How Nonprofit Boards Can Bridge Difference in Divided Times

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Who are we?
Civil society:
A community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity

“Ordinary citizens contributing to the well being of their community”

“Civil:”
secular, nonmilitary, polite, courteous, affable, pleasant
Nonprofit boards
Diversity on boards

- Boards are getting less diverse
  - 84% of board members are white
  - 90% of board chairs are white

- Culture of inclusion
  - Least diverse boards rate their culture as the most inclusive

- Social networks are not diverse:
  - White people 91% Black people 83%
  - Latino people 64%
Nonprofit boards in public education

- Major driving force
  - 7,000 public charter schools
  - Thousands of ecosystem organizations
  - Philanthropy is driving ed reform

- Some efforts to rethink governance
  - Do huge school systems work?
  - Does political governance of public education work?

- Shifting autonomy to school level relies on strong boards for accountability
How can boards do this?

- Think carefully and be intentional about who is on the board
- Make proximity a priority
- Follow best governance practice
- Ensure inclusiveness
- Have the hard conversations
  - Have more of the hard conversations
  - And even more
Four Corners

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
Tools and Guides

- Rethink your board meeting agenda
  - Leaving agenda time for open-ended, challenging discussions
    - Put more on the committees’ agendas
  - Training the board to asking hard questions and not think they have to have the answers
  - Having hard conversations about race, privilege, community leadership, power, and class—regularly
  - Considering who in the community the board should be hearing from, and bringing them in

- Strategic board composition
  - Clearly defining community engagement
  - Broadening the skills matrix:
Thank you!