

APPROVED



Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School

Minutes

April Board Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday April 9, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Location

Zoom Account is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: April Board Meeting

Time: Apr 9, 2024 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84342690053?pwd=cUpwZGt2dEZEMmFWY3Vlb1N2a3hJUT09>

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Passcode: Dmk6e0

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Passcode: 084269

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kewhga9OvG>

Trustees Present

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

Trustees Absent

Neil Hede, Shino Pichette

Ex Officio Members Present

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner (remote)

Non Voting Members Present

Brent Nielsen, Marcy Conner (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 Apr 9, 2024 at 6:20 PM.

C.

Read the Mission Statement

D. Approve Minutes

David Potter made a motion to approve the minutes from March Board Meeting on 03-12-24.

LATRINA DENSON seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

LATRINA DENSON Aye

David Cavallin Aye

Shino Pichette Absent

Neil Hede Absent

Vanessa Ford Aye

Mindi Winter Aye

Fiona Yates Aye

Azizah Yasin Aye

David Potter Aye

Sasha Viands Aye

II. Public Comment

A. Brief comments and/or questions welcomed.

- Jessie Burt - Parent of Freshman - Comment and or question about communication families received about upcoming changes. Communication on how Grades are presented? Not explained in the email. Frustration with Grading system very hard to understand, son gets frustrated not knowing how to better his grade, and don't think that the system prepares kids for College. Not clear for students. Example this past report card got an Exemplary and 2 accomplished and a 4.0 GPA and in another same words but 3.6 - this does not make sense to them. Also want to comment on proposal to extend the school day to 3:30pm is the option to start the day at 8am rather than 8:30am. No sports or extracurriculars at PVPA so they do them outside and it starts around 3:15-30pm. Last comment is for an idea to have half days - they are not as productive for students and I know also the difficulty of picking them up in the middle of the work day.
- Alexis Solis - Student in 10th grade - Paideia plan has been several years in the making, this doesn't seem the case since no one in the community has known. Students have not been involved in the discussion making process, not necessarily against decision, but does not trust Admin to make decisions in an open and thoughtful manner. Encourage the Board to put in place a plan to have open and transparent communication. Strategic plan
- Carissa Marie - Alum of PVPA - Citing Strategic Plan ...value all voices being heard when making decisions... Magnify the idea that the community and Alumni

as well as other people connected to PVPA would like to feel like they are involved in the decision making at PVPA.

- Michelle Veras - 10th/12th Grade Parent - In the Room - Lack of transparency and communication the kids come home and tell parents rumours all the time when Parents have not gotten a communication. Attempt to stay informed but the new things feel like they have come out of nowhere. Would like to see more communication on big issues. Paideia and the new grading system are large items, and we would like to have earlier communication so that they are not going off of rumors from the kids. Interested in what will be talked about in regards to Paidiea - think that it has lots of benefits for kids especially for ensembles and audition groups. Kids have had wonderful educational experiences during Paidiea that have opened up new interests and activities. Hoping that there is some way that it can be tweaked and kept to save the benefits.
- Kate - Family would benefit from a more in-depth understanding of what the concerns and benefits of removing Paidiea - a clear statement of the problem would help understand why the changes are being made. Questions - Where can we find the schools Charter, are DESE imposing conditions at this time?
- Charlotte Powell - 10th Grader - Ask about how the school has offered up the exchange for Paidiea to be arts integration into classes. How is the school going to manage that? Will someone be checking the curriculum to make sure that the integrations are happening and that it is being fulfilled. Since the teachers are not interested in teaching art.
- Julie Warren - Alumni - Ask questions about Paidiea wondering about the transparency issue since change has been in the making for some time it has never been made clear. There is a difference between something that is not occasionally working versus not working occasionally. What isn't working, what would be the clear replacement. Paidiea fulfills the Charter but removing it might be against the Charter? I went to Smith and we had a J term where intensive study was done and that was an intensive exposure opportunity. Understand that the academic landscape has changed dramatically especially post-COVID. Can we pool our resources into how this can be made better and it is less about the nostalgia and how can we help make it better.

Questions have been recorded and we will try to address them in different ways.

III. Head of School Report

A. Brent's Report

Brent addressed some Public Comments questions:

Grading improvements

Length of day - can change the start time potentially - Survey will go to families about 8 or 8:30 start time

Paideia issues. do include issues with accountability with DESE and other logistical issues.

Informational session tomorrow night at 6:00pm (Wednesday) asking parents to attend at that time for more in-depth information.

Alums - I'm here and I can be contacted to get more information - Brent is banned from that group by Bob Brick the original founder and so is not able to share information in that group. Encouraging contacting directly.

Executive Director report presented - Report attached.

- Senior class will hold Chipotle fundraiser tomorrow in Chicopee - Please attend.

1/2 days Thurs and Friday

April Break doing security updates to main office - End of year extending the foyer and replacing the doors. Grant.

Mock Trial States May 5th in Wilmington DE

May 9th Core criteria site visit which will kick off the renewal process.

Concerns for DESE:

- Chronic Attendance problems - already identified as a Problem school
- MCAS. results that need to be improved, Math in particular.

Scheduling - students picking their classes for the next year - Course Calendar is completed, but Master schedule is still being finalized - course calendar will come out either during April Break or as the kids come back, then course selection will start live with an Advisor.

The composition of the day is still being worked out with Labor Management Committee - need to balance the duration of the periods and the length of the lunch term. Still gathering data from teachers.

Survey will be sent to students/families - in order to determine start/end time.

School calendar will need to be voted on in Special Meeting due to not being on the Agenda in time.

10 Half Days eliminated 5 curriculum days.

Presentation given - Slide show attached.

Questions from Board:

- Vanessa - Great presentation Brent - Is there a particular number of students that are outside of the District and will it impact their ability to attend the school if we make the change now.
 - 94% of students for next year are within the proposed region. If students are outside the region then they would just be a lower priority so we would have to allow the students within the District to come in first, then outside would be eligible.
 - For next years students this would not change - if approved by DESE it would be 25-26 school year lottery and may take longer.
- Azizah - Thorough presentation similar to Vanessa's question if this change would happen will it reduce the number of spots per class and would it change the current priority processing in place, if there are applicants outside the area would those students have less of an opportunity
 - No changes to the total enrollment which is 400 so no impact on class sizes.
 - Within the 400 we can spread them out by grade as we wish - generally 70 students in 7th and 8th grade then it tittles down to around 65-69.
Depending on the Senior class. If the senior class is small then we add more to the lower grades.
 - How it impacts students ability to come here is just falling within the priority level, kids outside of the region will not be excluded but students within the region will get priority admission in the Lottery. Kids from outside the region will still be welcome but may end up on the wait list more frequently. Kids outside the region would not get the free transportation.
- David - what is the reason that this can not work with the current region?
 - We would need seven buses but those buses would be traveling such a large geographic area that it would take too long to get the kids in to the school or home, to reduce that the cost would be too prohibitive in order to accommodate the vast region.
- David - Is there any data about reimbursement patterns from the state?
 - Can tell you that in FY21 state was reimbursed at 91.2% - Brent has the data for the last 3 years.
- Latrina - anecdotal evidence on how parents feel about how this change will affect them.

Mock Trial Questions:

David saying that it is straightforward. Needs to be approved prior to May. Brent will share information when it is on the Agenda.

School Calendar Questions:

David noting that there will have to be a conversation about that when it is on the Agenda properly.

B.

Votes on School Calendar 2024-2025 and Mock Trial trip

Not properly posted on the Agenda so discussion skipped

IV. Board Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Per Marcy - Finance Committee was unable to meet last week, so there is no update. Rescheduling the last week of April to be able to work on the Budget for the May meeting.

B. Governance Committee

Governance reviewed Trustees membership and term limits. Reviewed the Officers list and need to determine who is up for election and new officers.

Document attached with info.

Would like to talk about upcoming elections, open is Clerk and Vice President/Chair of Governance. President.

Discussed who is qualified and who would be interested in order to develop a slate of candidates. Looking for nominations from the Board and gather interest for those positions.

Nominations are being sought and would like to have people make themselves known if they are interested in the Offices.

Also need to check in with current Officers to make sure that their plans are in place.

Latrina asking for Questions?

None

David asking for nominations and questions - None from the board

C. Head of School Support & Evaluation Committee

Report from David:

Committee has not met since last meeting.

Received Brent's self assessment and it has been shared with the Board of Trustees, please let David know if you are not seeing this info.

Survey should be open for Board to take as well - responses are confidential.

Senior Staff will then get the survey to complete.

D.

Long Range Infrastructure Planning Committee

Report from Mindi:

April meeting canceled. Status quo from last month

E. Head of School Support & Evaluation Committee

V. Internal Stakeholders

A. Staff Reports

David Cavallin

Praising shows. in recent weeks.

Midst of MCAS season and auditions for Dance/Ensembles right after April Break.

Statement:

- Staff concern over rollout of communication regarding changes to the master schedule, grading, etc. on our last curriculum day. Staff was informed of planned changes to grading and the master schedule. Unfortunately, no discussion about Paideia, just a presentation and a proposal. No questions were allowed at the moment, staff asked to email questions instead. There was lots of talk about what, but not enough information as to how changes were to be implemented, and the inability of staff to ask questions and engage in discussion left many of us feeling confused. We are politely asking for more transparency and better communication moving forward.

Marcy stating that Tim Cable has been elected as the new Staff representative

Tim did not prepare comments but echoes what David said.

B. Student Reports

Danielle -

Prefacing by saying our job is to reflect our Student body and we are expected to relay info from the Students to the Board. The communication that went between the Adult leaders and the Students (leaders) found out about the changes on field trip then upon return there were no answers for students.

Student Council did get an opportunity to discuss changes with Brent and Frank which was helpful but still not enough information.

Demographic change and MCAS issues - which Demographic can be seen as a race issue which no one wants to talk about.

How are we going to keep students enrolled, make sure that all these changes are going to be implemented next year.

A lot of changes in the Junior year to make at once right before Senior year.
I do love this school and I do know that changes need to happen - appreciate Brent and Frank for taking the time to talk to Student council.

Fiona -

Agrees with Danielle, students at this board are leaders within the school. These are the kids that look for information and go find it. However the average student does not do this and most students found out about the changes via the rumour mill. Teachers found out at Curriculum day and then Teachers informed students what they learned. It was a very difficult way to find out what was happening.

Students were told that Admin would communicate to students directly prior to the Board meeting - Students did not get that information.

There has been no presentation or email to Students explaining the changes.

PVPA has a higher level of student involvement than other schools, which is unique.

Paideia keeps show quality, high

Lots of questions, not a lot of answers.

Ava

The benefit of future PVPA but not the benefit of what PVPA looks like now - understand the need to change the schedule and grading, Paideia. Students want to keep the benefit of Paideia

Serena - Freshman

Mirror what the other students have said and agree with those perspectives. From the Student's POV, there is serious frustration about the lack of communication. All information is coming from word of mouth or informal sources. Students should get basic information before the rumors start. Urge the Board and Admin to listen to students and alumni about how to make Paideia better.

Students would like to be considered in these decisions, not opposed to PVPA changing but want to make sure that Student voices are included.

Misinformation is spreading rampantly, and Admin has been silent.

Questions:

Danielle would like to acknowledge that we are coming from a place of entitlement and privilege because we can speak at this table - Students are not trying to call out Admin but the students are getting a lack of information to be able to share informed opinions.

VI. President's Business

A. DESE Core Criteria Site Visit

DESE site visit will be May 9th but DESE would like to be able to meet virtually on May 8th prior to 1pm.

Please complete form for a special meeting prior to the end of the month so that the Board can address the issues that were outstanding from this meeting.

Holidays are not allowed to be used for meeting dates but school vacation is an option.

Vanessa asking about meeting time on the 8th - Brent does not have a time for the meeting at this time. Will get it to Board as soon as DESE gets back to him.

Brent commenting -

People need to keep in mind the responsibility of the Trustees. Fiduciary responsibility to the school.

Feeling attacked as an Admin during meeting.

David Potter acknowledging Brents comments stating they were helpful to hear. However pointed out that a lot of people have praised Admin.

Sasha Viands comment - uplifting the youth in the room and want to state that she hears you and sees you about all that you brought to the meeting tonight.

Wants to acknowledge that given. Brent's comments that we should be mindful and intentional in how we bring information to the community and acknowledge that talking points should be provided so that there is a uniform script to share information.

Azizah asking about the Executive session that is missing from the Agenda - wants to hold the session given it was on the original Agenda. She feels that we need one, given that the Executive session was on the agenda.

Questioning why that was there and left off - when we have been going out of order all night.

David asked her to follow up after the meeting.

Motion made by David Potter to adjourn then seconded by Sasha Viands

Vanessa asking about Executive session at our next meeting - David responding that the purpose of the executive session would need to be determined prior to the meeting. If one is required then we could have one if necessary.

Azizah - never been asked to modify or adjust the Agenda items as a Board member in order to appropriately give input. David invited the Board members

Azizah would like to add to the record that it is her opinion that all meetings should include an Executive session.

Brent noting that more Trustees should be involved in the discussion of what an Executive session is and how/why we utilize them. An email discussion could lead to a deliberation.

David promising to send the information about Exec Session

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 8:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mindi Winter

Documents used during the meeting

- 2024_03_12_board_meeting_minutes.pdf
- Head of School Report to the Board - 9_12_2023.pdf
- April 9, 2024 Presentation to Board.pdf
- Board Membership (non-staff or student) Info_April 2024.pdf