APPROVED

Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy

Minutes

SA Monthly Board Meeting

Date and Time
Monday October 23, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Location
You are invited to a Zoom webinar.
Topic: Scholars Academy Monthly Board Meetings
Register in advance for this webinar:
Scholars Academy Monthly Board Meeting - Zoom Webinar Registration

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

You may also watch the meeting live via YouTube stream, at Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy - Charlotte - YouTube

Directors Present
A. Farooqi, A. Hall, A. Starling, D. Palmer, E. Alvarez, E. Womer, L. Lopez, M. Dixon, W. Ning

Directors Absent
None

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests

B.

Call the Meeting to Order

E. Womer called a meeting of the board of directors of Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy to order on Monday Oct 23, 2023 at 6:40 PM.

C. Read Mission Statement

Ready by: AJ Farooqi

Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy provides a differentiated, challenging, and equitable learning environment that supports the distinctive intellectual, social, and emotional needs of highly gifted children from diverse backgrounds and enables them to form meaningful relationships with their intellectual peers.

D. Administrative Meeting Review

E. Approval of Prior Minutes 9/25/23

D. Palmer made a motion to approve the minutes from SA Monthly Board Meeting on 09-25-23.
W. Ning seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

F. Adoption of the Agenda

D. Palmer made a motion to adopt the agenda for today, 10/23/2023.
E. Alvarez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

A. Community Comments - guidelines

No community comments

III. Director's Report

A. General Items

Director's Report

- **Admissions Process for 2024-2025 School Year has started**
  - Monthly Virtual Information Sessions
  - In person tours - 1st time since pre-COVID - Nov 6th and 7th
  - Group Test Deadline: Dec 15th
  - Group Test Dates: Jan 20th, Feb 3rd
  - Application Deadline: Feb 9th
  - Admissions Lottery: Mar 21st

- **Marketing Overview**
  - Q City Metro - Black community news
    - Sponsored article
    - Facebook posts
  - Norsan Media - Hispanic network
    - Geotargeting digital ads in Spanish within the school area zipcodes
    - Radio ads La Raza
  - Niche - national school search engine with rankings and detailed school information
  - Bus wraps with school logo - function as mobile billboards
  - Budget for Marketing comes from NC Access Grant
- **Parental Leave Statute**
  - The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 & The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 - Require the North Carolina Prayer Certification and Single Set of Assurances (20 USC 7904 & 20 USC 7846) be noted Board minutes
    - Paid parental leave was signed into law in June. This is mandatory for regular public schools.
    - Charter schools may opt in before December 1, 2023
    - State funds are based on reimbursement of $110 per day (plus FICA) for classroom teachers only.
    - Staff must have worked for the school for a full year before becoming eligible for this benefit
    - Opt -in requires universal benefit for all staff regardless of position. Therefore, no reimbursement available for teaching assistants, support staff, or admin.
    - Provides 8 weeks of full pay for the birthing parent, 4 weeks for adoption, paternity, or child placement
- **Our Current Policy**
  - We provide employer paid short term disability
  - Provides 60% for 6 weeks for birthing parent
  - No financial benefit for adoption, paternity, or child placement
  - FMLA covers guaranteed unpaid leave for up to 12 weeks
  - Sub cost for maternity leave comes from the money not paid to the employee out on unpaid leave
  - STD is available for any staff member with a qualifying health condition
  - Cost to school for Short Term Disability:
    - Priced per employee based on age and income
    - Average cost per employee is $270 per year
    - Annual cost to the school approximately $12,000
- **Financial Impact of Providing Parental Leave**
  - State parental leave benefit - $110 per day + FICA ($13.75/hour)
    - $4,400.00 - 8 weeks of reimbursable sub pay

        - $2,200.00 - 4 weeks of reimbursable sub pay
    - Using our current non certified sub pay of $120 per day ($15/hour) - the gap in funding would be minimal
        - $4,800.00 - 8 weeks
        - $2,400.00 - 4 weeks
    - Preference to fill maternity leave with a either a teaching assistant or a certified teacher
    - Teacher assistant pay is $20.50 per hour
        - $6,560 - 8 weeks
        - $3,280 - 4 weeks
    - Non-contracted certified teacher pay is $35 per hour
        - $11,200 - 8 weeks
        - $5,600 - 4 weeks
- **Scenarios to Consider**

1. Classroom teacher who is eligible for reimbursed sub takes 8 weeks and position is filled with:
    1. Substitute at $15/hour - **Budget impact is $400**
    2. TA at $20.50/hour - **Budget impact is $2,160**
    3. Certified teacher at $35/hour - **Budget impact is $6,800**
2. TA is NOT eligible for reimbursement takes 8 weeks and position is filled with a substitute at $15/hour - Budget impact is $4,800
3. Office staff member NOT eligible for reimbursement takes 8 weeks. Likely position would be not be backfilled and work would be distributed. Budget impact could include small stipends for other office staff who need to pick up additional duties.

- **Short Term Disability and Possible Supplements**
    - For comparison using a teacher making approximately $35/hour (Bachelor with 6 years or a Masters with 2 years salary is about $52,500)
        - 8 weeks of fully paid leave equals **$11,200**
        - If the teacher were to take 8 weeks of leave using 6 week of STD and 2 weeks of unpaid leave, the employee would receive: **$5,040**
        - If the school covered 60% for the additional two weeks, the employee would receive: **$6,720**
        - Cost to the school would be: **$1,680**

    - Non-birthing parent, adoption, or child placement would NOT qualify for STD
        - 4 weeks of fully paid leave equals **$5,600**
        - If the school covered 60% for the 4 week, the employee would receive: **$3,360**
        - Cost to the school would be: **$3,360**

CONTINUED FROM ABOVE....

- **Other Things to Consider**
  - In talking to other charter schools, there is a concern about the potential costs of opting in and many schools are going to opt out.
  - End of ESSER and other grant funding equals budget short fall for existing expenses
  - Building and security upgrades and maintenance
- **Unknowns**
  - Will this be retroactive for this school year?
  - Will we have the option to opt in every year?
  - What happens if the state reserve funding is not enough to cover the reimbursement costs?
- This is a first read for review and approval before Dec 1st
- Adam commented that a takeaway for Finance Committee is to summarize priorities for the school from a finance perspective that should be evaluated together with this benefit.
- Erica mentioned that there is significant variability in the potential cost (i.e. could be $400 or $4,000). Furthermore, expressed that this benefit would be a positive impact for the employees including morale and recruitment. The unknowns may not resolve and we may need to make a decision without getting the answers to these questions.
- Group clarified that if opting into this benefit, an employee would only qualify for this benefit and not STD during the same period. The requirement to qualify for STD, employee can't receive any salary.
- Discussion about CMS running out of funds for this benefit.
- Ari mentioned that in addition to the financial impact there is an educational impact for the substitute used in replacement of the teacher (i.e., certified teacher at higher cost vs. non-certified substitute at lower cost)
- Malik suggested that we evaluate the benefit cost based on historical school data

- To evaluate during the next meeting, we will follow up with the unknown questions, prepare a finance

To receive funds under The Every Student Succeeds Act, School is required to present a Prayer Assurance. This was signed, discussed and duly noted.

IV. FAST Committee (f/k/a Expansion Committee)

A. Update

- Description for FAST committee - Facilities, Assets , Security, Technology

Reconstitution, new name, and mission statement:

The Board is happy to announce that the Expansion Committee will be reconstituted as the Facilities, Assets, Security, and Technology Committee ("FAST Committee"). The FAST Committee is dedicated to advising the Board on capital improvement and cybersecurity needs, including but not limited to, new construction projects, renovations, deferred maintenance, physical/technology assets, and security. We believe this change will give the Board a more comprehensive framework to provide oversight and strategic direction that promotes and accounts for a secure, efficient, and technologically advanced learning environment.

Security Assessment

The school has engaged with Jericho Security Consultant, a third party security consultant that specializes in emergency procedures & security services for education facilities, houses of worship, healthcare facilities, and private organizations. Jericho will be doing a security risk assessment this November.

Survey

The FAST committee asked the administration for certain data points covering the current status of our facility, assets and technology, for which they are working on putting together. We plan on using this information along with the information from the security risk assessment to establish a game plan on what our immediate needs are and what improvements could be made to our current location.

- Requested survey of current assets to develop a strategy for going forward. This will include security assessment.

V. Foundation

A. Update

As of 10/23/2023, slightly behind in goal for Annual Giving.

- $180K down by $24K
- 28% returning family participation, 40% new family participation
- leadership at 100% pledge
- Bus donation $14K behind as well
- As month of October rolls off, there will be an additional push for donations in events such as Fall Fest

VI. Finance Committee

A. Updates

A. MD&A and Audit Report - Reports completed as of 6/30/23 to present to audit.

B. CD Reinvestment - Seeking approval to reinvest school-only surplus funds (i.e., current savings) in 3-month CDs. Quarterly updates will be provided. Investment strategy will remain in place until there is a suggested change which will require board approval.

C. Budget Amendments

- Adjusting revenue up by $140
  - County adjustment increase by $58K
  - Transportation $55K rollover from last year
  - CMS true up + $27K represents underpayments from last year
- Adjusting expenses up $1.628M. Some categories include:
  - Mortgage Payoff $1.597M
  - Teacher assistants
  - Elevator parts
  - HVAC Software updates

D. Purchase of Buses - NC Access Grant allotted for purchase of 2 activity buses (14 students each). Must purchase before end of year. Buses are not currently available but can pre-purchase for delivery in February.

E. Purchase of Updated HVAC Software - Smart software for HVAC controlling currently not in budget. Asking $14,900.

VII. Finance Items Requiring Board Vote

A. MD&A and Audit Report

D. Palmer made a motion to Approve MD&A and Audit Report as recommended by Finance Committee.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. CD Reinvestments

A. Starling made a motion to approve CD Reinvestment until the end of academic year or when Finance committee suggests changes.
D. Palmer seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

C. Budget Amendments

A. Starling made a motion to approve budget amendments as recommended by Finance Committee.
D. Palmer seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

D. Purchase of Buses

D. Palmer made a motion to purchase of school buses as recommended by Finance Committee.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

E. Purchase of Updated HVAC Software

D. Palmer made a motion to Purchase of Updated HVAC Software as recommended by Finance Committee.
A. Starling seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VIII. Policy Committee

A. Update

- A board of directors of a charter school may (but is not required to) provide paid parental leave. If the charter school provides parental leave, it is eligible to receive funds allocated for schools that provide this benefit. • G.S. 115C-218.90(a)
- The opt-in deadline for Paid Parental Leave is December 1, 2023. A decision should be made by the November Board meeting.

- Although any employee of the IPS is eligible to take paid parental leave, the IPS will only be eligible to be reimbursed for a daily rate of a substitute. The charter school is responsible for paying the employee's salary while they are out on paid parental leave. This rate for 2023-24 is $115 + 7.65% social security.

B. First Reads & Upcoming Policy

- **REVIEWING RECOMMENDED POLICY**

Policy content evaluation:
• Identify the problem/conduct/actionable goal or change that the policy targets or influences.
• What are the core components and implementation requirements of the policy?
• Does the policy articulate the mechanism for monitoring implementation?
• Does the policy identify indicators for assessing program success/problem resolution?
• How is the content of the policy similar to or different from that of other policies?
Improving policy implementation and future policy development:
• What is the context of the policy's development and passage?
• Is there a basis of evidence in support of the policy's strategy?
• Is there an unexpected impact of the policy?

- **Upcoming Policy**:

Parents' Bill of Rights (December Policy Compliance Goal): MAY NEED DECEMBER MEETING TO APPROVE
• New policy for compliance with North Carolina's Act to Enumerate the Rights of Parents to Direct the Upbringing, Education, Health Care and Mental Health of their Minor Children. (SB 49)
• The recent budget passage extends the implementation of new legislation, commonly known as the Parents' Bill of Rights, to Jan. 1, 2024 from September 15, 2023.
• The State Board of Education discussed the attached policy for how it will hear appeals from family members who believe their local school district violated the law.
• If a parent believes their school violates any part of the law, they can file a formal complaint to their local school board. If the issue is not resolved to the family's satisfaction within 30 days, they can appeal only certain violations to the State Board of Education.
• The State Board Vice Chair Alan Duncan, noted "that there's no enforcement section," of the law. The Board's attorney, Allison Schafer, confirmed that the State Board can identify a violation, but the law does not provide consequences for a violation beyond a hearing. She said her staff "did raise that with the General Assembly," but that legislators did not put an enforcement provision in the law.

C. Recommended Policy Adoption: 2.4(b) - Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy & Complaint Process

M. Dixon made a motion to Adopt the Policy 2.4(b) - Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy & Complaint Process as proposed by Policy Committee.
D. Palmer seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

D. Recommended Policy Adoption: 1.11(a) - Public Records Request Policy

M. Dixon made a motion to Adopt Policy 1.11(a) - Public Records Request Policy as proposed by Policy Committee.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

A. Community Comments

No comments
A. Farooqi made a motion to Move to Close Session.
M. Dixon seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

X. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

M. Dixon made a motion to Adjourn the meeting.
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 9:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
L. Lopez

Documents used during the meeting

- 60F 2023 0630 AUDIT DRAFT - Rev 2023 1006.pdf
- Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy - Management's Discussion & Analysis - YE 6.20.23 - DRAFT.pdf
- Q_065980 - 14p. MFSAB Build Sheet.PDF
- Gregory Poole Bus Sales & Service - Quote - 10.10.23.pdf
- Trane Proposal - Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy Controls Upgrade 10-19-2023.pdf
- Paid Parental Leave-SBE Presentation.pdf

- PPL_FAQ_Draft procedures-092023.pdf
- Parental Concern Hearings Procedure.pdf
- Final_SA_NON-TITLE_IX_DISCRIMINATION_HARASSMENT_AND_BULLYING_COMPLAINT_PROCESS.pdf
- Final_SA_Public_Records_Request_Policy.pdf