

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday August 25, 2022 at 4:30 PM

Location

Join Zoom Meeting <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/j/87944697628?pwd=RE43LzRVRWhpVC9iOTBwZEZ4YS9NZz09>

Meeting ID: 879 4469 7628

Passcode: 912934

One tap mobile [+13126266799,,87944697628#](tel:+13126266799,,87944697628#)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 879 4469 7628

Find your local number: <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/u/k8aG053ZG>

Trustees Present

A. Errichetti (remote), D. Ford (remote), D. Fuller (remote), D. Janes (remote), M. Landon (remote), R. Martin (remote), R. Sela (remote), T. Maxey (remote), X. Delobato (remote)

Trustees Absent

A. Mendelson, L. Doherty

Guests Present

N. Gauthier (remote), R. Romano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Errichetti called a meeting of the board of trustees of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Aug 25, 2022 at 4:35 PM.

C. Approve minutes

D. Ford made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 07-28-22.

D. Janes seconded the motion.

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

II. Board Chair Report

A. Updates and Information

1.) Rachel is reviewing her contract with her lawyer and we will bring it to the September meeting for Board approval.

2.) The High School Grand Opening will be on September 1st from 5-7 p.m. We will have a presentation, a land acknowledgement, a gym dedication, and then enjoy refreshments and a tour of the building.

III. Executive Director Report

A. Early College Designation

Lily will inform the Board about the first part of our Early College designation process. It is a very heavy application but we have a lot of content from all the work we have been doing over the past two years. We are in a good position to submit a lot of our materials before the November deadline and get some great feedback.

Why does Early College designation matter?

- 1.) Official Recognition
- 2.) Funding and Resources
- 3.) Innovation and sustainability

We were asked to share our budget with Department of Education and the Board of Higher Education who are part of the Early College Joint Committee (ECJC - decision makers in this process) from that we received almost \$500,000 as part of an early college implementation grant.

Denise asks if there are other schools like this in Western, MA.

Lily says that we have programs at Commerce and Discovery (focused on IT).

Denise asks who will we be compared to?

Lily says we are unique in being a charter school that is doing this kind of work. Moving forward we may be compared to New Heights in Brockton, MA.

David asks if 9th graders will be taking college courses?

Lily says yes, they will start first semester with a college seminar class and then they will begin taking early college classes second semester (either Spanish I or Experimental Digital Imaging). College courses for 9th and 10th graders will take place at Veritas.

Denise asks about lingering issues for our high school students from the pandemic.

Lily says we have seen a significant rise in students needing math supports but we have created a schedule that accommodates that. We have already significantly reduced the amount of ELA support we will need through interventions and acceleration work we have done this year.

Lily identifies what DESE looks for in their review of schools applying for early college designation:

- 1.) Equitable Access
- 2.) Guided Academic Pathways
- 3.) Enhanced Supports
- 4.) Connection to Career
- 5.) Effective Partnerships

David asks if these courses are in addition to the regular courses or will there be a lighter load?

Lily says they will be meeting both high school and college course requirements simultaneously. All our students will be completing their high school requirements and some may go far beyond that.

Dale asks what will happen as the governorship turns over in the near future?

Lily says there are funds that have been put aside for early college and early college appeals to people across political lines for various reasons.

Lily says that we hope to be officially designated as an early college program by Spring 2023.

B. Proposed Resolution for the 2022-23 Student and Family Handbook

There have been some updates legally to certain policies over the last few years e.g. Title IX so we needed to update the handbook. Other changes to the handbook were based on making it more user friendly as we move forward.

Denise wonders who we would release 3rd party information to?

Rachel says we don't normally get these requests but with a high school we may get requests from the military, etc. One example of how we use it is to request mailing information for families from the Springfield Public Schools so we can promote Veritas during recruitment season.

David asks if every family gets a copy of the handbook?

Rachel says yes.

Ann asks about pregnancy (now that we will have high schoolers) and physical restraint?

Rachel says this is a good question and we need to consider how to accommodate this if and when it comes up. She also mentions that there are two small points in the handbook that need to be finalized (those are highlighted), nothing substantive. Secondly, we are required to have a restraint policy and train all of our staff in de-escalation with the hope and desire that we will never have to put our hands on a student.

Dale asks about cell phones?

Rachel says we have a lockbox where most students place their phones everyday. If we have an issue with students using their cell phone during school we usually take it and put it in the lockbox or talk to their parents. Cell phone usage will be a little different at the high school because we want to prepare students for college life where you will have your cell phone all the time. Also, we won't have a uniform at the high school but we will have a dress code.

Dale asks about use of locker rooms and bathrooms in terms of gender identity?

Rachel says we will have gender neutral bathrooms. We have them at the middle school as well.

Ann asks who the Title IX Coordinator is?

Rachel says it's Jonathan Swan.

C. Vote to Approve the 2022-23 Student and Family Handbook

D. Janes made a motion to approve and adopt the following School policies and procedures attached in the Student and Family Handbook as Appendices A through F: 1. Sexual Harassment Policy (Appendix I); 2. Grievance Procedure for Complaints of Sexual Harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Appendix J); 3. Civil Rights Harassment and Discrimination of Students Policy (Appendix G); 4. Civil Rights Discrimination and Harassment of Students Grievance Procedures for Non-Title IX Complaints (Appendix H) 5. Section 504 Grievance Procedures (Appendix K); 6. Restraint Prevention and Behavior Support Policy and Procedures (Appendix D).

R. Martin seconded the motion.

See above section.

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

D. Launching the 2022-23 School Year

Rachel says the first day of school is Monday and we are all very excited. The energy is really high and positive. Our new teachers came back on August 8th and had a week of training before the whole team joined on August 15th. Our founding high school team are experienced and really hit the ground running. There is still a lot to do like student orientation the first week of school but things are going well.

IV. Academic Achievement Committee

A. Academic Achievement Committee Report

Rachel and Rebecca update the committee about the previous academic achievement meeting where they talked a lot about professional development. Rachel shared the plan that we have been using for the last three weeks. There were separate sessions for the middle school and high school and times that we all came together as a large group. Topics included: De-escalation, LGBTQIA+ training, Diversity trainings, etc.

The committee also talked about our two new assistant principals and how we plan to support them this year and moving forward as neither of them have ever had formalized leadership training. Both our new assistant principals are on a multi-level, multi-year development plan. We are starting with compliance so they can start to see WHY we do things and WHY they are a part of our practice. Jonathan, Rachel and Amy are working on this together. We have also extended this opportunity to a few of our other leaders who have expressed an interest in being in a leadership role in the future.

Rebecca adds that the committee talked about a plan to continue to look at achievement data to inform decision making as we move forward this year.

V. Governance Committee

A. Accountability Plan 2022 with DESE Feedback

Rachel informs the Board that we received feedback from DESE related to our accountability plan. There won't be any big revisions just making our data collection and the metrics stronger. We should be able to finalize and get in front of the Board by the September meeting.

VI. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Denise updates the Board that this is the first month of our new fiscal year so there aren't many updates. Cash is down to \$350,000 but Lynne has been submitting funding requests for grants so we should be back up to about 1.2M once these come in. We had also borrowed \$230,000 on our line of credit and Lynne is figuring that we will be paying that down to zero in September with grant monies coming in.

In terms of revenue we are currently at 515 students and we budgeted for 505 so we have some leeway there but there will be some volatility in that number as we begin the school year. We also have contingency funds that will help us balance this.

As far as grants, we will finish with ESSER II by the end of this year and ESSER III will be used at 50% this year and the rest of the money will extend into fiscal 2024.

Lynne is also going to be creating a report that distinguished between high school and middle school expenses.

B. Audit Update

Denise informs the committee that the audit is proceeding very well. Lynne and Denise will be attending a fraud seminar as we receive more grant money.

C. Quarterly Investment Sub-Committee Meeting Update

Denise updates the committee that we have not had too many changes to the portfolio since last time. It is still in a defensive posture. For the year, the portfolio is down about 10%. We see some opportunities within fixed income coming in the near future. The long and the short of it for now is the economy is not "normal" right now. Rachel asks about which bond looks like it could have some growth in the future? Steve says it's part of the rational special situations income fund. Could add 3-6% to this holding come September. He also mentions that some of the buffer funds we own don't get fully priced until maturity. The September and January ones we bought should yield us a 3% upside if we

wait it out until January (unless the market goes down another 20%). All things considered, what we like is maximum flexibility, and we have that. We have a lot of cash and a lot of buffers for when the time comes.

VII. 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 5:54 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- Grand Opening Flyer Spanish.jpg
- Grand Opening Flyer English.jpg
- Veritas Board Resolution New School Policies.docx
- Student and Family Handbook SY22-23 FINAL.docx
- Financial Reports to the Board August.pdf