APPROVED

Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy

Minutes

Board Meeting

Date and Time
Monday May 24, 2021 at 6:30 PM

Location
LIVE STREAM: https://youtu.be/C63B7pHu8CE

Directors Present
A. Farooqi (remote), A. Starling (remote), A. Young (remote), C. Lewis (remote), M. Dixon (remote), M. Ramasamy (remote), S. Dasu (remote), S. Korrapati (remote), S. Liner (remote), S. Schroeck (remote)

Directors Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
A. Pieper (remote)

Guests Present
Enrique Alvarez (remote), M. Vespa (remote), N. Zagorski (remote), T. Hemming (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests

B.

Call the Meeting to Order

M. Dixon called a meeting of the board of directors of Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy to order on Monday May 24, 2021 at 6:33 PM.

C. Read Mission Statement

M. Ramasamy read the Mission Statement.

D. Administrative Meeting Review

M. Dixon read the rules and procedures for the Zoom Webinar meeting platform.

E. Approval of Prior Minutes April 26, 2021

S. Schroeck made a motion to approve the minutes from Board Meeting on 04-26-21.
M. Ramasamy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

- **CLARIFICATION:** Conditional Approval of Admissions Policy Amendment for the purposes of submitting for State Approval.
- Official approval of posted draft minutes.

F. Adoption of the Agenda

S. Schroeck made a motion to adopt the May 24, 2021 agenda.
S. Dasu seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. Community Comments (First Opportunity) - subject to guidelines

A. Community Comments - guidelines

There were no members of the community who wished to make a public comment.

III. Director's Report

A. General Items

A. Pieper gave the Director's Report.

Educational Program-

End of Year Testing - nearly all students including virtual students came to in-person testing. A few makeup tests will happen this week. We will have scores soon for end-of-year tests (EOCs and EOGs). The data from all Math testing and Grade 3 Reading will be shared with the Board at the retreat in July. Grades 4-8 Reading results will not be ready until August or September, however, as the test is being renormed. Parents will get test

results separate from progress reports. Progress reports go out June 10. End-of-year test results will be delivered electronically through email as those scores become available.
Last week of school activities - Parents will be able to attend some end of year activities in-person including Graduation and music performances. An email went out with details about timing, parking, and seating for those events. Events will be held outdoors.
Next school year

- In person learning with social distancing as space allows beginning August 24. The school is still awaiting specific guidance from the State. Details will be communicated as soon as they become available.
- Planning staggered open house event - August 19th
- Face coverings next year - TBD
- Volunteers, community events, athletics - TBD

Students and Staff

Thank you to the Board for staff bonus - Staff members received a bonus during teacher appreciation week.
Diversity Training Summary - The staff is very excited to continue working with Hines-Gaither Consulting. The training has been beneficial. Hines-Gaither has sent a survey to staff to determine what they can do to continue to serve the SA organization. Administration is in communication with Hines-Gaither Consulting regarding options for continuing diversity training next year.
Student Re-Enrollment - The percentage of re-enrollment for rising 1st through 8th graders is currently 100%. Re-enrollment forms will be sent to returning students over the summer.
2021-2022 Waitlist - There are a total of 193 students remaining on the waitlist following 2021-22 enrollment.

Compliance and Finance

- GEER Funding ($15K) received - will be used next year for mental health costs and the costs for the school nurse.
- ESSER II Grant ($71K) received - Federal grant money to help the school recover from the costs incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to be used over the next school year.
- ESSER III Grant Anticipated ($150K) - additional Federal grant money for pandemic cost recovery to be used next year and the following school year.
- NC Access Grant (tentative $400K - pending SBE approval) - this grant enables the school to provide resources for academically disadvantaged students over five years.

IV. Expansion Committee

A.

Status Review

S. Korrapati gave the Expansion Committee Update.

Scholars Academy will remain in our current home for the next school year (2021-2022). The Board remains committed to expansion and will continue to seek opportunities to achieve our goals.

Strategic Planning Goals update -

- Goal 1 - To plan and execute a sustainable financial transition which allows for pragmatic growth and expansion - in the past year the Committee has researched various financing options in order to work toward this goal.
- Goal 2 - To create an expansion communication plan to keep all school stakeholders informed - the committee has worked toward this goal over the past year by keeping members of the school community updated via the school website and newsletter.

V. Governance Committee

A. Status Review

S. Liner gave the Governance Committee update.

In the last Board Meeting, all committees were asked to give a status update as to the five year strategic plan action items. Some of those updates will be shared by committee chairpersons during this meeting. Following tonight's meeting, the Governance Committee will compile all of the Strategic Plan Year One Action Item status updates as they are submitted into a color-coded document.

Governance has completed several objectives -

- Goal 1 - Developing a comprehensive teacher recruitment plan - Five out of Six objectives have been met. One is still in progress.
- Goal 2 - Continuing to budget and plan for professional development - This year, teachers were given several training opportunities, particularly for remote teaching.
- Goal 3 - Planning an annual Gifted Conference - This goal was not completed this year, however SA will participate in Gifted Conferences in the future.

Board Recruitment - The deadline to submit an application was 5:00PM today. Eight applications were received. Interviews will be conducted over the next couple weeks. The Board will vote on the slate of new Board members at the June Board meeting.

A personnel matter will be discussed in closed session.

The Committee has been working on Employment Contracts with the assistance of an attorney. These contracts will become templates for various types of employees (teachers, support staff, administrators).

VI. Diversity & Inclusion

A. Status Review

S. Dasu gave the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Update.

The Committee is seeking to better understand what Equity means in terms of how it pertains to the Scholars Academy Community. This improved understanding will enable the committee to tie the strategic goals of the committee to the goal of equity.

Strategic Plan Action Item Update -

Several tasks have been completed.

- Plan and attract diverse families - part of this involved the NC Access Grant Application.
- Recruiting and attracting a diverse student body - the initial vision for this goal was to recruit students from outside the school in year one, however, through committee discussions, it was clear that the focus should shift to inclusion within the current student body for the first year, so the goal has been "put on the back burner" deliberately for now.
- Leveraging the new marketing role that the school has started - The Hines-Gaither training was successfully implemented by the administration.
- Improving class curriculum - staff committee has worked very hard on incorporating diversity topics into the curriculum.
- Building intentional teaching topics that tie to creating and maintaining a school culture that supports Diversity and Inclusion - action on this goal has begun and is still in process.

VII. Educational Excellence

A. Status Review

C. Lewis gave the Educational Excellence Committee Update.

End of year SEL Awards - The format has changed to focus on characteristics in our Vision for our Graduates. K-3 students all will get awards in a variety of categories. 4-8, up to 3 students will receive an award in each category. 8th grade will still have traditional subject area awards.

Strategic Plan Update

- Goal 1 - Build appropriate support and communication for families on the K-8 path. The committee focused on communication for families with students in K-2 this year. Individual growth targets were set for each child for the year. Progress reports were updated to reflect the grading framework and the language was streamlined for clarity. The new plan was communicated to parents through a custom video and through parent-teacher interviews in the Fall. Staff continues to monitor student progress toward individual targets and streamlining the process so that it may be repeated.
- Goal 2 - Sustain a focus on the innovated gifted-based educational curriculum and practices - action on this goal has started but has not yet been completed. Partial FTE was assigned to be a gifted instruction coach and as part of that effort, all of the gifted resources were catalogued and organized so that staff may more easily access information on gifted instruction. Two gifted-focused professional development sessions were hosted and several teachers attended the national gifted conference.
- Goal 3 - Integrating Diversity and Inclusion topics into the curriculum - this goal is being worked on in conjunction with the D&I committee. This is an ongoing process. The committee and staff worked on a monthly calendar to bring diversity topics into daily curriculum and resources were provided to teachers to enable them to integrate these topics into their classrooms. As a result of this effort, student artwork is on display throughout the school and reflects a diverse cultural experience.

Next Year, the committee will focus on reviewing the ELA and Social Studies Curriculum and look for ways to incorporate diverse and inclusive topics.

VIII. Whole Child Committee

A. Status Review

S. Schroeck gave the Whole Child Committee Update.

Grandpeople Day was May 5 and nearly 100 people attended virtually from all over the world. Grandpeople attended virtual SEL class with their grandchildren. A virtual, interactive map of the location of our Grandpeople was posted to the school website. Aside from a few isolated technical glitches, the event was successful.
The May meeting has been rescheduled for June 22, We will be discussing the mental health plan that will be presented to the Board and the June Board meeting and submitted to the State by September.

Strategic Plan Update

- Develop a system of measurement for gauging individual student progress toward our Vision for our Graduates - This goal has been started, but is not complete. This goal happens to align with one of the steps in the Mental Health Plan that has been required by the State of North Carolina. The committee has discussed some broad ideas on ways that student progress toward grade-appropriate SEL goals be gauged and how to involve parents, students, and teachers in evaluating progress. There is a staff committee that is currently working on drafting the comprehensive mental health plan. The Whole Child Committee will support the recommendations in the mental health plan pertaining to tracking individual student progress.
- Finalize the Whole Child Committee Charter Document - The Committee reviewed this document at the start of the school year and determined that no changes should be made to the charter document that was written last year by members of the Educational Excellence Committee at this time. The Document can be considered to be in its final form.
- Begin weekly communications via social media to parents and members of the community regarding topics pertaining to Social and Emotional Wellness of Gifted Students and resources to aid in better understanding of these topics - This goal is complete. Throughout the school year, the Committee has posted weekly "Wellness Wednesdays" posts and articles on the school's Facebook page. Each month has tackled a different theme in Social and Emotional wellness of gifted children. Metrics show a growing engagement in these posts by members of the community. This will be an ongoing goal as the committee must continue to generate this weekly content for years to come.
- Implement an award to recognize students who display good citizenship and/or personal growth so that staff may encourage students to continue to improve upon their behavior and mindset - This goal is complete. The Eagle Vision Award was established this Spring and earned an enthusiastic reception from the staff and students. Aside from the benefits of recognizing and rewarding Social and Emotional Growth in students, there was an unexpected benefit from the establishment of the Eagle Vision Award. Teachers re-familiarized themselves with the Vision for Our Graduates document, and, reportedly, some teachers have formally integrated those principles into their classroom culture and lessons.
- Partner with Staff and Development Committee to plan meaningful and enriching activities for a virtual/hybrid Grandpeople Day to ensure continuity of this time-honored tradition - This goal is complete. Virtual Grandpeople day was held May 5.
- Develop and annual SEL Service Learning project that reaches all three tiers of students (K-3 local, 4-6 national, 7-8 global) - This goal is not yet started - COVID-19 restrictions have pushed action on this goal later than initially hoped, but the expectation is that once restrictions are lifted, a meaningful service learning project can be planned.

IX. Policy Committee

A. Status Update

A. Young gave the Policy Committee Update.

The Committee met this past month and discussed the change to the Admissions Policy that was voted on by the Board at the April meeting. The Board needs to vote to request a weighted lottery from the State Board of Education.
A. Young made a motion to submit a request for a weighted lottery from the State Board of Education.
S. Dasu seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

X. Development Committee

A. Status Review

A. Farooqi gave the Development Committee Status update.

The pledge total for the 2020-2021 school year is projected to be $430,000 to $450,000. 284 families participated in this year's pledge drive. The pledge goal was $495,000.

Strategic Plan update

- Community Development supporting the Annual Giving Campaign - This goal is complete - The number of people who pledged shows a strong effort by the school community. Success was driven by strong volunteer involvement, campaign events, and strong messaging.
- Science Exploration Expo - This goal is complete - this was a unique and highly successful experience. There was very positive feedback from our sponsor, Sealed Air. There was participation from judges across a variety of organizations. Engagement and quality of work was impressive.
- Outreach to the community - This goal is complete - There was an outreach effort to follow up with the 20 years in 2020 event that took place in the first week of March 2020 prior to the pandemic restrictions. This outreach allowed the school to build upon the community network and create future opportunities.

XI. Foundation Committee

A. Foundation Committee Update

M. Ramasamy gave the Foundation Committee Update.

Some members of the Development Committee will be overseeing activities of the Foundation as the Annual Giving Campaign will be moving to the Foundation. A proposed

budget will need to be approved before an application for a solicitation license can be submitted. This budget will be presented and discussed in closed session. The Foundation has charitable foundation status. We are still waiting on an update as to the amendment to make the Foundation a supporting organization.

XII. Finance Committee Update

A. Finance Recommendations

A. Starling gave the Finance Committee Update.

The Finance Committee met last week and discussed the current year's budget and remaining open items. The budget has been managed and a surplus has been maintained all year, which allowed the school to pay bonuses to the staff during teacher appreciation week. A few items will come in under budget (ie Mortgage interest). Revenue from the Annual Giving Campaign was less than what was budgeted. Spending priorities for this year were new chromebooks and furniture for the technology lab in order to transform the format into a collaborative STEM lab and outdoor improvements (mulch around landscaping and pressure washing the building). These activities will take place after the end of the school year. Next month's Board meeting will be the last before the end of the fiscal year, so any budget "clean up" items will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

XIII. Community Comments (Second Opportunity) - Subject to Guidelines

A. Agenda Item Summary

There were no members of the community who wished to make a comment.

XIV. Closed Session

A. Closed Session

A. Farooqi made a motion to convene in closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. §143-318.11: (a) To prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential information; (e) To discuss contract negotiations; (f) To discuss personnel matters involving an individual employee or prospective employee.
M. Ramasamy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Vote on any items from Closed Sessions

S. Dasu made a motion to approve the budget amendment as recommended by the Finance Committee.
M. Ramasamy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

S. Dasu made a motion to approve the contract renewal as recommended by the Governance Committee.
S. Korrapati seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.
S. Korrapati made a motion to present the personnel contract as proposed by the Governance Committee.
M. Ramasamy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

XV. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

S. Dasu made a motion to adjourn.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** 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 9:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
S. Schroeck