APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday March 19, 2024 at 7:00 PM

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

557 5th st#3
Brooklyn, NY 11215

17 Sagamore Rd
Bronxville, NY 10708

300 Cromwell Avenue
Staten Island, NY

600 Commodore Court, #2620
Philadelphia, PA 19146

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

Trustees Absent
Maria Casale

Ex Officio Members Present

Tim Castanza

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

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

As per Public Officers Law, Article 7, § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board members Becky Peters and Mark Harmon-Vaught are not present in-person for this meeting, they are attending via videoconference from locations posted on the public meeting notice/agenda and open to the public; they are therefore considered to be in attendance for purposes of quorum and are permitted to vote. Board member George Winn is in attendance via telephone/audio only and therefore not counted toward quorum and is not eligible to vote at this meeting.
QUORUM IS MET FOR THIS MEETING.

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 Mar 19, 2024 at 7:05 PM.

C. Welcome from Chair

D. Approve Minutes of Board Meeting on 2.27.24

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 02-27-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 02-27-24 board 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 apologized for attending this meeting via phone and gave the following *Finance Committee* report:

- **School's Tax Return**: The committee met yesterday and had a series of working meetings prior. The most important item to be presented at tonight's meeting is the school's draft tax return, which needs approval by a vote of the board. There is nothing that really stands out in it. He wants to commend the management team and

BoostEd as well as our accountants for getting the tax return to us well ahead of the May 15th filing date. So thank you for that.

- **Cash Management:** We are still working on finishing our plan from last July regarding providing services for the management of our cash assets; Fiduciary Trust and J.P. Morgan Chase are handling our accounts based on returns of the Treasury markets; both firms are highly rated and we feel that they are a safe and sensible place for the school to have its cash assets.
- **Budget**: The budget is still in process; one of the biggest pieces that goes into it from an expense standpoint is our human capital. And there is a lot of work being done around how we array our human capital against the market and where we are in terms of the messages we're sending through compensation. There will be more on that as that work progresses during the budget cycle this spring.

Laurel Gyimesi made a motion to approve the Federal Tax Return for Bridge Preparatory Charter School as presented to the board covering the fiscal year July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Academic Committee

T. Frey gave the following overview of topics covered at the *Academic Committee Meeting*:

- **Acadience Program Data**
- **Proposed Improvements to the Academic Program for next school year 2024-2025**
- **Updates for Saturday Academy**
- **Updates for Summer School**

She then gave the floor to C. Volpe for further details:

- We brought the **Acadience Program** in as another assessment in place of F&P; it aligns more to our science of reading. We are looking closely at when we assess students, not giving them their testing accommodations to see what a true independent level is in fluency decoding and comprehension. We gave our 1st assessment in December and we just gave our 2nd assessment. We're looking at the assessments, diving deep into individual students needs. We're meeting with teachers. We're analyzing the data with the teachers. And then we're piloting a progress-monitoring session so we're looking at and identifying specific children. Acadience gives us materials to work with students around progress-monitoring, giving some really targeted instruction and then retesting them through the progress-monitoring 3 weeks later. We're hoping to see the results of that intense intervention.
- We started our **Saturday Academy**, which was specifically around test preparation. We identified students from our last testing session and our 3rd graders through MAP. We looked at students who were on the cusp. Students who were 1 or 2

questions away from a Level 2 or Level 3. For our 5th graders we're working with Math, ELA, and also keyboarding since they're taking computer-based testing. We're identifying their strengths, their weaknesses and having really small targeted groups to prepare for testing. We have about 40 students in the program. It's approximately a 6 to 1 ratio for students to teachers. We will monitor the students to see what kind of impact this intervention has so that we can expand for next year.

- Update on our **Summer Boost** program. We submitted the application last week; increased our number to 55 students which hopefully will bring us in about a $100,000 to spend on our summer program. Part of that is for transportation. We're looking at creative ways to transport students because one of the things that holds our students back from coming to our summer program is not all students are entitled to busing - just students with door to door busing. We're working with the Bloomberg group talking about how other schools manage transportation. Hopefully we'll be able to fill those 55 seats. We're going to offer it to some of our incoming students as well. Received some positive responses from parents. It's been opened up to all of our families as an option, and it looks like that we will be able to service any parent that is interested in the program for the summer.

R. Kerr asked if there will be any more mock testing done. C. Volpe responded no, but we are offering test prep Fridays in all of our 3rd, 4th and 5th classes and have very specific goals around each period that they're doing test prep and our Saturday Academy is doing sample testing.

T. Frey then gave the floor to T. Castanza to discuss proposed improvements to the academic curriculum for next school year:

- T. Castanza stated that improvements to the academic programs relates to budgeting. And how we make decisions about what goes in the budget, what are the priorities. We look at the needs of each team. We think about how are we going to improve our academic programs. We discuss budgetary and non-budgetary items as we start planning for the next school year, and a lot of it is around personnel. What personnel positions will we need for the upcoming school year based on our observations, review of the data, our corrective action plans, and also feedback from staff in our focus groups.
- One of the things that we've landed on related to feedback that we received from NYSED about **Connect Saturdays**. We had been counting Connect Saturdays as regular mandatory school days for staff. NYSED says we cannot count those days as regular school days, so we're changing how we consider them next year. We'll still offer Connect Saturdays because they are successful, but now we are going to offer those days as optional per-session bonus work days for staff. And that's something that we think is fair. And we think we'll actually generate interest in a positive way.
- **Staffing positions** that we don't yet have in the 1st draft of the budget that we might want to see in there: we're thinking about potential **Cluster Teachers** for Science and Social Studies, which would then be 1 less content subject for the main classroom

teacher and would also free up an extra prep period for those teachers. That's another 2 staff members that we'd have to hire because it's 2 and potentially 4 more staff members depending on the number of needs. So It's something that's not in the top tiers of priorities in terms of funding. *(Further discussion was held on teacher prep periods, how it is done in other elementary schools, and the demands on time for classroom teachers.)* This is something we will be exploring with the committee further. It's not something that we're funding right now and it's not in the budget now. R. Kerr added that there's going to be more discussion on this and the structure of it is very important; if we can afford it and it will give us less stress and push/pull with teachers because teacher's demands are great. T. Castanza added that another staffing position being looked at is whether we need additional **Instructional Coaches**; instead of labeling them as a "Math Coach" or a "Literacy Coach" we can simply be more flexible and one Instructional Coach could work with the upper upper elementary grades, and one work with the lower grades; an Instructional Coach to support teacher development and teacher growth is something that is not in the budget right now, but it could make its way into the budget in the future.

C. Governance

L. Gyimesi gave the following update on *Board Development & Governance:*

- We're trying to develop and make use of a our marketing vendors on behalf of board governance and development and so far are seeing if we can use some of these resources to help us develop a targeted plan to build our board. Hopefully we can have it in play before the next board meeting and see what we can do as far as using these resources on our own behalf to help recruit more trustees or at least put ourselves out there so people know that we're looking for trustees; see if we can entice more people to join our board. We can make use of SILive.com. They're going to help us create some kind of a plan.
- Regarding our charter renewal application and the SUNY middle school application; we do not have any decision from NYSED about our renewal and Lisa Long said that we won't have a Board of Regents decision in April but will in May. We have not heard a decision from SUNY about our middle school application, but they have been reaching out with additional requests for information from us. Our public hearing on the SUNY application is April 2nd. If we get a capacity hearing, that'll be the first week in May. In the beginning of May we may have finally have answers on all our applications.

III. Report of Executive Director

A. Executive Director Update

T. Castanza gave the following update:

- We have not yet heard anything regarding our **NYSED Renewal Application** but we expect to hear something from them in April. There are 28 schools up for charter renewal this year.
- We invited Lisa Long to visit our school, but she did not respond yet to our invitation. She has not visited us in the past.
- As L. Gyimesi said, we won't have a decision on our **SUNY Middle School Application** until May when the Board of Regents votes at their meeting on May 6th or May 7th, although they would tell us a week ahead of the vote. Both Lisa Long and David Frank said that we will hear in May. Regent Cea said she has not heard anything yet about a vote on our application. We had a great meeting with SUNY. It was our first interaction with the head of the charter schools team and the head of the accountability team at SUNY. They started the conversation off by saying that they really appreciate our application coming in. They've enjoyed reading it thus far and acknowledge that we are a different type of school that serves a different population of students with double the IEP percentage of the district. And they understand that the traditional metrics like state tests are not always going to display what our kids are doing. SUNY is looking at us fairly. The list of 20 schools that applied for the 9 zombie charters is out and the competition is tough. Success Academy applied for 6 new charter schools across New York City, including a K-5 675-seat elementary school on Staten Island. Zeta charter schools applied for 5 charters. Another group that we do not know, applied for a civics-based middle school on Staten Island. Out of the 20 applicants, only 3 are for middle schools, including us. We are 1 of 5 NYSED-authorized schools that applied for a SUNY charter. Many of the schools applied for charters in the same districts in Queens. L. Gyimesi said that one way we seem to have a leg up over a lot of the other schools is the ability to show need and parental support; we have a record of a long history of parents being involved, and parents asking for a middle school; we supported this new application with a lot of documentation of that, more so than a lot of the other schools which are relying on their past. We're showing actual need in the community and if we can emphasize that, it helps us. M. Harmon-Vaught added that it's also valuable that need is reinforced by comments from our public elected officials, which is certainly not the case for a lot of charters in other parts of the city.
- **Budgeting**: We've talked about the positions that we've identified as needs that did make it into the budget for the first draft, one of which is a **Literacy Interventionist**. This is a position that would work with our lowest 20% of students in an intense RTI level and work in 6-8 week cycles for kids, to really move students ahead. This aligns with the science of reading in the state, something that's going on statewide. We also are bringing **2 Associate Teachers** onto the budget. These 2 positions are not salaried the same way as a full-time teacher even though they're full-time roles. They're more like teaching assistants and they're meant to support our Cluster Teachers, Art, STEM, PE and SCL teachers in the classroom. They would also provide us with some flexibility to be pushing in to other classrooms. They would get fully trained in Orton-Gillingham like every other staff member. Other staffing

positions that may ultimately come out of the budget is an additional **ICT pair** *(Information and Communication Technology)*. We put in for 2 new full-time teachers as if we're opening another section because we want to make sure that we can shrink down class size, if we need to go from 23 students to 17 in the classroom. We have extra physical space, particularly because we're not opening Kindergarten-level classes. We may not need that extra ICT pair depending on how the enrollment breaks out, but we wanted to put it in the budget if we need to do that. Potentially if we don't hire those 2 ICT teachers, we could look at hiring another **SLP** *(Speech-Language Pathologist)*. We currently have an SLP on staff, but she cannot do all the SLP mandates herself. Right now, they just rotate SLPs every year. If we had our own SLP that worked just for us, we could offer them our training. This year we have a particularly strong group that we want to train but we can't. We have some flexibility here. This is why the April meeting of both *Finance Committee* and *Academic Committee* will be critical. We're budgeting for **222 students** very conservatively, which is 20 students under our authorized enrollment.

- **Enrollment** is slowly moving along. We've now have more applications than we have graduating students for the for the 1st time. Our Vanguard mailing went out today. We will have an in-person **Admission Lottery** on April 3rd. We're going to update our website next week with the details. We originally were starting at 5 PM, but we may be looking at an earlier time. We're seeing a bigger uptick of applications for 1st grade and 4th grade.
- We were in Albany last Thursday for **Dyslexia Awareness Day** and were one of the co-sponsors of the event. We brought 25 members of our community, staff and students that have diagnosed dyslexia in grades 3 through 5. Our students were phenomenal. I'm impressed by them often, but we got to sit back and watch them engage with elected officials. They took tours of the capital building and were able to go on the floor of the assembly. Three Assembly members held an info session, back and forth, question and answer with our students. The questions that our students were asking were Level 3 questions. I was really proud. Our staff was fantastic. It was just a really great day and we had the largest contingent of people there.

IV. Family Association

A. Family Association Update

A. Wolkowitz gave the following Family Association update:

- We ended our **Read-a-Thon** *(based on Monopoly game)* on Friday. The students received different tasks from the game board; over the 2 weeks we had pop-up community chest and chance challenges and we gave little prizes to everybody whether they participated or not just to keep the momentum going. Boards are due this week, so we're tallying up how many minutes were read. The overall prize is getting to slime E.D., which they are super excited about. For in-school reading minutes they hit the first level for a mystery prize: a treasure chest. On Friday each student will be able to pick something from the treasure chest. After we tally up the

at-home reading minutes the next prize is a school-wide ice cream party and then sliming E.D. and then with their boards they'll get tickets for a basket auction for anything from throwing the first cup of slime - to an Amazon gift card. The teachers are very supportive and it was a fun thing for us to do. The kids were excited to get reading logs to fill out. They had to list the book they read, how many minutes they read and if they liked it and have a parent sign off on it. There was one 4th grader, who read 1,700 minutes. It was amazing. It was really fun all around. We had a lot of good feedback and we're tallying the reading logs now.

- We want to do a **fundraiser** by duct taping a staff member to a wall. We would pre-sell long pieces of duct tape, and the goal is to have the staff member stand on a box against the wall and the students will tape the staff member to the wall, with the idea of removing the box and the staff member remains still stuck on the wall with the tape holding them up. It's fun. I promise it's fun.
- We have our **Plant Sale** coming up in May for Mother's Day.
- We're getting ready for the end of the school year. We have **Family Association elections** in May, in April we ask for willingness-to-serve. Every position open so we're trying to recruit new people. It's very hard. Everybody wants to volunteer for the events, like Pumpkin Patch but nobody wants to lead.

V. Other Business

A. New Business

- T. Castanza said that the **5th grade Graduation** is June 13th at the St. George Theatre at 4 PM. A formal invitation will be sent later; There will be a post reception for board members and staff at Basel immediately following, in lieu of our Red and Blue Dinner that was held in the past.
- Our **Award Ceremony** is the night before, on June 12th in a large tent on the Quad here at the Petrides Campus.
- Our **Immersion Programs**, week-long immersive learning are happening starting the week of May 6th for our 1st and 2nd graders.; the week of May 20th for our 3rd and 4th graders; our 5th graders will be during the week of June 3rd, after their test.

VI. 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 8:03 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano