Strength and Stability of the Governing Body

The Arizona Virtual Academy's governing body has experienced very little turnover since its creation. The founding board included:

a parent, Jodi Gallegos
a charter school expert, the Honorable Onnie Shekerjian
a member of the PPEP & Affiliates corporate board, Dr. Celestino Fernandez
a school choice advocate and expert in governmental affairs and public policy, the Honorable Tom Simplot
a public school expert, Kim Fields from the Pima County Superintendent's office

This governing body remained in place until two years ago. Mrs. Gallegos' home situation changed and she resigned from the board. Mrs. Gallegos was replaced with Ann Robinett. The Honorable Onnie Shekerjian resigned when her Tempe City Council duties increased during the third year of her term. She was replaced with Christopher Smith. Kim Fields resigned when she relocated to Tennessee. She was replaced with Dr. Mark Duplissis.

The original governing body developed a vision and mission for the school. The governing body established the organizational structure, working relationships and expectations between the groups of people responsible for the success of the Arizona Virtual Academy. The governing body remains one of the strongest components of AZVA's organization and the governing body still holds the vision of the school

Part 1 – Governing body member list and areas of expertise

Ann Robinett, President – Mrs. Robinett was the first parent to enroll her children in the Arizona Virtual Academy in July 2003. Mrs. Robinett is the parent representative on the board. Mrs. Robinett's role is to speak on behalf of the parents. Mrs. Robinett and her husband own a CPA firm in the Bullhead City area. She brings financial expertise to the board, as well.

The Honorable Tom Simplot – Vice Mayor Simplot is an expert in school choice and government process. Mr. Simplot was one of the original advocates of charter schools within the State of Arizona. The Vice Mayor advises AZVA on governmental issues and process.

Dr. Celestino Fernandez – Dr. Fernandez is a respected sociology professor at the University of Arizona. Dr. Fernandez advises AZVA on higher education issues and on issues related to PPEP & Affiliates. Dr. Fernandez is a long-standing member of the PPEP & Affiliates corporate board.

Dr. Mark Duplissis – Dr. Duplissis is the executive director of high school relations for Arizona State University. Dr. Duplissis advises AZVA on school policy and post-secondary education issues. Dr. Duplissis is a former high school administrator and he brings years of experience managing public schools.

Christopher Smith – Mr. Smith is the director of government affairs for Cox Communications. Mr. Smith was one of the authors of Arizona's charter school law. Mr. Smith has decades of experience in public policy, government affairs and governmental process. Mr. Smith is also the parent of daughters who attended charter schools for many years. He has experience serving on boards of other charter schools. Mr. Smith advises AZVA on public policy issues and he speaks as a parent.

Part 2 – Governing body recruitment, selection and development.

Fortunately, the AZVA governing body is very stable. Governing body members have left AZVA only due to life changes or relocation.

Governing body recruitment is an ongoing activity at AZVA. Parents, faculty, administrators, policy makers, business leaders and others who touch AZVA are routinely asked to suggest names of prospective governing body members. Each outgoing governing body member has been asked to help recruit a replacement, and each outgoing member has happily helped recruit a replacement. Governing body recruitment includes discussions with existing members, staff and other related parties (like parents, contractors, public policy experts). Prospective governing body members are invited to school events, professional development sessions, school improvement team meetings, curriculum demonstrations, board meeting and staff meetings prior to consideration of joining the governing body. Prospective governing body members are encouraged to talk with current and outgoing members regarding work load and expectations. School leaders prepare data and background on AZVA for prospective members to review and ask questions.

Governing body membership is voted on by a majority of the governing body members.

Training and development of governing body members resembles recruitment activities. Governing body members receive a handbook that includes organizational documents, the charter law, the Open Meetings Act, the charter contract and application, school data, school newsletters, school organizational charts, school budgets, policies, minutes/agendas, and anecdotal/background information on the school (marketing presentations, DVDs, CDs, curriculum samples, programs from school events, etc.). Governing body members participate in an annual budget workshop session prior to considering the annual budget. New governing members review the Open Meeting Law and the Attorney General's presentation with the regional vice president or head of school. The members periodically conduct retreats and vision-setting sessions. Governing body members review school data at each meeting as an important training process.

Part 3 – Governance structure and organization of the school

The governing body meets quarterly and as needed between regularly-scheduled meetings. The governing body's meeting schedule is geared around critical decisions and legal obligations: Adoption of annual technology plan (October), proposed budget approval (July), adopted budget approval (July), academic declarations (October), annual financial report approval (October), revised budget approval (if necessary, December), approval of Proposition 301 plan (March) and acceptance of annual audit (March). The governing body also considers special education policies and procedures, Consolidated Plan and related policies, growth amendments, student discipline policies, student handbook policies and other polices as the school leaders request.

The president of the governing body conducts meetings. Open Meeting Law notices are published and materials are provided to members in advance of meetings. Members participate in meetings in person, telephonically and via our web based classroom, Elluminate. The school staff members generate minutes immediately following each meeting and draft minutes are distributed to members for editing within 48 hours of the meeting.

Governing body members work with the school leaders and the K12 staff throughout the year. K12 hires the head of school and other school leaders. PPEP & Affiliates' corporate board contracts with K12 Inc. to manage AZVA. PPEP & Affiliates ratifies the AZVA governing body members. The AZVA teachers are employees of K12 Inc. The governing body establishes student:teacher ratios, special programs, annual academic priorities and staffing priorities through the annual budgeting process. The governing body also established priorities through the adoption of the Consolidated Plan. The governing body considers policies throughout the year; the governing body prefers to review a few policies at each meeting rather than review all policies annually.

Part 4 – Role of the governing body in monitoring the school's academic performance

The governing body reviews school data at each meeting. The members receive school updates throughout the year. The governing body spends considerable time reviewing the Consolidated Plan which included detailed information on school performance. The governing body received a detailed report on student achievement about 30 days after student-level AIMS scores are released. School leaders disaggregate test data and report on special populations, like Title I, SPED and ELL. School leaders also provide governing body members with detailed information on high school metrics (course passing rates, decile reports, withdrawal rates, etc.) and teacher performance metrics. Governing body members approve the specific teacher metrics that will be collected and analyzed each year. Teacher metrics are divided into appropriate groupings: K-8 regular education, special education, high school content-specific teachers, high school counselors, high school advisors and Title I.

Governing body members have asked for information on competitors' performance and other K12-managed school in the past. Data and information is prepared and presented upon request.