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**Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent**

*"Educating Georgia's Future"*

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Locally-Approved Charter School Governing Boards  
From: District Flexibility and Charter Schools Division  
Date: April 18, 2017  
Re: **Training, Ethics, and Conflict of Interest Policy Requirements for Locally-Approved Charter School Governing Boards**

Please note that neither *college and career academies* nor *state charter schools* are subject to the requirements detailed in this memo – they are subject to separate training and eligibility requirements found in the following places:

For College and Career Academies (both those created by a three-party charter contract or by a charter system or Strategic Waivers School System as part of their State Board of Education-approved performance contract), please see the separate April 25, 2017 memo Re: *Training, Ethics, and Conflict of Interest Policy Requirements for College and Career Academy Governing Boards*

For State Charter Schools, please see O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2084 and SCSC rules and regulations, which are located on the SCSC's website at <https://scsc.georgia.gov/documents/rules-regulations>.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2072 and SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06 require members of *locally-approved* non-profit charter school governing boards to participate in nine (9) hours of annual training, with six (6) additional hours of training for new governing board members and members of newly-approved charter schools during the first year after their approval. The training must include certain topics and be conducted by a State Board of Education (SBOE) – approved provider. In addition, charter school governing boards must adopt a *Code of Ethics* and a *Conflict of Interest Policy*.

Charter school governing boards should refer to the Department's website at [Charter School Governing Board Training](#) for the most up-to-date guidance on Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards, the model Code of Ethics and the model Conflict of Interest Policy.

**I. Required Number of Training Hours and Topics**

- A. Existing Governing Boards and Members: Charter school governing board members that have served one or more years must participate in a minimum of nine (9) hours of annual training as follows:
1. Three (3) hours of Financial Governance Training on all topics included in Domain VII, Standard B, of the Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards (see IV and V below).
  2. Three (3) hours of Whole Board Governance Team Training (see III below).
  3. Three (3) hours of training that covers topics within the Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards (see IV below).
- B. New Governing Boards and Members: New members of charter school governing boards (including past governing board members with a break in service of greater than one year) and the entire governing board of newly-approved charter schools must participate in a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of training within their first year of service as governing board members.
1. Three (3) hours of training on:
    - Best practices on charter school governance;
    - Constitutional and statutory requirements relating to transparency as it relates to public records and open meetings; and
    - Requirements of applicable statutes and rules and regulations.
  2. Three (3) hours of Charter School Finance and Budgeting Training on all topics included in Domain VII, Standard A, of the Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Board (see IV below).
  3. Three (3) hours Financial Governance Training on all topics included in Domain VII, Standard B, of the SBOE-adopted Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards (see IV and V below).
  4. Three (3) hours of Whole Board Governance Team Training (see III below).
  5. Three (3) hours of training that covers topics within the Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards (see IV below).

## **II. Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards**

- The State Board of Education-approved Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards, found at [Standards for Effective Governance of Charter Schools](#), include standards and elements within the following ten (10) domains:
  - Domain I Governance
  - Domain II Strategic Planning
  - Domain III Board and Community Relations
  - Domain IV Policy Development
  - Domain V Board Meetings
  - Domain VI Personnel
  - Domain VII Financial Governance
  - Domain VIII Ethics
  - Domain IX Workforce/Economic Development
  - Domain X Joint venture among business, school system, technical college and others

## **III. Whole Board Governance Team Training**

- A. The purpose of Whole Board Governance Team Training is to enhance the effectiveness of the governance team as a whole. It focuses on the training needs chosen by the governing board as part of their own Annual Board Training Program assessment of training needs.
- B. Whole Board Governance Team Training cannot be conducted unless a quorum of governing board members are present at the meeting.
- C. Board members absent for Whole Board Governance Team Training must make up the number of hours missed through:
  - 1. Online course(s) by an approved provider in the area of the Whole Board Governance Team Training they missed, or
  - 2. Meeting with the school's CEO/Head of School/Principal and the Governing Board Chair to make up the missed session using the same or substantially similar information as that used during the session they missed.
- D. If the absent board member(s) fails to complete this optional training, the board member(s) will not meet the annual training requirements and will be ineligible to continue serving on the school's governing board.
- E. Approved providers will award training credits for Whole Board Governance Team Training only when board members attend an approved provider's course designed for Whole Board Governance Team Training.

#### **IV. Annual Board Training Program**

##### Developing and establishing the Annual Board Training Program

- A. Each charter school governing board must adopt a training program for its members that complies with SBOE-approved requirements and is provided by a SBOE-approved vendor.
- B. Each training program must include curricula that are aligned with the Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards.
- C. Training credit hours will only be awarded for approved content aligned with the governance standards.
- D. Each charter school governing board must adopt its Annual Board Training Program and any revisions at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- E. The annual assessment of training needs must start with the Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Boards.
- F. Charter school governing boards should then review the list of SBOE-approved training providers and the training proposals available on the website.
- G. Governing board members should develop a training curriculum based on the board's identified needs and the training offered by each provider.
- H. Any revisions to the training program that are adopted by the SBOE must be incorporated by each charter school governing board within three (3) months of such revisions.

##### Implementing the Annual Board Training Program

- I. Charter school governing boards must schedule and participate in an initial training prior to the start of the school year (for new board members and newly-approved schools) and annual training thereafter with its selected provider(s).
- J. Any individual interested in serving on a charter school governing board must adhere to SBOE requirements. An individual is not eligible to serve on a charter school governing board unless he or she:
  - Has read and understands, as shown by signing, the charter school's code of ethics and conflict of interest policy; and
  - Has agreed to annually disclose compliance with the SBOE's policy on governing board training as well as the charter school's code of ethics and conflict of interest policies by signing a Governance Training Affidavit. Such disclosures must be included in the charter school's annual report due to the Department by November 1.

**V. SBOE-Approved Trainers**

- A. All required board member training must be conducted by an SBOE-approved charter school governance training provider that offers training in the areas included on an individual governing board’s training plan.
- B. Each year, the SBOE will release an RFP for Charter School Board Governance Training Providers for the following school year. Providers who submit proposals and are approved by the SBOE will be eligible to provide charter school governance training for the following school year.
- C. The list of 2017-2018 SBOE-approved training providers will be posted on the website at the [Charter School Governing Board Training](#) link.
- D. Training proposals by each approved training provider Individual can also be found at the [Charter School Governing Board Training](#) link.
- E. Governing board members should select a training provider that will meet its needs.
- F. **Note that the three hours of Financial Governance Training required for *new charter school governing board members in their first year* on topics included in Domain VII, Standard B, of the SBOE-adopted Standards for Effective Governance of Georgia Nonprofit Charter School Governing Board – including Fiscal Responsibilities of Board Members; Risk, Internal Controls and Audits; Federal Funds; Financial Reporting and Fund Accounting; and Budgeting training – *can only be delivered by the Finance and Budget Office of the Georgia Department of Education.***
  - Note that this training is comprised of 5 of the 9 modules already offered to new BOE members by FBO twice per year at the GSBA/GSSA conferences in Savannah in June and in Atlanta in late November/early December. We will also provide an opportunity in September 2017 in Atlanta.
- G. Note also that training in Domain VII, Standard B can be provided by any vendor for charter school governing board members in their second and later years and for whole board governance training for charter school governing board members in any year of service.
- H. Charter school governing boards and individual members may also participate in additional training based on identified needs.
- I. The Governing Board Chair must receive training related to the leadership duties of a governing board chair as a portion of the annual training requirement.

**VI. Required Code of Ethics**

- A. Each charter school governing board must adopt a Code of Ethics that includes, at a minimum, the SBOE's model code of ethics.
- B. The SBOE's adopted model code of ethics can be found on the Department's website at [Charter School Model Code of Ethics](#).
- C. Any revisions to the model code of ethics that are adopted by the SBOE must be incorporated into each charter school governing board's Code of Ethics within three (3) months of such revisions.
- D. Each governing board member must sign the charter school's adopted Code of Ethics annually.

**VII. Required Conflict of Interest Policy**

- A. Each charter school governing board must adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy that includes, at a minimum, the SBOE's model conflict of interest provisions.
- B. The SBOE's adopted model conflict of interest provisions can be found on the Department's website at [Charter School Model Conflict of Interest](#).
- C. Any revisions to the model conflict of interest provisions that are adopted by the SBOE must be incorporated into each charter school governing board's Conflict of Interest Policy within 3 months of such revisions.
- D. Each governing board member must sign the charter school's adopted Conflict of Interest Policy annually.

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Please see the website or contact Janelle L. Cornwall with any additional questions.

- District Flexibility and Charter Schools Division Website:  
<http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/default.aspx>
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