APPROVED

BOSTON PREP

Boston Preparatory Charter Public School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Retreat

Date and Time
Friday March 21, 2025 at 9:00 AM

Location
Industrious at Post Office Square | 225 Franklin Street, Boston, MA

The public is welcome to attend any meeting of Boston Prep's Board of Trustees or its subcommittees. If communication assistance or any other accommodations are needed to ensure equal participation, please contact Lily Jewell at ljewell@bostonprep.org at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting. Any changes in the agenda will be posted on Boston Prep's website and will be electronically filed with the secretary of state at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting.

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Trustees Present
A. Cheers, B. Jones (remote), C. Newton, D. Berkley, D. Wolff, K. Borchert, N. Branch-Lewis, S. James, T. Huff, V. Lipschitz

Trustees Absent
D. Russell, J. Beck, J. Johnson, J. Ripert, M. Gametchu

Guests Present

L. Bardsley, L. Jewell, M. Sanon

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

K. Borchert called a meeting of the board of trustees of Boston Preparatory Charter Public School to order on Friday Mar 21, 2025 at 9:27 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

II. Retreat Opening

A. Welcome and Warm-up

Welcomed the board to the annual board retreat and previewed the agenda for todays meeting. Kim introduced Julia Bowen, who is joining the board to support facilitate the retreat. Julia works with Meekerley and works with the charter school association. Thanked the board for being here.

Julia kicked off the meeting and is excited to be here. She was the founder of a charter school and worked with Boston Prep founder, Scott McCue. She has been a lifelong educator and is currently a chair of a community college in the Berkshires and is passionate. Started with an icebreaker what led you to this school community and what are you currently working on? And attendees shared out.

Julia emphasized the goal of today was to make sure that the Board goals are aligned the priorities of the school

III. Key School Updates

A. Sector-wide Considerations

Meekerley started key school updates with a little quiz to see if the Board knew the fast facts to set a fun and engaging tone. Transitioned, to summarizing where the school is currently and leading in to the strategic focus for next 5 years. Led with question of what are the strengths and weaknesses of the school currently?

The Board shared out the strengths and weaknesses. Some strengths were persistence project, building operations, fiscal operations, board members who are passionate and wanting to do what is best for the school, the students themselves, enrollment, Meekerley leaderships

Some room for growth have been the academic recovery space, teacher retention and training to support their development, and more. Meekerley discussed the four stage approach to re-stabilizing the school after the pandemic. 2022-2024 was focused on assessing, 2024- 2029 is stabilizing, and 2030-2031 Strategize, and beyond 2031 with be rising. We are currently most focused on building strong foundations in instruction, culture, and leadership.

Meekerley is focused on the strengths: Single-site middle/high school model, high-quality instructional supports, strong financial and operational standing. Current local and national threats are: local school-aged population decreasing, in addition to rising costs in Boston, Local BPS shift to K-6/7-12 configuration creates unique challenges for Boston Prep, National- new policies threaten DEI funding and create family stressors with immigration enforcement concerns. Additionally, there is continued conversation around loan forgiveness for our teaching staff.

B. Key Strategic Questions

Our initial strategic planning was surrounded how are we going to shift the work we are doing to produce great persistence results-- higher college success and graduation rates. Today we are focused on a clearer focus and direction-- College is our north star, ethics is our compass it needs to be a foundational point of why and how we do things in school. Ethics is the tool we are choosing to have our students in engage in. Additionally, we need to make sure the systems we have in place are strong and built to last by ensuring organizational stability to support long-term success. Finally, we are maximizing students who earn four-year degrees in four years. Meekerley opened it up to ask what resonates with you and what questions do you have?

Board was excited to hear we are going back to the core-- 4 in 4 which is at the root of how Boston Prep started. They appreciated hearing how ethics is the compass really stands out because it reflects and is meeting the needs of the current state of society.

Strategic Questions Posed: How does this 4 in 4 sit in the greater landscape of what is happening nationally with education? Additionally, how does this sit for students who have different educational or financial considerations?

C. School Program Highlights

Discussed Boston Prep school priorities:

- Priority 1: Increased literacy achievement
- Priority 2: Build ethics- based school culture, we are hoping by investing more into ethics and into our culture we will see better results and a lifelong impact on our students.
- Priority 3: ensure organizational stability- financial health, enrollment targets met, high staff retention, annual fundraising increased

- Priority 4: Maximize college persistence by addressing the challenges our students will face, understanding the clear goals and targets of our students. To do so we have invested in college persistence budget and alumni and college counselors.

Meekerley led discussion about how we are assessing work towards priorities and where we are at. Currently we are using iReady assessments. Currently, 25% of students are reading at grade level and 26% are meeting MCAS expectation, discussed further data that represents where we stand including SAT data and more.

In terms of culture, we are in a rebuilding year of ethics curriculum and finding new ways to integrate ethics into other aspects of the school. We plan to have families fill our surveys about culture and ethics. We want to get to a place where students talk about the school culture in terms of ethics.

In terms of organizational stability, currently financial health is in the green. Enrollment is above charter peers but not as high as we want. Fundraising has been below the development budget goal and we need to be exceeding this goal each year. Additionally, staff retention is similar to charter peers but we need to it be higher.

College persistence is working towards goals. 92% of students have completed necessary FAFSA forms. 99% of students have applied to post- grad programs and 77% of students have applied to 4- year institutions.

D. Questions and Discussion

Closed first session with the question: What are you taking away at large? We have remaining questions about how we are going to get there? What needs to change to get there? What do we need to do to make sure all seniors are on track to graduate on time? How do we make sure all staff members are on board for these goals?

For moving forward the strategic question will be is it a strategic advantage to be a 6-12 charter or would it serve us better to be a 7-12 school? How would this impact our enrollment?

In terms of fundraising, we are seeking new connections to support us. We have many multi year grants that are coming to a close this year.

IV. Break

A. Ten Minute Break

Julia moved for a 10 minute break.

V. Board Roles and Responsibilities

A. The Role of the Board - DESE & Bylaws

Julia started off by setting norms for the session and objectives. This session will be focused on setting expectations for the board to make sure everyone on the board is on the same page about the Boards role. Will work to focus on developing goals for this school year.

Discussed what the definition of a charter school is: a charter school is a public school that is governed by a board of trustees and operates independently of any school committee under a five year charter granted by the Board of elementary and secondary education. Every five year schools need to get a charter renewal. There must be a balance of accountability and autonomy, and the Board must govern with this in mind.

Reviewed charter school performance criteria in terms of governance. DESE is looking for legal and fiduciary responsibilities by complying with bylaws, appropriately overseeing charter school administration, and hiring/evaluating/and removing appropriately. Are they governing with culture of collaboration and with a focus of improvement.

Opened it up to the board to highlight what stood out to them the most about the governance requirements document. Board emphasized working to be in the school more to see on the ground what is happening, having stronger succession planning, etc.

Defined the difference between governance and management. Governance refers to the strategic oversights and decision-making by the Board ensuring the organization adheres to its mission, complies with legal standards, and remains a viable organization. Management on the other hand, involves the day-to-day operations, including implementing policies and overseeing staff to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. Navigating this line is what is most difficult for boards. Key question: What is the right lane for the Board and ED to be in? There is a divide between which responsibilities are in the hands of the Board vs. ED. Many of them are shared to some extent. For example, it was discussed how there is a fiduciary duty of the board to understand how money is spent but also about making sure there is enough money. On the school level they are working to expose this more clearly to the school staff and next to the greater community.

Continued discussion by looking at a chart with the divide of Board roles vs. School Leader Roles. Then transitioned into case studies of things that have come up in other schools. Board discussed and analyzed the different tensions that exist in the case studies. This pushed the Board to think about how these situations would play out in our Board. Board asked some overarching questions to come back to as they govern over the years. Discussed how to report on finance line item spending could be purposefully

presented to the Board so they can govern knowledgably understanding the financial bets that the school is taking to support the academic priorities.

B. Self Assessment Data Overview

Board took time to review the board survey data thinking with the questions: What are some areas of strength for the Board? What might be an area for improvement? Board shared out the overall board strengths and areas of improvement that they noticed in the survey trends.

C. Board Governance Scenarios & Discussion

VI. Board Goal Development

A. Board Goals Brainstorm & Action Plan Development

Started brainstorm for goal and action plans:

- Being explicit about engagement expectations for board members and who follows up with Board members who are not meeting expectations, beyond just visiting the school but meeting all responsibilities
- Board Succession planning: an eye on recruiting diverse members and a variety of qualifications
- School leadership succession planning
- Greater clarity on student outcomes
- Improved alignment and calibration on management of Board
- Creation of board dashboards and track strategic outcomes, and ways to self-evaluate if they are
- How are we taking advantage of having faculty trustees on the Board? And how can they support further? How can we expand on how parent and alumni trustees can support. Where can they support in additional capacities in the school? Differentiating my trustee type.

The Board voted on which goals they think are the top priority. The top were:
1. Being explicit about engagement expectations
2. Creation of Board dashboards to track strategic outcomes
3. Recruiting new Board members and ensuring diversity and qualifications

These goals will go to the governance committee along with the parking lot of next step questions.

VII. Closing and Next Steps

A. Action Items & Outstanding Issues and Items

Boston Prep thanked Julia for her support with the retreat.

B.

Retreat Evaluation

Board completed a survey on the retreat.

VIII. 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 12:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
K. Borchert

Documents used during the meeting

None