

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday March 14, 2024 at 8:30 AM

Location

Join Zoom Meeting <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/j/3131719731>

Committee Members Present

A. Errichetti (remote), R. Sela (remote)

Committee Members Absent

L. Doherty

Guests Present

A. Clark (remote), J. Swan (remote), N. Gauthier (remote), R. Romano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

R. Sela called a meeting of the Academic Achievement Committee of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Mar 14, 2024 at 8:34 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

A. Errichetti made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 02-08-24.

R. Sela seconded the motion.

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

II. Academic Achievement

A. Special Education Definitions & Achievement/Culture Data

Amy will be representing the guests we were supposed to have today.

The committee talks about leaving room at the end of these meetings to decide what information will be brought to the whole board.

Knowledge Building Session around Special Education:

- Differences between charter and district schools.
- Amy highlights the attachment: Parent Guide to Special Education - we can tune into a few helpful definitions and topics within this document.
- The committee discusses the data that we report on by subgroup.
- The "recovery path" is work being done post pandemic - there are goals set for us each year to get back to where we were pre-pandemic. Where we exceeded in all categories was special education and students with disabilities (SWD). Amy qualifies this data with a note: these students were doing so poorly previously that although there is progress, there is still work to be done.
- In ELA, all the subgroups are broken down and some students fit into multiple subgroups. Amy talks about what qualifies a student as high needs (The Massachusetts definition of high needs includes children with multiple risk factors: Children and parents with special needs. Children whose home language is not English. Families and children involved with multiple state agencies.)
- Math achievement, SWD met the target, most groups struggled. Again, Amy qualifies that the previous bar was low but we are happy to see them making progress.
- Science - SWD did the best but we are having a hard time finding qualified science teachers, it has been a challenging staffing situation.
- The committee looks at growth. Ann asks what "recovery path declined" means. Amy says, it means we went down.
- Rebecca notes that even though the group went down, each student in that group is not necessarily the same. This is comparing a snapshot in time of any 5th or 8th grade student. It is not a cohort comparison of specific students over time. Amy thinks the SWD group stays pretty much the same but we do see some change.

- Discipline data: In our reporting, the state is interested in the difference between special education and SWD as compared to the other students. The committee reviews this data. Amy talks about manifestation hearings that take place before discipline meetings for special education and SWD to make sure the incident is not a direct result of their disability, if it is, they will not be suspended.
- The committee reviews the attrition data related to special education and SWD. Rachel explains that in the past, the reason we would lose students in 6th and 7th was because they got into schools that went through high school but now that we have a high school, that shouldn't happen. Amy says what we can see from this data is that special education and SWD are not leaving the school at a higher rate than other students.
- Ann talks about breaking down the disabilities students face for the larger Board. Jonathan says the most common is health (i.e. ADHD), then there is also specific learning disabilities (reading, math, or both), Autism, emotional disabilities, vision and hearing.
- Amy talks about the misconceptions related to IEPs and talks to the committee about the process that families must go through to get their student an IEP (outlined in the packet attached). Jonathan also talks to the committee the different misconceptions and intricacies related to the IEP process. Amy also talks about finding qualified special education staff to support these students can be difficult.
- Ann asks about our high needs students - how many have IEPs? Jonathan says about 25%, it fluctuates from year to year. Approximately 136 of our students have IEPs currently.
- Ann asks about who pays for the extra resources that students with IEPs need? Rachel says we do and we get a little supplemental funding depending on our number of students with special needs but its not nearly what we need to cover the costs related to the resources that these students need to close the gaps.
- Jonathan provides the committee with an example of a student that started with us this year with needs that were high cost.
- Rachel says in the district there are full schools dedicated to working with special education and SWD, so we are not always the right choice.
- Rebecca asks if there has ever been a conversation among charter schools about creating a collaborative for SWD?
- Rachel says there has been discussion - someone needs to start and run it, all the charter schools need to support it, and all the needs have to be covered. It is tricky. We can actually contract with the school district and utilize their services, but we have not had the support from the district to really make this work. This may be the better option, however.

What do we want to bring back to the whole Board?

- Ann says reading through the parents guide was interesting and informative. We can share the decision pathway.
- Jonathan shared a link which is a web-based guide. We can share this link in the Board agenda. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/rlo/sped/parents-guide/index.html#/>

- Rebecca thinks the accountability data (just achievement data) is important to look at related to the progress we're making. SWD are a highlight here. We can then talk about what our special education program is like.

- Amy's notes: Accountability data: achievement data sections. Define some of the subgroups (high needs, students with disabilities, ELL). Zoom into the students with disabilities as a bright spot. Then, talk about what is an IEP, the process to get one, requirements of staff once a student is on one. Share the web-based parents guide.

- **What is special education/SWD (subgroups), what are the needs/disabilities, what does our program look like, what is their progress, and what is the impact on the school (i.e. resources, funding, etc.)?**

III. 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 9:31 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
R. Sela

Documents used during the meeting

- Understanding The IEP Process - March Meeting.pdf
- 2023 Accountability Data - VPCS - March Meeting.pdf
- 2022-23 Student Discipline Data Report by All Offenses - VPCS - March Meeting.pdf
- 2022-23 Attrition Report -VPCS - March Meeting.pdf