

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

February Board Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday February 13, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Location

Zoom Account is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: February Board Meeting

Time: Feb 13, 2024 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82723949408?pwd=YzNWSzBIWHd0SG9TQVBaalId4R21TdZ09>

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Passcode: pDH4Vx

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Trustees Present

David Cavallin (remote), David Potter (remote), Fiona Yates (remote), LATRINA DENSON (remote), Mindi Winter, Sasha Viands (remote), Shino Pichette (remote), Vanessa Ford

Trustees Absent

Azizah Yasin, Neil Hede, Sarah LaPierre

Trustees who arrived after the meeting opened

Vanessa Ford

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen (remote)

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen (remote)

Guests Present

Eva Veras (remote), Serena Gross (remote)

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 13, 2024 at 6:09 PM.

C. Read the Mission Statement

David read the mission statement.

D. D. Approve Minutes

Sasha Viands made a motion to approve the minutes from January Board Meeting on 01-09-24.

Fiona Yates seconded the motion.

No discussion.

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

Roll Call

Vanessa Ford	Absent
Shino Pichette	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
David Potter	Aye
Mindi Winter	Aye
Sasha Viands	Aye
Azizah Yasin	Absent
David Cavallin	Aye
Fiona Yates	Aye
Sarah LaPierre	Absent
Neil Hede	Absent

Vanessa Ford arrived at 6:13 PM.

II. Head of School Report

A. Brent's Report

From Brent Nielsen:

Welcome, great to see some new faces in this group today.

We are preparing to report our enrollment for the second and final time. The ave daily enrollment has been great. If we report 400, we get the full amount we can for tuition dollars. We won't know how much we actually will get in dollars until much later.

The musical just happened, hats off to David Cavallin for an amazing job done! The new microphones worked great!

March 8 and 9 is the Wofa show. This will include more than just Wofa company students, it will includes kids in the African Dance classes.

We are now saving for a new kiln. Students have loved the pottery classes that Petula has been teaching.

We finally heard back from DESE and we won the grant (\$53,500) to help with work force diversification. Yay! The grant requires us to put together a team (PLC) for this. Still recruiting a board member and a teacher to join this group.

We also got a \$10,000 grant to address frequent absenteeism.

We applied for a grant this week to support math improvements, to help students pass tests they need to.

We also have some Esser fund (federal money from COVID-19) that need to be spent by the end of the year. Brent put forward a proposal of how to use those funds. Will support students with mental health needs and with absenteeism.

Trevin Bond shared about a field trip.

Seniors of affinity groups are going to see Hadestown on Broadway on April 3 in the afternoon. A donor has contributed \$1,000 to cover the cost of tickets. Students will end up paying about \$30 each (there is help for those who aren't able to pay that). The bus will be \$2,100, and the group is still looking for about \$1,000 to help cover that cost.

Sandra Courtney shared about enrollment.

We have stayed at pretty much full enrollment for the full year, which isn't always the norm.

Just closed the application at midnight on Sunday. We are a bit behind in new applications completed. Sandra has heard that enrollment across the region is down 7-9% over the past years. So it doesn't seem like a PVPA issue. We haven't had a much turnover this year as some years, which helps us keep up enrollment.

This year we had 251 applicants total. (35 fewer applicants this year. Notably fewer from Franklin County.) And we have 119 applicants for 7th grade specifically.

As a public charter school, the only way to enter PVPA is through the lottery. The only preferences are for students with siblings already in the school, and students in the PVPA region.

By next week, everyone will heard their lottery number spots.

We admit 72 new 7th graders each year. For other grades, we fill empty spots.

In June we will do some accepted students days to welcome students. We are also working on welcoming non-7th grade students who transfer in, because it can be intimidating. We want new students to feel welcome and supported. And it helps with retention.

If we need to do supplemental lotteries to fill classes where we have small wait lists, we can. We can't hold another lottery if we still have students on a wait list, but we can accept applications.

We may work on increasing transportation support, to help with enrollment, too.

(updated to delete duplicate information, per March board meeting approval of 2/13/24 minutes)

(updated to delete duplicate information, per March board meeting approval of 2/13/24 minutes)

PVPA [Report Card](#) (report from Brent):

These are posted once per year. Schools are responsible to send these out by the end of Feb, so a letter will be going out to families soon.

PVPA's charter is up for renewal in 2026. They will review our accountability plan and our SAP.

The Report Card shows many ways that show how PVPA compares to other schools, and helps us track our own statistics across time. We reviewed some of the data.

Our average daily attendance is below the MA average in 2022 and 2023. We were higher in 2021. We are working on increasing the accuracy of our data, because the 2021 numbers are likely wrong. Chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more) is a big deal. The commissioner is wanting to emphasize attendance more than test scores. It's difficult to improve test scores if students aren't IN school. 148 of our students (out of 403 students) are chronically absent. So we have a lot of work to do. In the eyes of DESE - an absence is an absence regardless of the reason. Even if students have a doctor's note or it's an amazing other learning opportunity, it all counts in the stats as an absence.

Our graduation rates are great.

The College Going Rates have shifted over time. Fewer students are going directly to college. Maybe because post Covid more students are hesitant about taking on college debt, and more are taking gap years etc? We used to be higher than the state averages for student who went to college. Now we are sending fewer students straight to college than the average school across the state.

MCAS scores review.

10th grade ELA:

We have fewer "not meeting" scores than statewide. Our own scores have generally lowered from 2022 to 2023.

10th grade Math:

Lower grades from 2022 to 2023, and our "not meeting" are the same as state averages.

Interventions for Attendance:

- **Messaging through Open House/Community Bulletin/Family emails**
- **Discussions with students at Grade Meetings**
- **Attendance Policy**
- **Addition of School Social Worker**
- **Student Support Team**
- **Attendance Letters**
- **Family Meetings**
- **Filing with DCF**
- **Working with Families to access CRA Juvenile Court**

Interventions for College Going Rates:

- **Individual planning meetings with School Counselor**
- **Group lessons with School Counselor**
- **Regular email communications from School Counselor with reminders about college application process**

Interventions for MCAS Scores:

- **Addition of ELA Intervention Teacher in 2023**
- **Plans for Math Intervention Teacher in 2024-25**
- **Discussions with Math Department regarding changes to model of support and interventions**
- **See Attendance Interventions**
- **Discussions with teachers regarding changes to the scheduling of Paideia**
- **April Vacation Acceleration and Tutoring Programs (Grant Funded)**

Scheduling of Paideia:

- It really seems like the schedule disrupts academics right before MCAS happens. Brent reports that this is impacting the low scores PVPA students are getting.

Q: What about the 10th grade Biology scores? We don't have statistically relevant data. Our Bio scores are going to be in rough shape for a while, but we do know that we need to support them.

III. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

No report this week.

B. Governance Committee

Latrina Denson reports out.

- We are working on ByLaw updates. We have a subcommittee who will bring feedback to the gov committee and then to the full board.

- We have a potential new member visiting this meeting, Kiara Badillo.

C. Head of School Support & Evaluation Committee

David Potter reports out.

- There were some BoardOnTrack issues with uploading materials. They figured it out now, though.

- They are discussing the survey that will be sent out for evaluating Brent. Brent's responses will be sent out along with the survey for others to take. It's a big survey! This will be concluded in May, and brought to the board in June.

D. Long Range Infrastructure Planning Committee

Mindi Winter reports out.

The committee is meeting monthly again.

Discussing the music department move and how it might be feasible.

The dance rooms will be getting some insulation to help with sound dampening.

The bathrooms need increased capacity.

We need some common space.

How do we get an overall feasibility study of some kind for our current space and our future goals. Will be working on that.

IV. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff Reports

David Cavallin reports out:

- A lot of concerns from staff regarding Paideia. David read a letter to reflect these concerns. The union sent out a poll about staff opinions. 55% of respondents wanted to keep Paideia, 45% wanted not to - but most wanted to have a discussion about restructuring it.
- Losing Paideia could impact Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- Mock Trial relies on Paideia to make the program so strong.
- The musical also relies on Paideia. The students involvement in leading the show is a hugely unique part of the way PVPA runs shows. Gives students unique exposure/experience.
- Dance companies rely on Paideia.
- MAPs (Music and Poetry) is an incredible program students have access to through Paideia.
- David can bring more staff responses to the board as well.
- Paideia is key in what makes PVPA unique.
- Gary Hugget notes that he will not lead Mock Trial if he doesn't have Paideia.

Brent Nielsen's response:

- The idea is to participate in MAPs in even more depth, rather than remove it.
- A change for Paideia could lead to improving some things.
- Kids are learning tech in Paideia currently, but Brent is looking to add a new path where they can major in Tech. So students can learn sound design etc throughout the year, not just during the Paideia weeks.

B. Student Reports

Eva Veras reports out:

- Paideia is a unique time to explore their interests in a new way, increase their exposure. The focused time offers a deep dive which is amazing.
- Paideia is key to PVPA's culture.

Serena Gross reports out:

- the 9th grade student council has been thinking more about fundraising.
- 100% of students polled in 9th grade did want to keep Paideia.
- Paideia prevents burnout.
- It keeps students excited about learning at PVPA.

Fiona Yates reports out:

- Senior had an amazing fundraiser - a craft fair. They also are partnering with the Odyssey Bookshop - use their code.
- Paideia was great this year.
- Pottery with Petula was a highlight.
- Latin films
- Great Comet show (it reminded students of the pro-covid pvpa)
- 100% of students polled in 10th grade did want to keep Paideia.
- Fiona does not believe PVPA will survive without Paideia.

V. President's Business

A. Summer Retreat Planning

David has begun talking with the Governance Committee about planning a retreat that will address tracking the SAP and what we have accomplished so far and what needs to be worked on.

There are also transitions to new leadership coming. Folks staying on the board should consider taking on more roles and prepare for those in advance.

Brent Notes:

The things that students have done to have arts related fundraisers have been incredible. The craft fair of seniors this past weekend were amazing. They raised ~\$1,600 or more.

The 10th graders are having a jazz cafe this month and it seems very exciting / wonderful.

David Potter Notes: This shows broadening arts integration, which is part of the Strategic Action Plan.

VI. Public Comment

A. Brief comments and/or questions welcomed.

Carissa Dagenais '08: She had an amazing experience at Paideia, and she also entered college early. Her three younger brothers also all went to PVPA. So their family is deeply invested in PVPA. Carissa is a Creative Arts Therapist. Students get to have active learning strategy and get the mental health benefits of the time. It sounds like changing the timing of Paideia has value - test scores are important! But removing Paideia rather than moving or restructuring seems extreme. Carissa is optimistic that there must be a middle way to meet the needs of higher test scores while also meeting the needs of the students of keeping Paideia. Carissa volunteers to help get alumni thoughts / experience with Paideia to us if that's helpful.

Austin Clark, PVPA Librarian: He apologizes in advance to the students who want Paideia. And he appreciated what David Cavallin shared. He wants to give voice to the other half of the staff who want to see Paideia ended or at least very modified. Paideia is a huge amount of work with very little reward. For those who don't run a niche interest group, or an audition group, teachers have to run about a whole term of class content for the two week Paideia, for students who often don't want to be there. The experience is always exhausting. Austin often wants to quit during Paideia. Austin is pleased to hear that students find Paideia rejuvenating. Austin's experience is that it is a very dis-regulated time. It seems to not be functioning as intended. It seems to be really inhibiting the teaching goals of the regular academic courses.

Current student in 10th grade (name on the Zoom was mom's first name): There are many ways he sees arts not being supported at PVPA. After Paideia he sees students be more interested in participating. He understands there are challenges for teachers, and wonders if there are some ways to address those. But he wants the school to thrive as an ARTS school, not just as a normal school.

Kiara Badillo, potential new board member, '16 alum: She wants to echo that the Paideia experience is a pivotal part of the education. She thinks that removing Paideia would negatively impact absenteeism. The burn out and mental health benefits from Paideia is huge. PVPA is supposed to be an alternative education model. Arts are just as important and valid as academics. PVPA is changing in many ways.

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 8:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shino Pichette

Shino Pichette made a motion to adjourn.

LATRINA DENSON seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Sasha Viands	Aye
Fiona Yates	Aye
David Cavallin	Aye
David Potter	Aye
Sarah LaPierre	Absent
Azizah Yasin	Absent
Shino Pichette	Aye
LATRINA DENSON	Aye
Mindi Winter	Aye

Roll Call

Neil Hede	Absent
Vanessa Ford	Aye