

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

February Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday February 8, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Location

<https://zoom.us/j/98158607236?pwd=cG1OQkd2TTEvT2RWYTl4RXN4TzdBZz09>

Meeting ID: 981 5860 7236

Passcode: PVPA2022

Trustees Present

Andrea Nathanson (remote), David Potter, Jenna Sardella, Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola (remote), Jesse Pompei (remote), LATRINA DENSON (remote), Maggie Solis (remote), Marty Espinola (remote), Richard Pouliot (remote), Shannon Materka, Shino Pichette (remote), Sofia Getoff-Scanlon (remote), Tonya Ward (remote)

Trustees Absent

Jacob Rosenblum, Mindi Winter, Neil Hede

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen

Guests Present

Marcy Conner

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

David Potter called a meeting of the board of trustees of Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School to order on Tuesday Feb 8, 2022 at 6:09 PM.

C. Read the Mission Statement

D. Approve Minutes

Marty Espinola made a motion to approve the minutes from Marty / DP seconded January Board of Trustees Meeting on 01-11-22.

David Potter seconded the motion.

unanimous

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

E. Public Comment

None

II. Executive Director Report

A. Monthly Updates, Progress with Strategic Action Plan

Shino Pichette made a motion to Approve an out of state field trip for the Black Student Union under the supervision of Kendrick Roundtree.

Maggie Solis seconded the motion.

Discussion - Shino - how many students will be attending and how many adults will come? Response - 15 students with 5 chaperones. Tonya reports that there is no longer a time limit at the African American History Museum. Shannon - how is the trip being funded? Kendrick - fundraising is happening now. There are some funds leftover from last year (\$695). They currently need \$4000. The majority of this goes to accommodations and meals. The tickets are free. Jenyka - is there a platform for community members to make donations for this trip? Response - donations are being accepted and they can contact Marcy or Kendrick. David - have you considered a press release to share information about the event? Response - Dr. Shabaz at UMass has pointed the BSU to several publications where this can happen.

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

Motion to approve the PVPA 22=23 sy calendar exactly as presented except without any dates to reference, and with a note that Paideia is under discussion by a collective, there will be a Paideia and no more than 14 school days in the school year.

David Potter seconded the motion.

The calendar for next year needs to be approved. Items changing for next year include the number of days for Paideia (reducing from 14 days to 9). This is only a place to start and needs to be followed up with an in-depth conversation about ways to improve Paideia. School starts and ends around the same time as this year. The same number of curriculum days are present; however, a December curriculum day will be a half-day for students and a full day for staff. This will help to prevent us from going too far into June at the end of the school year. The first day will be 8/30 and the last will be 6/15 (final workday for staff on 6/16).

Discussion: Shino - why is Paideia being shortened? Response - the dates of Paideia are still being discussed. Approval of the calendar does not limit these changes from happening following discussion with students and staff. Less routine has led to some negative consequences and repercussions. Frustrations and "meltdowns" were more commonplace this year. Firas - PVPA has some things that make us special and Paideia is one of those things. It helps us to retain our status as a unique place of learning. Mock Trial would be adversely affected by the shortening, as much of this time is used for preparation for trials. Is there a way to reduce strain on teachers and find ways to make Paideia more structured? Sofia - echoing what Firas has said. Paideia offers many opportunities for students to have extremely diverse and valuable experiences. Is it possible to get student feedback before this decision is made? Shino - how was this decision made? Response - the union polled staff, but the poll was split almost 50/50. Students need to be involved in the final plan, but it must also be noted that there are things teachers and admin see that students do not. The increase in behavioral referrals during Paideia is exponential, in some cases leading to hospitalizations of students. Students should be engaged in the type of experiences that happen during Paideia, but it must be done in a way that allows teachers more time for planning. Students, teachers, and admin need to find a solution that benefits everyone. Fiona - echoes Firas and Sofia.

PVPA is enjoyable and unique to PVPA. Shortening Paideia will negatively impact the PVPA community. Jesse - as a parent of an 8th grader and a teacher the idea of Paideia is something vital to the PVPA community. Is there a way to return to the outreach programs that once took place during Paideia as a way to alleviate some of the stress on teachers? The programs are outstanding and make PVPA what it is. Rick - would like to learn more about the responses from the faculty response to the poll and echoes the idea that there should be feedback about Paideia from the students. Paideia seems like an important part of building community re-building community in the wake of Covid. More input is needed before we vote on this issue. Jenyka - has experience with this argument from both sides as an alum and a former employee. Jenyka echoes Jesse's thoughts about using Paideia as a means to interact with the greater community. The lack of structure is problematic and can lead to feelings of instability. This is an ongoing issue at PVPA, and a quick decision should not be made. Student voices need to be heard. More support for teachers could be implemented, more support could be given to the

Mental Health team to support students. Can focus groups be implemented with students to get their feedback? Maggie - can there be more quantification or information provided? Why is Paideia a destabilizing time? How many students are being negatively impacted by this lack of stability?

Brent reports that there are many negative impacts of Paideia at three weeks. Teachers are in an untenable position regarding their daily schedule. We are also not meeting our 990 instructional hours requirement. Paideia is often discussed as problematic but has never really been effectively changed. The valuable things that occur during Paideia can still happen but in a new and more effective and engaging way. We need to understand how to do Paideia without negatively impacting any students.

The calendar vote includes 180 school days, 9 curriculum days, no changes to federal holidays or school breaks. It also establishes a start and end date for the school year but leaves the issues of Paideia unresolved.

Shino moves to approve the start and end dates of the calendar as proposed (see above). Shannon seconds the motion.

Brent would like to have the board vote to approve the calendar completely but without Paideia finalized. David suggests that we disseminate a calendar without Paideia, but not regarding the work that is ongoing.

Marcy offers a friendly amendment that we vote to approve the calendar with an amendment that explains the ongoing discussion surrounding the motion.

Shino withdraws her motion.

Jenyka moves that we approved a calendar but with a commitment that Paideia should be made to continue the discussion about Paideia and how it will look in the coming year.

Maggie suggests that Paideia should not be included on the calendar, but instead a note needs to exist that informs families that discussion is still happening about Paideia and the dates are TBD.

Firas suggests that we leave Paideia untouched on the calendar with the previously discussed note.

There is a hard date of March 1st for when the calendar has to be approved.

Brent stresses that Paideia can be changed regardless of the calendar being approved.

David moves that we approve the PVPA 22-23 calendar as proposed with a note that indicates the final dates and format of Paideia are subject to change. Shannon seconds the motion. - DOES NOT PASS

Maggie moves to adopt the calendar as proposed but without setting specific dates for Paideia, but instead including a note to explain that Paideia is under discussion and will have no more than 14 days. David seconds the motion.

Fiona makes a friendly motion to include the idea that we include that discussion will be collaborative and will include staff, students, etc.

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

Slide presentation of images from Paideia. Last Friday was the last day of the 14 days of Paideia for 2022. Votes tonight on the school calendar, most importantly the start and

end dates for the school year. An exciting field trip is planned and needs to be approved by the board.

Every year PVPA has something called Paideia that occurs in between the fall and spring semester where many great things happen. Some of the things presented tonight included: exploring Studio Ghibli, Hands-on science, Mock Trial Team (very successful this year with 3 victories so far and another trial coming up next week), STARS (a musical written by a PVPA student) was very successful with three shows this past weekend, Backgammon and Chess, Stage Combat (formerly a class at PVPA), MAPS (music and poetry synchronized) where students collaborate with a school in Puerto Rico and put the poetry they create to music, Runway - Empowerment through Movement (students also created and modeled their own designs), Paper Mache and Pottery, Knitting and Crocheting, Humanities Intensive Paideia (credit recovery), Short Film Writer's Room (their work will be displayed in June), Rainbow Activism, PVPA Bake Off, Video Game Culture, Magic the Gathering. There was also a Paideia that worked very hard to add color to the newly painted hallways. Many murals were created, and all of the walls are now an amazing display of the hard work of students and staff.

The opportunity for students to provide feedback, make suggestions, ask questions was discussed last month. Brent did create a Google form, but some students have expressed a desire to have more anonymity around this process. A box will be housing a box where this can happen.

The main office is currently under construction. New furniture has been obtained and the desire is to create an inviting space. During February break, painting will take place. Murals will most likely be forthcoming and a new counter will be installed.

Covid updates: we are past the Omicron surge. The highest reported cases were 11 in one week (4 staff and 7 students). The last two weeks have had 2 students positive and it looks like there will be two reported this week. These cases are almost always traced back to family, and transmission is seldom related to the school. Everyone is doing what is necessary to prevent transmission. Our vaccination rates are very high. The vaccination clinic had 61 participants on January 21 and included first, second, boosters, and flu shots. Currently, 342 students (88%) have had their first shot. 332 (85%) vaccinated fully. 95% of staff are vaccinated. Routine pooled testing is still ongoing, but we have now adopted at-home testing. Pooled testing has 287 students enrolled. 81 staff members are also participating. The pooled testing will continue in conjunction with at-home testing. We have fewer students opting into the at-home testing (167). These numbers may move up incrementally in the next few weeks. This program does not cost the school anything and helps to limit the amount of time needed for contact

tracing/quarantine. This should also cut down on the amount of time that students will need to be out of school.

Enrollment: As of today we have 391 students enrolled with 5 in the process of onboarding. We expect to be between 395 and 398 by the time the lottery for next year takes place. We are doing better compared to many area charter schools. Many students seemed to have left between January 1 and January 24. This is unprecedented and may relate to Covid fatigue. We are currently doing more to find out why students are leaving when they do. The lottery for next year will take place on Monday. We have the same number of applicants compared to previous years, but these applicants are currently skewing towards high school. If the 7th-grade waitlist is exhausted a supplementary lottery will be held.

Restorative Practice updates: we are in the final stages of onboarding a restorative justice coordinator. There has been a verbal acceptance, but a CORI check is still needed. They should be starting soon. Many things are planned including a two-day workshop for administrators to integrate restorative practice and PBIS. Some of this work has been done in the past, but this gives everyone an opportunity to continue this work and have updates regarding this practice and unite all admin on the same page. A six-hour online training module was purchased and will be completed by all staff. This will establish a baseline of knowledge and put everyone on the same page so that we can truly begin the work of restorative practice at PVPA. Students will be asked to help, especially student council members and those familiar with restorative practice. Brent has been meeting with a group whose focus is on helping new leaders at Charter schools and they are currently working on diversity and inclusion, and upcoming work will be focused on restorative practice.

The community handbook is being updated. The admin team is working together to make this happen. This is a big job but should be finished by the end of the week.

Brent has been hosting family information sessions, but attendance has been low.

A group met today to review the course catalog for next year. There are some significant changes that have already occurred and there will be more. The History offerings, in particular, have changed. All 9th graders will take World History. All 11th graders will take a Civics course and complete a Civics project. All of the History electives have been updated according to student interest and an effort to move away from US and Eurocentric History.

Tech theater opportunities for students are currently being thought about, especially with the creation of classes.

Relevant PD to support leadership, growth, and effective outcomes. PVPA has purchased an evaluation and performance tracking system. Electronic records will be maintained while an employee works at PVPA and can be transferred between supervisors should they change over the course of an employee's career. Artifacts, records of observations, PD, etc. are all tracked by this system.

Brent was invited to speak at the Amherst Rotary Club. During the application period for the lottery, Sandy did a lot of advertising, print media, and radio. Ads were created in both English and Spanish and the aim was to create a diverse showing throughout the valley. Sandy has been doing a lot to maintain our social media presence. We have started to host tours of PVPA prior to acceptance open to students and families considering PVPA.

The new PVPA website will be going live soon (a visual mock-up was presented). The layout should be more accessible, with information easier to find. It will be hard to miss the options to "apply" and "donate." The image on the site will be a live video. Events will be listed on the main page that also links to ticket purchasing without the need to use Eventbrite. Students will also be able to pay for lunch via this site. Forms can be created and disseminated to the community.

III. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Report

Andrea reports that the committee met on 2/2. Marcy caught the committee up on the budget as it is affected at the state level. Numbers look good heading into next year. The governor's budget looks favorable for PVPA. The estimated tuition for next year is 7.2 million. The increased rate increases will add \$38,000 to the budget. Other increases are currently under discussion.

B. Governance Committee Report

Met early last month to review and propose the new members. They will meet again next week.

C. Long Range Infrastructure Planning Committee Report

No Report

D. Executive Search Committee Report

The committee has been meeting weekly. The job posting was modified and approved. The posting has gone out. The larger community school survey was also modified and approved and will go out soon. The proposal from Civitas Strategies was reviewed. Since reviewing the proposal, Marcy has given the committee additional feedback and this was shared back with Civitas. They then submitted a revised proposal to address Marcy's questions. The committee will meet tomorrow at 5 and scrutinize this new proposal.

E. Executive Evaluation Committee

We are taking this year off due to the leader's interim status. We are instead looking to revise our evaluation process and developing a survey to help in the evaluation of the school head. This will also serve as a rubric. We have great models about what has been done in the past and there will be something to report to the board in a few months. The governance community may wish to inform the board regarding pieces of the process for finding a new head of school. Clarity of process is important. Where does the board step in and take over?

IV. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff Reports

Shannon presents a question - as there will not be an evaluation of the head of school, will there be a way for teachers to add input about Brent as the current head of school and his candidacy to remain as the head? Will this potentially be unfair to other candidates? David reports that all information can be shared and considered in the process of interviewing and hiring the new head of school. It might not be appropriate to create a formal conduit for this information to be gathered, but it is certainly possible for staff to add input. Per Marcy, this will most likely happen during the actual interview process as there will be staff present.

B. Student Reports

Sofia reports that the student council is working on planning a second consent week event. This will be student-led training about the prevention of sexual assault. More information will be forthcoming. Firas thanks the board for adding World History and increasing global history offerings. Student clubs have been increasing their activity. A book drive is underway and candy grams are occurring. Firas also reports his support of the new PVPA website. Fiona also offers that they are always willing to answer questions about the student experience. And David asks that we move this to next month's meeting considering the time spent.

V. President's Business

A. Committee Minutes

Committee minutes can be shared with David. There are items and topics that are of record even if they are not in the minutes. These items have an impact on our community because they are observed and heard by the larger community. There has been a discussion about updating bylaws to prevent negative conversations of named persons from happening when said person is not present. Thom Vreeland and Sandra Courtney were discussed in negative terms related to the presentation of the job posting for the head of school, and this was unacceptable. This is a breakdown at the board level and David assumes responsibility and asks the board to keep this in mind as we consider policies for the future.

B. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

C. Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan asks the board to continue conversations with the community and is looking to implement a suggestion box for staff/students.

D. Teacher Appreciation Donations

Teacher appreciation donations should be considered for official board business. Can we create an appreciation gesture for teachers that is owned by the board and becomes a tradition and can be planned for in advance? The PTO is helping to coordinate teacher appreciation efforts. Brent reports that Chris Fournier is running the PTO.

VI. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

David Potter made a motion to Go into Executive Session To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

Marty Espinola seconded the motion.

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

David Potter made a motion to Adjourn the meeting.

Marty Espinola seconded the motion.

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

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jacob Rosenblum

Documents used during the meeting

None