APPROVED

Bridge Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday March 13, 2025 at 7:00 PM

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

3298 victory Blvd
Staten Island, ny 10314

Agenda Google Doc:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ejBJbqYfZ11jyF83GAEndFQ2lgHwGPqitHvrp5pjLew/edit?tab=t.0

Trustees Present
Amanda Wolkowitz, Deidre Medina, Geena Kuriakose, Mark Harmon-Vaught, Nicole DeStefano, Tara Gore (remote), Traci Frey

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
Tim Castanza

Guests Present
Cheryl Otterbeck, Kathy Baldassano (remote), Rebecca Peters (remote), Rose Marie Illuzzi

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I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Board member Rebecca Peters is participating via audio only and therefore not counted toward quorum or eligible to vote at 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 Thursday Mar 13, 2025 at 7:09 PM.

C. Approve Minutes

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board Meeting on 02-08-25.
G. Kuriakose stated if there is no objection, the motion to approve the minutes of the 02-08-25 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. Vote on 2025-26 calendar

Geena Kuriakose made a motion to approve the Bridge Preparatory Charter School Academic Calendar for 2025-2026 as presented to the Board at tonight's meeting.
Mark Harmon-Vaught seconded the motion.
T. Castanza shared the school's *Academic Calendar* for 2025-2026 with the Board and said that Bridge Prep continues to program instructional days in excess of the DoE district, as required by our Charter; we are scheduled for 182 instructional days next school year and for the first time our school year will end on the same date in the end of June as DoE schools. In January, DoE schools are scheduled to return to school from the holiday recess on Friday, January 2nd. However, due to push-back they are receiving, we anticipate that DoE will probably change that to January 5th; we proactively made January 2nd part of our holiday break and Bridge Prep will resume classes on January 5th; we are still able to meet 182 instructional days. Connect Saturday sessions will still be held, but are not considered to be instructional days and therefore don't appear on this *Academic Calendar*. We did include State test days which have a testing window from April 13th through May 15th. We will create a different calendar for families that contain dates for Connect Saturdays, 5th Grade Graduation events, Award Ceremonies and other school-wide events, which will also be posted to our website.
A question and answer session followed regarding events shown on the calendar.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. Committee Updates

A. Academic Committee

T. Frey gave the following update on topics covered at the last *Academic Committee Meeting* on March 3, 2025:

- **SCHOOL CALENDAR:** T. Castanza reviewed the school calendar for the committee, which the Board voted to approve at tonight's meeting.
- **STAFF CHANGES:** We have an upcoming teacher vacancy that we're hoping to fill soon; the teacher is moving. E.D. and the School Leadership Team have some paths they can follow to replace the teacher. We also need to hire a full-time ESL teacher for the upcoming school year.
- **PRINCIPAL SEARCH UPDATE:** The search committee has a meeting scheduled for March 20th, when they're going to produce additional candidates to the 3 candidates that they had at their last meeting. We hope that the new principal will be selected by the end of April or beginning of May. ***T. Castanza added the following update: The search committee will be considering approximately 10 candidates after another round of vetting and filtering; since we last spoke there was a bigger spike in interest in our principal job posting; it's been a very comprehensive search given the specific nature of our school. There probably won't be a perfect candidate since not many will check all the boxes, but we should have 10 strong candidates with the intent of whittling it down to 4 or 5 candidates for the final interview. That will be the work of the committee next week.*
- **ORGANIZATION CHART:** T. Castanza shared the new organization chart with the school staff and has been having one-on-one meetings with individuals who will be directly impacted by a change in title, a change in job description, or if their job is no longer on the organization chart and need to transition to a different role. The entire staff has been made aware of the changes.
- **SUMMER BOOST:** The application was completed except for some of the budgeting items. It's due tomorrow. They've embedded project-based learning. Busing transportation is key to get the students to the program, and that's something that we're hoping to have in place. ***T. Castanza added the following update: Thank you to Ms. Otterbeck for working with him to actually get that application done. We have requested approximately $97,000 in summer funding including money for bus transportation so we can have busing similar to what we have for Saturday Academy.*
- **MAP DATA:** We'll be diving into MAP mid-year data review at tonight's Board meeting with a deep-dive into the Data Dashboard.
- **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM CONFERENCE & RETREAT:** The school's Leadership Team is attending the National Charter Schools Conference (NCSC) held in Orlando, Florida in June and will be having a retreat - hopefully including the new principal.

B.

Academic Data Review - Data Dashboard

T. Castanza stated that we shared this student data with the *Academic Committee* at our meeting this month, and we made some tweaks to the data format specifically because we wanted to talk about more than just growth. We're getting away from this idea of only focusing on growth and really start talking about proficiency. We added some new metrics to focus on some of the student data and not spend a lot of time on student attendance. We can focus more on data that shows growth towards proficiency, since that is a metric that NYSED measures and one that is a really good gauge for us to know. As long as we're seeing growth towards proficiency, we're good. We will cover mid-year student assessment data obtained in January 2025 and we have until the State tests in April to continue this growth. He then gave the floor to C. Otterbeck to discuss the *Data Dashboard.*

C. Otterbeck shared the 2024-2025 *Data Dashboard* with the Board members. The following items were discussed:

- **INCIDENT REPORTING:** Most of the incidents reported are due to actions of our newest students (48 incidents); the levels shown are categories of consequence which have decreased significantly over the past 2 years. The data shows the percentage of new students in each grade: 2nd grade 66%; 3rd grade 38%; 4th grade 26% and 5th grade 10%. 1st grade and Kindergarten 100% new students. T. Castanza added that this new student data also indicates enrollment trends. This is actually showing us that the way that we're doing student recruitment is working because our goal is to take a higher percentage of new students into Kindergarten through grade 2. You'll see that the number goes down as they get closer to 5th grade and 10% new students in 5th grade is approximately only 5 or 6 children.
- **PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO MET OR EXCEEDED RIT SCORE:** The graphs indicate grade-wide growth and proficiency from beginning of year to middle of year. **Math:** Kindergarten 50%, 1st grade 64%, 2nd grade, 47%, 3rd grade 51%, 4th grade 52% and 5th grade 56%. **ELA:** Kindergarten 50%, 1st grade 46%, 2nd grade 55%, 3rd grade 52%, 4th grade 52% and 5th grade 72%. A student's RIT score represents their current achievement level, and the RIT scale tracks growth as students move through different grades and subjects. The RIT scale also shows the change in a student's RIT score over time. It assesses where the student technically stopped the year before, or the test before and it's based on the growth from there matched against the national average growth.
- **GROWTH & PROFICIENCY**: Graphs indicate 7% of our students are proficient in Math with another 4% above proficiency for a total of 11% of our students meeting or exceeding proficiency in Math. All growth is moving towards proficiency, but only 11% of our school is proficient in Math. 12% of the school is proficient in ELA, with 4% above proficiency for a total of 16% of our students are meeting or exceeding proficiency in ELA. Discussion followed regarding how to work with the students who are 2 years below proficiency, 1 year below proficiency and approaching proficiency. We are working toward having all students be proficient, but it's going to take time to get new students to that point, and many are not going to be proficient by this

April's State tests. How many kids can we move from either 1 year below proficiency or approaching proficiency to being proficient? Mid-year is the point where we look at what we need to adjust based on this data, so that we get the results we want to see. The teachers see the reports and are learning to use the MAP scores to know which students they need to focus on and work with to get them to the level of "meeting or exceeding proficiency". MAP data also tells teachers which standards students are not mastering so that teachers can go back and reteach. All this data can be overwhelming for a teacher; it's impossible to focus on all the standards, but it's important to identify the priority standards and make sure that students are at least proficient in those because that will be on the State tests. Classroom observations show that some teachers are doing too much talking, and the students aren't doing enough engaging. We realized that there are some classes that are doing it well, but there's some that aren't. And we're really putting a focus on creating lab classes so that teachers can come and see the classrooms that are working well; teachers can go in and see what we're talking about. One of our 5th grade classes with the best growth data had things happening in that classroom; the kids are learning, and they're doing it on their own. Some of them have tools and some of them don't need tools. Some students are with small groups in the back, and we're trying to facilitate that in every classroom. This is the first time some of our newer teachers are teaching in a school. They don't know what to do, and they're scared to try something new. The coaches are trying to tell them not to be afraid, that it's going to be hard but we have do this for the kids.

A question and answer session followed regarding: State test data; projected/expected rate of growth and how that is determined; growth towards proficiency; how students who already exceed their projected rate of growth are considered and assessed; what does "towards proficiency" mean; how the proficiency percentages add up; how the school leadership is using all this data to recalibrate the steps they're taking; what key levers the school is pulling both to drive the progress, and also to generate the urgency around the progress; the work that the team is doing as they look at their data and are targeting; is what we've been doing efficient and is it translating into results; are the students in after-school and summer session improving and moving forward; is the after-school program effective; the biggest hurdles for teachers on the ground; is the feedback that teachers getting correct and appropriate; are the teachers implementing the feedback that they're getting and if not, is there any accountability.

C. Finance Committee

R. Peters gave the following update on the topics covered at the *Finance Committee Meeting* on March 11, 2025:

- **INSURANCE**: T. Castanza gave some updates on insurance policies and an annual review of what's new there.
- **BUDGET:** We talked about the budget and initial thoughts on the first draft of the budget is that it looks really good. It's conservative, but not too conservative. We

are buffering for an increasing amount per pupil, but not the full amount in terms of number of students. She actually likes the number we're at. Historically, we're under-budgeted. We're always under budget of our actual student count. But she thinks this number is a really good one. It's also really nice to see the new organization chart reflected in the budget. There's also a lot of flexibility for the new principal coming in; there's options in terms of line items. We can move things if the principal wants to focus on certain areas. The *Finance Committee* is still reviewing the budget. We'll give comments back to E.D. and Josh Moreau, and we'll be approving the final budget in the months to come.

- **INVESTMENT POLICY:** We wanted to have the investment policy approved at tonight's Board meeting, but the *Finance Committee* has not had enough time to truly digest it before we implement a policy that will become a part of our audit. There are internal controls that our auditor expects to have, which are still being drafted. We just want to make sure that our investment policy is something we're going to commit to and follow. That is why it's not yet updated, but what we have so far has been shared with the Board. If Board members have any comments on the investment policy, feel free to let the *Finance Committee* know.
- **RECRUITING:** We discussed that topic briefly, but we are okay in that area.

D. Governance Committee Report & Board Recruitment Check In

M. Harmon-Vaught stated that he and N. DeStefano had started the discussion on Board governance and recruitment last month at the strategy session, but due to the rich and full discussion at that meeting, we didn't get to cover everything. We asked the Board members to complete a survey that was a quick inventory of members' skills. This is different from the Board Assessment Survey, which is still being filled out and should be submitted soon as you can. But the Member Inventory was more about the specific domain knowledge that Board members bring to our roles to help us with future recruitment. We took the skills inventory forms and fed them into a GPT model that was designed to look at best practices from charter schools, our specific charter school, and our specific board composition. It gave us some recommendations on areas to focus on as we recruit additional board members as well as some potential ways of doing that. He added the results to the agenda just prior to tonight's meeting and which has been printed out for the people here tonight and can be accessed by people attending remotely via the link on the agenda. He asked that everyone take a few minutes to read the Member Inventory results entirely generated by GPT. The survey that we completed asked us for to rank ourselves (no expertise, some expertise, moderate expertise and deep expertise) on various metrics within 5 domains. GPT analyzed it to find our key areas. The strengths were in financial knowledge and educational practices. We have knowledge in the community engagement area, and we have some good knowledge in Board governance. The one domain that fell below the strengths of the Board was legal and policy experience, which isn't surprising. It identifies our Board's expertise gaps. He then asked everyone to share what they notice about the inventory results.
Discussion followed: we've lost our legal expert on the Board; we have some education expertise, but not necessarily specific to dyslexia intervention; fundraising was always

something that we talked about as an area of need so that isn't surprising; we have expertise in certain areas but we're also missing knowledge in charter school areas, such as charter school financial and legal; we have broad knowledge, but not very specific to charter schools. We could direct Board recruitment strategy towards educational law firms or local pro bono networks, and to recruit specific candidates in the legal field. Considering that we are a charter school is very crucial because it drives what we do and growing the Board will allow us to bring in not only new members with specific skills, but also other wide-ranging community members and help raise community awareness; we can look at other successful charter schools' boards to see who is on those boards; what makes a good charter school board and what is their make-up of members. We need to start thinking about specific events we attend and find people there that we want to recruit for our Board.

M. Harmon-Vaught added that there are a few more potential recruitment strategies such as engaging with law firms and literacy organizations that we could tap into or church school associations. We need to think about how we can do this in a concerted way, because best practices recommends that we can consider growing our Board by 2 or 3 additional members, and acknowledging that we have a constantly changing Board due to term limits. The *Board Governance Committee* will need to codify a set of particular recruitment strategies. This was really just to open the conversation on this topic. We should do a follow-up conversation on this topic and have an open *Governance Committee Meeting* so that anyone who wants to join can help us strategize there.

III. Other Business

A. Leadership Team Role Descriptions

T. Castanza shared a document with written descriptions of the school's leadership team roles. Just as a review for the Board because we're still working on hiring and we want the Board to feel free to ask what does one role do compared to another role. He added the principal's role description as part of this working document as we create new job descriptions. You can see the key information core in some of the job descriptions. It's really not an item for discussion, as much as it is just for Board review. If you have questions about any of the descriptions feel free to reach out and we can talk about them.

B. Family Association Update

D. Medina gave the following *Family Association* report:

- The *Association* is in a lull right now but we're moving forward and meeting with T. Castanza next week to plan our year ahead.
- We are talking about what kind of Read-a-Thon event we want to work on; there is some back-and-forth debate on whether we want to hold a huge platform-based fundraiser or just a smaller event like we did last year. We've been discussing the different benefits of doing it each way. We plan on meeting next week and will decide what to do and plan out the rest of the year's events.

- We are holding a Bake Sale on Monday, and all Board members are invited to come to the Bake Sale.

IV. 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 8:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Baldassano

Documents used during the meeting

- SY2526 BPCS School Calendar - SY2526 School Calendar.pdf
- SY2425 BP Data Dashboard .pdf
- BPCS Board Experience & Recruitment Report.pdf
- Senior Leadership Team Job Responsibilities.pdf