APPROVED

Believe Memphis Academy

Minutes

Board Retreat

Date and Time
Thursday April 3, 2025 at 8:00 AM

Location
1672 E Alcy Rd, Memphis, TN 38114

Directors Present
A. Norman, B. Moritz (remote), D. Reed, E. Eber, F. Jones, J. Causey, J. Torres, J. Turner, M. Mason

Directors Absent
None

Guests Present
John, K. Green, M. Cowan

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Norman called a meeting to order on Thursday Apr 3, 2025 at 9:20 AM.

B. Record Attendance

C. Breakfast

Meeting kicked off at 8am with casual conversation and breakfast. Ice breakers/team building from 8:45 - 9:15

II. Board Retreat

A. Connection Building

Meeting kickoff at 9:20
Team building review — how does this relate to the board?
Addressing skills of current board — input information into Board on Track (Matt sending reminder with screenshot of how-to). We need to find the gaps and work to fill them.

Review of mission, vision, and core values

Why does Believe exist?
To correct the injustice of underserved populations, specifically Black/Brown students in low-income areas of Memphis.

What's Believe's niche?
We provide opportunities our students and staff wouldn't be afforded if we didn't exist.

We want to provide more opportunities.

Conversation around niche + reality:
Brad: Why are teachers included in the niche?
Matt: Because we need to be developing and growing our staff to grow Believe.
Alicia: On a committee for staff recruitment with the city…. Staff need to be nurtured like our students. A lot of teachers are leaving. There's a national teacher shortage because we haven't been giving them what they need. Believe teachers have 2 planning periods — part of how Believe creates a retention strategy.
Matt: There are so many uncontrollable factors. Education is tough.

- Parent engagement. Growing friction between parents and schools.
- Federal government: what is the dismantling of the department of education? Uncertainty.
- Challenging behaviors in kids.

Matt: We're being more particular about staffing and interviews.

B. Vision Casting

10 year target: Land of Opportunity
We want to become opportunity makers.

Professional Development for teachers: revenue builder + sharing learnings.

Conversation around targets:

Things that excite us —
Academics

- 90% of 3rd graders reading on level
    - We have to consider we are taking ***all*** students which can impact the ability to reach these goals. If the kinder students don't have prek experience, they are already behind.
- By saying we want to have advance math, we may be putting kids on different tracks. If we don't offer it, our kids will find it somewhere else.
- Why not advanced science. Advanced math, etc.
- John: White Station model of honors vs regular. Tracks. The charters who have hit high numbers — they'll take all kids but we'll spend a 6 hour on Saturday to work on reading comprehension. Not willing to do it? Not going to cut it here. We need buy-in. A KIP model. Are there enough takers of this approach to retain our enrollment?
- Matt: We need to be up front about who we are so people know what they're signing up for. Important for staff and families.
- Alicia: You have to have the parents' involvement and include their voice. Get them in the early years. What's the highest school outcome to compare?
    - Matt: Success Academy in NY was a model for some of this. Model of growing students and having high achiever. If we have a student from pre-k through 3rd, we are designing their education experience. If we can retain 90% of those pre-k students, we should have them on grade level. If not, it's no one's fault but ours.
- Alicia: Harlem Children's based on KIP.
- John: Buy-in leads to retention. We see this with Cornerstone but they have a 50% turnover of students annually. In the early days with KIP, they were attracting kids from 30 miles away.

Facilities

- Jazmin: Environment reflects the attitude. A beautiful space boosts morale.
    - Extracurriculars are key. Let students shine where they can. Kids will meet the academic standards set to be able to pursue their joy/their passion.

- Emily: Recruiting tool for students + staff.

Areas for pause:

- Emily: Learning hub + mini-teacher college + leader residencies. Leveraging existing orgs and tools.
- Alicia: Don't want to turn people away, but it's hard to do.

3 Year Target:

What excites us & concerns us

Alicia: **Pre-k and SEL.** Both foundational to reaching that 90% reading goals. Pre-k is the foundation. Head start grant for 26-27. Push that back a year.
Emily: Hesitation for 2 year launch vs 3 year. Alicia is confident in being able to do it.
Alicia: Hoping for 2 classes of 20 with 2 teachers per class. Head Start grant — Porter Leath is going to get half or all. Has visited dozens of schools to implement the funding and programs.
Matt: Want us to be prepared, be ready. Want to remain focused. We're 2 years of adding grades back to back, wanted a 2 year break before adding again.
Florence: It seems like the opportunity is presenting itself. It's in line with our long term goals.
Diane: It makes sense for us to reach 30% reading level, for us to sooner implement pre-k.
Torres: Year one needs to establish SEL strategy. That's a year 1 must. Implement ASAP. Have a plan that's morphing and growing as the years go. But launch in this school year. Assisi Foundation has a curriculum we now have all the rights to.

John: **Concern about the growth of 3rd grade literacy**.
Matt: We don't have the 3rd grade numbers. They're doing fine on phonics but struggling on academic and nonfiction reading. If students continue their growth pattern, we should have approx 30% of students at reading level. Wouldn't be surprised if this year's 2nd graders outperform the 3rd graders this year.
Alicia: This is our first year of 3rd grade so we can't expect them to be on grade level. To transfer in at 3rd grade, they could be 2-3 grades behind. This is going to be a tough year for them.
Matt: Support from All Memphis increasing next year. Coaching teachers bi-weekly. Reading specialist support for students. This year we have more tutoring to hit TCAP goals. 3rd graders are all being pulled during intervention for additional support. Short-term after school tutoring to "beat the test." As of now, not keeping the after school

tutoring for next year because it's not the in the annual budget. Trying to figure out how to best partner with MAM. Our enrollment stays where it is because of MAM. It helps bridge the gap for the school and parents.

John: Reviewing performance of students who are lifers vs transfers. Can we review it in sections?
Matt: We don't always have the ability to do it quickly.

Matt: 4 of 25 3rd graders are second timers because of 3rd grade law (literacy act where students have to be reading on level by 3rd grade according to TCAP. They can move forward by taking a second assessment and passing, retaking TCAP, or summer learning academy).

Emily: thoughts on landmark opportunities to share.

III. Board Meeting

A. Approve January Minutes

F. Jones made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 01-14-25.
D. Reed seconded the motion.
The team **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Approve February Minutes

E. Eber made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 02-25-25.
D. Reed seconded the motion.
The team **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Org Chart

Matt reviews the organizational chart. Eliminates the assistant principal roles and adding a Managing Director of Academics and reading support specialists. Making the MDA a contract role, not salary. Supports curriculum and leadership development.

Alicia: We are officially voting to approve this org chart based on prior conversations. Questions? Concerns?
Chart based on 502 enrollment. Lower if k-5, Middle is 6-8. In lower we have 2 classes per grade and middle has 3 classes per grade.
502 is budgeted enrollment, 535 is targeted enrollment. If we hit 530, we would only add an in-building substitute.
J. Torres made a motion to approve the Organizational Chart.

M. Mason seconded the motion.
The team **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. SY 25-26 Calendar

Review 2025-26 School Calendar

Calendar is very similar to MSCS this year. Start the same day and get out the same day. Same fall, winter, and spring breaks.
Our teachers come back earlier due to more intense trainings and development.

175 total number of instruction days. Municipalities utilizes stockpiled PD days. MSCS implemented 175 this year, but teachers have more days. Day is not extended but now we have less snow days — used to have 13, now we have 8. If we go over 8, we add makeup days.

Jeremy asked if PD days revolved around grading/report card deadlines. Asked about parent teacher conferences. Having 2.
J. Turner made a motion to approve the 25-26 School Calendar.
J. Causey seconded the motion.
The team **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

E. Finance & Development Update

Finance update in binder: pg 3 notes. Per pupil amount was lower than expected in March 2025, surplus decreased from $240k to $145k.
Fundraisings:

- $10k from Slingshot
- $10k from CFL
- $10k from ? Jeremey contact.
- $50k from Fleetwood committed, coming in April
- A few smaller grants, $5k from Technology Happens
- Submitting to match but they’re pushing back on a few things.

Conversation around budget: projected teachers at max amount they’d be hired at.
Next year we’re budgeted with a $30k surplus, working on getting it to $100k-150k.

We’ll dig deeper into the budget in June, but wanting to make sure we’re keeping eyes on things.

IV. Closing Items

A. Closing: Board Business

Alicia: today's win was every member attended in some way!

B. Lunch

C. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Norman

Believe Memphis Academy Charter School prepares students in grades Kindergarten-8 with the academic rigor, robust supports, and leadership development necessary to excel in high school, thrive in college, and lead lives full of opportunity.