Charter School CEO Succession:

Emergency Succession Planning and Long-Term Talent Development Strategy

There are two factors to consider in succession planning: emergency succession planning and a long-term talent development strategy.

Here’s the difference between them.

Emergency Succession Planning provides a written plan that clariﬁes for the board, school staff, and families which staff members would own critical responsibilities and which staff members would report to the board if the CEO was suddenly unable to serve in their role.

Long-Term Talent Development Strategy can be as speciﬁc as an agreement on a future successor for the CEO and a timeline for the transition or a more general planning process to ensure that the organization has in place policies and practices to build the next generation of leadership.

To ensure your charter school, CEOs and boards must ensure that their organization has an emergency succession plan and long-term talent development strategy.

**Building Your Emergency Succession Plan**

Your emergency succession plan clariﬁes who would be responsible for managing which aspects of the school and who would report to the board if the CEO became suddenly unavailable to do their job.

# *Follow good processes to finalize, communicate, and maintain your plan.*

The creation of an emergency succession plan originates with the CEO. The CEO drafts the plan, shares it with the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee, receives feedback, and revises it as necessary.

The ﬁnal document is then shared with the full board for an ofﬁcial vote to accept the emergency succession plan.

Once the board approves the plan, it should be communicated to senior staff. While it can be uncomfortable to discuss emergency succession, key staff must know what they are responsible for if something comes up.

Finally, commit to reviewing your plan annually to make any necessary updates. This is best done at your September or October board meeting or annual board retreat.

# CEO’s guide to drafting an Emergency Succession Plan

## Start with your CEO job description.

Conﬁrm that it truly reﬂects the CEO’s significant responsibilities. If not, revise the job description or, at least, document all responsibilities that are not reﬂected in the job description.

Then, list the categories of the primary responsibilities, with notes on the key pieces of each.

## Assign each category of responsibility to a speciﬁc staff member.

Ideally, especially in an emergency, responsibility for the entire job would rest with one successor. But this is often not feasible. If so, divide the responsibilities between no more than two or three people. See the examples on the following pages.

## Create talent development plans as needed.

Consider carefully what skills or background knowledge these staff members might need to develop to fulﬁll these succession responsibilities successfully.

Also, consider whether your designated successors have the necessary relationships with the key constituencies (students, families, staff, donors, authorizers, community leaders, etc.).

Then, create action plans for ﬁlling these gaps. See the examples on the following pages.

# Example Responsibility Categories for Assignment to Emergency Successors with Key Learning Needs and Action Plans

| Responsibility Category | Academic Excellence |
| --- | --- |
| Designated Successor | Dr. Kendrah Underwood |
| Key Responsibilities | * Develop and manage the performance of the principals instituting accountability systems to ensure that charter promises are met and exceeded. * Develop and lead the process for assessing the needs of the instructional program and planning, implementing, and evaluating short- and long-term academic goals. * Supervise the processes for recruitment, selection, initial training, ongoing professional development, and evaluation of teachers and staff. |
| Designated | Meetings with State Accountability Officials: The CEO has always done this; Dr. Underwood should participate with him this year so she would be ready to fulﬁll this role under the succession plan.  Charter Terms/Accountability: Dr. Underwood is unfamiliar with our charter terms or authorizer; she should review the  charter agreement and discuss it with the CEO; she should  host and be in the debrief for this year’s authorizer visit (renewal). |
| Successor |
| Development Plan |
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| Responsibility Category | Mission, policy, and planning |
| --- | --- |
| Designated Successor | Mr. Jack Krewson |
| Key Responsibilities | * Helps the Board determine Kairos values, mission, vision, and short- and long-term goals. * Helps the board monitor and evaluate Kairos' relevancy to the community, effectiveness, and results. * Keeps the board fully informed on the condition of Kairos and all the essential factors inﬂuencing it. * Identiﬁes problems and opportunities and addresses them; bring those appropriate to the board and/or its committees; and facilitates discussion and deliberation. * Informs the Board and its committees about trends,   issues, problems, and activities to facilitate policy-making. Recommends policy positions.   * Keeps informed of developments in public education reform, the charter school movement, not-for-proﬁt management and governance, philanthropy, and fund development. |
| Designated | Experience Working with Board: |
| Successor |  |
| Development | Mr. Krewson has experience working with this  other board. Mr. Krewson should begin attending board meetings and being a leader in the strategic planning process. Should begin working with the CEO to create and  deliver the monthly reports on strategic planning to the board. |
| Plan |
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| Responsibility Category | Management and administration |
| --- | --- |
| Designated Successor | Dr. Underwood: oversees and manages instructional staff  Mr. Nathan Jacobs (COO): oversees and manages operations staff |
| Key Responsibilities | * Provides general oversight of all Kairos activities, manages the day-to-day operations, and assures a smoothly functioning, efﬁcient Charter School. * Assures program quality and charter school stability and sustainability through developing and implementing standards and controls, systems and procedures, and regular evaluation. * Assures a work environment that recruits, retains, and supports quality staff and volunteers. Assures process for selecting, developing, motivating, and evaluating staff and volunteers. * Recommends stafﬁng and ﬁnancing to the board of trustees. In accordance with board action, recruits personnel negotiates professional contracts, and sees appropriate salary structures are developed and maintained. * Speciﬁes accountabilities for management personnel and evaluates performance regularly. |
| Designated Successor Development Plan |  |

| Responsibility Category | Finance |
| --- | --- |
| Designated Successor | Mr. Ben Jackson (Director of HR and Finance) |
| Key Responsibilities | * Promotes programs and services that are produced cost-effectively, employing economy while maintaining an acceptable level of quality. * Oversees the ﬁscal activities of the charter school, including budgeting, reporting, and audit. * Works with the board to ensure ﬁnancing to support short-   and long-term goals.   * Assures an effective fund development program by serving as the chief development ofﬁcer or hiring and supervising an individual responsible for this activity. * Helps guide and enable the Board, its fund development   committee(s), and its board members to participate actively in the fund development process.   * Helps the board and its development committee design, implement, and monitor available fundraising plans, policies, and procedures. * Participates actively in identifying, cultivating, and soliciting donor prospects. * Assures the availability of materials to support solicitation. * Assures the development and operation of gift management systems and reports for quality decision-making |
| Designated Successor Development Plan | Fund Development:   * This would be a completely new area for Mr. Jackson * He should “ride along” with the CEO on at least three primary donor visits this year and host two * The CEO and Development Committee chair should make sure Mr. Jackson is introduced to all of our $1,000+ donors * Mr. Jackson should serve on the board committee planning the   gala |

| Responsibility Category | Governance |
| --- | --- |
| Designated Successor | Ms. Marnae Chavers (Chief of Staff) |
| Key Responsibilities | * Helps the board articulate its role and accountabilities and that of its committees and individual members and helps evaluate performance regularly. * Works with the board chair to enable the board to fulﬁll its governance functions and facilitate the optimum performance by the board, its committees, and individual board members. * With the board chair, focuses board attention on long-range strategic issues. * Manages the board’s due diligence process to ensure timely attention to core issues. * Works with the board ofﬁcers and committee chairs to get the best thinking and involvement of each board member and to stimulate each member to give his or her best. * Recommends volunteers to participate in the board and its committees. |
| Designated Successor Development Plan | General Governance Knowledge:   * Ms. Chavers should complete the webinar strand on general charter school management on the Kairos website * Relationship with the Board: Ms. Chavers should start attending board meetings regularly and should take the lead in facilitating this year’s board roles & responsibilities development process |

| Responsibility Category | Community relations |
| --- | --- |
| Designated Successor | Mr. Jack Krewson |
| Key Responsibilities | * Facilitates the integration of Kairos into the fabric of the community by using effective marketing and communications activities. * Acts as an advocate, within the public and private sectors, for issues relevant to Kairos, its services, and constituencies. * Listens to students, parents, volunteers, donors, and the community to improve services and generate community involvement. Assures community awareness of Kairos’ response to community needs. * Serves as chief spokesperson for Kairos, assuring   proper representation of Kairos to the community.   * Initiates, develops, and maintains cooperative relationships with key constituencies. * Works with legislators, regulatory agencies, volunteers, and   representatives of the charter community to promote legislative and regulatory policies that encourage a healthy community and address the issues of Kairos’ constituencies. |
| Designated Successor Development Plan | * Exposure to the community/experience representing the school publically: * Mr. Krewson should present the family information sessions that proceed with the lottery this year * He should “ride along” with the CEO on at least three meetings with local politicians or community leaders this year |

The Board’s Role in Building a Long-Term Talent Development Strategy

The most crucial role a board can play in developing a long-term succession strategy is to ask intelligent questions that help the CEO to articulate what the organization is doing to grow future generations of leadership.

## These questions include:

* What part of the interview process for teachers or other staff is intended to gain insight into their capacity for and interest in future leadership?
* How would your CEO assign each staff person to the following key talent pipeline categories today?
  1. Those with strong leadership potential
  2. Those who may have leadership potential
  3. Those who do not possess signiﬁcant leadership potential.
* What’s the CEO’s process for assessing which staff members are in which of the above categories? What is your CEO’s plan for each?
* How does your school reward or invest in those with high leadership potential?
* What opportunities exist to allow teachers to explore their potential and grow into organizational leadership roles? (E.g., grade team or department level chairs, enrichment coordinator, summer academy administrator, Saturday school administrator, etc.)
* How is your CEO feeling about their career progression? What do they imagine doing professionally in three to ﬁve years? (Revisit this question yearly as part of the CEO’s annual review.)

## Recommended Action Steps

1. The CEO writes a report outlining his or her thoughts on longer-term succession management. This document should contain answers to the questions above and other relevant information.
2. The CEO then shares this document with the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee, receives feedback, and revises it as necessary.
3. The revised plan is shared with the entire board for an ofﬁcial vote to accept the intent of the succession management plan and the creation of speciﬁc goals and expectations for the CEO that may emerge from this process.