

Lycée Français de la Nouvelle-Orléans recommendations

Elstrott, Maurer & Hunnewell, LLC (EMH Strategy) was retained by the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools (LAPCS) to develop a CEO search profile and process for Lycée Français de la Nouvelle-Orléans (LFNO). Since beginning work soon after the January 14, 2013 board meeting of LFNO, we have interviewed many key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, administrators, board members, and interested external parties.

During our work to identify the qualities of a successful leader of LFNO, additional areas were identified that should be strengthened in order to have a successful, sustainable school. This report details the high-level, root cause issues identified through our series of interviews with stakeholders, and is meant to identify the best path forward for the school to be successful and sustainable in the long-term.

Based on our experience and best practices, we have developed the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: CEO search

The most critical issue is that the school has not had, nor does the school currently have, the appropriate school leader. This lack of leadership is at the root of nearly every issue raised during our meetings with stakeholders.

Our recommendation is that the board of LFNO immediately begin a CEO search, maintaining an open, transparent and collaborative process, taking the following tactical steps:

- Immediately empower Jeremy Hunnewell of EMH Strategy to select a search committee. This search committee will be comprised of three education practitioners with:
 - Experience leading schools or businesses.
 - Extensive knowledge of what is required of a school leader.
 - Deep networks.
 - Jeremy will select this committee by the end of February.
 - Search committee members will be announced to the LFNO community when they have been identified.
- Immediately post the open CEO position (see attached job description) and engage your personal and professional networks, as well as those of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools and other stakeholders, in order to reach as many qualified candidates as possible.
 - Post the opening in publications such as the New York Times and Education Week, and online resources such as <http://www.idealists.org/>

- On an ongoing basis, the search committee will interview candidates and screen for the most highly qualified. The search committee will meet with as many good candidates as possible.
- The search committee will make a recommendation to the board (or to a committee of the board if one has been developed) of two or more candidates for consideration by end of March or as soon as reasonable.
- Before selecting the CEO, the board should meet with the final candidates in a public forum setting, where teachers, parents and other stakeholders can meet the candidates and ask questions.
- The board of directors will retain the authority to hire the candidate they see as best for the role.
- EMH will assist with coordination of the screening.
- We anticipate being able to secure a qualified school leader in 60 days.

Recommendation 2: Board governance structure

A strong board is vital to running a successful school. The existing board of directors does not have the appropriate governance structure in place to best carry out their duties in an effective manner.

Our recommendation is that you improve the board governance structure, taking into account the best practices discussed below, and implement this new structure as soon as reasonably possible. Specifically, you should:


1. Add strong board members, and provide them with the training and the tools to be successful
2. Create and adhere to strict term limits
3. Increase participation and involvement of other stakeholders through non-voting seats on working committees and the board itself
4. Create committees

Best practices:

- Strong board selection process
 - Schools often begin their existence with a founding board, which is responsible for the heavy workload of creating a new school and guiding it through the early days. At some point it is important to switch to a board with different skills and abilities that can better accomplish the ongoing operating of the school.
 - The LAPCS can provide a document highlighting suggested board skills and responsibilities.
 - A membership committee can be used to identify and nominate strong board members.
 - The LAPCS's Top Shelf program can help identify potential candidates and provide training for all new members.
- Term limits

- In order to have a strong, well functioning board of directors, it is imperative that a board establishes, maintains and adheres to clear term limits.
- Terms should be staggered so that not all members roll off on the same date.
- Advisory / non-voting members
 - To increase transparency and to benefit from additional, diverse viewpoints, many schools set aside seats for parents and teachers to sit in on board meetings and working committees in an advisory, non-voting role.
- Strong committee structure
 - Much of a board of director's work should be done in committees, with results reported at full board meetings for approval.
 - Assess where you most need to use committees and implement these when appropriate, once sufficient board members are in place to implement the committee structure effectively.

I would request that the board vote to accept both recommendations, and begin enacting the board best practices immediately so that they are in place when a CEO is secured.



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