

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday December 12, 2024 at 3:30 PM

Location

IN PERSON

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/j/k8aG053ZG>

Trustees Present

A. Errichetti, A. Hickson-Martin, A. Mendelson, D. Ford, D. Fuller, M. Freeman, M. Landon, R. Martin, R. Sela, T. Maxey, X. Delobato

Trustees Absent

A. Martínez, L. Doherty

Guests Present

K. Turner, N. Gauthier, R. Romano

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Errichetti called a meeting of the board of trustees of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Dec 12, 2024 at 3:40 PM.

B. Approve minutes

A. Hickson-Martin made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 10-24-24.

X. Delobato seconded the motion.

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

II. CEO Report

A. Early College Program Updates and Future Plans

Adrienne Mantegna, Dean of Early College, and Sara Neuenschwander, College and Career Counselor, provided an update on the Veritas Early College and Career Program for SY 2024-25.

Fostering Community

- STCC Student Leadership Community
- Students created a video of their experience and plan to do more.
- Wrap around supports and intentional nature of our program allows our students to show up in ways that other Early College students are not.

Current Enrollment and Course Offerings:

- 60 students are enrolled in Early College courses at Veritas, studying subjects like Criminal Justice, Public Speaking, and Computer Basics.
- 43 students are participating in the STCC full-time campus program, with coursework including Technical Math, Lab Physics, and English Composition.
- Approximately 50% of the freshman class will join the Early College program in spring, taking foundational courses like Spanish and Computer Basics.

Program Highlights:

- A STCC Student Leadership Committee has contributed to program policies, hosted town halls, and sponsored celebratory events, fostering collaboration between students and staff.
- January will introduce a J-Term at STCC, a 2.5-week intensive learning experience.
- Spring classes for STCC students include: Psychology, Sociology 101, Lab Chemistry and Physics, Nutrition, Art 101
- Student Portfolios - culminating in student-led conferences.

Future Partnerships:

- Discussions are underway with Westfield State University to enhance the Early College program with both high-school and campus-based models, offering students access to a 4-year university environment.

Career and Academic Planning:

- VPCHS uses MyCAP (My Career and Academic Plan) and Schoolinks software to guide students in achieving MASS CORE graduation requirements and exploring postsecondary options. Seminar curriculum delivers this program.
- Every student participates in two college or career experiences annually, with 18 field trips and grade-specific events planned for SY 24-25.
- There are specific career-related events for each grade: 9th - Career Fair/Mock Interview, 10th - Reality Fair, 11th Grade - College Fair.

Student Engagement

- Sara discusses current student engagement percentages in different categories including college visit attendance, career tour attendance, etc.

Work-Based Learning:

- Partnerships with local businesses provide career tours, job shadows, and internships. Certifications in 3D printing, CNA, and Real Estate will be offered in spring 2024.
- Career and College Advisory Board has been re-established, is meeting regularly and early college leaders are working with the Board to create an internship program.

Innovation Pathways:

- A planning grant for Advanced Manufacturing has been secured, with full implementation targeted for SY 2025-26. A 3D printing course will pilot this spring as part of the pathway.

The presentation emphasized the program's success in providing students with real-world experience, college readiness, and career exploration opportunities. Future developments aim to expand partnerships and pathways for student success.

Discussion:

Matt Landon inquired about potential resistance to Early College students at STCC and Westfield. Adrienne explained that STCC has experienced a significant increase in Early College students on campus this year, contributing to some resistance. In contrast, Westfield does not face the same situation, making professors more receptive to the program.

Andrea asked whether students at Westfield would have their own cohort or join general population classes. Adrienne shared that her vision is to integrate these students into general population classes, with adjustments made to the current model as needed to support this approach.

B. Development Update

Katrina Turner, Communications and Development Manager provided an update on the Fund Development progress for FY25, highlighting key achievements and upcoming opportunities:

Progress Toward Goals:

- Veritas is on track to meet the FY25 individual giving goal of \$50,000, with 48% achieved as of December 12 (\$24,413.29).
- 38 new donors have contributed, with all new donations matched up to \$5,000.

Results from Recent Campaigns:

- **Giving Tuesday:** Raised \$4,375.76 from 19 donors. *9 of these donors came from communication sent out directly to contacts/friends by Matt Landon.
- **Gratitude Book:** Served as a meaningful touchpoint to share Veritas' work without a direct ask and will continue to be a reusable marketing resource.
- **Fall Appeal:** Highlighted board support and successfully reached donors less engaged via email.
- **Boost Fundraising:** Generated over \$1000 through ongoing engagement efforts.

Discussion: Matt mentions a friend who is in DC who donated on Giving Tuesday and Katrina will follow up to build this relationship as well as explore opportunities for our 8th grade students traveling to D.C. in the Spring. Michael may have a connection for this trip as well. Xiomara also mentions Congressman Neal.

Upcoming Strategic Opportunities:

- Pursue corporate sponsorships for the Spelling V and Washington, D.C. trip.
- Expand volunteer involvement through the February 28 Career Fair, tutoring, and mentorship programs.
- Host community events, such as tours, talks, or panels, to deepen engagement with supporters.
- Develop criteria for scholarship funds.
- Continue Boost Fundraising with new incentives.
- Plan a recognition initiative for sustaining supporters, such as an event or gift.

The presentation highlighted a strong trajectory toward the annual fundraising goal, with actionable plans to build on current momentum and expand engagement opportunities.

C. Harvest Fest Recap

Nikki provides the Board with an update regarding the success of Harvest Fest which took place on November 1st. The event was attended by over 500 school and local community members. They enjoyed the haunted hallway, designed and run by middle and high school students, a trunk or treat, hosted by staff, families, and Board members, enjoyed food trucks, face painting, balloon animals, and a photo booth. We were featured on 22 news and overall the event ran smoothly and was well attended. We will continue to monitor the event's impact on student recruitment for the 25-26SY.

In the Spring, we will do the Spelling Vee which has potential to be another great event.

Veritas Shark Tank/Pitch Contest: EforAll or boutique Western Mass VC firms.

D. High School Principal Search Update

Rachel updates the Board on the principal search. We have a position posted and we have put feelers out to see who might be interested. We are in the beginning stages of talks with a few potential candidates. There are two other charter schools in the area that are also looking for principals, so we are moving quickly. Rachel is planning to involve staff in the process in meaningful ways. Rachel hopes to have a commitment by the end of this year.

III. Academic Achievement

A. Quarter 1 Reports for Middle and High School

Presenter: Rachel Romano, Chief Executive Officer

Middle School Highlights:

Organizational Viability:

- Enrollment exceeds projections with 434 students enrolled.
- Retention at 93%, with efforts ongoing to reduce attrition.

- Budget status is stable, with minor adjustments expected to balance by year-end.

Academic Success:

- Focus students are underperforming, particularly in math, with 28% meeting expectations on Unit 1 assessments.
- 70% of teaching staff submit daily intellectual prep, though curriculum implementation fidelity requires improvement.
- New ELA curriculum Wit & Wisdom is seeing initial success even in year one of implementation.
- MAP data indicates disparities for students with disabilities and English learners.

Discussion: The Board engages in a conversations regarding the new ELA curriculum and reading and how this could lead to improved test scores and academic achievement overall.

College and Career Readiness:

- Seminar curriculum launched across grades 5-8, with continued refinement underway.
- Student-led conferences have begun, with plans to increase participation and completion rates.

School Climate & Staff Culture:

- Chronic absenteeism reduced by 4% compared to last year.
- Incentive programs and point systems need consistent implementation.
- Staff survey results show strong alignment with mission and equity goals, though participation rates vary.

High School Highlights:

Academic Performance:

- Students are making progress toward key goals, though subgroup disparities persist.
- Increased enrollment in Early College classes expected in the spring semester.

College and Career Readiness:

- Positive survey responses indicate strong alignment with the VPHS portrait of a graduate goals.
- Seminar curriculum continues to support students' organizational and planning skills.

School Climate & Engagement:

- Student engagement and absenteeism metrics show improvement, but challenges remain in incentivizing consistent participation and point tracking.

The presentation underscored areas of progress while identifying opportunities for improvement, with a focus on academic achievement, retention, and equity. Recommendations included continued support for staff development, targeted interventions for focus students, and better consistency in implementing school-wide initiatives.

IV. Governance Committee

A. Trustee Obligations Reminder

Nikki reminds the Board about annual and semi annual trustee obligations. Please refer to the spreadsheet attached to ensure you are up to date with all responsibilities.

B. Trustee Status Discussion

D. Fuller made a motion to terminating Terry Maxey from the Board due to a consistent lack of attendance and communication.

D. Ford seconded the motion.

Rachel reported that she has been unable to reach Terry by phone and that communication with him has been lost despite several outreach attempts through multiple channels. As Terry has served on the Board for several years but remains unresponsive, the Board must now vote on whether to remove him in accordance with the attendance policy.

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

C. Treasurer/Finance Committee Chair Discussion

Rachel shared that AnnMarie has been facing challenges fulfilling her duties as a Board member and Treasurer due to changes at her workplace. However, she continues to perform key responsibilities behind the scenes, such as approving bills, and communicates effectively when she is unable to attend meetings. Rachel expressed hope that AnnMarie's circumstances may improve, but acknowledged the need to revisit the situation if they do not.

Matt emphasized the importance of the Treasurer being present at Finance Committee meetings, despite AnnMarie's behind-the-scenes contributions. Rebecca inquired whether AnnMarie could take a leave of absence, to which Rachel confirmed that it was an option.

To ensure the role is fully supported, Rachel proposed appointing Denise as Assistant Treasurer. Robbie volunteered to assume the Treasurer position if AnnMarie decides to step down.

Ann and Rachel will meet with AnnMarie to discuss the situation before the next Board meeting, where the Board can vote on Robbie as Treasurer if necessary.

V. Finance Committee

A. Finance Committee Report

Denise reported that liquidity is improving, with approximately 41 days of cash on hand. The Finance Committee discussed the goal of reaching 60 days of cash on hand within the next two years. Lynne shared optimism that the organization will achieve 35–40 days by the end of this year. It was noted as a positive sign that funds are coming in consistently, and there has been no need to borrow against the line of credit.

The income statement indicates that both revenue and expenses are aligned with projections. The team is closely monitoring and maintaining control over expenses.

B. Approval of Chart of Accounts Update

R. Sela made a motion to to approve the additions to the Chart of Accounts as noted.

A. Errichetti seconded the motion.

Denise provided an update on newly added accounts to align with operational and compliance requirements:

1. **Leased Vehicles:** Three accounts were added to manage the leased vans.
2. **MTRS GASB 68 Compliance:** Two accounts were created—one for contributions made on behalf of the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System (MTRS) and another for GASB 68 accounting.
3. **Early College Costs and Transportation:** Two accounts were added to track expenses for the Early College program and related transportation.
4. **Transportation and Nutrition:** Two accounts were added for transportation in-kind services provided by Springfield Public Schools and for the nutrition program, which is now more cost-effective.
5. **Amortization Expense:** One account was added for vehicle amortization expenses.
6. **Property Taxes:** One account was added to manage high school property tax expenses.

These additions ensure compliance, improve financial tracking, and align with operational needs.

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

VI. Board of Trustees Strategic Priorities

A.

Strategic Priorities Discussion

See wrap up discussion below.

VII. Wrap Up

A. Meeting Wrap Up

While the strategic priorities were not formally reviewed during the meeting, they were thoroughly addressed through the discussions and work conducted throughout the session. The meeting was highly productive and successful, with meaningful progress made on key areas.

Rachel mentions contracts for leadership roles. The Board will discuss this more in the future.

Rachel also mentions that our building owner is willing to talk about selling the building to us this summer. The Board will also discuss this more in the future.

VIII. 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 6:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- Early College Board Presentation - December.pptx
- December Board Presentation_Fund Development .pptx
- Q1 Data Report Middle School.pdf
- High School Q1 Data Report.pdf
- Trustee Obligations Spreadsheet.xlsx
- VPCS Board of Trustees Bylaws.docx
- Financial Reports to the Board November.pdf
- Appendix M - Chart of Accounts - November Meeting.pdf
- Strategic Priorities June 2024 DRAFT.docx
- Strategic Priorities Discussion December Meeting.docx