

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday August 8, 2024 at 8:30 AM

Location

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

Committee Members Present

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

Committee Members Absent

A. Hickson-Martin, M. Freeman

Guests Present

A. Clark (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 Aug 8, 2024 at 8:35 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

A. Errichetti made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 06-13-24.

L. Doherty seconded the motion.

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

II. Academic Achievement

A. MCAS Data

Academic Performance Analysis

The main agenda item focused on data analysis of MCAS scores where Rachel expressed disappointment in seeing flat results despite efforts directed towards improvement in specific areas such as writing skills. Amy presented detailed statistics regarding proficiency levels across different grades in English Language Arts (ELA).

The team discussed the academic performance of fifth-grade students, expressing surprise at the results. Rachel mentioned looking forward to understanding the situation better with teacher input. Lisa highlighted that 80% of students were not meeting expectations, questioning the reliability of teacher data due to this low percentage.

The group delved into interim testing data analysis and its implications for student performance. They discussed ANet data for different grades, noting strong scores in some areas but struggles in others. Amy suggested examining specific test items and domains for a clearer picture.

Rebecca prompted a comparison between their school's performance and state-level data to gain insights into their standing relative to broader educational trends. Amy agreed to retrieve recent state data from Dropbox for further examination.

Amy shared insights into high school performance data, highlighting notable improvements but expressing concern over persistent gaps in math and science education stemming from middle school challenges. The discussion also touched upon accountability measures set by DESE that focus on average scale scores rather than percent meeting or exceeding standards.

Curriculum and School Transitions

There was discussion around potential impacts from changes in curriculum implementation on student performance with varying perspectives offered by members including considerations about teacher responses and potential influences on student outcomes.

Strategic Planning and Interventions

Rachel proposed focusing on engagement issues, mental health concerns, and attendance challenges by analyzing a cohort of students who regularly attend classes without significant barriers. She emphasized the need for strategic interventions based on this analysis.

The group discussed potential interventions based on correlations found in student performance factors such as attendance and homework completion. They considered implementing tiered interventions based on identified priorities to support students' academic progress effectively.

Rachel highlighted leveraging existing staff resources to support students outside of classrooms while considering tailored interventions for students facing engagement challenges due to mental health issues.

School Culture and Environment

Lisa brought up reviving school culture as an essential aspect that may have been neglected recently while emphasizing its impact on student learning outcomes.

Rachel discussed the shift away from controlling practices such as telling students how to sit and where to look, which were perceived as not conducive to student engagement. She highlighted the need for a stakeholder conversation involving parents and teachers about what they want the school environment to look like for their children. The impact of mental health issues on social and emotional behavior was also emphasized.

Ann encouraged revisiting the initial goal of differentiating themselves from public schools post-COVID while acknowledging similar challenges faced by both institutions such as teacher recruitment and mental health issues among students.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Amy expressed concerns about teacher qualifications, stating that many teachers are not adequately trained or experienced. Rachel echoed this sentiment by mentioning that most new hires have little experience or training, leading to challenges in retraining them annually. They discussed hiring individuals from the community with good intentions but lacking teaching skills.

The participants delved into a talent crisis within the organization due to difficulties in attracting highly qualified and experienced teachers. Amy mentioned low salaries as a deterrent for experienced educators, while Rachel highlighted challenges in retaining individuals without degrees or credentials.

There was deliberation on implementing performance-based pay for teachers based on student growth percentile (SGP) scores, with higher scores potentially resulting in

bonuses at year-end. However, concerns were raised regarding its reception among staff members and its effectiveness given previous experiences with underperforming hires.

Academic Challenges and Prioritization

Rachel expressed concerns about the slow progress in academic performance, emphasizing the need to manage expectations and maintain persistence. She highlighted the importance of strategic planning and data analysis to validate or disprove their current approach. Additionally, she suggested revisiting the teaching model for fifth grade due to recruitment challenges and potential impact on student learning.

Rebecca raised concerns about prioritizing efforts effectively, citing a sense of overwhelm within schools and districts. She emphasized the need for ruthless prioritization to drive meaningful change in classrooms at a faster pace. Lisa sought examples of effective prioritization strategies from Rebecca's experience.

Rachel discussed potential adjustments to school models based on changing demand dynamics, particularly regarding class sizes in fifth grade. She deliberated on exploring alternative cohort sizes and configurations while acknowledging financial implications.

Data Analysis and Accountability Measures

Ann sought clarification regarding accountability measures related to performance improvement goals set by DESE. Amy explained that these measures primarily revolve around average scale scores as well as other factors such as attendance and advanced coursework eligibility for credit recognition.

Rachel emphasized the importance of learning from available data and encouraged everyone to explore questions that could provide deeper insights. Amy expressed interest in exploring the correlation between attendance, homework, and achievement. Rebecca suggested presenting facts about meeting outcomes at an upcoming board meeting in August, with a preview planned for September.

Lisa inquired about the schedule for receiving more data. Amy explained that all data except growth metrics were available, with growth expected by end of September and accountability data likely arriving around October or later.

Rachel proposed discussing specific details to share once more data is obtained before the board meeting on 22nd. Rebecca confirmed that although the data was embargoed, it could be shared during the meeting without being posted with materials.

Rebecca and Amy discussed the need for measures to track the performance of high-needs students compared to others. They considered using Open Architects to facilitate data analysis, aiming to present comprehensive data at an upcoming board meeting on the 22nd. The discussion focused on identifying bright spots in program effectiveness and seeking input from teachers.

Rachel emphasized the importance of evaluating program success by analyzing student performance, particularly for English learners. The team expressed a desire to involve teachers in this evaluation process but acknowledged that presenting incomplete data at an upcoming meeting might not be ideal.

Lisa highlighted the significance of not dismissing existing plans solely based on unsatisfactory results, emphasizing a need for further analysis before making conclusions about plan effectiveness. This approach aimed to avoid demoralizing staff members who had worked diligently on these plans.

Amy expressed gratitude for the discussion's helpfulness in steering away from wallowing over disappointing results. She suggested involving Rebecca in future meetings while planning ahead for sharing more comprehensive data at subsequent board meetings.

Rachel confirmed plans to share detailed data during an upcoming board meeting scheduled for the 22nd, with intentions of inviting Amy as well as considering additional comparative city-wide and statewide datasets alongside Springfield-specific information.

Rachel proposed granting access to an Open Architects platform enabling extensive exploration of various datasets relevant to their operations, aiming towards generating new perspectives through questions and insights derived from this access.

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 9:35 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
R. Sela

Documents used during the meeting

None