



MWA Board Report

September 2020

MWA Chief Executive Officer Report

Alton B. Nelson, Jr.

WHAT

To **Re-open the Campus** we are optimizing for the following three areas:

1. *Safety*
2. *Teaching and learning*
3. *Social-emotional development and support*

Dr. Ward-Jackson is continuing to orient her leadership team and staff around these three important aims. As stated in our last board meeting, we need to plan for a variety of phases to best support students while also being responsive to our three areas of optimization. I continue to pay attention to state, local, and national reporting, as well as conversations with colleagues, to inform our decisions and the iterations of our plans.

A challenge continues to be ongoing and almost weekly changes to requirements by the state and by the CA Department of Education. Recent examples include a change from the countywide watch list to a more nuanced tiered system with different and less restrictions at each tier (<https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/#reopening-data>). While providing for more flexibility for businesses and schools, it also heightens the responsibility to make good decisions. We will need to be confident in our cohort model for students and adults, our campus safety protocols, and our notification protocols in the event a student, staff member, or parent contracts the virus.

The **School-wide Reorganization** process has started in earnest as all of the key senior leaders have been hired or promoted (or filled in the interim by internal candidates) into senior leader positions. The plan to move to a school-wide structure “feels” better as it is clear that we are under one leader, with one vision and one system. Under the new plan, Dr. Ward-Jackson has six direct reports, providing her more time, ultimately, to focus on big picture levers and impact. Newly configured teams and leaders need more time to adjust to new roles and responsibilities, and time to learn how to work together. Early successes include alignment and focus on teaching and learning practices and systems. However, there are still areas of growth in communication. For example, what triggers communication and at what level of urgency should it occur.

The Impact of Distance Learning and Working is mixed. We all miss working on campus, seeing students daily, and working alongside our colleagues. Even more so, the cumulative effect, for our students and staff, is a sense of isolation. It is important that we keep this as a top priority to continue to monitor and address. Its importance cannot be underestimated.



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SO WHAT

- ***Social-emotional Support.*** We have to continue to pay attention to how students, staff, and parents are doing and do what we can to provide supports and/or referrals to resources to try to meet everyone where they are. If the fabric of relationships and overall well-being deteriorate, it has an impact on the community in a variety of ways – from decision-making to more significant outcomes related to self-harm and distress. Recent national discussion has centered on students' need for both peer and adult interaction.
- ***Systems and Communication.*** Despite many long-standing relationships within the community – both personal and professional – we must continue to monitor system responsiveness and communication. Our “early warning systems” rely on having timely information to inform what we are doing, how we are doing it, and at what level of urgency we are doing it. One might predict that working remotely would diminish the kinds of issues that come up in the workplace, but the opposite is true. Strong communication competency and trust is required when you have less information to inform perceptions and experiences, which typically come from body language and other forms of non-verbal cues. It is important that we pay attention to this as we could be in Phase 1 and 2 for long portions of the year.

NOW WHAT

- ***Metrics.*** Develop metrics with MWA leadership to help us monitor our optimization areas of safety, teaching and learning, and social-emotional development & support.
- ***Training & Support.*** Provide for regular intervals of training for supervisors and key leaders and routine check-ins to assess how calibrated we all are on communication norms and professional expectations.
- ***Strategic Plan.*** Work with Patrick (MWF CEO) and MWA and CAP senior and exec leaders to work on and monitor the progress of the strategic plan and Year 1 milestones.
- ***Compliance Requirements.*** Continue to monitor updates from the Governor and the CA Department of Education on changes and updates on expectations and requirements related to funding, school opening conditions and criteria, and reporting expected.
- ***Campus Opening Decisions.*** Executive leadership and the Board will have to be deliberate and thoughtful in supporting decisions to allow for full or partial reopening of the campus. Still to be resolved is the potential exposure to liability for board members and executive leaders if families or staff file lawsuits related to the impact of COVID and school operations. In addition, the politicization of charters suggests we are vulnerable to public opportunistic attacks that could muddy the pathway for renewal in a couple of years.



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Goals for 2020-21

1. Discuss, develop, and agree on definitions, goals, and metrics in a set of cascading MOCHAs (a delegation framework – Managers, Owners, Contributors, Helpers, and Approver) in the areas of:
 - a school-wide instructional philosophy
 - innovation in teaching and learning practices
 - social emotional development practices
 - insights into the experiences of our Black stakeholders at MWA (students, parents, staff, and alumni)
2. Co-lead the Strategic Plan Program Committee, with Patrick, to meet Year 1 milestones and goals of the new strategic plan. Examples include expanding college access education back to earlier grades at MWA (e.g. as early as 5th grade) with targeted programming for parents and students and identifying unique instructional practices and innovations to be able to share with others.

While relatively straightforward, these two goals are interrelated and comprehensive. They are responsive to stakeholder feedback in 2019-20, the strategic plan development process, and the joint letter Patrick and I composed making commitments, institutionally, to address systemic racism and racial equity.