Charter School Roles & Responsibilities

For Principals & Academic Policy Committees (APC)

Charter schools in Alaska are public schools approved by their local school district and the State of Alaska that offer alternative teaching methods or curriculum. Charter Schools are governed by an elected board called an ***Academic Policy Committee (APC)****.*

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Introduction

Effective charter school leadership depends on a clear understanding of the respective roles of the Academic Policy Committee (APC) and the principal. In general, the APC governs the school, while the principal manages the school and serves as the APC's lead administrative and educational advisor. The two roles are distinct, but they are also highly interdependent.

The APC provides governance and direction for the school. It establishes and follows the school's charter, bylaws, and policies, sets long-term priorities and goals, and monitors the school's progress toward those goals. One of the most important ways an APC can support school success is by empowering the principal to serve as the school's educational and administrative leader within the direction established by the APC and the school district.

The principal is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school and for implementing APC and district policy. As the school's instructional leader, the principal supervises personnel, identifies and communicates school needs, provides educational leadership to staff and the school community, and carries out the strategic priorities established by the APC. The principal keeps the APC informed about educational developments, school needs, and other information necessary for good decision-making.

A strong APC–principal relationship is built on communication, trust, and respect for each other's roles. The APC should provide clear direction without attempting to manage school operations, while the principal should provide the information and professional recommendations the APC needs to govern effectively. The sections that follow offer practical guidance to help APCs and principals understand their respective roles, work effectively together, and support positive and productive school governance.

The specific processes for carrying out these responsibilities may vary by school and district. Please consult your school's charter, APC bylaws, and district policy for more details.

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Principal – APC Relationship

THE APC *Governs*

1. Provides overall direction for the school's educational program.
2. Works collaboratively with the principal to support the success of the school and students.
3. Establishes selection criteria and selects the principal in accordance with the charter and district policy.
4. Provides the principal with clear goals and performance expectations.
5. Conducts an annual evaluation of the principal's performance in relation to the APC goals and established expectations.
6. Conducts regular self-assessments of APC effectiveness.
7. Demonstrates trust in and respect for the principal's professional judgment and expertise.

THE PRINCIPAL *Manages*

1. Serves as the school's instructional and administrative leader, responsible for day-to-day operations.
2. Works collaboratively with the APC for the success of the school and students.
3. Maintains the professional qualifications and administrative certification required for the position.
4. Supports the APC in policy development and ensures the APC policies and priorities are effectively implemented.
5. Provides the APC with timely information, data, and recommendations to support informed decision-making.
6. Initiates a strategic planning process that engages the APC and school community.
7. Demonstrates trust in and respect for the APC's governance role and collective authority.

Meetings

THE APC *Conducts its business through public meetings*

1. Holds properly noticed meetings and carries out APC deliberations and actions in accordance with the Alaska Open Meetings Act.
2. Comes to meetings prepared, having reviewed materials provided in advance.
3. Follows meeting procedures established through adopted bylaws.
4. Works collaboratively with the principal to develop agendas focused on APC priorities and matters requiring governance attention.
5. Notifies the principal of potential issues and questions before the meeting (no surprises).
6. Uses executive sessions only when appropriate and for purposes allowed by law.
7. Makes decisions collectively and provides clear direction to the principal on governance matters.

THE PRINCIPAL *Advises and suppots the APC*

1. Supports the APC in conducting effective meetings consistent with the Alaska Open Meetings Act.
2. Provides meeting materials in sufficient time for APC members to prepare.
3. Supports established meeting procedures and assists with notices, records, and other administrative requirements.
4. Works collaboratively with the APC President to develop meeting agendas, and brings emerging issues and recommendations to the APC.
5. Provides information and recommendations needed for informed decision-making.
6. Supports the APC in seeking district or professional guidance when questions arise about meeting requirements or executive sessions.
7. Implements APC decisions and communicates actions to staff and the school community.

Policy

THE APC *Adopts policy*

1. Adopts policies that establish a framework for school operations, aligned with the charter and the APC goals.
2. Considers information and recommendations from the principal when developing or revising policy.
3. Reviews APC policies and bylaws on a regular cycle and updates them as needed.
4. Ensures policies and bylaws are accessible to staff, students, and the public.

THE PRINCIPAL *Advises and impements policy*

1. Implements APC and district policies in the administration of the school.
2. Provides information and recommendations to support the APC in developing or revising policy.
3. Develops administrative procedures and school rules consistent with adopted policies.
4. Monitors policy implementation and identifies areas where review or revision may be needed.
5. Maintains current policies and procedures so they are accessible to staff, students, families, and the public.

Budget & Finance

THE APC *Adopts and monitors*

1. Establishes fiscal priorities that support the charter, APC goals, and needs of the school.
2. Reviews and approves the school budget.
3. Encourages public input in the budget development process.
4. Monitors the school's financial condition through regular financial reports.
5. Provides governance oversight of school funds and promotes stewardship of resources.
6. Advocates for needed funding and leads community support for the budget.

THE PRINCIPAL *Prepares, administers and reports*

1. Develops and presents a balanced budget based on available resources.
2. Works collaboratively with the APC to align the budget with school goals and APC priorities.
3. Administers the approved budget and manages school expenditures.
4. Provides the APC with regular financial reports and identifies significant budget concerns as necessary.
5. Works with district financial staff to support accurate accounting, reporting, and financial controls.
6. Supports APC and school community understanding of the budget and school finance.

Curriculum & Instructional Materials

THE APC *Establishes, approves and monitors*

1. Establishes the academic direction and instructional priorities consistent with the school's charter.
2. Works collaboratively with the principal to support an effective instructional program that meets students needs.
3. Approves curriculum and instructional materials within the authority provided by the charter.
4. Reviews student achievement and other relevant data to monitor the effectiveness of the instructional program.
5. Supports communication with the school community about academic goals, programs, and progress.
6. Provides for adequate resources within the budget.

THE PRINCIPAL *Recommends and oversees*

1. Serves as the school's instructional leader and advises the APC on curriculum and instructional needs.
2. Works collaboratively with the APC to align instructional programs with the charter, academic priorities, and student needs.
3. Recommends curriculum and instructional materials, as appropriate.
4. Oversees the implementation and ongoing evaluation of curriculum and instructional programs.
5. Provides the APC with student achievement data and recommendations to support informed decisions.
6. Communicates with staff, families, and the school community about academic programs and student progress.

Personnel

THE APC *Provides governance and oversight*

1. Selects, supports, and evaluates the principal in accordance with the charter, bylaws, and district policy.
2. Considers principal recommendations regarding staffing levels and related budget priorities.
3. Maintains appropriate boundaries by leaving individual personnel decisions and supervision to the principal and district processes.
4. Directs personnel concerns and complaints through the appropriate channels.
5. Promotes a positive school climate.

THE PRINCIPAL *Manages and supervises*

1. Serves as the school's administrative leader.
2. Manages assignment, supervision, evaluation, and other personnel matters in accordance with district policy.
3. Provides the APC with recommendations regarding staffing levels and resource needs as part of the budget development process.
4. Receives and addresses personnel concerns through established district and school processes.
5. Fosters positive working relationships, professional growth, and effective communication among staff.

Student Learning

THE APC *Establishes direction*

1. Promotes a positive school environment that supports student learning, safety, and well-being.
2. Identifies school-wide student needs and priorities in partnership with the principal.
3. Reviews the student handbooks and related school-wide expectations for alignment with the charter, APC policy, and district policy.
4. Considers information and recommendations from the principal regarding student programs, services, supports and learning conditions.
5. Includes student voice on the APC and in decision-making.

THE PRINCIPAL *Implements and oversees*

1. Fosters a positive school environment that supports student learning, safety, and well-being.
2. Recommends programs, services, supports, and learning conditions that respond to student needs.
3. Develops and administers school rules and procedures consistent with the charter, APC policy, and district policy.
4. Develops and maintains student handbooks and communicates expectations to students, families, and staff.
5. Encourages and facilitates student engagement in school decision-making.

Facilities

THE APC *Provides oversight*

1. Ensures the school has access to facilities that support its educational program and enrollment needs.
2. Reviews lease agreements, use agreements, and other significant facility commitments within the APC's authority.
3. Plans for the financial impact of rent, utilities, maintenance, and other facility costs.
4. Sets priorities for facility improvements and future space needs.
5. Monitors facility risks and obligations and works with the district and other partners to address long-term needs.

THE PRINCIPAL *Manages facility operations*

1. Manages the daily use of the school facility to support safe and effective operations.
2. Understands lease, use, and maintenance responsibilities and coordinates with the district or landlord as needed.
3. Monitors facility conditions and addresses maintenance, safety and accessibility concerns.
4. Keeps the APC informed about facility costs, concerns, and emerging needs.
5. Recommends improvements and future facility needs based on enrollment, programs, safety and school operations.

Community Engagement

THE APC *Builds connections and seeks input*

1. Builds relationships with families, community members, and organizations that support the school and its charter.
2. Creates opportunities to hear perspectives and priorities from the school community.
3. Encourages family and community engagement in the school.
4. Establishes committees and defines their role to support the school.
5. Directs individual complaints to the appropriate school or district process for resolution.
6. Champions and advocates for school needs, and encourages community support for school programs and priorities.

THE PRINCIPAL *Communicates and connects*

1. Keeps families informed about school programs, activities, and needs.
2. Creates opportunities for families and community members to be engaged in the school.
3. Fosters relationships with community partners that support students and the school.
4. Supports APC-established committees.
5. Responds to complaints through the appropriate school or district process.
6. Keeps the APC informed about community interests, concerns and opportunities for engagement.

Planning & Growth

THE APC *Sets long-term direction*

1. Leads strategic planning with input from students, families, staff, and the community.
2. Sets annual APC goals that support the school's charter.
3. Monitors progress toward goals using agreed-upon measures and benchmarks.
4. Plans for the school's future needs, including enrollment, programs, staffing, facilities, and resources.
5. Participates in ongoing professional development to strengthen APC governance.
6. Advocates for the school and public education at the local and state levels.

THE PRINCIPAL *Carries out the long-term direction*

1. Implements the strategic plan.
2. Develops measurable objectives and identifies the actions and resources needed to carry out the strategic plan.
3. Reports regularly to the APC on progress toward strategic goals and identifies areas needing attention.
4. Identifies emerging needs and opportunities related to enrollment, programs, staffing, facilities and resources.
5. Supports APC advocacy by providing information and school-level perspective. representatives.

Notes

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