

APPROVED



METROLINA REGIONAL  
**SCHOLARS  
ACADEMY**

## Metrolina Regional Scholars' Academy

### Minutes

#### SA Monthly Board Meeting

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**Date and Time**

Monday October 25, 2021 at 6:30 PM

**Location**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEVHO5vOxDPKvqIkc8Tp04g>

**Directors Present**

A. Farooqi, A. Starling, A. Young, C. Lewis, E. Womer, K. Neal, N. Morrison, S. Dasu, S. Korrapati (remote), W. Ning

**Directors Absent**

S. Schroeck

**Ex Officio Members Present**

A. Pieper

**Non Voting Members Present**

A. Pieper

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**I. Opening Items****A. Record Attendance and Guests****B. Call the Meeting to Order**

S. Dasu called a meeting of the board of directors of Metrolina Regional Scholars' Academy to order on Monday Oct 25, 2021 at 6:32 PM.

**C. Read Mission Statement**

W. Ning read the Mission Statement

**D.**

### **Administrative Meeting Review**

S. Dasu gave a review of the rules and procedures for the Zoom Webinar platform.

### **E. Approval of Prior Minutes 9/27, 2021**

A. Young made a motion to approve the minutes from SA Monthly Board Meeting on 09-27-21.

E. Womer seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

### **F. Adoption of the Agenda**

S. Dasu made a motion to approve the minutes.

K. Neal seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## **II. Community Comments (First Opportunity) - subject to guidelines**

### **A. Community Comments - guidelines**

There were no members of the community who wished to make a comment.

## **III. Director's Report**

### **A. General Items**

- Critical substitute shortage- advertising for an AM part-time sub, Ms. Pieper is currently speaking with applicants
- Staff support- staff is under a lot of stress. Coming back has been difficult for everyone. Governance committee and PTO are coming up with ways to better support the staff.
- Staff vacancy for a PE teacher has been published. Details to be discussed during closed session.
- K. Neal asked for clarification about the survey. Survey hasn't been finalized, but one section is on morale, and one section is on professional development.
- Reviewed important upcoming dates
- Weighted lottery has been officially approved by the State Board. New information is available on the website.
- Two buses are now running morning and evening, and we currently have two bus drivers. There is a significant wait list for the south route; there is availability for the north route.
- Board continues to vote each month about universal mask use as mandated by state
- No new Covid cases within the past two weeks

### **B. SA Indoor Mask Usage**

S. Dasu made a motion to continue indoor mask usage.

W. Ning seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## **IV. Expansion Committee**

### **A.**

## **Status Review**

S. Korrapati gave the Expansion Committee update.

The Expansion Committee has not met. Expansion is currently seeing opportunities and is still committed to our goals. There is a contract to be discussed in closed session.

## **V. Governance Committee**

### **A. Status Review**

C. Lewis gave the Governance Committee update.

Governance met on Oct. 14. Discussed staff survey, which will go out at the beginning of November. This will give staff an opportunity early in the year to provide input.

Also spoke about school community in general. Really important that all community members recognize the stress experienced by staff and children, and find ways to support them. This topic will be ongoing.

Strategic goals will be discussed next month.

A. Farooqi asked for clarification about stressors. A. Pieper clarified: there is not enough time (more to do), kids' needs are greater than in the past, maturation hasn't occurred in a typical manner over the past year and a half, academic growth isn't the same as in the past, even the experienced teachers are feeling less equipped this year, more differentiation is needed this year, and parents don't have a good understanding of these factors.

S. Dasu remarked that this will take time, understanding is required, and that this should be part of the Educational Excellence committee's discussions.

A. Farooqi asked how we compare to other schools in Ms. Pieper's network. Ms. Pieper remarked that no one is out of the woods (regarding the current pandemic-related struggles).

Calibration of expectations is needed.

## **VI. Whole Child Committee**

### **A. Status Review**

S. Shroeck was absent, and S. Dasu read the remarks that she conveyed:

- The Whole Child Committee met at the beginning of this month. We discussed the marketing and communication plan. The school's social media pages continue to be a great resource for the community to learn about SEL topics that pertain to gifted education. Because we have so much going on with the social media pages, we are no longer doing a weekly "Did you know" post, but every couple of weeks, a new topic will be introduced. The first topic will be asynchronous learning. Anyone who wishes to read more about the specific Social-Emotional characteristics of gifted children can view our growing list of resources on the school website under the "About" tab.
- The Staff Committee met September 16 and reported on their activity at the Whole Child meeting. They suggested making some minor changes to the Eagle Vision Awards. Overall, fewer students will be honored with the Eagle Vision award this year compared to last year. The hope is that the award

will be truly meaningful for the recipient and aspirational for their classmates.

- We got a broad overview of the takeaways from the COVID-19 Mental Health Needs Survey. There were a significant number of SA families who lost friends and family members to COVID, but many more shared concerns about their child's comfort level in returning to school, their ability to adjust to the necessary changes in routine, and their mental health. About a third of respondents were not aware of the counseling referral form available to them, so we hope that the survey served a dual purpose in assessing mental health needs and also pointing families in the direction of help.
- Closer to the holidays, there will be a parent support group meeting focused on the topic of grief. There will be a guest counselor to help conduct the session. SA families are reminded that all are welcome to attend the parent support group meetings. It can be a great resource for parents, grandparents, friends, and other caregivers.

## **VII. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Updates**

### **A. Status Review**

K. Neal reported that the DEI committee was joined by Ms. Grain, the staff DEI committee lead. There will be a new section in the newsletter with resources and information related to DEI. Alicia Gozycki has been working with hispanic media outlets to promote SA. Ad in Ola news. She is also working with the Black-owned Q City Metro to promote SA.

A. Farooqi asked if these marketing outreaches are part of the SA marketing budget. Part of the funding is from the NC Access Grant, and part is from the marketing budget.

The committee is currently beginning to look at curriculum from DEI standpoint. A review of SS and ELA curriculum will occur soon.

In the new year the DEI committee will work on another scorecard (questionnaire) to evaluate materials pulled by the teachers.

A. Starling asked about putting another task on already overworked staff. A. Pieper explained that time would be allotted for this task.

## **VIII. Educational Excellence Committee Updates**

### **A. Status Review**

A. Young presented the Educational Excellence Committee update, which consisted of updates regarding the Strategic Goals from Ms. Zagorski:

Strategic Goal #1: Build up appropriate support and communication for our families along the K-8 path.

1) Check-in with families to see how well they understand the pathways and then defining and communicating the transition from K-2 pathways into third grade expectations (how exactly is yet to be figured out)

2) Re-engaging families with Night of the Notables, Night of the Arts, Science Fair, Math Night, Elementary Science Night, Classroom invitations to parents to attend presentations (Countries Around the World, Poetry Slam, etc..). (In person but playing it by ear) (Idea that staff ed excellence team came up with to work alongside PTO on)

Strategic Goal #2: Sustain focus on innovative, gifted-based educational curriculum and practices.

- 1) professional development on gifted education for teachers (begun already)
- and
- 2) reinstate the gifted conference (February 2022)

### Strategic Goal #3: Monthly diversity integration

- 1) Begin review social studies curriculum for diversity content
  - 2) Begin review language arts curriculum for diversity content
- Timeline: October- meet w/ teachers to have them start pulling and creating lists for the curriculum in their classrooms. Novels, supplemental materials. While that's happening we will pinpoint scorecard and get approved for looking at each grade level holistically.

Action items between now and next month to bring back to the board.  
Narrow down framework for the curriculum review.  
DEI needs to have input, and Ed Excellence will implement.

## IX. Foundation

### A. Status Review

A. Farooqi gave the Foundation report. The Foundation Committee has met several times within the past month

Total pledged so far: \$254,000

Family contributions: scholars families are at 40% (last year this time was 25%)

Board: 100%

Foundation: 100%

Staff: 100%

Parent Ambassador Program: Board members are asked to sign up for slots and reach out to families in order to mention the importance of their contributions and also to recognize and thank them for their contributions

## X. Finance Committee Update

### A. Finance Recommendations

A. Starling gave the Finance Committee update. The committee met on Oct. 21.

Received 3 quotes for AC repairs. Moving forward with the repair company that has been hired in the past. Sabrina Liner negotiated a lower maintenance fee in light of the large one-time repair bill.

Receiving grants: ESSER III (\$159,000), ECF (\$130,000)

Long list of budget adjustments: received true-up of \$48k from CMS, lunch fees and bus revenue, increase in health insurance, tech/software adjustment of \$10k, net benefit to bottom line of \$66k, but we have other small adjustments that won't come through this month. Received audit report and submitted to bank and state. Auditor found nothing.

Finance committee recommends the purchasing a 3rd bus prior to January. NC Access Grant will provide funds for bus and for smaller activity bus; funds will be reimbursed next year, but they won't entirely cover the cost of the buses. Have received estimates for \$101k and \$95k for new buses. \$88k, \$80k, \$30k in grant for busses.

Providing transportation is the #1 way to remove barriers to for students to attend SA. If we don't purchase a bus many families who have requested bus transportation will not have any.

Recommend to vote on the budget amendments after the closed session.

## **XI. Policy Committee Updates**

### **A. Policy Updates**

E. Womer gave the Policy review. The committee met in October.

Consolidation of policies is ongoing, with a focus on financial policies and inconsistencies in operational policies. Other policies also need attention. These inconsistencies are due to SA policies having evolved piecemeal. Our policy manual is a living document, but very long and very impractical. There are materials that should be deleted and others that should be updated. The Foundation also requires policies, and these must be consistent with SA policies, especially concerning disbursements and gifts. There is money in the budget for legal council, but not earmarked for especially for this purpose. Attorney Lisa Gordon-Stella explained that these are common issues and will provide several quotes for assistance options. Financial policies will be tackled first, and there will be discussion with the Finance Committee to figure out the budget. Policies must be sound legally while also practical. Timing and cost of services TBD.

E. Womer intends to develop process and procedure for revising/adopting policies in future so that the process is efficient.

## **XII. Community Comments (Second Opportunity) - Subject to Guidelines**

### **A. Agenda Item Summary**

There were no members of the community who wished to make a comment.

S. Dasu made a motion to Enter into closed session.

A. Starling seconded the motion.

(a) To prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential information;

(f) To discuss personnel matters involving an individual employee or prospective employee;

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## **XIII. Closed Session**

### **A. Vote on any items from Closed Sessions**

A. Starling made a motion to approve the contract with the superlative club as recommended by administration in closed session.

K. Neal seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

A. Starling made a motion to approve budget amendments as recommended by the Finance Committee.

K. Neal seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

A. Starling made a motion to approve the purchase of a bus up to \$115k as recommended by Finance Committee.

K. Neal seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## **XIV. Closing Items**

### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

A. Starling made a motion to adjourn meeting.

K. Neal seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A. Young