APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday February 27, 2024 at 7:00 PM

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

600 Commodore Court
Philadelphia PA 19146.

557 5th St #3
Brooklyn, NY 12215

201 Pondfield Road
Bronxville, NY 10708

142 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

300 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy
Merritt Island, Fl, 32952

300 Cromwell Avenue
Staten Island, NY

Trustees Present

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

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Christine Volpe (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Board members Rose Kerr, Mark Harmon-Vaught, George Winn and Rebecca Peters are present via video conference from locations posted on the public meeting notice/agenda and open to the public *(as per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a Videoconferencing by public bodies).* Therefore they are considered present for purposes of quorum and permitted to vote.
QUORUM IS MET.

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 Feb 27, 2024 at 7:01 PM.

C. Welcome from Chair

L. Gyimesi welcomed everyone; and thanked them for attending. We are coming off of a much-needed break which was hopefully relaxing and enjoyable and getting ready for the last push through the rest of the school year. Let's just move forward for that.

D. Approve Minutes of Board Meeting on 1/4/24

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Meeting - Board Strategy Meeting on 01-04-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 01-04-24 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.

E. Approve Minutes from Board meeting 1/23/24

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 01-23-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 01-23-24 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.

II. Committee Updates

A. Finance Committee

G. Winn gave the following report on the *Finance Committee* meeting of February 26th:

- **CASH MANAGEMENT PLAN:** We caught up on the implementation of the cash management plan, which is still forthcoming. T. Castanza is working on that with both Fiduciary Trust and JP Morgan Chase. Approximately $1.5 million will be going into each of those managers.
- **BUDGET:** We also talked a little bit about scheduling our budget conversation as we go forward so that we again reach our goal of filing the budget with NYSED at the end of June. And we can expect that some of the work regarding a salary plan will be done earlier this year to enable our management team to have conversations with staff as they move into the Spring and we finalize that portion of the budget.
- **TAXES & VENDORS**: T. Castanza is working with our tax preparers through BoostED to look at vendor relationships see what we want to do as we go forward. We have worked in the past with CPAs Schall & Ashenfarb, now reorganized under the name Sax, LLP (accountants) and we will look at that relationship as we review other contracts. We file our taxes on extension because nonprofits' taxes are due the 15th day of the 5th month following our fiscal year close (June 30th); so our taxes must be filed by November 15th; working backwards, our upload of the tax forms to NYSED is May 15th so we need to finalize the tax documents in April. We should have drafts completed in March, but since we have different staff working on this and our accountants have reorganized, we'll see how the timing goes.
- **CONTRACTS:** All committees that have contracts specific to the focus of their committees need to be mindful about those contracts and their renewal dates. Notably those that have automatic renewal if we don't advise within 30, 60 or 90 days.
- **JANUARY FINANCIAL REPORT FROM BoostED**: Was not included in tonight's agenda, but will be emailed to the board this week; there was nothing of significance in the report.
- **BUDGET REFRESH**: One of the exercises we're doing is discovering at mid-year the reasons why any budget changes have been made and whether we're ahead or behind in terms of expense projections from last June - and to bring those to the attention of the board. It marks where we are midway through our spend-year.

T. Castanza added that we're doing budget prep to get ready for the budget season, and we're so close to well-oiled machine status at this point that we're actually able to look at

the budget from a targeted needs-based perspective - very different than in years past. Additions that we're thinking about adding into the budget are based on our experiences over the last 5 years and we're adapting to the research and growing needs. The Academic Committee will need to talk about potential new instructional positions then build that out. Our timeline is going to work really well for us this year.

The next Finance Committee Meeting will be held on March 18th at 3:45 PM.

B. Academic Committee

T. Frey stated the following topics were covered at the *Academic Committee* meeting on February 13th: Midterm check-ins; tiered levels of support for teachers and students; teacher observations; update on new Math Coach and professional development. C. Volpe will give further details; she then gave the floor to C. Volpe.

C. Volpe offered the following details on topics discussed at the *Academic Committee* meeting:

- **MIDTERM CHECK-INS**: She held midterm check-ins individually with all the teachers. She and E.D. reviewed 3 points of data for the teachers: 1. Classroom data based on the MAP; 2. Teacher attendance and 3. Teacher observations. They tiered each teacher by levels of support based on those 3 data points. She met with each teacher and shared those 3 points of data with them. Then they discussed how to use MAP to drive instruction and how to promote goal setting for their students. She shared what the support would look like and where they are in the tier. Also during her check-in meetings, they talked about looking at the data and some of the trends that they're seeing and why they felt some of the data was either good or not what they had hoped it would be. Also looked at the things they've implemented and will share those findings with the other teachers i.e., planning. According to detected trends, teachers who plan together have better data. We'll be sharing that with the staff.
- **PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP)**: Four teachers were given a PIP *(Performance Improvement Plan)*. She will meet with those teachers weekly and bi-weekly as well as doing inter-class visitations and bringing the Math Coach and C. Otterbeck in for heavy loads of support.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVEOPMENT**: Regarding professional development, there will be a virtual professional development session on Friday with one of the representatives from MAP along with our Data Team and some identified teachers. They will specifically focus on goal-setting and what that looks like in the classroom. Also Ms. Cook, one of the lead support teachers for special education, will be holding a small group meeting with some identified teachers to focus on how to incentivize students to do their best on MAP, when to schedule it and how to administer it effectively.
- **MOCK TESTING:** Was completed in early January. Our 5th graders will be taking a computer-based state test and we were able to practice with a simulation; it was great for the administrative team to work through some kinks; special ed accommodations

look very different on computer-based testing than paper-based testing. We did paper-based mock testing with our 3rd & 4th graders. Teachers learned a lot from that experience not only administratively, but about the kinds of questions that are going to be asked and the kinds of questions students are struggling with. Teachers are adjusting their instruction based on some of those outcomes.

- **MATH COACH**: Our new Math Coach, previously a classroom teacher, Ms. Ramirez has jumped right into the role, supporting staff, developing weekly Math data so the teachers can have a their data aligned weekly, checking on kids and adjusting accordingly; we're been getting a lot of positive feedback from her support. The Math Coach will also be creating a weekly grade-wide assessment that will be administered to students.
- **TEACHER OBSERVATIONS**: C. Volpe and T. Castanza have started on the Spring formal observations and informal observations; they intend to have these all completed by the end of April.

Question & answer session with C. Volpe followed:

Q: Has there been consideration for a model classroom to be set up? For teachers to go in and observe teachers that work well?

A: Yes that is what is being done - especially with the teachers that are on a PIP - she is identifying specific areas of weakness where they need support and then going into identified classrooms with that specific lens. So for some, it is what co-teaching looks like and looking at model classrooms; for others it's about classroom management; for others it's around questioning technique.

Q: Will there be a look at the mock test results this time or will there will be another mock test to look at trends in our student's achievement?

A: We have results of the 3rd & 4th grade paper-based mock test because we actually have the test. It was based on last year's state test. Teachers are looking at the 3rd & 4th grade test data, and they're adjusting their instruction based on what they're seeing. However, for the 5th grade computer-based mock test, we don't get that data; it's a simulation from the state and was absolutely solely for administration purposes. But teachers were monitoring students by walking around and could see the bulk of the questions and where students were struggling.

In addition, we just finalized that we are starting a Saturday Academy. It will be a 5-Saturday program for students on the cusp of state assessments results of level 2 to 3 or level 3 to 4.

Q: Have we ordered the Rally!Education software that simulates computer-based testing?

A: Yes, it was ordered, but it has not yet arrived, and C. Volpe is still waiting for her login. Hopefully it will be ready to go in the next few weeks. We'll work heavily with it in our Saturday Academy, but we'll also be using it after-school programs and in the classrooms.

Q: How did mock testing go with the 5th graders on computers, as opposed to the paper-testing of the 3rd & 4th graders? Recognizing that the 5th graders are older, but what about endurance or ease of taking the exam? Was there any difference?

A: C. Volpe did ask the 5th graders how they felt about the test and the majority actually liked working on a computer. And it was so much easier to administer the computer-based tests. The students will probably do fine, especially that they already use the Keyboarding Without

Tears program in STEM, so they're getting used to actually doing extended responses on the computers in the classrooms.
Q: How are the modifications being adjusted for kids with disabilities with the online programming? Is there speech to text applications? Are there timed applications where kids get extended time? These are modifications that we need to make sure are being respected across the system.
A: We're working with the CSE to identify where those changes have to be in place; text to speech, would be test-read. Some of them do have human reader and we have to abide by that; there's a lot of logistics involved with that. However, they made it easy because the students' accommodations are met on the computer. But we have to actually program the accommodations into the system prior to testing. Then the students have a screen toolbar, and everything is already there on the toolbar. Teachers are showing students how to use that. And there are no time limits on the test so that's an accommodation for everybody.
Q: If a parent requests paper-based testing to be placed on a child's IEP, would that be an accommodation?
A: The CSE is trying to clarify if that can be an accommodation; on one state document it does mention paper-based testing accommodation, but in the document's appendix it does not list paper-based testing as an accommodation.
Q: Was this a full scale computer-test simulation, an entire full test, or was it a shortened modified test? If modified, we have no real way of knowing if the students have the stamina or ability to get through an entire full computer-based test.
A: It was a modified test, but we're hoping once the Rally!Education software program arrives, that it will be helpful for us to work with students and build up that stamina.

Next Academic Committee Meeting will be held on March 12th at 8:30 AM.

C. Board Development & Governance Committee

L. Gyimesi gave the following report on the *Board Development & Governance Committee* meeting of February 19th, followed by M. Harmon-Vaught presenting the Board Survey results:

- **BYLAWS REVIEW**: We're going to look at the bylaws again and if anybody has seen anything in the bylaws that they want to add or bring to our attention that should be addressed, please do so. We will review the bylaws and present any revisions to the board for a vote.
- **BOARD DEVEOPMENT**: Board development is something that we really need to focus on. We may have one new person interested in joining the board, but we have to work on making sure we fill in all the gaps for the people that are exiting and keep building our board stronger so there's less work on more hands. She then gave the floor to M. Harmon-Vaught.

M. Harmon-Vaught said his colleague at Wagner College, Nicole DeStefano, is very interested in becoming a member of our Board of Trustees. She is *Director of Development and External Relations* for Wagner College and wanted to attend tonight's board meeting

but is out of town. She has experience in community relations, grant work, fundraising and many skills that can be helpful to our board.

He then explained the purpose of the *Board Assessment Survey:*

- It is an annual survey within Board-on-Track based on best practice in Charter School Board Governance
- Provides a year-over-year comparison to track our growth
- Helps us identify strengths and areas for improvement
- Rates us on a 5-point scale across several domains and overall
- This year we had 100% board participation
- Self-reported; these findings are important but we need to look at other data points

He then presented the survey results via charts indicating this year, our board:
Scored Highest Level 5's in Board Meetings, Board Structures, Finance and Academic Oversight
Scored Level 4's in Board Composition, Board Goals & Accountability and Executive Director Support & Evaluation
Scored Level 2 in Board Recruitment
Scored Level 1 in Board Development
Giving our board an overall score of Level 4 (ADVANCED)

Board recruitment requires continued focus, especially in pipeline development. We need to home in a little more specifically on board recruitment. We know that that we have some very essential people who are rolling off the board due to term limits this year; we really need to concentrate on several key areas. One thing we need to focus on is how we build our capacity on the board and develop our applicant pipeline. This year we need to think very intentionally about this work. And invite greater participation from all trustees, but also from the school and from community partners in building our board capacity. When we met with NYSED earlier this year at their charter renewal visit they were very impressed with the board's presence, engagement, level of knowledge and expertise. We really hope to sustain that even though some of our founding trustees and long-time members are leaving the board.

Discussion followed regarding creating a recruitment plan; whether our recruitment levels are lower than they should be due to NYSED Charter Office's inability to process board member applicants in a timely manner; what recruitment ideas have already been tried and didn't work; what can be done in the next few months before 3 of the board members leave in June 2024; what board committees will need focus when the 3 members leave; what the school's community outreach and networking can do to help; many suggestions and ideas were discussed.

The next Board Development & Governance Committee Meeting will be March 12th at 4 PM.

III. Report of Executive Director

A. Executive Director Update

T. Castanza gave the following Executive Director update:

- **ADMISSIONS UPDATE**: We're getting applications and we haven't even done our big push of outreach yet, which is a good sign. That means that the 50 applications we've received have come to us purely by direct referral or are returning applicants; this year we looked at the students that applied last year that were wait-listed, but never admitted and we re-engaged those students; some families think that because they applied one time, they automatically get rolled into the next admissions period, which is not the case, so we are re-contacting them. We held a virtual open house on a recent snow day that was well attended by 10 families; we held an in-person open house at the school and had 6 families attend. We have 3 more in-person events scheduled in the month of March. We've also started to schedule events for after the admissions lottery. We expect to get applications in April and May, so we want to get ahead of the process and bring people into the building and answer their questions so if they do want to apply and get added to our wait-list they can do it right away. We want to start registration a little bit earlier this year. We're getting ready to do a direct mass-mailing with Vanguard and SchoolMint which is always our biggest draw and we anticipate applications to significantly increase after the mailers goes out. SchoolMint will also be doing a social media campaign for us. Once we do our social media posting, it will be then blasted out through the Staten Island Advance Media Group.
- **ADMISSIONS LOTTERY**: We are going to need to hold a lottery for seats in at least 4 of our 5 grades. We are seeing a larger number of early childhood applications for 1st grade and 2nd grade. We received 3 phone calls this week about registrations for Kindergarten, so there is a demand for Kindergarten seats, which we don't offer yet. Last year we had a lull in 1st grade applicants but had a large number of 4th grade and 5th grade applicants. We will have a more accurate admissions update in March, bringing us closer to our April 3rd lottery.
- **DYSLEXIA AWARENESS DAY** in Albany is March 14th; we're meeting as a team tomorrow to talk about the staff and student presence; if we have enough students we will try to get a bus for students and families who wish to come.
- **SCIENCE OF READING CENTER** opened at SUNY New Paltz; they're offering a new micro credential in the *Fundamentals of the Science of Reading*; it's an online asynchronous course that anyone can take. For the first 5,000 or 7,000 applicants, it only costs $50. It gives teachers 35 CTLE *(Continuing Teacher & Leader Education)* hours, it's online and fully self-paced. They offer a new class every month; the course takes 7 weeks to complete; it's something that we could explore as part of our summer professional development program for our teachers.
- **STAFF HIRING UPDATE:** We were able to fill the position of Math Coach and we backfilled the teaching position with a new teacher; she's doing great and adapting

well into the new classroom. We also have a teacher vacancy that just occurred for someone that is pursuing a different career path; we support her and wish her well. We've immediately begun the process to look for a backfill for that for that position; we're taking an existing teacher that's here on the same grade level and moving her into that classroom right away. That will leave a vacancy in her classroom, but we have a new candidate that we've hired that's going to be coming in. The situation caused a lot of moving pieces. We're happy with where we landed the new staff member that we have coming on. We sent a letter home to families today about the teachers' changes.

- **ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS**: *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) accountability statuses are out for schools; we're happy to report that our school remains in good standing, now called local support and improvement in the new guidelines - which is actually good. So our status has remained the same although local support and improvement is a new term.
- **CHARTER RENEWAL UPDATE:** Nothing from NYSED yet; the Regents are meeting again in mid-March, so we may hear something then. We have not heard from Regent Cea since speaking to her in January. T. Castanza was also able to speak with *NYS Education Commissioner* Dr. Betty Rosa and shared our NYSED feedback with her as well as David Frank, of the NYSED Charter School Office. We told them about our experience with the charter renewal visit and some of the questions that we had about the process. Commissioner Rosa actually did ask if we took her advice and she said she can't wait till we get Kindergarten. We're in a holding pattern right now, which is frustrating.
- **SUNY CHARTER APPLICATION UPDATE:** We applied for one of the "zombie" charters through SUNY and our application was submitted prior to the deadline due to the hard work of Nora at Pasek Consulting and our team, Fahron, RoseMarie, Laurel, Traci and Rose and everyone that really helped with this. We submitted everything they requested and the process for submitting through SUNY was a far superior experience compared to NYSED. We won't get a decision from SUNY until the end of April or early May; T. Castanza will keep the board updated if he hears anything official from NYSED or SUNY.

IV. Family Association

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following *Family Association* update:

- **READ-A-THON**: This Friday kicks off our 2nd annual Read-a-Thon; last year's was phenomenal but we decided to do a little different take on it this year; last year we focused on the monetary part of it and this year we are focusing more on the reading part of it; obviously we're still taking donations and any donations are welcome but we're focusing on the number of minutes read. We did a little spin on Monopoly, called Readopoly; each student will receive what looks like a Monopoly board and each game space has different challenges such as read with a friend, read to a pet or

a toy, read a book about a superhero or princess. For every space that the students check off during a 15-day period, they get a certain amount of tickets and the tickets can be used for different prizes - anything from lunch with E.D. to an Amazon gift card. There are also school-wide prizes depending on the numbers of books the entire school reads. We are filming a fun, cheesy and over-exaggerated video of the teachers and staff promoting reading just to get people really interested in it. When finished we send the video out for everyone to see.

- **CEC 31 MEMBERHIP:** A. Wolkowitz just accepted the District 75 seat on the District 31 CEC (Community Education Council), an unpaid job on the CEC. That's what we're here for.

V. 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 8:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano