

APPROVED



Sankofa Montessori

Minutes

May Governance Committee Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday May 9, 2024 at 10:30 AM

Location

Please go to zoom.com and join meeting.

ID to join: 601 495 1069

Through a culturally responsive, child and family-centered Montessori education, Sankofa Montessori ensures that all of our students develop the knowledge, skill, and agency to have a life of purpose.

Committee Members Present

A. Nash (remote), E. Moore (remote), K. Karacalidis (remote), S. Harvey (remote)

Committee Members Absent

None

Guests Present

Andrea Thames-Allen (remote), Rhushanda Barnes (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

K. Karacalidis called a meeting of the Governance Committee of Sankofa Montessori to order on Thursday May 9, 2024 at 10:41 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

K. Karacalidis made a motion to approve the minutes from April Governance Committee Meeting on 04-11-24.

E. Moore seconded the motion.

The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

Motion to approve minutes from April Academic Committee Meeting.

E. Moore seconded the motion.

Motion made by Andrea Thames-Allen, and seconded by Errika Moore.

The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Content

A. Executive Director's Updates

Good month

Testing

Testing window still open, closes Friday

Will have growth data no later than next Tuesday

Current data shows growth in every class

Still below national average, but above where we were

Will share growth percentage after testing window closes

Suspensions

K-last month (3 OSS, 2 ISS); this month (2 OSS, 0 ISS)

1st- last month (2 OSS, 2 ISS); this month (1 OSS, 0 ISS)

2nd grade-last month (0 OSS, 0 ISS); this month (1 OSS, 0 ISS)

Total

Last month: 5 OSS, 4 ISS

This month: 4 OSS, 0 ISS

Hiring

Last month told board all staff returning

2 of 4 told Sarah not returning and having taken other jobs since last update

Reason: overwhelmed by student population

Offer letters do not have any protections for school

Reaching out to lawyer to make amendments to offer letters to provide more options for school

Had 6 roles to fill and filled 4, now have to hire for 2 add'l

Candidate pool is really strong; interviews lined up

Partnering with Teach 4 America

Special Education: 1 is not returning (difficult commute); 3 roles open

Hired music teacher

Hiring for part-time art teacher

TAs-partnering with Hands on Atlanta, place people in schools (\$19,000/person)

to have 4 costs \$76,000/year-have to be in classroom with lead teacher (full-time)

will need to hire 2 part-time who can be alone with students (not Hands on Atlanta)

will result in not needing subs-using sub money to pay Hands on Atlanta placements

will also be able to have TAs all day, instead of just half the day

spoke to other schools who have used the program and they have had good results

possible pipeline for new lead teachers

Question: What resources will be put in place for placements to move into leads?

Inviting them to teacher PD-learning how to use Montessori materials

For promising candidates: have conversations about next steps regarding training and

state certification

Proposed edits to handbook

Staff absences-have had excessive absences this year; took advantage of all available time off provided in handbook

180 days of work; 28 days of PD with no children=208 days

34 days off within school year, then month of June off, 1 week off in July=59 days off

Current state: Giving 15 days on top of the 59 days

Someone can be off for the equivalent of 3 months, and some staff have been

Thinks it's destabilizing for kids when adults aren't in the building

Also increases costs to pay subs (also subs not able to provide substantive learning with curriculum)-spent approx. \$25,000 in subs

Proposing 5 days (consulted with other school leaders and 15 days may have been too much)

Keep status quo for year round staff (they do not get full month of June off)

Question: How will it be perceived by staff? Will reduction have a negative impact on morale? Are days being taken in response to the difficult work and need for mental health days?

Sarah: Will have no impact on part-time staff; Incoming teachers will only know the proposed change

May need to think through the complete impact and possible response to current staff

Rhushanda: There is an impact when all guides call out; subs not trained; staff may have to be pulled from their assignments to assist; there may be a compromise to meet time off needs of staff and limit impact on effect of last minute call outs

No central portal to see who has called out (plan to fix that for next year) to see in real time and address a threshold; only the leadership team knows who has called out

May need to do some work around the culture aspect of the community; make sure there is an understanding of the impact when a teacher calls out to the community as a hold but also leaving space for acknowledging that things may get hard but the school community is there to support and everyone is needed.

Question: is there a plan to tighten up our policies around behavior because that plays into the culture and addressing needs of staff to feel safe?

Rhushanda: following new code of conduct to the letter to address behavior issues; staff did not have a lot of experience with Title I school or students with disabilities; have also had some training related to handling those kinds of situations

Around culture, addressing what Sankofa is and the population we are trying to serve to make sure incoming staff understands the community and buys into the mission from the start.

Question: Can upcoming PTA help in providing a pool of substitutes as a plan C? Also the push for extracurricular activities could help with building culture/community.

Having PTA help would be an option and gives voice to parents requests/needs

Parents have the challenge of being working parents and not able to take off to serve as sub

Incoming class/special education

14 students currently received sped services, full range of disabilities; 3 pending (going through the evaluation process)

Next school year projecting total of 28 students (19 on autism spectrum)

Due to needs, creating self-contained classroom for students with more acute needs

Will be taught by one self-contained special education teacher, 1 para possibly 2

Some behaviors causing harm to gen pop students

Reached out to Marcus Autism Institute for assistance

Need professional development for team

Will need to administer GAA next year for 3rd graders (want to be ready to meet this new challenge)--2 right now that need GAA

What does that mean for staff?

Want 3 sped teachers min., and 3 sped paras

Currently have 1 special ed teacher, 2 paras

Have to decide if we want to allow RBT (registered behavior technicians); good support for some autism students

Liability issue: RBTs not employees of the school and spacing for them to do their ABA techniques

In self-contained classroom will need to work on life skills to prepare for GAA, so they will be on different curriculum than Montessori

Thinking about bringing on a behavioral specialist

In hiring, thinking about the profile of good candidates taking school population into consideration

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
K. Karacalidis