

NOCCS Board Retreat Minutes
August 28, 2016

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of North Oakland Community Charter School was held on **August 28, 2016 at 10:00 am** at the School. The meeting was called to order at **10:10 am**.

The following members of the Board were present:

Stephen Ajani, Leslie Bell, Mia Birdsong, Teresha Freckleton-Petite, Juliana Germak, Sahra Halpern, Tracy Hanna, Mariah Landers, Luis Rodriguez, Joy Sherrod, Rachel Vyda-Venning, Lakisha Young, Melissa McDonald, Raja Antony, Devon King-Neece, Melanie Gross

Public Comment : none

Minutes

Tracy moved to approve the June minutes; Lakisha seconded the motion. There were 12 votes in favor, 4 abstentions.

Mia welcomed new members to the board and outlined the goals for the meeting: getting to know each other and setting the groundwork for a productive year of school governance. After an introduction go-round, the agenda was read: Team-building, onboarding new members, discussion of board roles and structure, financial updates, revisit strategic plan

Head of School Update

Stephen gave a report on the goals he has set of the upcoming school year (based on the feedback received from parents/teachers in last year's surveys and the strategic plan) that fall into three categories: Communication, Growth, Culture

He named some of the successes of the last school year: becoming our own LEA, regaining the trust of families, teacher recruitment/staff placement (strong, new teachers, retention of one teacher to a class that is a better fit). Challenges centered around the many transitions of new admin staff and their learning curves of their new roles, the struggle to support teachers, and our the school's financial situation (sustainability and the hidden costs of educating students).

As such, the programmatic and operational focus areas for this school year will be:

1. Teacher Support and Leadership: including building a pipeline, retention & coaching
2. Sustainable School Model: enrollment, staffing (reconfiguring the operations team), diversifying fundraising streams (less reliance on asking families and more grant writing)
3. External Relations: It is going to be a politically turbulent year for charter schools. NOCCS needs to cement its role in the community, do more outreach, collaborate with other schools and organizations
4. School Culture: redoubling commitment to supporting an equitable culture and the conditions that lead to excellence for all students

Conversation/Questions: Stephen was commended for the partnership-building work that he is doing to strengthen instruction and programs at the school (e.g. Algebra I elective being offered and WELO taking over management of after school program). There was questions asked about whether NOCCS has a common definition of high quality instruction and a sense of its identity before we enter into partnerships. Stephen said the school is working on it and not seeking to have outside groups define it for us but serve as thought partners. A question was asked about the school's PR plan. Stephen said he has worked hard to create a space for open dialogue and the next step is to establish consistent messaging. Stephen is also receiving coaching in communications from a national nonprofit leader.

Board Role Presentation

Tracy delivered a presentation on the role of the board of directors of a charter school including our responsibilities, what is not in our purview, best practices, composition/structure, legal obligations (following Brown Act because it's in our charter) and standards:

- Focus Relentlessly on Student Achievement
- Ensure Exceptional Leadership
- Commit to Exemplary Governance
- Act Strategically & Be Accountable
- Raise and Use Resources Wisely
- Commit Steadfastly to Compliance

Expectation of Board Members:

- Active and Consistent Involvement
- Active Participation on 1-2 Committees
- Leadership
- Fundraising
- Time Commitment

What to Expect at Board Meetings

- Board member expectations
- Board packet circulated at least 72 hours in advance
- Public comment
- Role of non-board members
- A quorum is required (50% +1) *please inform chairs if you will be absent or late)

To do: Tracy will email the bylaws to the board

Icebreakers

Mariah led the group in a series of icebreaker activities to get to know each other and a warm-up exercises for team building around our strategic plan vision: equity, culture, artful innovation and TFU curriculum .

To do: Mariah will share an executive summary of the TFU research out of Harvard

Finance Presentation

Sahra began by asking that we vote on the unaudited actuals prepared by EdTec. She assured the board that she had reviewed them thoroughly, found no inaccuracies, and recommended that we approve them. A question was raised about the negative operating income of \$22k in the budget that we are reporting to OUSD. Sahra explained that a series of significant loss \$165K drawback in SB740 funds and a lawsuit settlement has pushed us into the red and we need to make a plan to now in order to be financially solvent.

Tracy made a motion to approve the unaudited actuals. Rachel seconded. The vote was 13 in favor. 3 abstentions.

Sahra proceeded with a review of our financial reports and what to look for when reading them. She underscored that while the finance committee was largely responsible for working with EdTec on budget management, the entire board should be paying attention. An overview of the budget shows revenues are staying flat while expenses are climbing. This was underscored in the 3-year budget presentation where state and local revenues are forecasted to remain stagnant or even dip whereas expenses such as benefits (medical and retirement) are expected to rise. At this rate we are going to need to borrow in the future to stay open or we need to generate more revenue/reduce expenses. We will need an additional \$80k-\$100k annually to be on solid financial ground.

At 225 students, NOCCS is too small to sustain. The board discussed increasing class sizes to generate more revenue (proposal: add 2 more students to each class in grades 4-8, and possibly 1 more student to each K/1 class although this would create an odd number and they often work in pairs/buddy activities). Each new student would bring in \$8K in new income (~\$80-112k), but at what cost to school appeal, teacher and family retention? Also, we'd need a strong communication strategy in place to make sure got teachers and family buy in. Mia called for a temperature check on the proposal and it was clear that many members had questions they wanted answered before a vote on the matter:

1. How does we compare with other charters, Oakland, Berkeley – is it changing the small school paradigm?
2. What is the plan to make the weakest part of our school stronger? (the middle school)
3. Does this make us sustainable? Culturally as well as financially. For how long will it make us sustainable. Look at 5-10 years.
4. Are parents giving up anything else? If so, what?
5. How do we structure things so that teachers are supported?
6. Can Educate78 funding help?
7. Can we look at a different model to run upper grades? Community redesign?

To do: Sahra and Stephen will double check the budget cut figures.

Board Elections

Mia explained that in the past outgoing officers would pass the baton to another member, but we need to have elections. She is stepping down as co-Chair but will serve another year on the board. Also, Sahra has to step down as Treasurer because of strict policies at her company, but she will also remain on the board and can train the new Treasurer. Candidates so far: Lakisha Young (co-Chair); Teresha Freckleton-Petite (Secretary). Anyone who is interested in an officer position should contact the Executive Committee.

Notes: check the forthcoming Google Sheet for the roster, meeting dates, committee assignments, etc...

Strategic Plan

Developed during the charter renewal process. It is comprised of five priorities: Commitment, Our Students, Talent, Impact & Sustainability. This document was sent in the pre-reads packet. All members should become familiar with it.

In order to better align with the strategic plan, the Executive Committee has developed a new board committee structure:

Keep/Add	Eliminate/Transform
Executive: officers	Development
Finance	Strategic Planning-move to Exec.
Governance	Data/IT-merge with Education
Personnel	
Education- expansion of Data/IT	
Impact-What are we going to do!	

Present members were asked to sign up for committees. Assignments will be given at next meeting.

Executive: Tracy

Finance: Raja, Devon, Rachel, Tracy, Sahra

Governance: Luis, Melissa, Teresha, Leslie

Personnel: Devon, Melanie, Lakisha, Joy

Education: Mariah, Luis, Raja, Melissa, Teresha, Juliana
Impact: Luis, Rachel, Melissa, Melanie, Mia

Other Housekeeping

Luis requested a summary of the feedback given at the board/staff meeting back in April and what are the plans to address issues/make them a priority.

Mariah wanted to know how the board can get more face time with the school community. There are opportunities such as school events (Back to School Night and Wednesday all-school meetings) but also board members can schedule school tours, visit classrooms.

Board materials and documents need a central location on a cloud-based server so that members can access reading materials and other documents without combing through emails. The Executive committee will follow-up with Stephen about creating a Google Drive for the Board.

Next Meeting is rescheduled for September 28 because of Back to School Night.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm

Respectfully Submitted, Teresha Freckleton-Petite