

# Pikes Peak School of Expeditionary Learning

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## *Board of Directors’ Handbook*

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September 22, 2013

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## **Vision Statement**

*Pikes Peak School of Expeditionary Learning's (PPSEL) vision is to be a community that actively cultivates character in a challenging and engaging learning environment.*

## **Mission Statement**

*Pikes Peak School of Expeditionary Learning's mission is to develop motivated, independently thinking individuals who demonstrate strong character, academic achievement, social confidence and service to the community by utilizing the Expeditionary Learning Model.*

## **Policy Statement on Decision Making**

All decisions by the Board of Directors and the Principal shall be made within the parameters and uphold the principles of the vision and mission statements. Decisions shall be made first considering the vision and mission statements and then considering the members (parents), always keeping in mind that parents should have a meaningful voice in their child's education.

**PURPOSE AND DISCLAIMER:** PPSEL Board Directors are encouraged and required to be familiar with this handbook to assist in their duties serving. The purpose of this handbook is to provide *general guidance* to PPSEL Board Directors that is based on our PPSEL Board Bylaws, policy, corporate knowledge, mission, values and known best practices as of the writing. While the PPSEL Board makes every effort to keep this guide current, the currently certified Bylaws supersede this guidance when interpretations are required or if discrepancies are found. In all cases, this guide shall not be used for *authoritative* or *legal* purposes. For such authoritative and legal purposes, PPSEL Board Directors shall always consult the currently certified PPSEL Board Bylaws or certified Board policy documents.

## **Board Member Agreement**

A member of the PPSEL Board of Directors (“Board”) shall have a firm belief in the fundamental education delivery format and shall be committed to using the Expeditionary Learning Model and other curriculum as approved by the Board. Members of the Board (“Directors”) shall be fully committed to the charter school concept.

The purpose of the Board is to set the general direction and policy of the school, not to manage it on a daily basis. Directors shall be able to govern in a manner to ensure the adherence to the PPSEL vision and mission statements. Furthermore, directors shall foster positive relationships with school personnel, the school community, and community at large, oversee the financial stability of PPSEL, and deal with school related issues as prescribed in the bylaws.

By signature below, each director agrees to uphold the terms of this agreement.

### **Characteristics of an effective charter school governing Board:**

- Passionate, unwavering belief in the charter school’s mission and core values
- A firm understanding of the charter promises and a clear, consistent way to measure them
- Clarity of collective vision—where the school is and where it wants to be in the future
- Focus on results
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities of the full Board, individual trustees and committees
- The right structure in terms of Board size, composition, committees and officers
- Board meetings focused on strategic issues, not just reporting
- Clear understanding of the difference between governance and management
- A school leader who has the time to assist in the creation of effective governance
- A strong partnership between the Board and the school leader which is built on mutual trust and respect

### **Governance vs. Management**

The Board of Directors is to be the governing body of the organization. The Board will normally meet on a regular basis or as needed in emergency situations to discuss the overall direction of the organization. The Board is designed to create and review the policies of the school and delegating the implementation of those policies to school administration.

A major obstacle in the governance of schools is ensuring the Governing Body (School Board) and School Administration are able to delineate their different responsibilities. "Governance" is the strategic task of setting the school's goals, direction, and policy. "Management" is overseeing the day-to-day operations of the school.

Governance is about policy and planning the framework for fulfilling the mission and vision of the school. As such, it is distinct from the administration who organize and do the work. As far as possible, the governing body should steer clear from making managerial decisions and getting involved in the day-to-day implementation of policy.

### **Board Offices: (Bylaws Section 6)**

President: The President shall preside at the meeting of the Board of Directors and shall ensure that all actions and resolutions of the Board are carried out. The President shall also serve as Chair of the

Board of Directors and as the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation. The President shall be empowered to sign and execute contracts as required by law or authorized by resolution of the Board. The President shall work in partnership with the staff to implement the Mission of the School. The President shall report to the Board the overall state of the school, current initiatives, federal state and district policies and their impact to the school, deadlines and other information pertinent to the operation of the school, and is responsible for the planning all meetings in regards to all current and future academic, financial, legal and operational obligations incurred. The President shall represent the Pikes Peak School of Expeditionary Learning with the School District.

Vice-President: The Vice-President shall have all the powers and perform all the duties of the President in the absence or disability of the President. The Vice-President shall perform such other duties as from time-to-time may be assigned to him or her by the President or the Board of Directors.

Secretary: The Secretary shall record the votes and keep the full minutes of all meeting and proceedings of the Board of Directors, shall serve timely notice of all meetings, elections, and other proceedings in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws or as required by law, and perform such other duties as may be assigned by the President or by the Board of Directors.

Treasurer: The Treasurer, shall have oversight over all school financial matters. These include: receiving and depositing, in appropriate bank accounts approved by the Board of Directors, all funds received from the School District; depositing contributions, gifts, grants, bequests and other such funds in approved bank accounts; disbursing such funds as directed by resolution of the Board of Directors; keeping proper books of account; reporting the financial condition of The Pikes Peak School of Expeditionary Learning at Board of Directors' meetings; causing an annual financial audit and other audits as required by the Contract; preparing and presenting an annual budget to the Board of Directors for approval and overseeing such other duties as may be assigned by the President or by the Board of Directors.

All directors should attend at least one PTO meetings each year to show support and encouragement for that vital aspect of our school. Directors will not serve on the PTO Executive Committee. Directors may chair and/or serve on other committees of the PTO.

Prior Board experience is helpful but not required. Placing a high value on professionalism and the success of the school is mandatory. Motivation for serving on the Board shall be to facilitate the educational success of students.

All directors are requested to attend the yearly Colorado League of Charter School's Conference where the directors learn and investigate new trends in charter school operations and set the goals of the Board for the year. Further, a Board self-evaluation meeting shall be conducted each year where the performance of the Board during the past year will be critiqued. Additional meetings may be held during the year where outside speakers present information on effective Board leadership and/or other pertinent topics are discussed.

The Board shall, at least annually, conduct a Board Visit Day. During this time, directors will visit classrooms, talk with the faculty and staff, and become familiar with current school concerns. This may be facilitated through the annual "Meet the Teachers Night".

## **Behavioral Expectations**

Directors shall abide by the open meetings law [C.R.S. § 24-6-401]. The open meetings law states that anyone discussing Board business, policy, actions, resolutions, etc. amongst three or more directors,

except at meetings for which notice has been properly posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, is illegal. “Meeting” with another director is defined as communication in person, by telephone, by electronic mail, or through any other means. Executive sessions and confidentiality laws are also outlined in the statute. Personnel matters, individual students, and negotiations are confidential by law and may be conducted in executive session.

Expectations include a professional demeanor at all Board and school functions. Issues being discussed shall not be personalized and directed toward a fellow director, PPSEL personnel, parent or anyone else. Discernment should be used in interpersonal relationships and communications.

A diversity of opinions and solutions are necessary for the effective governance of PPSEL; however, directors shall respect and listen to ideas being presented by another director. Directors shall encourage each other to fulfill their responsibilities to the fullest of their potential.

When receiving criticism from parents or other parties about school personnel or other directors, the director shall direct the speaker to the director / personnel, which the situation involves. Directors will not receive or act on the criticism because it both violates the correct grievance procedure, implies that the director has power to act outside of the Board as a whole, and places said director into the day-to-day running of the organization, rather than managing policy. Directors shall never speak negatively about school personnel or other directors to the school community, or parties outside the school community.

Conflict shall be resolved by those between whom it exists. Directors will commit to resolving conflict directly with each other or with the appropriate school personnel and not share the conflict with anyone outside of the conflict except as necessary to follow the approved policy of PPSEL, including, but not limited to, other parents, other school personnel, or the media.

Directors shall exemplify integrity, honesty, and respect. A dedication and commitment to the vision of PPSEL and the charter school movement shall be top priority for any directors. Any director finding himself or herself involved in an irresolvable conflict shall put the vision and interest of the school first.

Directors are expected to attend all Board meetings unless excused. A director missing more than two consecutive Board meetings without prior approval for their absence from the President or at least two other directors shall receive a notice of probation. Missing a third meeting without prior approval is considered a resignation by that director.

All Board meetings shall be governed according to appropriate parliamentary procedure.

Any director may be removed at any time, with or without cause, by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Directors then in office, cast at a meeting of the Board of Directors called for that purpose. Directors shall be removed in the manner provide by the Colorado Nonprofit Corporation Act.

### **Governance of PPSEL (Bylaws section 3.5)**

PPSEL shall be governed by the Board. The Board shall be made up of seven directors, at least six of whom are parents or guardians (“members”) and one community member who may also be a member. The Board shall establish and maintain fundamental school policies to ensure adherence to the vision and mission statements. PPSEL’s principal shall serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Board. The Principal shall make day-to-day management decisions and is responsible for all administration

duties for the school. The Principal shall report directly to the Board and serve at the pleasure of the Board.

As with all charter schools, PPSEL is an entity separate from the school district in the area of governance. Each director shall guard this unique characteristic of PPSEL and other charters schools.

Directors should remember that derogatory statements concerning matters regarding PPSEL in a public forum tend to bring disrepute on the school as a whole and could be counter productive to not only PPSEL, but also the Colorado charter school movement. If a director questions a school related decision, he or she shall immediately take that concern or disagreement to the Principal in a confidential and diplomatic manner. Likewise, the Principal shall agree to the same commitment regarding Board decisions.

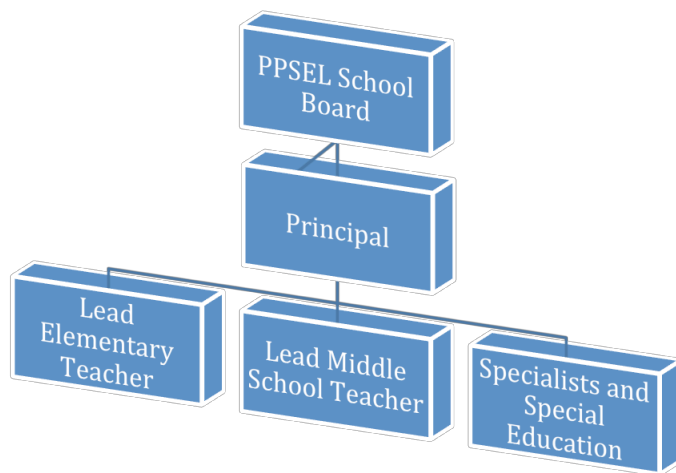
While at the school, directors shall be mindful of the different roles they play: parent, volunteer, director, etc. Directors shall not use their position of authority while acting in their parent or volunteer roles. With humility, each directors shall serve the best interests of the school. Board members may not speak, listen or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes. Expectations and authority will be carefully stated in order not to conflict with authority delegated to the Principal.

Directors shall remember that stepping out of their advisory or director capacity and attempting to manage or unduly influence the operations of the school will always cause problems.

The vision and mission statements of PPSEL, an Expeditionary Learning charter school, will serve to guide and direct the function and decisions of the Board. The goal to continually improve, maintain integrity, serve PPSEL families and ensure academic success for PPSEL's students shall take precedence in all situations.

### **Organizational chart**

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Parents of PPSEL, as members of the corporation, are stakeholders and have thus elected the Board of Directors.

The El Paso County D-49 School District has granted the charter to PPSEL.

## **Responsibilities and Duties of the Board of Directors**

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### **The Board is responsible for:**

1. Implementing the vision and mission statements as well as the school's philosophy and objectives. This philosophy should be read on a regular basis and taken into consideration whenever possible changes of policy are under discussion.
2. Establishing policies for the Principal's operation of PPSEL as well as ensuring that the provisions of the corporation's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, the charter, and other contracts or agreements with the Falcon 49 School District are being followed.
3. Establishing fiscal policy and boundaries, including but not limited to, budgets and financial controls for the schools.
4. Selecting a new Principal, when necessary.
5. Establishing necessary working committees and ensuring that all directors are actively involved in appropriate committee assignments.
6. Periodic evaluations of PPSEL, taking into consideration the school's philosophy and goals as stated in the vision and mission statements.
7. Conducting a written annual evaluation of the performance of the Principal and establishing his/her performance goals for the following year.
8. Conducting a written annual self-evaluation, including consideration of whether the Board and its committees are independently knowledgeable concerning school matters or are relying too heavily upon the Principal and other school personnel for guidance in establishing and maintaining policies.
9. Keeping full and accurate minutes of Board meetings and those of its committees.
10. Maintaining a policy book so that governing decisions made over a period of years may be readily available to subsequent directors and administrators.
11. Developing and maintaining a communication link to the community.

## **Appendix**

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The following documents may be reviewed in the PPSEL office:

1. Articles of Incorporation
2. Bylaws
3. Previous Board meeting minutes with Board packet supplements

Acknowledgement Page

I have read and agree with the information in this handbook.

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Printed Name and Signature

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Date