).

Following these simple organizational tips can help save board secretaries immense time and will help the board function better.

One final suggestion—you might consider hiring a secretary to the board, rather than appointing one board member to do it as a volunteer. Having a secretary on staff has several advantages:

- It gives the incentive of a paycheck as accountability for performance;
- It allows all board members to concentrate fully during the meeting on the business of the meeting, rather than having the secretary distracted and behind while taking minutes;
- And it is less likely to involve regular turnover.

Whether your secretary is a volunteer or an employee, organizing the documents is both the key to success in the job and the key to a well-functioning board that consistently governs its school according to its charter.

*The job of board secretary is inversely proportional to its simplicity to describe.*

# YOUTWITFACE

## PART THREE: HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA BUILD YOUR BRAND WITH YOUTUBE

An old marketing axiom goes, “Half your advertising budget is wasted; you just never know which half.” New technology, however, is making such truths obsolete.

Websites like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Wikipedia allow charter schools to target segments of the public directly and inexpensively.

With a comprehensive “Web 2.0” strategy, you can reduce the waste in your advertising budget and increase effectiveness.

YouTube is a fantastic, free way to publicize your school. With it, you can post school- and student-created videos that help build your brand and inform the community about your charter.

Click the links below to see the YouTube channels of some schools that have them set up.

[Weilenmann School of Discovery](#) in Park City, Utah focus its videos on what sets it apart—adventure P.E., outdoor education, and the arts, as well as a tre-

mendous professionally produced marketing video. [Pivot Charter School](#) in Tampa, Florida posts videos about its own school as well as other videos that aren’t school-specific, but of interest to parents, like the one of President and Mrs. Obama talking about bullying. (You can see what the school is trying to say about itself by posting this video.)

[Evergreen Charter School](#) in Asheville, N.C. celebrates its accomplishments and its students and teachers. If it hasn’t already, your school should create a YouTube channel and post videos marketing your school. This can be as simple as having videos posted of great things your school already does. (Be careful about the use of children’s images in public videos. Get permission and be aware of safety issues.)

Link these videos on your school’s website, Facebook page, twitter feed, and other social sites to publicize what great work you’re doing. Well-done videos generate a lot of buzz.



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