

In the Name of God, Most, Gracious, Most Merciful

HOW TO TRANSFORM BOARD MEMBERS INTO SUPERSTAR TRUSTEES



**Presented by
Necva Ozgur M. Ed.
April 2007**

MERIT

www.meritcenter.org
nozgur@meritcenter.org

HOW TO TRANSFORM BOARD MEMBERS INTO SUPERSTAR TRUSTEES

The whole of a board is only as strong as the sum of its parts: the board members. Each board member has the potential to be a superstar trustee, if the appropriate standards of excellence are developed and implemented. In order to set such standards, the characteristics of the ideal trustee must be defined and categorized into essential, important, and beneficial but optional qualities. Once these characteristics are identified, standards will be set and individual evaluations can be made using those standards. Only when board members strive for excellence, can they form a board that meets its mission of excellence.

- **How do you define the superstar trustee?**
- **The Ideal Trustee: 10 must-have qualities, 5 willing to have, and 5 desirable but not necessary qualities of a trustee**
- **What are the standards of excellence for trustees?**
- **How do you use these standards to evaluate your trustees?**
- **Where do you find these trustees? How do you get them committed?**

THE IDEAL BOARD MEMBER--SUPERSTAR TRUSTEE

10 “Must Haves” Qualities:

1. **Positive character traits:** Possess honesty, sensitivity to and tolerance of differing views, a friendly, responsive, and patient approach, community building skills, personal integrity, strong Islamic values, and a sense of humor.
2. **Passion and commitment to the cause:** Ability to consider this board service as his/her number-one priority after the family and their business. It is their “calling” and he/she is committed to the advancement and growth of the school.
3. **Broad thinker:** Ability to see big picture, and to make connections, and relationships. Ability to integrate “what best serves the school in short and long term?”
4. **Strategic thinker:** Ability to listen, ask questions, analyze, plan, and think clearly and creatively for the strategic direction and long-term benefit of the school.
5. **Team player:** Ability to work with others in the best interests of the school and a willingness to support consensus decisions.
6. **Advocate of the school:** Ability to take every opportunity to increase public awareness and promote the school by being an ambassador. Should become well informed about the school’s history, goals, accomplishments, and current operations, so that he/she can act as a knowledgeable advocate of the school.
7. **Understanding roles and respecting boundaries:** Ability to understand the role of governance and leadership, not management, and re-direct constituencies to the management.
8. **Respect confidentiality:** Ability to respect confidentiality of board discussions. The credibility of the board goes hand-in-hand with confidentiality. The issues discussed in the board room will stay in the board room.
9. **Careful about conflict of interest:** Is cautious against any conflict of interest, whether business related or personal. Board members who are parents must take particular care when making decisions for the school, leaving their personal agendas at home by separating their children’s needs from the interest of the school.
10. **Financial support:** Ability to support the school financially. All the board members provide financial support to the school on an annual basis and actively participates fundraising activities and solicitations.

5 “Willing to Have” Qualities:

1. ***Attend the meetings:*** Willingness to commit time for board meetings, committee meetings, planning sessions, and special events.
2. ***Prepare and participate at meetings:*** Review agenda and supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings, ask questions, take responsibility, and follow through on a given assignments.
3. ***Participate as an active board member:*** Willingness to take responsibility as an officer of the board or committee member, or in a task force. Each board member should be involved areas of expertise or interest.
4. ***Participate in board training:*** Willingness to attend board training sessions in order to become an effective board member. Understands that the education provided at such training sessions improve the effectiveness of board members.
5. ***Develop expertise:*** Willingness to develop certain skills according to the school’s needs and interest, such as: cultivating and soliciting funds, cultivating and recruiting board members and volunteers, reading financial statements, organizing events, and learning about the different programs of the school.

5 “Desirable but Not Necessary to Have” Qualities:

1. ***Particular expertise or professional experience:*** It is advantageous that board members have expertise in an educational field at another level, 9-12 school, public school, college, or university; it is also advantageous that they have expertise in finance, law, architecture, marketing, or an another non-profit organization,.
2. ***Volunteer experience:*** It is beneficial to have board members who served on another board, or volunteered in fundraising events, a PTO, committees and/or task forces. It is also important to know their track records as volunteers.
3. ***Financial resources:*** It is advantageous to have board members who are wealthy so that they can contribute to the school. However, if the wealthy board member doesn’t have the “must have qualities,” than they might bring more challenges to the board, and so this quality should be weighed carefully.
4. ***Capacity to attract new resources to the school:*** It is beneficial to recruit board members who have social connections and an ability to network, and who are willing to talk to their friends and colleagues about the school.
5. ***Business knowledge:*** It is advantageous to recruit board members who have concrete business knowledge, who are professionals, and who are technologically capable.

STANDARDS FOR INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

The board members are required to carry out their roles, responsibilities, and duties in an ethical and professional manner, including proper use of authority.

Quality Indicators

1. Board members understand, support, and promote the school's mission and strategic goals.
2. Board members are knowledgeable about the school's mission, goals, programs and services.
3. Board members educate themselves by attending board development seminars and workshops.
4. Board members attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, coming to meetings well prepared and ready to participate.
5. Board members' first and utmost concern is the welfare and the academic performance of the students.
6. Board members assist in fundraising by identifying prospective donors and personally asking them make a contribution.
7. Board members contribute to the school's development program and give a significant annual gift to the school.
8. Board members understand the school's financial statements and that they have fiduciary responsibilities to the school for sound financial management.
9. Board members maintain a good working relationship with and publicly support the principal.
10. Board members deal with each other, staff, and the school community in a fair, ethical, and courteous manner.
11. Board members recommend qualified individuals with relevant skills and experiences as possible nominees for the board.
12. Board members participate in board and committee meetings as well as other activities of the school.
13. Board members take advantage of opportunities to enhance the school's public image by periodically speaking at the community events about the school.
14. Board members speak on behalf of the board only when authorized to do so.
15. Board members respect the confidentiality of the board.
16. Board members focus their attention on long-term and significant policy issues rather than short-term administrative matters.
17. Board members avoid conflict of interest whether at a business or personal level.
18. Board members are aware that authority is vested in the board as a whole and that individual board members do not have any power.
19. Board members accept and support board decisions. Once a decision has been made, the board speaks with one voice.
20. Board members care for the benefit of all students not the specific needs of an individual child.

SELF-EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

The board members are required to carry out their roles, responsibilities and duties in an ethical and professional manner, including proper use of authority.

Quality Indicators		Outstanding	Effective	Acceptable	Improvement Needs	Ineffective
1	Board members understand, support, and promote the school's mission and strategic goals					
2	Board members are knowledgeable about the school's mission, goals, programs, and services					
3	Board members educate themselves by attending board development seminars and workshops					
4	Board members attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, coming to meetings well prepared and ready to participate					
5	Board members' first and utmost concern is the welfare and the academic performance of the students					
6	Board members assist in fundraising by identifying prospective donors and personally asking them to make a contribution					
7	Board members contribute to the school's development program and give a significant annual gift to the school					
8	Board members understand the school's financial statements and has fiduciary responsibilities to the school for sound financial management					
9	Board members maintain a good working relationship with and publicly support the principal					
10	Board members deal with each other, staff and the school community in a fair, ethical, and courteous manner					
11	Board members recommend qualified individuals with relevant skills and experiences as possible board nominees					
12	Board members participate in board and committee meetings as well as other activities of the school					
13	Board members take advantage of opportunities to enhance the school's public image by periodically speaking at community events about the school					
14	Board members speak on behalf of the board only when authorized to do so					
15	Board members respect the confidentiality of the board					
16	Board members focus their attention on long-term and significant policy issues rather than short-term administrative matters					
17	Board members avoid conflict of interest whether business or personal level					
18	Board members are aware that authority is vested in the board as a whole and individual board member does not have any power					
19	Board members accept and support board decisions. Once a decision has been made, the board speaks with one voice					
20	Board members care for the benefit of all students not the specific needs of an individual child					

BOARD COMMITMENT & PLEDGE

We are committed to excellence in governance and promise to fulfill our duties as a governing body of our school. We understand that we have the ultimate responsibility for the institution. We are responsible for the integrity of the school and the standing and reputation built by its founders and by those who have labored for it over the years. We hold in trust the school's future as well as its present. We understand that our collective judgment will determine the success of our school.

We pledge to form a strong partnership with the principal of the school. In doing so we assure that each child receives excellent quality academic education based on high moral values in an Islamic Environment. We support the aspirations of our principal to empower his/her staff and to give each boy and girl a quality school experience during the crucial years of childhood.

Our faith in Islam is demonstrated through the children who will bear the fruits of a solid foundation in reading, writing, mathematics, critical thinking, friendship, compassion, honesty, and self-esteem.

We welcome the challenge and know that being a board member is a deeply rewarding endeavor.

I accept to serve as a board member and fulfill my responsibilities as explained and outlined:

Name _____ *Signature* _____

Date _____ *Occupation* _____

Address _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

My areas of interests in the board: _____

TRUSTEE CONTRACT

1. I will keep myself informed about the school's history, goals, challenges, and current operations. I will read the materials sent to the board and ask for additional clarification if I think I do not have adequate information to make informed decisions.
2. I will attend board and committee meetings regularly and make doing so a priority because I know this board needs the full participation of its members to govern effectively. I will also make attending board retreats and/or other training opportunities a priority in my schedule because I know that doing so is an important trustee responsibility.
3. I will work hard to understand my own roles and responsibilities as a trustee and those of the principal and other administrative staff in order to provide appropriate oversight without interfering or micromanaging in areas that are not the board's responsibility.
4. I will participate with an open mind and an objective perspective in the consideration of all issues before the board.
5. I will guard against any conflicts of interest, whether personal or business-related. If the slightest possibility of one exists, I will inform the board chair and withdraw from consideration of the issue. If I choose to enter into a relationship with the school that creates a conflict of interest, I will immediately offer my resignation from the board.
6. I will put aside my parent role and any other personal agendas and pledge to actively work only toward those decisions and solutions that are in the school's best interests.
7. I will respect the confidentiality of the board's business at all times because I know that doing otherwise compromises both the principal's and the board's authority and their efforts on behalf of the school.
8. In my role as a trustee, I will honor the principle of "no surprises," and expect that my fellow trustees and our principal will do likewise.
9. I will actively support our principal and will demonstrate that support within the school community. If I have differences of opinion or concerns, I will address them with the principal directly but privately.
10. When confronted with problems or concerns brought to me by others, I will use the proper channels of communication, informing the board chair or the principal of the situation, rather than trying to deal with it myself.
11. I will support the school financially, and I will actively participate in its advancement efforts because I know that doing so is an essential part of effective trusteeship.
12. I will be an advocate for the school in our community by supporting it publicly and helping others to understand the important contribution it makes to our city.

I have read and understand the contract above and pledge to abide by it during the coming year.

Signed _____ Date: _____