

BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMITTEES

Rules & Regulations

Introduction

The work of the Socrates Academy Board of Directors' Committees is the backbone of Academy-based decision making. These Committees as well as those of the Administration and PFI Association contribute to the development of the policies adopted by the Academy's Board of Directors and has been shown to be the most important element in student achievement. For the parents, this is a rewarding experience, and the kids love when their families are involved.

The Board of Directors, by resolution, designates the committees, and outlines their duties and purpose. Each committee is chaired by one or more Board Directors or other individuals appointed by the President and approved by the Board. The Board reserves the right to create, limit, or abolish any standing or ad-hoc committee as it deems appropriate. A committee of the Board shall not appoint a subcommittee or an ad-hoc committee of that committee without approval of the Board.

All committees are advisory in nature and have only such authority as specified by the Academy's Board of Directors. The Board will receive reports or recommendations from a committee for consideration/action, and retains the right and has the duty to make all final decisions related to such reports or recommendations. The committees are created with a specific character/purpose and are given a tentative time line for reporting back to the Board. A written charge to the Committee specifying the role, responsibilities, membership, duration and reports to the Board will be issued by the Board.

The Board of Directors may elect one or more of its members as alternate members of any committee, who may take the place of any absent member, or members at any meeting of a committee, upon request by the Chair of the committee. Subject to the Open Meetings Act, each committee shall fix its rules governing the conduct of its activities and shall make such reports to the Board of Directors of its activities as the Board of Directors may request.

The president of the Board of Directors shall serve as an ex-officio member in all Socrates Academy Committees.

Committees allow parents, other community members, teachers, school staff, and students to be active participants in academic achievement by sharing their skills and expertise in meaningful ways that demonstrate the value of education. The Board seeks to nurture these partnerships and more people to participate and make the work of the Board easier and more effective.

Effective committees are indispensable. They do the bulk of the work of the Socrates Academy's Board, thereby freeing the full Board for attention to matters like responding to emerging critical issues, strategic planning, major policy/procedures development and short and long range financial planning. Among other crucial roles, an effective committee structure provides a means for information to flow from the parents, students, community, and Socrates Academy staff to the Board, as well as a training ground for parents and community volunteers, who may be asked to serve on the Academy's Board in the future.

All committees should have clearly stated charges, channels of communication with appropriate members, and defined responsibility for reporting and recommending to the Board as a whole. The committees shall determine the frequency of and agenda of their meetings. The Board determines the appropriate number and category for membership according to the type and responsibility of each committee. Minutes should be kept by all committees, and the committee's chairperson, or designee shall provide a monthly written report to the Board at their regularly scheduled meetings. Special Meetings may be convened by the committee chairperson, or at the

request of the chairperson of the Board, upon 24 hours notice to the Committee. All meetings are open to the public, unless convened in Executive Session.

It is suggested that all committee meetings be held monthly at 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. in the Socrates Academy's facilities.

As the school grows, a BOD Committee Coordinator may be appointed to coordinate all these committees.

The Board of Directors meetings are held monthly on the second Wednesdays of each month, at 7:30 p.m. with some exceptions.

Characteristics of Effective Committees

- Clear Purpose focused on student achievement
- Informality
- Participation
- Listening
- Civilized Disagreement
- Consensus Decisions
- Open Communication
- Style Diversity
- Clear Roles and Work Assignments

Responsibilities of Committees to the Board

- Focus on student achievement
- Accept challenges, tasks, charges from the Board, then investigate, analyze, and develop a faculty/parent consensus on recommendations to be made for Board adoption/action
- The committees may also be asked to provide periodic updates to the Board on the status of their work
- Committee members should consider their own experience, the experience of colleagues, and the comments of students, parents, and others when making recommendations to the Board
- This Board/Committees relationship results in a "focus" for the entire faculty and school community

Responsibilities of the Board to the Committees

- Focus on student achievement
- Provide meaningful assignments based on needs of the students
- Provide clear directions for what is to be accomplished
- Provide time lines for reporting progress and making recommendations to the Board
- Make available needed resources for accomplishing task
- Provide agenda time for committee reports, questions, concerns
- Keep a finger on the pulse of the school and as needs arise, form committees to investigate, analyze, and make recommendations to the Board

Elements of Committee Effectiveness

There are many elements of committee effectiveness. The six more important are:

1. **Written Committee Description.** The description summarizes the purpose of the committee, its composition and selection procedure, and the specific duties of the committee.
2. **An effective committee chair.** In seeking an effective chair, the Board of Socrates Academy is looking for two things: content knowledge and experience relevant to the work of the committee as well as proven leadership and people skills that will be essential if the committee is to work effectively.
3. **An effective leader.** The role of committee chair requires extra work, time for communication with staff, a willingness to resolve conflicts among members, and a commitment to keep the Board President informed at all times. An effective leader is more interested in the committee's success than in his or her own feeling of personal importance. The committee chair will be responsible for preparing agendas for the meetings, assigning responsibilities to committee members and doing some of the follow-up to make sure assigned work is being done by members. In some instances, charter school staff may be assigned to assist the committee chair but this is not always the case.
4. **Members thoughtfully appointed.** The next element of committee effectiveness is members who have been thoughtfully appointed, members who possess the skills and experience needed to complete the committee's task.
5. **Accountability to the Board.** The committee's work plan should contain objectives incorporating measurable outcomes, and these measurable outcomes would be the basis for regular reporting of the committee to the Board as a whole.
6. **Well-run meetings.** Another element of committee effectiveness is well run meetings. In a sense, if a committee reflects the first five indicators of effectiveness -- a clear description of its work, a chair that knows how to lead, a solid match between the interests, skills and experience of individual members on the one hand, and the needs and requirements of the committee on the other, a good mix of Board and non-Board directors, and direct accountability to the Board --we will have the makings of excellent committee meetings. In addition, Socrates Academy, as part of its overall Board education and training program, is also planning to provide training to committee members to help them sharpen their skills.

Evaluating Committee Meetings

At the end of each committee meeting, the chair can ask for written or oral comments about the session. This is a feature of every meeting and is referred to as the "check out." A relatively small investment of time can produce continuous improvements in the work of the Board's committees. Immediate feedback from members can be solicited on how well the meeting achieved its purposes, if members stayed on task, and if there is anything that can be done to improve effectiveness of future committee meetings.

An annual Board calendar of major decisions and meetings is suggested. The same practice will increase the effectiveness of the Board's committees as well. The committee calendar should also be tied into the overall annual Board calendar so that efforts are unified and coordinated for maximum impact. Scheduling regular meetings of the committee in advance will also help busy people plan far enough in advance to assure good attendance.