

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL
888 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Thursday, February 2, 2017

Board Co-Chairs Ramone Alexander and Jacqueline Hollins called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

The following individuals were present:

Trustees - Jacqueline Hollins, Ramone Alexander, Susan Hakala, John Whitty, Vivian Logan, Tom Bailey, Evin Conyer, Bryan Donohue, Divitta Alexander.

Administration - Janet Barnes, Dara Seeley, Ellen Connell, Chantele Thompson, Donna Nowak, Amanda Kenefick.

Legal - Steve Polowitz.

The Following individuals were not present –

Trustees - Joe Costantini, Maureen Ludwig, Ron Stewart, James McLeod, Susanna Schenk.

MINUTES: Upon motion by Tom Bailey, seconded by Vivian Logan, the draft minutes from the January 5, 2017 meeting were unanimously approved. They were electronically forwarded to CSI on February 3 by the Secretary.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP REPORTS:

—Ms. Donna Nowak reported that at mid-year, 50 Juniors took the U.S. History Regents examination for the first time. There was a 90% pass rate among these students, who completed the yearlong course in one semester. There was a 28% mastery rate. This success received some positive publicity on a local news station. There will be a special “Lunch with Leaders” on February 17 at 2 PM to recognize these students. 6 Seniors took the same exam with a 44% pass rate. Chronic absenteeism was cited by Ms. Nowak for the failure among Seniors. Moving forward, Ms. Nowak’s classes will be restructured to suit a longer period at the end of the day to better support Seniors. Juniors also did better than Seniors with respect to English Regents exams. There was a 60% pass rate for first time test takers, with 40% of the 50 Juniors who took the exam achieving mastery level (80%). 11 Seniors took the Global Studies Regents exam, with only a 27% pass rate, again attributed to chronic absenteeism. Poor showing in Geometry (0% pass rate) will be addressed with IXL, a computer program designed to support math students by targeting and assessing their deficiencies and Regents readiness. Poor scores in Living Environment will be addressed by having the science department chair take on 3 classes in this area.

—Ms. Janet Barnes, interim Head of School (HoS), briefed the Board on facilities issues (cold temperatures in the classrooms during exam week, broken water fountain, and

need to provide a handrail on the 3rd floor back hallway). She then updated the Board on positive actions taken to provide New York State reporting data, some of it overdue. Ms. Barnes noted that with respect to professional development (PD) and teacher support, there may be an avenue to recruit student teachers from Buffalo State University. She is researching the possibility to have Dr. Steven Jacobson from the University at Buffalo and Dr. Cathy Battaglia from City Honors provide PD at OCS, mainly in the area of classroom management. Ms. Barnes hopes to settle this and get started as soon as possible. Ms. Barnes has been confronting the issue of Seniors with chronic absenteeism, including sitting in on meetings with students, teachers, and parents and making home visits to several Seniors who were not attending classes. Several students have started coming back to classes as a result, and parents are being clearly apprised about what Seniors have to do to graduate. Ms. Barnes has also been working on the issue of teacher turnover.

—Amanda Kenefick, Director of Operations, noted that enrollment is at 328. Attendance by grade hovers around 80%, with Seniors' attendance the lowest. Year-to-date teacher turnover is 16, versus last year's total of 14. OCS will attend job fairs at Canisius and at UB, and a "New to OCS" teacher support group has been established and will meet twice monthly to assist teachers in addressing various issues, including management and rigor. Upon question from a Board member, Ms. Kenefick responded that \$975 was raised, with Board and other donations, to purchase ear muffs and mittens for OCS students as a holiday gift.

—Dara Seeley, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, noted that hiring of several new teachers (2 Math, 1 Science, 1 English, and 1 Special Ed) is critical, and that several hires are "pending." She explained also that the 2013 cohort is 69, with 11 students considered drop outs. Work is being done to establish the status of these students (such as moves out of state, enrollment elsewhere). They must be accounted for in order for the OCS graduation rate to be accurate and more positive. Many Seniors are in good shape with respect to the Regents exam, but not with credits. Seniors doing Independent Studies were met with, to ensure that expectations were clear. Several Gradpoint licenses were approved by the Finance Committee and electronically approved by the Board, and they are ready for students to use. She noted the need to purchase a formal Forensics Curriculum. This has been presented to the Finance Committee and needs Board approval (see below resolution). Ms. Seeley also provided some detail on the plan to address senior attendance and lateness to school.

—Ellen Connell, Director of Student Life, noted that there were 14 out-of-school suspensions and 0 in-school suspensions in the 2016-17 school year so far. Comparisons with previous years are hampered by lack of access to older data. Issues include fighting, insubordination, rough housing, endangerment, etc. 19 students are currently working with the Mediation Specialist for behavior skills training. 29 students are working with the school Social Worker. Work continues on the Student Handbook and Code of Conduct.

—Ms. Chantele Thompson, Director of Community Relations and Outreach, noted the “Lunch with Leaders” success, with 90% parent participation in January. Ms. Thompson has established a partnership with The College Simulation Experience, and the first simulation will begin on February 7, 2017. Marketing for OCS includes radio, digital, print, mass mailing, billboards, and social media. Open House at OCS will be February 15, 2017.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:40 PM Tom Bailey moved that the Board enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Vivian Logan seconded the motion. At 8:17 PM Tom Bailey moved to come out of Executive Session. John Whitty seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Executive Committee—Ramone Alexander noted that he and Jacqui Hollins had reached out to CSI to inform them of changes at OCS and on the Board and to advise about the plan to hire academic consultants. The Board Secretary Susan Hakala noted that all of the new Trustees (Whitty, Schenk, Conyer, and Donohue) were approved by CSI as full voting members as of January 19, 2017.

Academic Excellence (Academic Policies)—Susanna Schenk, Chair (not present). The committee meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month, and the report on Seniors and Regents exams noted above was a result of the last academic committee meeting and Board requests for information.

Development/Marketing—Needs a new chair; no report.

Finance—John Whitty, Treasurer and Chair. Board members noted that they would like to have the financials circulated to the entire Board before the Board meetings.

Governance—Tom Bailey, Chair: nothing new to report.

NEW BUSINESS:

At 8:17 PM the Board took up discussion of a number of resolutions:

1. Upon motion by Bryan Donohue, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, it was moved that the Board adopt a resolution establishing that any check payable on a recurring basis that is less than \$5,000 require only one signatory, and any check, regardless of amount, continue to require two signatures if it is for payment to non-recurring vendors. The resolution was unanimously approved.
2. Upon motion by Tom Bailey, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, it was unanimously resolved that the Board ratify the purchase of 30 additional Gradpoint licenses in the total amount of \$14,970. All Board members were notified of the immediate need to approve the purchases in early January 2017, and all Board members provided affirmative consent for the purchase via email to the Board Co-Chairs.
3. The Board then ratified unanimously the request to purchase a Forensics Science Curriculum at the cost of \$12,698. The licenses for the curriculum will last for six

years and will provide kits and supplies to make the course viable, consistent from teacher to teacher, and rigorous. The request was approved in the Finance Committee. Tom Bailey moved to approve the resolution; Jacqui Hollins seconded it.

4. The Board then approved a resolution unanimously to ratify the employment agreement with Ms. Janet Barnes, as negotiated and agreed to between the Board Co-Chairs and Ms. Barnes. Tom Bailey moved to accept the resolution, and Bryan Donohue seconded the motion.
5. Upon motion by Tom Bailey, seconded by Ramone Alexander, the Board unanimously agreed to accept a resolution that authorizes the Co-Chairs, subject to preparation/approval of an appropriate Contract by the School's legal counsel, to enter into an agreement with KXD, the education consultancy firm chosen by the search committee to assist the Board with recruitment of a new HoS, to review/evaluate the School's programs in preparation for charter renewal, and to assist in preparation of OCS' application for renewal.

At 8:30 PM the meeting was adjourned. The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 2, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan R. Hakala
Secretary to the Board of Trustees