APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday September 12, 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

60 Washington Sq. South
NY, NY 10003

Trustees Present
Geena Kuriakose, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Rebecca Peters (remote), Traci Frey

Trustees Absent
Nicole DeStefano

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present

Cheryl Otterbeck (remote), Deidre Medina, Fahron Ebanks (remote), Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi (remote), Tara Gore (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

QUORUM IS MET FOR THIS MEETING.
As per Public Officers Law, Article 7 § 103-a *(Videoconferencing by public bodies)* although board member Rebecca Peters is not present in-person for this meeting, she is attending via videoconference from a location posted on the public meeting notice/agenda and open to the public; she is therefore considered to be in attendance for purposes of quorum and is permitted to vote. A total of 4 board members are present in person or via videoconference and therefore 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 Thursday Sep 12, 2024 at 7:04 PM.

C. Approve Minutes from August 8th Meeting

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 08-08-24.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 08-08-24 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.

D. Welcome From Co-Chairs

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that it's great to be in fellowship again; he is excited to kick off the year - particularly to talk about some of the meaty business of the board and of the school year, thinking about goals as we get things underway.
T. Frey said that she echoes Mark's sentiments, is grateful to have you all here and excited to work with you all this year. She also wants to give M. Harmon-Vaught kudos, because he is the one who made the push for us to be able to use school jargon i.e., dig deeper, and dive deeper into items and not just make committee reports or reports in general. So we're excited to do this today with all of you.
M. Harmon-Vaught added that we're experimenting and will try some new things today. We'll learn from topics we'll continue to iterate. We're going to reference a few documents, and if attendees are logged into Board-on-Track online, every document we talk about is either linked or shared in the meeting agenda. You'll be able to access it and follow along from anywhere.

II. Board Reports

A. Academic Committee Report

T. Frey gave the following *Academic Committee* update with information shared from C. Otterbeck:

- Overview of the first day of school was discussed.
- Staffing updates: there's still a PE/Specials vacancy that needs to be filled; there are 10 new teachers, 6 of whom are new to teaching; T. Castanza and C. Otterbeck have been busy onboarding them and making them feel at home and want to come back the next day, which is important.
- OG assessment has started; MAP assessments and Acadience Reading assessments should be starting tomorrow, if not by the beginning of next week.
- The new Science curriculum is here, teachers have been trained and they're excited to get going with that.
- Kindergarten classes are new; 15 students are registered for Kindergarten and 12 have shown up as of Monday.
- The teachers' resource side of the *Literacy Lab* is now operating.
- The coaches have been busy going to Grade Team meetings, visiting classrooms daily, observing and modeling. They're creating an arc of support for the teacher evaluation tool. They're meeting with C. Otterbeck once a week for coaching and training and getting outside training from *The Writing Revolution* and *Multisensory Math*. They've put together a professional development plan for November. Teachers will be meeting only on Tuesdays this year, instead of Tuesday and Thursday, as part of the feedback that E.D. received on creating a better work/life balance for teachers.
- The Data Team met and talked about what data our Board of Trustees would like to see when we take our deep dives. We'll be looking at longitudinal and grade-by-grade data from the state testing once it's released to the public. E.D. and his team have already started disaggregating that data. We can look at OG, MAP and Acadience data at beginning-of-year and mid-year to make comparisons. The coaches will be supporting teachers by analyzing data, which is something that teachers expressed to us - that teachers were given data, but they didn't know what they were supposed to do with it or how to use the data. They're also creating goals similar to goals that we'll be creating for ourselves as trustees. E.D. and the school are creating short-term data goals and long-term data goals that focus on the priority standards.
- The Structured Reading period, has been restructured around the monthly priority standards, and modifying the HMH reading curriculum so that it meets the needs of our students and is not one-size-fits-all, as these curricula tend to be.

III. New Business

A. Financial Policy and Procedures Manual

R. Peters gave the following update on the *Financial Policy and Procedures Manual*:

- We're updating the financial policies and procedures to be more reflective of our spending. We're just increasing the spending of what can be approved internally by the team. That doesn't have to go to the board directly, which is in line with a charter school of our size at this point. The last time the FPP was changed was 3 years ago, so it was due for an update.
- T. Castanza added that we included feedback from the committee with language regarding modifying and updating the FPP manual. We explicitly state that the manual is updated annually, but if we update it throughout the year, we explain how we're going to communicate that to staff since it's an organization-wide document and treated as an appendix in the staff handbook. Rather than showing staff the entire manual we will email them the specific section being updated. The only other material we changed are yearly items for the 2024-2025 school year; minor revisions such as adding our new insurance policies which haven't been updated for a while; other than what was already shared, we made no major revisions.
- M. Harmon-Vaught stated that E.D. and others discussed in the *Finance Committee,* something that's not in this FPP that will be coming later is an investment policy. The committee discussed whether to hold until that policy was ready to include in the manual, but ultimately decided that because we need to actually have the policy in place, we can go ahead and approve the manual, and then come back at a later time to recommend a policy regarding investment. T. Castanza confirmed that is exactly in line with what was done with the travel policy, where we added the travel policy post-approval after the trustees voted on the singular policy, which was then just added into the manual. R. Peters agreed.

Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to to approve the revised Financial Policy and Procedure Manual as presented to the Board of Trustees.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
Proposed are a set of amendments to the school's Financial Policy and Procedures Manual, which have been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee. These amendments focus primarily on aligning school discretionary spending limits with industry standard levels. Further, the proposed revisions include specification of the annual review and revision cycle of the manual. Of important note, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the manual is being submitted for board review and approval without the inclusion of an investment policy. Such a policy is under consideration of the Finance Committee and will be brought to the board at a later date for review and inclusion in a revised manual.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. New Board Members' Status Update

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that all documentation has been submitted to NYSED for our 2 new board candidates and our 1 board candidate who's moving into new member status. But those approvals are still in progress awaiting NYSED confirmation. So they are not yet voting board members, but they will be someday soon. The process been a lot faster than in

past years, so we're hopeful that before the next board meeting, they'll be approved. They will be made aware as soon as that comes through. We do appreciate their patience and attendance at our meetings in the meantime.

C. Board Business Calendar, SY 2024-25 Draft

(The Board Business Calendar was opened in Zoom for the board members to view and discussion followed on the various topics, meeting dates and how the calendar is formatted.)

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that our *Board Business Calendar* is something we talked about at our last meeting and the *Executive Committee* discussed. He and T. Frey met with T. Castanza to discuss this and E.D. had conversations with his team. One of the things we discussed in July was trying to make our meetings meatier and less focused on just reporting information and more on generative collaboration. We want to ensure the board is learning about what's going on in the school, perform deep dives on topics, leverage our expertise and have a a stronger grasp on our oversight responsibilities. And so we've put together a draft calendar of topics for our future meetings, and it's linked for board members on Google drive. We pulled out important items that require board action and votes, and routine things that we do on a regular basis, like academic updates, Data Dashboard deep dives and other key areas that the board and the school have identified as critical throughout the year. Topics like enrollment strategies, conversations about facilities, student support and IEPs. We want to think deeply about certain components where the board needs to build its acumen and the school staff can help us understand where they're heading. This was shared in advance with trustees and we're hopeful to take a vote tonight to approve the the *Board Business Calendar* as it's currently written with the understanding that we may need to change it over time. We're planning for a year-long series of meetings rather than trying to figure out each month what the next meeting will cover. This will be a live document that board members will be able to reference at any point. And if there are items you want added, just let us know via email to T. Frey or M. Harmon-Vaught.
Mark Harmon-Vaught made a motion to adopt the preliminary 2024-2025 Board Business Calendar as presented, noting that it can be amended as necessary throughout the year.
Geena Kuriakose seconded the motion.
The Board Business Calendar outlines monthly topics for presentation, discussion, and action at Board of Trustees meetings throughout the school year. It features "deep dive" presentations on key issues for the school, board, BPCS community, and NYSED authorizers. The calendar aims to enrich board discussions, deepen understanding, leverage expertise, and strengthen oversight.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

IV. Special Topics

A. School and Board Goal-Setting

- T. Frey stated that she and M. Harmon-Vaught have been working with Executive Director T. Castanza to come up with school goals that were smart, specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and time-bound. Attached to today's agenda is a one-page summary of each of the goals. The document that we shared with T. Castanza is more detailed and drills down each goal with some action steps i.e., what does this mean in real terms? To meet this goal, what does E.D. need to do? What does the school need to do in order to reach that goal? We thought it would be helpful for all of us to take a look at the E.D. goals.

(The Summary of E.D. Annual Goals, 2024-25 was distributed to the board members for review. The listed goals are: Goal #1: Improve Academic Outcomes for Students; Goal #2: Improved Instructional Practices; Goal #3: Establish a Deeply Engaged Community of Families; Goal #4: Effective Fiscal Management; Goal #5: Strategic Planning; Goal #6: Improved Staff Culture)

- We want to do something similar.to establish our Board of Trustees' goals, which should be aligned to the school's goals. We may have some separate ones, but our goals need to take into account the school's goals. To model the process that we're going to use to set board goals, it will be important for board members to take review the school's goals and write down any thoughts or questions they might have.

(Discussion followed regarding the Summary of E.D. Annual Goals, with both clarifying questions and probing questions from board members on: instructional practices; proficiency of teachers; end-of-year evaluation data; improving academic outcomes for students; percentages chosen for levels of proficiency; instructional planning and assessment; classroom environment; engaging students cognitively in learning; pedagogy; curriculum and consistency across school, T. Castanza responded to all questions regarding the school's goals.)

- M. Harmon-Vaught asked E.D. when he anticipates having the forthcoming targets mentioned under Goal #1B *(grade-level Math and ELA targets for the NYS assessment)*? T. Castanza responded that he will be meeting next week with his Executive Leadership Team to go through the goals in more detail and refine the goals so that they're in alignment. The school-wide teams are meeting next Tuesday and the team leaders are going to take an active role in developing the target percentages for their grade after they look the data; we're hoping to have preliminary numbers early next week to be refined in the next 10 days.
- T. Frey added that we want to show the board members the end result of the process that we engaged E.D. in looking at multiple measures of data and multiple documents to ultimately come up with this draft *Summary of E.D. Annual Goals.* We'll start the process of our *Board's Goals* here tonight. We've linked some documents to tonight's meeting agenda: the last end-of-year *Board Survey Self-Assessment*, along with the

Summary of E.D. Annual Goals and the *NYSED Renewal Site Visit Report.* We want board members to look through these documents and identify what they think would be board priorities to set as goals for the current school year. We really want to tackle at least 2 or 3 goals a year, knowing that there's still other work that has to be done.

- M. Harmon-Vaught stated that the *NYSED Renewal Site Visit Report* is a 38-page document, but the important page is the summary on page 8. When we're thinking about the goals of the board - which won't be finalized tonight since we're going to continue to fine-tune using committee time as well as future board conversations. There are 2 important kinds of goals for the board: #1: the goals that relate directly to those areas the school has prioritized; how to support and hold accountable the school leaders for the work that they've identified as critical and #2: how we hold ourselves accountable for the board's own development, which we know is critical to NYSED and also for our ongoing success, our own development, our own recruitment, our own meeting structure and roles. T. Frey added that it's important to note that we're looking at what our goals as a board are and not what the school could be doing; there's a distinction between our role as the board versus what the school needs to do to improve.

(Board members reviewed the offered documents and discussion followed on the best way for the board to share ideas and comments; it was decided to use Google docs as the most efficient way to gather information, suggestions and ideas from everyone regarding possible Board Goals.)

- The board members offered their *Board Goals* suggestions on Google docs, and the following ideas for goals were shared: strengthening the board recruitment process; developing our understanding of the school's mission to support and hold the school accountable; ensure that the school is meeting state mandates, i.e., IEPs; confirm that programs/contracts approved by the board are implemented properly and are in-service of students; set board goals and how to achieve them; strengthen cohesion between committees and communication among board members; and develop fundraising opportunities. (*Discussion followed regarding the various suggestions.)* We can now take this and identify which committee should be responsible for each goal.

V. Other Business

A. School Leadership Updates

T. Castanza said that since the allotted time for his report each month is getting shorter, he will fill in a template summary ahead of time before each board meeting. He then gave the following *Executive Director* update:

- **ORIENTATION**: We held a *Parent/Family Orientation* at the end of August, and had *Back-to-School Night* earlier this week; both were really successful and well

attended, which is good since we're aiming towards goals of deeply invested and engaged families. Our new Parent Coordinator, K. Boxill and R. Illuzzi and her team really put the event together well, along with the Academic Team. The vibe in the building is good, and this being year 6 since we opened, we're noticing a different vibe in the building now. We talked about this at the Leadership Team meeting today. It's not just a feeling, but what we're seeing when we do daily observations in classrooms. Our staff seems to be making a new focus on accountability and identifying a deeper understanding of our core values.

- **MEETING ROOM CHANGE**: We're going to move the board meetings to the conference room downstairs and get a better audio/sound setup. We're working on getting that done for next week.
- **COURTYARD UPDATE**: Our building courtyard is near completion, something that we wanted to prioritize this year to turn that area into a children's space.
- **ENROLLMENT**: Student enrollment is fluctuating in specific grades. We're hovering around 262 children right now, which is well within where we want to be in our authorized enrollment budget, but still doesn't cause overloaded classes and lets us keep our class size where we want it. So we're in a good place.
- **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:** What we're looking at now is more than just Tuesday time, but rather full-day professional development that we build out In the school calendar. We've been engaging the *Reading League* specifically for some large scale professional learning. Our social workers have been engaged in the *Crisis Prevention Institute*. They want to do training about appropriate responses that they can then turnkey for some of our staff.
- **CAMPUS COUNCIL:** T. Castanza was chosen to lead the *Petrides Campus Council* which is both a blessing and curse; we've increased the size of the Campus Council to bring in the Borough Safety Team. We're focusing our energy this year on reimagining campus culture. What does the campus culture look like for staff and families from all 3 schools? Also looking at campus safety and traffic patterns. Our 1st order of business was hosting a meeting with the Department of Transportation Commissioner, and the NYPD Assistant Chief of Patrol to help us get a sense of the safety experience of staff and students as they arrive on campus in the morning. If anyone has driven around campus in the morning, it's very busy. We made some awesome special safety project recommendations that are already in process, and we drafted a letter to share with all members of the campus community, signed by the 3 school leaders. It's a lot of work, but it's worthwhile.
- **STAFFING UPDATE:** We have 10 new teachers, potentially 11. We have a final candidate for a vacancy and we're meeting that candidate tomorrow and hoping that we can lock that in. We have a new Parent Coordinator, Kai Boxill, a new school aide, 2 new OTs, and a new a speech provider. E.D. is meeting with every new staff member monthly to do a check-in with them - it's something that's part of one of his goals. We're also considering bringing on some additional supports in Structured Literacy, and the new teachers are going through their OG training now. We want to free-up C. Otterbeck and the coaches a little bit more to go into non-structured

literacy-specific observations. E.D. will be bringing that to the next *Academic Committee* meeting.

- **KINDERGARTEN UPDATE**: We restructured the Kindergarten schedule a little bit, we're noticing that little feet take longer to get to the cafeteria, they need more snack time, and they need more break time. This is our 1st year with Kindergarten classes and it's a learning experience. We had a special meeting with Kindergarten families at *Back-to-School Night*, which went really well; he offered a thank you to the Academic Team who came in on Saturday and restructured the whole Kindergarten classroom.
- **DYSLEXIA AWARENESS MONTH**: October is Dyslexia Awareness Month, and we kick into gear with some very targeted professional learnings: the Reading League Conference, and the International Dyslexia Association Conference. The NYS Charter School Conference is coming up and we're doing some particular professional learnings here on campus around the reading brain, reviewing and deep diving into the knowledge and practice standards of reading from the International Dyslexia Association and the Big 6 Pillars of Literacy. These are things that our staff needs to be really familiar with - how can we branch that out to other members of the campus community? On October 1st there's a hearing being held at the Windward School, hosted by the NYS Dyslexia Awareness Task Force offering feedback on guidance that they're issuing/advocating. As part of engaging our students' families around advocacy, we're inviting them and offering to provide transportation for parents to get to the event.
- **SEARCH FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER**: E.D. received a proposal today from Storbeck Search, the highly regarded search firm that is under consideration to support us in the search for our permanent instructional leader. It's something that we talked about at the summer strategy session. He will review their proposal thoroughly and then share it with members of the *Executive Committee* to be discussed at the next regular board meeting.
- **SUPERPOWER MENTORS UPDATE:** We have some really promising feedback from families of alumni, talking about their good engagement with Superpower Mentors, which the board prioritized in the last budget, making sure that graduating 5th grade students are getting mentors. We're having a check-in call with Superpower Mentors next week to get some preliminary data to share with the board members.
- **TEST DATA IN ELA & MATH**: Although he can't share state test data specifically at this time, but you may haver read about declines in ELA scores across the city, and there was some criticism about the new changes regarding reading curriculum. We are not immune, and there was a very small (under 1% point) decrease in our ELA scores, which is obviously not what we want. However, we are really excited to have a very promising growth in Math - a 9% point increase in overall Math proficiency, which is triple what we saw previously. Our rate of growth particularly increased with students with disabilities - an 8% point increase. This will help us narrow a larger gap between the district's scores and the school's scores. We have to continue to focus on ELA, but with the new curriculum and some of the changes we made last year, it looks really promising.

B.

Update from the Family Association

D. Medina gave the following *Family Association* update:
We're having a slow start to the new school year. Our Executive Board has not meshed perfectly yet. We're getting to closer, we're getting there. Our 1st meeting is next week. We have the same people being active; some are doing everything but we're trying to pull other people onto our board. Some parent members are new and we don't really know them that well, but we have a good plan for the year. We have some events set up: Pumpkin Patch and Trunk-or-Treat in October and we set a calendar date for our Holiday Fair.
We're discussing different fundraising ideas. Right now we're doing a fundraiser with BJs Club. If you become a BJs member through our fundraiser, annual membership only costs $20. But if you apply directly with BJs, it's $25. Join through us, BJs membership costs $20 and until October 31st we get $10 every time someone becomes a BJ Club member through our *Family Association*. We put this fundraising information on our Facebook page and on our neighborhood website.

VI. Closing Items

A. Review of Action Items & Next Steps

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that we're going to follow up on our Board Goals development, sharing back with everybody.
T. Castanza and his team will continue to work on their School Goals.
No other items to follow-up.

B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano