APPROVED

# Bridge Preparatory Charter School

## Minutes

### Board Meeting

**Date and Time**
Tuesday December 19, 2023 at 7:00 PM

**Location**
Bridge Preparatory Charter School
715 Ocean Terrace
Building A - Atrium (Main Floor)
Staten Island, NY 10301

201 Pondfield Rd
Bronxville, NY 10708

557 5th st #3
Brooklyn, NY 11215

328 Oakland Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10310

**Trustees Present**
Amanda Wolkowitz, Geena Kuriakose, George Winn (remote), Laurel Gyimesi, Maria Casale, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Rebecca Peters (remote), Rose Kerr, Traci Frey

**Trustees Absent**
Heba Nassef-Gore

**Ex Officio Members Present**
Tim Castanza

**Guests Present**
Christine Volpe (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Nicole DiStefano, Rose Marie Illuzzi (remote)

---

## I. Opening Items

### A. Record Attendance

### B. Call the Meeting to Order

Geena Kuriakose called a meeting of the board of trustees of Bridge Preparatory Charter School to order on Tuesday Dec 19, 2023 at 7:01 PM.

### C. Approve Minutes of Board Meeting on 11/21/23

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 11-21-23.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 11-21-23 meeting will be adopted. As there was no objection, the motion is adopted and the minutes are approved by unanimous consent.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### D. Welcome From Chair

L. Gyimesi thanked everyone for attending and said it is a very hectic time; she hopes everyone has a joyful and peaceful celebration as we move onto a new year; and reflects on the next year; thank you for your time and attention for our school, we couldn't do it without you.

## II. Votes

### A. Vote to Authorize opening of Accounts

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to authorize the executive director of Bridge Prep Charter School to enter into agreements to open all necessary accounts, including brokerage accounts, at JP Morgan Chase and Fiduciary Trust Company, for the purpose of managing the school's cash holdings through money market funds or other vehicles of comparable liquidity and risk.
Mark Harmon-Vaught seconded the motion.
G. Winn explained that as part of the cash management process, it is recommended that some of the school's cash surplus be invested in cash instruments such as money market accounts at Chase Bank and Fiduciary Trust Co. that will result in higher interest rates while preserving liquidity. The school's executive director needs authorization from the Board of Trustees to open those accounts. If any additional signatures are necessary to open the accounts, the board's vice-chair and secretary may sign.

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

### B. Vote to approve contract for SI Media Group

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve the advertising agreement contract with Staten Island Media Group for the period 12-30-23 through 06-30-23, as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
T. Castanza explained that Staten Island Media Group will offer integrated solutions and targeted marketing for Bridge Prep Charter School via display advertising, social media marketing, website development, print products , targeted mailings and email, analytics and other creative services and tools. Decisions on whether to extend the contract for more than 6 months can be made at a later point.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## III. Committee Updates

### A. Academic Committee

T. Frey gave the following update from the *Academic Committee* Meeting held on December 12th, which covered these topics:

- **Acadience Reading Program** - a new program being used to assess students, which is complementary to MAP but does not target the same skills as MAP.
- **IXL** - being used as an instructional tool; the pros & cons observed when used in classrooms
- **Teacher Observations** - formal observations are almost completed but expect to be finished before the holiday recess
- **Staff & Student Focus Groups** - on the logistics of the NYSED site visit; debrief of staff
- Professional Development Day scheduled for January 15th
- **Dashboard Review**

She then gave the floor to C. Volpe to continue the *Academic Committee* report.
C. Volpe shared graphs showing our current 5th grade students' progress, tracked from their 1st grade MAP data through their 5th grade MAP data for both ELA and Math during the period Fall 2019 to Fall 2023; she explained the meaning of the graphs, which indicate the students' achievement scores compared to average RIT scores; other grades will also be looked at later. Teachers are reviewing this MAP data and adjusting their curriculum based on this information.
T. Castanza added that the difference between the students' scores and RIT scores is smaller in ELA than Math and we are seeing similar trends in the NYS assessments. What is the best metric we can use to show student achievement? More districts in NYS are using MAP assessments but CSE does not use MAP data; *Acadience* is a supplemental metric to MAP.

R. Kerr responded that the *Acadience Program* is very important to indicate the students' reading level for teachers as well as the CSE in order to give our students the best accommodations; the public should be made aware that NYSED instructed schools to discover alternate methods of assessment beyond the standardized tests; test scores during the COVID pandemic and even after COVID do not indicate true student progress/achievement; we are not sure if NYSED is using only state assessment scores to compare our students against schools that have only 10% special ed IEP students while we have 70% special ed IEP students in our school. If there were a District 75 division for charter schools under NYSED, our school would be in it. We had been told all along that NYSED would use MAP scores for our assessments along with NYS test scores.
T. Castanza added that under our original school charter, we are mandated to put in place additional academic measures that our school will be judged on in addition to state test scores. We asked the state to consider our MAP data and we will continue to use our MAP data because we think it's good data and it's in our charter.
R. Kerr said she thinks NYSED would agree that our MAP data is a better indicator of student success.
C. Volpe added that our students' demographic data is being updated and will be presented to the board in January; there will be more OG and MAP data available in February.
T. Castanza stated that he has done 2 focus group meetings with staff and will be holding another in January; formal observations have resulted in very good feedback sessions with teachers. We are preparing for NYS assessment-time and have ordered all our NYS assessment materials; this year the 5th graders will be taking all computer-based ELA, Math and Science tests; we have done a full review of all of our student electronic devices making sure that the necessary programs are on them and that the WIFI in the building is operating properly; in addition we will do practice tests with the 5th graders on January 17th & 18th; all state testing will be done electronically by 2026 for grades 3 to grades 8. It will be phased in gradually; next year both 4th graders and 5th graders will be electronically tested. What do testing accommodations look like for computer testing? We will be meeting with CSE to discuss what is possible for electronic testing accommodations; IEPs will have to be reviewed for required testing accommodations. We are considering holding a Saturday test prep academy in February/March. We are also talking to teachers on ways to imbed sample state test questions into everyday teaching so that students will become familiar with the format and language of the state assessments.

*The next Academic Committee Meeting will be January 17th at 8:30 AM.*

**B. Finance Committee**

G. Winn said that he already spoke tonight about many of the *Finance Committee*'s topics but that we can look forward to further discussion about the budget at next month's meeting.

*The next Finance Committee Meeting will be January 18th at 3:45 PM.*

## IV. Report of Executive Director

### A. Executive Director Update

T. Castanza gave the following update:

- Spoke briefly with Board of Regents member Dr. Christine Cea about touching base after the holiday recess to discuss NYSED matters; we hope to be added to her meeting calendar for January.
- Spoke to the NYSED *Charter School Office* about items related to student admission since we are getting ready to launch the admissions process; should we place Kindergarten as a choice on our applications? NYSED responded that we should not put anything new on the applications until after mid-January.
- NYS Assembly Member Charles Fall visited our school and viewed our OG classes; he offered his support in however he can help and is interested in funding expansion of our *Superpower Mentorship Program.*
- ESSA accountability status results will be coming out within a few weeks; he has no concerns about our results and is encouraged by what he has already seen; academic performance on state assessments informs accountability status as one of the major metrics and he is interested to see how all these pieces pull together.
- Our student application process will launch in January and student applications for the 2024-2025 school year will be available online; the student application is ready to go and an optional ELL question is included. ELL students might be given admission preference, if allowed by NYSED. We have already received 15 student applications, 9 for 1st grade, 6 for other grades, plus a few for Kindergarten, although we don't officially offer Kindergarten-level admission yet.
- We are planning our recruitment strategy; Vanguard will no longer send out our admission direct mailings, but the *Staten Island Advance Media Group* will step-in; we will advertise in SI Parent Magazine, post an ad/billboard at the SI Mall, design a digital banner on the SI Advance website (www.silive.com) and will focus on reaching out to community groups, religious organizations, libraries, etc.
- The *Admission Lottery* will be held on April 3rd at 5:30 PM here at the school.
- We are updating our website to show our Open House dates: *Virtual Information Sessions* are January 30th (5:30 PM) and February 13th (12:30 PM); *In-Person Open House Tours* will be February 3rd (9:30 AM), March 7th (5:30 PM), March 21st (5:30 PM) and April 11th (5:30 PM).

## V. Family Association

### A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following update:

- The *Family Association* has been busy, as usual; we hung a train along the walls of the hallways where students enter the school; the train cars contain pictures of the students.
- Our *Holiday Fair* was held last week outside in heated tents, which was fun and very successful; there were 11 vendors at the fair, a bake sale, jewelry, homemade goods, a table of free items for children without money, a craft table, music and a food truck on site. We invited some students and staff from the Hungerford School to sell coffee and brownies at our Holiday Fair and staff from the Petrides School stopped by to the fair.
- We held a sale of *Dream Cakes from Moretti's Bakery* and sold almost 300 cakes.
- Yesterday we sponsored a luncheon as a thank you to school staff for their support of the Family Association.
- The *Fifth Grade Dance* has been booked at Moonlight Caterers again this year.

T. Castanza said that the other schools who share the Petrides Campus suggested that we hold a campus-wide block party at the end of the school year to celebrate all the schools on our campus and continue to build the partnership we already have between the schools.

## VI. Other Business

### A. New Business

T. Castanza stated that we must update our *District Safety Plan*; NYSED has requested that school districts include an *Emergency Instructional Plan* in the event that you must provide instruction during an emergency when you don't have access to your school building, such as during a power outage or inclement weather, etc. This is a new requirement; we obtained guidance from NYSED on how to craft the plan and we are looking for ideas from another school's submission and what the DoE has submitted. It will be brought to the Board of Trustees for a vote in January since it amends the existing *District Safety Plan*.

L. Gyimesi said that our charter renewal can be discussed further at our next meeting; she attended a class on what to expect and how to deal with reports containing factual changes and evaluated changes that we can comment on. We will cover all this at our next board meeting.
We must hold a *Board Strategy Meeting* in early January because we have to make certain decisions before January 11th.
The *Annual Board Member Survey* will be sent out by H. Nassef-Gore when she returns.
Congratulations to our Executive Director, T. Castanza, who has been asked to join the P-20 Partnership Group by the NYS Education Commissioner and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents; the P-20 Group has been asked to form an action plan to integrate the science of reading into educator preparation. We are the only individual school represented on the P-20 Group and the only charter school in the Group.

M. Harmon-Vaught said he has some personal news to share: after working 4 years at Wagner College, he has accepted a position at the University of Pennsylvania to serve as Chief of Staff for the Graduate School of Education. He will be moving to Philadelphia in March but he fully intends to remain engaged and as a member of the Bridge Prep Board of Trustees. He believes there will be interesting opportunities there because one of his team's chief focus areas is early literacy. He said he has proudly shared what we do at Bridge Prep and will continue to do so.

## VII. 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 8:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

---

**Documents used during the meeting**

- Bridge Prep Recomendation.pdf
- A Contract for Bridge Prepatory Charter School_encrypted_-2 (1).pdf
- BPCS Data Dashboard SY23-24 - VII. Longitudinal MAP Growth (Grade 5 Cohort) (1).pdf