

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL
888 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, November 2, 2017

Board Co-Chairs Jacqueline Hollins and Ramone Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. With Susan Hakala excused from the meeting, Co-Chair Hollins requested Maureen Ludwig to take the minutes of the meeting.

The following individuals were present:

Trustees – Jacqueline Hollins, Ramone Alexander, Thomas Bailey, John Whitty, Maureen Ludwig, Ron Stewart, James McLeod, Ramelli Choates, Pastor George Nicholas

Trustees Excused: Susan Hakala, Vivian Logan, Divitta Alexander, Bryan Donohue, Evin Conyer

Administration – Janet Barnes, Benjamin Willis, Ellen Connell, Dara Seeley, Kathy Herman

Legal – Steve Polowitz

Consultants – Ken Peterson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a motion by James McLeod seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2017 Board of Trustees meeting.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION UPDATES

Curriculum & Instruction Presentation – As had been previously requested by the Board co-chairs, Dara Seeley presented the Board with an update on Curriculum & Instruction.

There are 24 new teachers on staff with varying degrees of experience in an urban teaching environment. Ms. Seeley has been focusing on teacher/student interactions and having the teachers understand quality lesson plans

Discussion ensued about competing priorities and their effect on teacher and staff morale. James McLeod requested that, by the next Board meeting, the administration provide the Trustees with the top competing priorities and a proposal as to how those competing priorities may be addressed.

Ramone Alexander inquired about teacher accountability. Discussion ensued regarding both informal and formal teacher observations and evaluations, with timely feedback provided to teachers. Any best practices noted during classroom observations are discussed with all the teachers during the departmental meetings.

Ms. Seeley also provided the Board with an overview of Professional Development Mondays and the topics that are being covered during those sessions. Ms. Barnes noted that data analysis is the current area of focus and workshops are underway to educate the teachers how to use data to improve outcomes.

Student Enrollment and Attendance – Enrollment stands at 314 students. Approximately 50 – 60 students are tardy each day with most of the tardy students arriving between 8:00 and 8:30. There have been 19 suspensions. Discussion ensued regarding zero tolerance and the need to pay more attention to the issues that lead to student discipline.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Academic Excellence Committee — Committee Chair Vivian Logan was excused from the meeting, but provided minutes of the October 10, 2017 Committee meeting to inform the Trustees of the Committee's activities. See attached minutes.

Finance Committee – John Whitty, Committee Chair, reviewed the balance sheet as of September 30, 2017 and the income statement for the three months then ended. Variances from budget were explained. It is expected that unfavorable revenue variances will continue due to enrollment being below projected.

Ellen Connell inquired about the budget for both student and teacher recognition. Discussion ensued and Mr. Whitty agreed to make some follow-up inquiries of Karen Burhans from Kirisits & Associates CPAs, PLLC.

Mr. Whitty reported that the Finance Committee met with Thomas Burns, CPA from Lumsden & McCormick LLP to review and discuss the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2017. After that meeting with Mr. Burns, the Finance Committee approved the audited financial statements. The audited financials were submitted to CSI on November 1, 2017, as required by the authorizer. Since the audited financial were not available for the last Board meeting, Motion to ratify the submission of the financials to CSI was made by Thomas Bailey and seconded by Jacqueline Hollins. Motion passed unanimously.

Janet Barnes and Ellen Connell discussed the need for additional security cameras in the school. Discussion ensued. A motion was mad by Jacqueline Hollins to ratify the contract for security cameras and seconded by Thomas Bailey. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by John Whitty and seconded by Jacqueline Hollins for \$75,000 be placed in a restricted dissolution escrow account Motion passed unanimously.

Governance Committee—Thomas Bailey, Committee Chair, reported that two January 2018 dates have been proposed for the annual Board retreat. Mr. Bailey will circulate the proposed dates to the entire Board of Trustees and get a date firmed up for the January retreat to be held at Buffalo State College.

CHARTER RENEWAL

CSI representatives made a site visit to the School in in mid-October and met with Oracle Trustees during the visit. The Trustees discussed key observations that arose from the CSI visit, and there was Board discussion about the proposed next steps in the renewal process. It was noted that the Trustees should invite the local SUNY Trustees to visit the school. There was also discussion of providing the statistics that were prepared by Amy Breckinridge, Data Consultant, to CSI for consideration before CSI makes their recommendation to the SUNY Trustees.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:05 PM upon Motion by Ron Stewart, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the Board unanimously approved adjournment of the meeting.

The next Regular Board Meeting will take place on December 7, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Hakala
Secretary to the Board

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL
888 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday October 10, 2017

Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 pm by Chair – Vivian Logan.

Meeting members in attendance were: Janet Barnes, Brian Gerbracht, Ramone Alexander, Dara Seeley, Latoya Young, and Ron Stewart.

Excused members: Jacqui Hollins, Ellen O’Connell.

Items discussed included the following: Developing a definition of “academic excellence” and the 2017 and 2018 committee goals for academic year.

It was suggested by Dr. Stewart that research be completed on various definitions of academic excellence, and the OCS definition should reflect establishing a level of accomplishment that every student can attain. Ms. Seeley suggested that the definition is clear regarding what excellence/achievement encompasses, and Ms. Young added that the definition should also include character building.

Encompassing committee input, Ms. Logan developed a draft of the definition of academic excellence, which reads as following:

Our goal is to educate the entire student, so *Academic excellence is:*

Cultivating a climate of continuous improvement in the area of scholarship, creativity, and service

Creating and teaching to comprehensible learning goals for every student

Creating a curriculum that is entrenched in rigorous standards

Developing social, emotional, character building skills necessary for academic growth

Challenging all students to move forward on their educational continuum.

The aforementioned definition is a draft which needs to be reviewed by the full academic committee. Committee discussion transitioned to goal development, as Dr. Alexander expressed the need to ensure our goals reflect what was stressed by the Authorizer, i.e. OCS goals/objectives should reflect what is being done to increase student performance in the areas of ELA and math, what interventions are place to assist those students who are underperforming, and when are students notified that they are not meeting standards.

Ms. Young shared that the guidance staff only has access to reports that indicate student failure mid year, which on most occasions is too late for students to play catch-up. Further, because OCS students need 24 credits to graduate compared to the 22 required by the District – if a

student is falling behind making up the two extra credits can be difficult, as there is a specific criteria of what can/cannot be counted as these two credits. Committee members suggested that teachers increase contact with families if a student is failing and/or improving – as family support is critical to students achieving academic success. Ms. Young suggested possibly created a “*Check-in/Check-out*” process, similar to what is used in Head Start. A teacher advisory team, which a teacher is assigned 4 classes and has a group of whose academic and behavior status is monitored on a daily basis.

Since at 4:30 members of the Instructional/Leadership team had to leave Ms. Barnes suggested changing the time of the meeting to 3:30 pm to accommodate the school staff’s availability to stay for the entire meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Remaining members met with Duncan Kirkwood Western NY Advocacy Manager, of the Northeast Charter Schools Network. Dr. Alexander apprised Mr. Kirkwood regarding the status of OCS’s charter renewal, the contents of the Accountability Dossier, and Benchmark deficiencies. Mr. Kirkwood stated immediately after the OCS meeting he would contact Andera Rogers, State Director and Jill Shagen, Operations Leader (both are Albany-based), and make them aware of the aforementioned concerns and the 10/17/17 CSI visit. Mr. Kirkwood stated that Ms. Rogers would be available to provide daily guidance and direction to the HOS until the State visit and if the Board desired thereafter.

Next Committee meeting 11/14/17 @ 3:30pm at Oracle Charter School.