

APPROVED



## Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport

### Minutes

#### GOBPT April Monthly Board Meeting

---

**Date and Time**

Wednesday April 19, 2023 at 5:15 PM

**Location**

Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport  
375 Howard Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06605

---

**Directors Present**

Bea Bagley (remote), Bob Carlson, Christopher Mcmillan (remote), Corey Sneed (remote), David Zieff (remote), Diane Gordon (remote), Selena Morgan (remote)

**Directors Absent**

Eva Vega, Tenssie Ramsay

**Guests Present**

Benjamin Chan (remote), Janay Garrett, Jean Lombardi (remote), John Scalice

---

**I. Opening Items****A. Record Attendance & Begin Recording Meeting (if remote participants are present)****B. Call the Meeting to Order**

Bob Carlson called a meeting of the board of directors of Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport to order on Wednesday Apr 19, 2023 at 5:21 PM.

### **C. Approve March meeting Minutes**

Corey Sneed made a motion to approve the minutes from GOBPT March Monthly Board Meeting on 03-08-23.

Christopher Mcmillan seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## **II. Governance Committee**

### **A. Executive Director's Report**

J. Scalice gave a high level overview of today's meeting

- Career & College Class
- Data Update
- Enrollment Update

#### **Career and College Pathway**

J. Scalice shared next AY plans for the "Great Oaks College Academy" School of education, equity and activism. J. Scalice described it as a place where students are going to gain specific skills in terms of educational methods, policy implementation and creation, discussing location and national issues, understanding the creation and implementation of systems, where there are potentials for inequity. The focus is understanding that an educated populace can transform ac community and how in various different professions, are we able to communicate that need and urgency around changing where we are now.

In this school, there will be college opportunity, to be dual enrolled with either Fairfield University or Post University, they will be taking at least 18 college credits at no cost if they begin in the 10th grade, they will have an opportunity to take up to 60 college credits by 12th grade and earn an associates degree. This is designed to prepared them for college courses around law, policies, education, social work, or social advocacy.

Students will take their non-dual enrolled courses in the morning, and their dual enrolled courses in the afternoon. The teaching will be done by teachers already on staff so they can earn both the high school and college credit.

Teachers who are teaching theses courses will be taking courses with post university over the summer in order to get the accreditation they need from post to be able to deliver those classes. Students will have lots of support to complete this coursework, including Americorps fellows, after school support, and extended time during the school day;

Each of these courses will offer applied learning to solve real-world problems in schools and community. Students will be looking at our disciplinary policy to make recommendations, our grading policy for equity considerations, and they will also be working with our social justice day which takes place every April.

J. Scalice shared the steps to admission into the program & general requirements, number of students who can participate, etc. This will be the first year we are doing this as a school and we are starting with a single cohort.

Students can apply for early decision or school year decision (modeled after undergraduate college applications). They will receive early decision by beginning of June. If there are remaining seats, school year decisions will come by August 2023.

B. Carlson had a question about the finance, science and math courses. J. Scalice shared that the math is built into the teaching methods course, finance through policy, and science is being taken as a non-dual enrolled course. Our 2nd career and college pathway, which will roll out in 2025, is our health sciences program. The allied health and sciences will be a career track for students who might want to enter the workforce immediately, with a paramedics certification or a CNA certification.

Dr. S. Morgan asked about the program being limited to 22 students and asked about total enrollment. J. Scalice noted that we have 200+ students, but this is the first year we are rolling it out. J. Scalice indicated that the hope is that the program will grow and the school will be able to cohort by grade, and offer an entry point every year. For now, we are starting with a single cohort.

D. Zieff shared great excitement and awe for the work that continues to happen at the school, including this program.

C. Sneed & D. Zieff asked a few questions about costs/financial impact, grant opportunities, and additional funding to launch and maintain the career and college pathway.

J. Scalice noted that the first two years will be assumed by the Barr grant, for the 18 college credits. We are currently enrolling at Post University at \$100 per credit, so the cost is \$1800 per student over the next three years for the students that are enrolled with Post. We are in negotiation with other partners, that may undertake those college credits (not PostU) at no cost. We are aiming to make this a 0 cost program.

60 college credits at a significantly reduced cost would also be at the \$100/credit line. So for the next two years there will be 0 cost associated to the school, and no cost to FTE because we are using current staff; with the reduction of class size based on the enrollment of these students, we are able to repopulate classrooms and reassign teachers so we are not hiring additional staff for the academy.

C. Sneed also sees this program within a program as a potential funding opportunity - being able to speak specifically to the work of this program at the school. C. Sneed also asked, would we have to make any organizational or structural changes in order to implement this program to then seek out grant opportunities specifically for this program.

J. Scalice responded expects that it'll depend on this success of this first cohort and the data that is produced from this first cohort. Especially when it comes to 10th graders entering college level courses, grant opportunities are going to see what the success rate was for those courses and the relationship with the university. Even Barr is looking at this success rate for those students in regards to extending funding opportunities in the future years.

C. Sneed noted that we would have to put together an entire packet just to market this program specifically. He wanted to ensure we didn't need to make any formal organizational or structural changes to officially implement this program in order to qualify for certain grants. E.G. if the great oaks college academy wasn't formally organized under the school. J. Scalice noted this is something we can look into.

D. Zieff asked for clarification about Barr grant funding timeline, and whether or not we could co-raise additional funding for the career and college pathway without hindering/limiting the Barr grant funding. J. Scalice confirmed that additional contributions would not impact our Barr grant. D. Zieff agrees that this is a phenomenal funding opportunity and a great opportunity for our students. D. Zieff wondered if we needed a target completion rate and/or implications for success.

J. Scalice noted that we are under the Barr foundation's innovative education grant, so a lot of what they are looking at are programs that aren't being done elsewhere or haven't taken root elsewhere, to get data to see if they are replicable models. So part of that has been around tutoring model (Imbedded tutors as opposed to a standalone tutoring model), some of the carrer and college pathway work we started doing with them before we applied for this grant, and also the way we structure our classes. That made us a school of innovation within the scope of the Barr grant, nationally in 21-22. What they are looking out of this portfolio now, is innovative ideas and data showing that it's working, it's not related to the funding.

D. Zieff wanted to know if we wanted to get funding for each student, what would the cost per student per year be - J. Scalice noted that it would be \$900 at the minimum if they were only to take the 9 credits per year.

D. Zieff asked if he wanted to name a "David Zieff scholar," for example, would he be able to to give \$100 to cover the cost of 1 of the 32 students, etc. etc. across funders, is this feasible to then try to get 32 people to cover 32 students, emphasizing this as an excellent opportunity.

J. Scalice noted that it's 22 students, not 32 since we don't yet have space for 32! D. Zieff noted the board + school should set a goal of covering at least 1/2 of the student costs.

J. Scalice gave a PSAT/ SAT update as well - Spring scores just came out. J. Scalice wanted to highlight the significant improvement on PSAT scores. This is the 2nd class of students taking tradition PSAT/SAT

In fall 2022, the average PSAT score was 738, compared to the CT averages of 942. J. Scalice noted of course, that there's a lot of learning loss and work our students have to do, so we created an SAT class, with embedded Math & ELA recovery. The team also spent a significant amount of time focusing on Data Study by students- giving students their actual report data, giving them an opportunity to comb through their data to make improvements, make their own improvement targets, and work with the teacher who is leading the SAT class on how to make improvements, to gain study skills and ownership over their learning.

What we found is that our spring SAT average went up from 738 in the fall to 807 this spring, which is a 69 point growth. 7.4% growth overall. What we saw in terms of growth scores, CT average went up to 980, they had a 2.1% growth score. Non magnet BPT average was 774 with a 1.6% growth score.

J. Scalice shared that they see the data as reflecting the value of the SAT class and they're asking, how to build on that value. Leveraging Barr grant and community opportunities, we have already set up Saturday opportunities starting in fall for SAT preparing students scheduled for 23-24 at no cost to the students as well as no cost to the school. That will be in addition to the embedded SAT course. This was our 2nd year for PSAT. The PSAT Data will also be uploaded into the student data portfolio - we did get the Panorama data studio, it's everything the board wanted it to be and more.

### **Quick data highlights**

53% suspension reduction from this time last year (April 2022)

52-73% Middle School students showing proficiency in high leverage SBAC Indicators in ELA (based on exact path data, waiting on IAB data now) - ***on target for the 10-12pt. proficiency growth score***

Of note: We had 14% of students still reflecting a below average score - we had huge movement from below performing into approaching performing range

33% Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism from this time in April 2022

Data in terms of academic, absenteeism and suspension reduction is all showing strong positive trends for end of year

## **B. Director of Operations Report**

### **Enrollment Update**

One of the things we've talked about, year over year, challenges of getting 6th grade seats, a long waiting list for 7th grade and understandably so, parents love the K-5 at BPT public schools, and understandably so, it's very inviting, but in 6th grade kids start to experience more peer challenges, more instances inside the classroom or between schools, so by end of 6th grade parents are most frequently looking for a change for their students.

#### 6th grade Change

- Reduction of Seats Available from 100 to 75 - more inline with our target, by June we are usually looking at 85 application or so
  - Removes need to redistribute unfilled seats to other grades in September
  - Removes potential funding shortfalls and uncertainty
  - Reduces FTE
  - Increases entry opportunities for Grade 7 (Large Waitlist) in 2024-2025

#### Impact

- Increases Grade 9 by 12 seats (largest Waitlist)
- Increases Grade 10 by 10 seats (Large Waitlist)
- Allows seat opportunities to upperclassmen
- Does not add additional FTE through Distribution
- Improves Space Allocation Schoolwide

### **Current Enrollment Dashboard**

Grade 6 - Currently 55 seats Filled (74% according to new model)

Grade 7 - Filled - Waitlist 27 students

Grade 8 - Filled - Waitlist 38 students

Grade 9 - Filled - Waitlist 108 students

Grade 10- Filled - Waitlist 23 students

Grade 11- Filled - Waitlist 6 students

Grade 12- Filled - Waitlist 5 students

Total Waitlist - 207

C. Sneed noted that this was something they spoke about prior to moving into new building - getting the school to the point where the waitlist continues to grow, and we are trending in that direction!

J. Scalice projects that once the college academy moves forward this will likely increase significantly more.

C. Sneed noted that at least revenue will remain consistent and we eliminated the concern of not filling seats.

### III. Finance Committee

#### A. Finance Committee Updates

B. Chan reviewed the reforecast numbers versus actual

**Revenue:** We have not drawn against what we have actually budgeted, so we have additional revenue we can pull from as needed (Esser for example, which is a multi year grant). Everything is on track.

**Salaries:** Tight controls, we are under budget which is good practice, anticipating summer school pay for teachers.

**Facilities:** We are spending more than budgeted, in part due to the work it requires to maintain and repair the building we are in now. Utilities costs are also high, along with custodial. The school is working on assessing energy usage. The current position that we are in, we are only looking to improve, get our reserves up (goal of 1 mo.)

Dr. S. Morgan asked about GOBPT funding; she wanted to know if, as a charter school, the school is also funded by the state or not.

J. Scalice shared that GOBPT is funded at 11,250 per student at the state level. J. Scalice shared that we get disbursements every quarter and that funding is based and our October 1 student enrollment through PSIS. For students that received special Education Services, we receive quarterly funding through Bridgeport, based on LEA disbursement. The state funds Bridgeport for the entire population of Special Education Students, which is why our PPTS are with Bridgeport and technically under the control of Bridgeport Public schools, they're receiving services at our school, at the Bridgeport rate.

Dr. S. Morgan asked about the references to separation. J. Scalice shared that as a charter school, we work with our foundation (Ben, Jean, etc.). they provide back office services that someone in Bridgeport public schools for example, would receive from Central Office - finance, HR, IT, etc. we also pay a fee for those services from the foundation, currently at 6%. So the idea of separation would be that our school in turn has central office function, back office support, and our relationship with the foundation would

change to a focus on the Americorps fellows and their fee, but we would no longer be paying a fee for the additional services.

## **B. Consent Agenda**

Bob Carlson made a motion to approve as a slate, the consent agenda for vendor approvals for the school.

Christopher Mcmillan seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

We did not review the 23-24 SY at a glance on the consent agenda because no one else on the board reviewed it at advance. It will be moved to the May meeting

## **IV. Foundation Updates**

### **A. Foundation Updates**

No updates from J. Lombardi at the foundation; no further updates from B. Chan

B. Chan did discuss doing a lot with a little and the need for further funding given the disparity/disparities in per pupil funding; and GOBPT has to pay rent as well. While the federal funds have helped the school tremendously and keeping a tight budget, further funding for education is essential.

B. Carlson asked J. Lombardi for her support in finding additional funding. J. Lombardi noted they're doing prospect research, but that the larger federal grants are the key. B. Carlson is concerned about when ESSER funding runs out.

C. Sneed asked B. Chan if he responded to our auditor - B. Chan confirmed that he will send out what's lingering.

## **V. Other Business**

### **A. New Business**

B. Carlson is concerned about increasing the physical security of the school; he suggested it should become a priority, through the retention of a designed or security company. He noted we have a duty to push the agenda of making the school as safe as possible, given the national tragedies across schools in the U.S. in the last year.

C. Sneed revisited the security grant, which L. Perkins was working on, in collaboration with L. Hubbard in this regard, but the board wants to ensure we do not lose sight of this. C. Sneed shared some of the ideas previously floated around increasing the security and safety of the school.

B. Carlson reiterated that keeping the kids safe is vital.



B. Bagley asked about routine lock downs, safety drills, etc. and the schedule/frequency of drills.

J. Scalice noted that the addition of two safety officers, the relationship with BPT SRO is strong, and BPT PD comes in to train staff and teachers.

Dr. S. Morgan had a comment, concerning her suggestion(s) to Bridgeport and now us, that cameras should not just be inside school buildings but also on the perimeter, so that you can actually catch/see/stop people before they gain access to the school building.

D. Zieff noted that every challenge we raised is an opportunity to gain private funding for the school.

B. Carlson asked about the role of the grant writer, or fundraising position and progress. C. Sneed asked for an update as well. J. Garrett noted that an RFP for a grant writer is ready to go when we clear the budget. C. Sneed and B. Carlson reiterated that while the foundation is he and should be supporting our fundraising efforts, we should aim to hire someone full time.

C. Sneed noted this role should be considered a revenue center not a cost center - the person can work with the foundation to uncover additional sources for funding, then be the led or point in the partnership to turn around. C. Sneed suggested we move forward with posting the grant writer position.

D. Zieff volunteered to chair a fundraising committee in the short run, and step out amongst the Fairfield community to raise funds for the school.

C. Sneed and D. Zieff discussed showing up to meetings for local funders as well, as an added step to securing funding for the school.

## **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 6:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Bob Carlson

---

To be amended per Governance Committee