How to Find and Keep and Mentor a Board Chair

Board Governance 101/201
The Selection Process

• Work through the COT
• Discuss the board chair responsibilities that are unique to your school’s culture and needs
• Include HOS input
• Be open-minded but focus on those with the key qualities and chemistry with the HOS
• Vet your choice internally and externally
• Pay attention to those NOT selected for the chair role who may have wanted it
What Should You Be Looking For?

• There are 15 qualities that most heads of school seek in a board chair.
• The ideal board chair will possess most of these traits and both the head of school and the rest of the board will agree upon the selection of this individual.
SKILLS

**Enlightened Intelligence:** The Chair must be bright, a quick thinker, humble and capable of leading people, companies and embassies.

**Collaboration:** The Chair must listen well, promote collaboration among board members and within subcommittees and partner with the head in a spirit of cooperation.

**A Specific Managerial Skill Set:** The chair must have experience managing and working with a group of diverse personalities and guiding, and if necessary, disciplining errant trustees.
Courage and Strength of Character: The Chair must stand beside the Head and defend the School and its leadership in a crisis.

Warmth and Compassion: The Chair must have empathy, compassion, and a caring soft side.

Family-centered: The chair must nurture and care for the head and the head's family.

A Sensitivity to Social Issues: The chair must embrace diversity and must demonstrate tolerance and open-mindedness that conveys to all a willingness to learn.
The Ability to Spot and Cultivate Talent: The Chair must be able to identify, encourage and develop talent among current and prospective leaders.

The Ability and Willingness to Take Charge: The Chair must be authoritative, but not arrogant and thus command respect from constituents and outside groups.

An understanding of Micro-management: The chair must leave personnel, curriculum and day-to-day management functions to the Head and his or her team.
A Passion for the School and for Education: The Chair must be motivated by a genuine passion for the school’s mission, not status or a desire for power.

A Desire for, Not Pursuit of the Role: Talented and valuable Chairs are often those whom we need to persuade to take the role.

The Capacity and Willingness to Give Charitably: The chair must set an example by donating to the school.

A Commitment to Serve at Least Three to Five Years: Long-term chairs lead to long-term heads and stable schools.

A Commitment to the Time that the Role Requires: The Chair must devote a significant time away from his/her profession and family, and stop aside if no longer able.
How to Keep a Strong Board Chair

• The head must cultivate and nurture the relationship with the chair. (It is a two-way street.)
• The head must make the chair feel appropriately empowered, not marginalized.
• The head must support the chair publicly and privately.
Keeping a Strong Board Chair

• The board must make the chair feel valued.
• The head must monitor the progress of the chair’s children.
• The bylaws must allow for sufficient chair terms to allow the chair to leave a legacy.
Building Connections (and no surprises)

- Chair has face to face meetings with the HOS
- Weekly
- One hour
REMEMBER

The second most dangerous time in the life of a school is the turnover of the board chair.