APPROVED

Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy

Minutes

SA Monthly Board Meeting

Date and Time
Monday March 25, 2024 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 (remote), W. Ning

Directors Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
T. Hemming (remote)

Guests Present

Angela Tate (remote), Jackie Dandrea (remote), Julie Doll (remote), K. Ely (remote), Megan Tolan (remote), Nina Sun (remote), S. Dasu (remote), Sheetal Puri (remote)

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 Mar 25, 2024 at 6:31 PM.

C. Read Mission Statement

M. Dixon read Mission Statement.

D. Administrative Meeting Review

E. Womer read the Administrative instructions.

E. Approval of Minutes of January Board Meeting - 2/26/24

D. Palmer made a motion to approve the minutes from SA Monthly Board Meeting on 02-26-24.
E. Alvarez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

F. Adoption of the Agenda

D. Palmer made a motion to Approve the agenda.
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
- Chinese Offering Phased Out

- Chinese offering will be phased out due to broad decline in Chinese language offering in High Schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg county and Union county
- Analysis was done to understand current High School offerings
- Students currently taking Chinese in grades 6-8 will continue to take the course for the remaining of their middle school years. For example, if a 6th grader is currently in Chinese they will be able to take it in 7th and 8th.
- If the demand for Chinese drops significantly for 6-8, there may not be a possibility to keep an in-person teacher but the student will be able to take an online option
- Starting 2024-2025 students in K-5 will not have the ability to select Chinese as a foreign language
- Proposal for Elementary Program
  - Eliminate Chinese in grades K-5
  - Increase Spanish to twice per week in grades K-4
  - French once per week in grade 4 for exposure before choosing a language for middle school
- Proposal for Middle School Program
  - Spanish or French for grade 5
  - Continue to offer Chinese for students currently enrolled in grades 6-8
  - Educational Excellence to assess foreign language curriculum
- Next year, Educational Excellence Committee will investigate options for another exploratory language for grades K-4

Admissions and Lottery

- Lottery results came out on Thursday, 3/21
- 185 total students this year vs. 217 last year
- Lottery all done via Zoom. At the time, no conversation is engaged with families. A separate meeting/Zoom is held with families accepted.
- There was a smaller number of Kindergarten applicants this year than ever (10 vs 21 last year). Reason is unknown.
- This resulted in a smaller wait-list for Kindergarten.
- Once a student receives a spot, most families accept. Not a lot of families that don't accept so not worried about the smaller number in wait-list
- One reason for smaller Kindergarten applicants could be smaller number of siblings already at school
- Once a student receives a spot, they have 10 days to accept, not counting Spring Break. So 4/12th is the final day to accept a spot
- Seems like there's a trend that the number of students that don't get in in Kindergarten, then apply for 1st grade, etc. Looking at the chart diagonally shows this trend.

- The Telra Institute may be a consideration for families looking for schools outside of CMS for gifted students. Something to think about in terms of competition for SA.

B. Solar Eclipse - April 8th

- Solar Eclipse - April 8th
  - Proposal to extend Spring Break until 4/8/24 due to safety risks posed by Solar Eclipse at dismissal time

E. Womer made a motion to approve extending Spring Break until 4/8/2024.
D. Palmer seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

IV. Governance Committee

A. Executive Director Search Update

- The Governance Committee developed a job description based on input from teachers and parents, as well as trusted consultants in the education space
- The first level is to review resumes against minimum requirements
  - For example, administrative experience of a 3 years minimum
- The next level, is the phone screen with 3 or more members of the Governance Committee
- Then, the on-site interviews with staff and teacher panel
- After that will be a final set of of interviews with the entire Board and members of the community
- There are currently 3 candidates in the on-site interviews phase
- Goal is to try to get all interviews complete before Spring Break
  - One interview this week, and then the other 2 will be scheduled shortly after
- Still taking applications and posting is active on website
- Question: Was there a common platform where these candidates apply?
- Answer: Most applied through the school website and some through NC Association for Gifted (paid site). Indeed (another paid job recruiting platform) was considered but we wanted to target a very specific audience so decided on NC Assoc. for Gifted. Many candidates were referred from school community and then applied from website.
- Any questions about the ED search process, please email Governance@scholarsacademy.org

B. Updates

- School Town Hall meeting coming up on Tuesday 4/16 at 6:30 pm in person for the Board, in Zoom or in person for the community
- There is a form for the school community to submit questions in advance

- Town Hall has been published in newsletter
- Also, Board Self Nominations are open for next school year. Those interested should send an email to Board@scholarsacademy.org

V. Policy Committee

A. Update

- **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?

- **Policy Update**:

A. Recommended Edits to the 2024-2025 Parent/Student Handbook:
• Excused Absences
• Excessive Absences
• First Read 2/26/24
• Vote 3/25/24

B. Parents' Bill of Rights:
• First Read 3/25/24.
• The statute requires that a Parent's Guide to Student Achievement is provided to parents, students, and school personnel no later than the first day of school after January 1, 2024. Based on school calendars across the state, the first day of school is in August for traditional calendars and July for year-round calendars.
• NCDPI May 15,2024 Reporting Form expected to support completion prior to the end of the school year.
M. Dixon made a motion to amend the attendance policy as presented by the Policy Committee.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VI. Foundation

A. Update

- Total donations and pledges at $451,507; increased by 5% since last month
- Total donations received at $263,671; up by %19 since last month (in part due to Parent Embassadors effort to remind parents)
- Outstanding pledges at $187,836
- Transportation program total donations and pledges at $30,422
- Transportation donations received $29,747
- Transportation outstanding pledges $450

VII. Finance Committee

A. Updates

- No budget amendments for this month!
- Next meeting, will provide budget for next year and budget needs, and vote for budget approval

B. Liability Insurance Review

- Insurance policy renewal - needs voting and approval
  - Premium increase from $35K to $41K (14% increase)
  - Most of the increase is due to increase in number of buses (I.e. Auto policy)
  - Two questions related coverage compliance for fidelity bonds to cover employee dishonesty and workers comp coverage, will be addressed after voting
  - Question on period of coverage: Renewal is on 4/1
  - Coverage is for Commercial property, general liability, business automotive, umbrella (I.e., everything outside of health care).

A. Farooqi made a motion to approve insurance policy renewal as presented by finance with a provision that if coverage is needed for employee dishonesty (i.e., fidelity bond) such policy would be acquired.
E. Alvarez seconded the motion.
As per School's Charter document, school is required to have employee dishonesty coverage of at least $250K
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

C. 990 Tax Filing

- School is tax exempt. There are no taxes paid or taxes returned
- This form is for 2022-2023 school year. Originally due on November 2023 but got an extension to file on May 2024
- Informational form for the IRS to report revenues and expenses

- Two pending edits but not significant to impact voting. Sabrina will have auditor/tax preparer to correct
- Similar form to be filled out by Foundation (coming soon!)

A. Starling made a motion to approve 990 tax filing as presented by Finance Committee.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

D. Auditor Contract - R. Barr

- Annual contract for auditor coming up for renewal
- Given that this is a renewal year for our charter, it is very important that our financials are on time and on point.
- Rebecca Barr, CPA has been the school auditor for 3-4 years now
- The school audit will be a priority for this Summer 2024 and plan to submit to State by the Fall 2024
- The Finance committee does not recommend to switch auditors this year
- The first year with new auditors its a big transition and there are a lot of questions which makes the process slower
- However, after this year's charter renewal, it could be considered to switch auditors as it is a good practice to switch auditors every few years just to get a fresh set of eyes

A. Starling made a motion to approve auditor contract as presented by Finance Committe.
E. Alvarez seconded the motion.
this is critical during the Charter Renewal year
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

A. Community Comments

- A question was posted in chat and it was suggested to send an email to the Board as we can't answer questions during a Board meeting

IX. Closed Session

A. Discuss confidential contract and property matter

W. Ning made a motion to approve employee contract as discussed in Closed Meeting.
A. Farooqi seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.
A. Farooqi made a motion to move to closed meeting.
E. Alvarez seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Confidential personnel matter

X. 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 9:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
L. Lopez

Documents used during the meeting

- Scholars Academy Parents Guide to Student Achievement-draft.pdf
- RECOMMENDED_AMENDMENTS_TO_PARENT_STUDENT_HANDBOOK32524.pdf
- Pages_from_2023-24_SA_Parent_Student_Handbook-32524.pdf