

**Minutes of the
North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board
State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction
April 11, 2022
9AM**

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Jamey Falkenbury (non-voting) Rita Haire John Eldridge Cheryl Turner (remote) Hilda Parlér Shelly Bullard (remote)	Eric Sanchez (remote) Terry Stoops – absent Bruce Friend – absent Lynn Kroeger Todd Godbey (remote)
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Dave Machado, Director Ashley Baquero, Consultant Claire Porter, Consultant (remote) Jay Whalen, NC ACCESS Barbara O’Neal, NC ACCESS (remote) Joseph Letterio, Consultant (remote)	<i>Attorney General</i> Stephanie Lloyd – absent Forrest Fallanca <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer – absent

CALL TO ORDER

- The North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board (CSAB) meeting was called to order at 9:03 am by Chair Turner who read the Ethics Statement and CSAB Mission Statement. Ms. Hilda Parlér led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion: Motion to approve the agenda and March 2022 meeting minutes.

Motion: Lynn Kroeger

Second: Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

2021 CHARTER SCHOOLS ANNUAL REPORT

- Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consultant, presented the 2021 Charter Schools Annual Report. She began by explaining the background and history of the Charter Schools Act and the reporting requirement. She spoke about the six stated legislative purposes of the NC charter school system. She gave an overview of current charter school demand and enrollment. She stated that throughout the pandemic, charter schools grew in enrollment even when traditional public schools saw declines in enrollment.

- She spoke about the creation of the Charter Schools Advisory Board and the Office of Charter Schools (OCS). Ms. Baquero explained the functions of both and presented data on staffing in OCS over time. She explained that staffing has remained flat despite over 100% increase in charter schools since the cap was lifted.
- Ms. Baquero stated that up to last Friday, 204 schools were in operation. As a result, some of the data will show 204 schools and other data will show 200 as the report is focused on the 2020-2021 school year and at that time, 200 schools were operating.
- Ms. Baquero spoke about the NC ACCESS grant program's progress, impact, and programs.
- Ms. Baquero explained where charter school oversight and authority lies – statute, policy, rules, and more. She explained that charter terminations fall into four categories, relinquishment, assumption, nonrenewal, and revocation. She stated since 1998, there have been 83 terminations.
- Ms. Baquero explained the 2021 Performance Framework results including 96% of schools meeting or exceeding goals. She stated there was a slight decrease from the previous year because there were two financially noncompliant schools.
- She stated that 100% of schools met or exceeded operational measures.
- Ms. Baquero moved into charter school growth. She stated there are currently 203 operating charter schools. She stated there were six new schools this year, and eight scheduled to open in fall 2022. She spoke about the 2021 application process and stated that the average number of applications received each year is just under 33.
- Ms. Baquero presented the ethnic and racial demographic data for 2020 and 2021 at both charter schools and traditional public schools. She stated they are pretty similar with the exception of the Hispanic subgroup with traditional schools enrolling more.
- She presented data on Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups. She presented data on the increase of weighted lottery implementation. She stated that over half of charter schools offer bus transportation and that there continues to be an increase in schools participating in the school lunch program.
- She stated this is the second year with no state accountability data for academics and that the low performing schools maintain that designation.
- Ms. Baquero presented data on funding and membership. She stated that the percent of state ADM enrolled in charters has risen to 8.8% as of this school year.
- Ms. Baquero explained that the innovation section of this year's report profiles schools from across the state in order to demonstrate the great diversity of opportunity at charter schools.

- Ms. Lynn Kroeger stated the report was very nicely done. She wanted to point out that with a doubling of charter schools, staff at OCS has really decreased from 7 to 6 and will need more staff to support charter schools.
- Ms. Kroeger stated that in the Performance Framework, schools often have a hard time meeting the indicator for projecting within ten percent accuracy. She stated that charter schools are forced to overestimate because they are only funded on that twenty day number and if you don't meet numbers, you don't meet budget, so they are often forced to overestimate. She stated it would help if charter schools could get the better of the first 20 days or the average of the first two months. She stated that would eliminate the need to overestimate.
- Mr. Jamey Falkenbury stated that the Superintendent's office is working with budgeting to improve school funding in general. He stated that improvements are in the works for both public schools and traditional public schools.
- Dr. Rita Haire stated the report is excellent and you can see the purpose of charter schools fulfilled. She stated the work of schools is exciting. She stated it's interesting to see how geography can influence offerings. She stated that it speaks well to charters working through the pandemic and to those working in charters across the state.
- Ms. Parlér and Ms. Turner expressed recognition for a great report and Ms. Turner stated she is optimistic about the data.

Motion: Motion to approve the 2021 Charter Schools Annual Report and move to State Board.

Motion: John Eldridge

Second: Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

AMENDMENTS

TMSA/QCSS Mission and Merger

- Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consultant, introduced the amendment. She stated this involves four schools: Triangle Math and Science Academy, Queen City Stem, Triad Math and Science, and The Math and Science Academy of Apex. She explained that Queen City Stem is under one board and the remaining three schools are under another nonprofit board ("TMSA"). She explained all schools have missions under their original applications and now would like to revise to have one mission, vision, and core values. She stated the school is also requesting to merge into one nonprofit board and that the board for Queen City Stem would dissolve and merge with the other three schools.
- Ms. Baquero stated that following last month's tabling of the request, additional information was submitted and is available on Eboard.
- Mr. Ben Karaduman, Superintendent, clarified a question from Ms. Turner by stating that the Queen City board will dissolve and become part of the TMSA board.

- Ms. Turner asked what the 5% fee would come to for this year. Mr. Karaduman stated about \$1.5M. She stated her issue is not with TMSA itself, but with the issue policy wise.
- Ms. Parlér stated she is struggling with why this is necessary. Mr. Karaduman stated all schools share a mission, vision, programming, etc. He stated with two boards, they do everything twice.
- Ms. Kroeger asked who employs Mr. Karaduman. He replied, he is employed by the board. He continued that the audit shows the money stays within the same organization and the schools each have their own accounting. He stated central office makes the decisions based on what the board decides. He spoke about the difficulties in having multiple boards and wanting to have alignment between the two boards to make it easier for all schools involved.
- Dr. Haire asked if Queen City STEM board is onboard with this. Mr. Karaduman stated yes, they are and the letter and merger is signed by all involved. Ms. Turner stated that goes back to her concern that the different needs between the schools won't be represented because the Queen City school only has two representatives. Mr. Karaduman stated that the disagreements have been operational like salary decisions, rather than mission/vision, curriculum, or related to student needs.
- Ms. Turner stated her concern is that the charter was given to that board. Mr. Karaduman stated the schools were started by the same group of people and three of the board members are still the founding members. Ms. Turner asked if the two members that will move to the merged board are two of the original TMSA people or Mecklenburg residents. He stated one board member is from Wake County and one from Mecklenburg County. Mr. Karaduman stated that they all work together as one group and have representatives from each community.
- Dr. Haire asked if that means they basically function like this now but want to make this formal. Mr. Karaduman stated yes, curriculum, mission, training, etc. He stated the calendars are made based on county considerations. He stated that there is no comingling of funds between schools. Dr. Haire asked how often he visits the schools. He replied he tries to visit each school twice per month plus all board meetings.
- Ms. Turner stated the wider concern, not focused on TMSA, is that this is becoming a more popular model for schools and boards. She stated the problem is that there is no policy around this. Dr. Haire asked if other schools do this. Ms. Turner stated yes, KIPP schools, Movement schools are moving that way, and Dr. Eldridge's school is doing something similar in concept. She stated we need to consider how many schools we will let one board run.
- Dr. Haire asked if there has been a decision regarding how many schools one EMO or CMO can run. Ms. Turner stated no, it came up a few years ago, but not since.
- Dr. Shelly Bullard asked if this is becoming a small district within a district. She stated there could be a limit on how many schools each board can run. Ms. Turner stated that is true. Dr. Haire stated that she can see the point of shared resources and efficiency and it shouldn't be punitive because we don't have our policies in line.

- Dr. Haire asked if the Queen City school was started by members of the TMSA board. Mr. Karaduman stated yes, and sometimes there have been minor disagreements. Dr. Haire asked if the board for Queen City is on board with this merger. Mr. Karaduman stated yes, and referenced the cover letter, resolution, and plan of merger with all agreeing to the merger.
- Ms. Turner asked if the merger is starting because of disagreements between the two boards, which brings up her concern that Queen City won't have equal representation. Mr. Karaduman elaborated on disagreements and stated they are not involving mission, vision, curriculum, etc. but differences such as percent of salary increase. He stated the schools work together and they try to keep morale by making sure things are equitable among staff. Ms. Turner stated her concern is that TMSA board will have greater control. Mr. Karaduman spoke about the board composition. Ms. Turner asked if the two that will join the merger board are from Mecklenburg County. He stated one is Wake County and one is Mecklenburg County. Ms. Turner expressed concerns. Mr. Karaduman spoke about the central office and organizational structure. Dr. Haire asked if the schools function this way already and they are simply trying to get formal approval. Mr. Karaduman stated yes. He stated everything is aligned – curriculum, mission, board meetings, etc – with the exception of calendars which they follow the county.
- CSAB members confirmed that the Queen City board is requesting this merger and on board with the merger plan.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the 5% fee. Mr. Karaduman stated that goes directly to central office staff and to pay for all the support provided to schools. He stated at the end of the school year, the remaining balance is given back to schools. He reiterated that there is no profit structure like an EMO and that the accounting of all schools, and the central office, is done individually with no commingling.
- Ms. Turner stated she is okay with the concept and these boards and schools have clearly done a lot of preparation and work; she is more concerned with the concept at large because it is becoming very popular. She stated her concern is having no oversight over the central office. Mr. Karaduman stated that the central office is involved with all board meetings and all materials are online.
- Ms. Turner stated that is why she is not speaking specifically about TMSA, but about the concept. Dr. Haire asked if there are schools that function like this already. Ms. Turner stated KIPP is similar and Movement Schools are moving that way and she thinks more and more schools are wanting to do this for the very reasons TMSA wants to do it. She stated we will need to determine how many schools one board could run. Dr. Haire asked if we do that with EMO/CMOs. Ms. Turner stated not yet, that it has come up years ago, but not since.
- Dr. Shelly Bullard stated she shares the concerns of Ms. Turner, but also from a policy standpoint it sounds like a school district within a school district. Dr. Haire stated we also see the advantages of this with shared leadership and resources. She stated we need to establish the right policies and procedures so we can facilitate this, and it could make charters stronger.
- Dr. Eldridge stated he is very interested in this conversation. He stated that the schools he is working with are in two counties and although in certain counties, they are not working with the local district.

- Ms. Turner stated they just need to get out front of the concept to make sure there are no problems. She stated the difference between Dr. Eldridge’s schools is that they can easily get out of the partnership if things don’t work out but she’s not sure what Queen City could do if it doesn’t work out. She stated on the other hand, she doesn’t want to prevent the schools from moving forward when they have clearly thought through this and put in a lot of preparation. She stated not everyone is going to be TMSA and she doesn’t want anyone to take advantage of the concept.
- Mr. Karaduman stated he wants to reiterate that EMO or CMO fees run at least 8%. He stated the difference here is the schools have a 5% fee and any money not used, goes back to the schools. He stated in previous years 250k has been sent back to schools because it was not needed for central office expenses.
- Mr. Falkenbury asked what if we move this forward and then within the next month come up with a policy that can go along with this request. Ms. Turner stated that could work. CSAB members discussed the fact that this is a broader issue, outside of this request, that needs some type of policy guidelines.

Motion: Motion to approve the merger and mission amendment request with the stipulation that CSAB and OCS will work to present this recommendation to SBE along with a proposed policy for Charter Support Organizations and Boards that govern more than one charter school. CSAB specified the amendment request recommendation shall go to SBE in May and the proposed policy to SBE in June with a request for Action on First Reading.

Motion: John Eldridge

Second: Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

North Oak Second Delay Request

- Ms. Baquero explained that North Oak Academy is currently in a one year delay and previously scheduled to open in Durham County this upcoming school year. She explained that Durham County has refused utility access and that North Oak and the County are currently in litigation over the issue. As a result, the board is requesting a second one-year delay.
- Ms. Turner stated she thought there was a law recently passed to prevent this. Mr. Gerald McNair, Board Chair for North Oak, stated that is true but Durham County refused, which is why they initiated a lawsuit.
- Mr. Falkenbury stated that law passed and asked if legal had input. Mr. Forrest Fallanca stated legal can look into the issue.

Motion: Motion to approve North Oak’s second one year delay.

Motion: Lynn Kroeger

Second: John Eldridge

Recused: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

Revitalize Enrollment Request

- Ms. Baquero explained Revitalize Charter is also a planning year school scheduled to open this fall in Raleigh. She stated they are seeking an amendment to decrease enrollment so they can come closer to meeting the 75% enrollment minimum for RTO.
- Ms. Turner asked to clarify that this school is decreasing enrollment because they couldn't even meet the 75% minimum enrollment. Ms. Baquero stated yes, Ms. Ansel Caceres, met with OCS staff and it was suggested they seek this amendment because of enrollment difficulties. She stated that Ms. Caceres is here today to give an update.
- Ms. Caceres stated that the school has about 50 enrolled students and stated the school went with their contingency facility in the application because the Casa Esperanza facility was not ready. Ms. Turner expressed concern that this was an accelerated application, and the board was assured Casa would be available. Ms. Turner asked if facility B is available. Ms. Caceres stated yes.
- Ms. Turner asked for capacity in facility B. Ms. Caceres stated 2 years without modulars and 4 years with modulars.
- Ms. Parler asked how many students. Ms. Caceres stated 332, but it may be a bit more, they are still getting specifics.
- Ms. Turner asked if she understands with a lower enrollment, they will not be able to get paid if they go over that enrollment. Ms. Caceres stated they have discussed it, but they know RTO is coming up in a month and they need to meet the minimums. She stated they try to increase enrollment over time.
- Dr. Haire confirmed they only have 50 of the 94 students that would be required for 75%. Ms. Caceres stated yes and discussed marketing taking place. Dr. Haire asked for the innovative piece of this model. Ms. Caceres spoke about the SEL and core instruction that will be taught through small groups. She spoke about the individualized experience for students and community relevant project based learning.
- Dr. Haire asked for the breakeven number. Ms. Caceres wasn't sure.
- Ms. Turner stated she has concerns about the budget and making this work. Dr. Eldridge expressed budgetary concerns as well. Ms. Turner stated they cannot guarantee that they will receive CSP grants and that there may not be that much available by the time they apply.
- Mr. Jay Whalen, NC ACCESS Program Administrator, stated that the maximum they can apply for is 400k. He stated that there are three schools that are eligible for the grant and if they all received, it would be about 250k per school.
- Dr. Haire stated that her take on the budget is that it is broad and not in the nitty gritty of the dollars and cents of making this work. She stated that the decrease will have a huge impact. Ms. Caceres stated that they can provide a revised budget with those details.

- Ms. Turner asked if they have done research into how many students in that age group would be available to enroll. Ms. Caceres stated not all information is publicly available, but they are working with local day cares, housing authority. She continued to speak about marketing efforts.
- Dr. Haire stated she has concerns they will meet that number and the budget is very loose and is critical to success.
- Ms. Turner stated her concern is that we are talking about meeting 75% of the lower enrollment. She stated not having a break even is very concerning. She stated if they never get to the 125, we haven't seen a budget showing it works at 92. CSAB members expressed concerns but stated at this point, they either approve this or they won't possibly make the 75%.
- Ms. Kroeger asked about delays for accelerated. Ms. Turner stated she forgot they were accelerated and that is more concerning for her. She stated the criteria for acceleration is so strict for a reason. She stated they don't have the enrollment or facility they came forward with. She stated one year delays are not options for accelerated. Dr. Eldridge asked what happens if 90 show up. Ms. Turner stated as long as they make the 80 minimum, but it becomes financially very difficult. She clarified the 75% enrollment is part of RTO to get final approval to open. Ms. Kroeger stated historically, schools that open with low enrollment have trouble staying viable.
- Mr. Eric Sanchez stated he completely agrees. Dr. Haire stated it is a hard decision to make, but the board set themselves up for acceleration and this is the consequence.

Motion: Motion to deny Revitalize Charter School's request to decrease enrollment.

Motion: Lynn Kroeger

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

Oak Hill Charter School Enrollment Increase

- Ms. Baquero explained that Oak Hill is another planning year school scheduled to open in the fall in Caldwell County. She stated the school is requesting an increase from 192 to 216, which is the addition of one Kindergarten class based on current applications. She stated the school is the only charter in the county and has presented a revised budget.
- Ms. Turner reminded the CSAB that they usually do not approve RTO school enrollment increase requests until they've made it through year one. But, she said, this is a bit different in that it is the only charter in the area.
- Mr. Anthony Rodriguez, Oak Hill, stated they now have 24 K students completely enrolled and 44 on the K waitlist and 110 total students on the waitlist.
- Dr. Eldridge asked why the CSAB doesn't usually approve RTO increases. Ms. Turner stated that past requests have been in counties with a lot of charter schools and we saw parents apply at several and then don't show up to the school and it's hard for schools to make their numbers. She stated they have

a long time to build the application and get started and if things go great, they can come back and ask after year one. But she stated this is a bit unique because there is no other charter option.

- Dr. Haire stated they have also submitted a thorough request with budget and planning.

Motion: Motion to approve Oak Hill Charter School’s request to increase enrollment to 216 in year one.

Motion: Hilda Parlér

Second: Rita Haire

- Ms. Kroeger amended the motion to include the reasoning – this is the only charter school in the county. Dr. Haire seconded as amended.

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

Old Main Stream Academy Weighted Lottery

- Ms. Baquero explained that Old Main Stream Academy is requesting to implement a weighted lottery. She stated the school serves K-4 students in Robeson County and opened in 2020. She stated the school has set a goal to enroll 35% economically disadvantaged students (EDS) by year 2023. She stated the school is an NC ACCESS grant recipient and that the school has used funding for curriculum, new teacher support from UNC-Pembroke, and a school nurse.

Motion: Motion to approve Old Main Stream Academy’s request to implement a weighted lottery.

Motion: Lynn Kroeger

Second: Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOL UPDATES

Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy

- Dr. Jason Wray, Principal, gave the school’s update. He spoke about the school improvement team and goals of the school improvement plan (SIP).
- Dr. Wray stated the goals focus on indicators leadership capacity, instructional excellence, and school professional capacity. He spoke about the innovative partnership grant and how the school has worked to understand brain development in order to help students.
- Dr. Wray spoke about school culture and holding each other accountable. He presented examples of data from student EVAAS data that show students decline drastically and the question is what in that student’s life caused this decline.
- Dr. Wray spoke about his experience at other schools and use of 11 instructional strategies. He closed with speaking about the mission and vision. CSAB members thanked him for the report.

Davidson Charter Academy

- Ms. Lori James, Director, and Ms. Jennifer Flury, Director of Business Operations, gave the update. Ms. James spoke about the organizational structure and stated they are in their 4th year of operation. She read the school's mission statement.
- Ms. James presented the 2021 EOG data from the school and stated they were pleased that the students could maintain skills despite the pandemic interruptions. She also presented EVAAS data showing all grades met or exceeded growth.
- Ms. James presented the MAP benchmark data. Dr. Haire asked about interventions and Ms. James explained a K-1 transition class as many K students missed a lot of school. She stated she's not sure if the data is properly showing this, but they have found this to be successful.
- Ms. James spoke about the school's main goals – academic, SEL, family engagement. She concluded by speaking about challenges and celebrations.

Marjorie Williams Academy

- Dr. Cyndi Austin, Director, gave the school's presentation and began by explaining the history of the school and the partnership with the Crossnore Community for Children, a group home for abused, abandoned, and neglected children. She spoke about how ADM fluctuates due to this partnership and being based on DSS custody. She spoke about how placements work.
- Dr. Austin spoke about how the school maintained in-person learning throughout the pandemic by removing unnecessary furniture and spacing out across the campus so students could stay on campus but remote in together. She presented EVAAS data showing meeting growth. She spoke about new curriculum, occupational course of study supports, and interventions.
- Dr. Austin spoke about data wall and analysis of each student individually. She spoke about trauma informed approach and use of Love and Logic.

Iredell Charter Academy

- Dr. Andrea Lopresti, Principal, gave the school update. She spoke about the mission and school goals. She explained goals are focused on equity work, core academics, SEL, family connection, and arts and science.
- Dr. Lopresti spoke about in-person learning and focusing on safety and security for students and staff. She presented academic data and spoke about equity work at the school.
- Dr. Lopresti spoke about arts and science integration and providing more opportunities to all students.
- Dr. Lopresti closed with challenges and celebrations at the school.

Children's Village Academy

- Ms. Jessica Jones, Principal, gave the school's update. She began by speaking about the school's mission and demographics. She explained the school's annual goals.
- Ms. Jones presented the school's academic data. She spoke about interventions and noted challenges. She stated challenges include incoming students that are at least one year behind and recruiting high quality staff.
- Ms. Jones spoke about insights from academic data and how the school responded to those insights.
- She continued by speaking about academic trends. She stated reading proficiency has increased, as has math proficiency based on i-Ready diagnostics. She concluded by expressing celebrations at the school.

REVISED NC ACCESS TIMELINE

- Mr. Jay Whalen, Program Administrator, explained that the timeline for subgrants has been updated and brought to SBE. He spoke about additional funding now available and to ensure compliance of 90% funding going to schools, they will hold a targeted competition for schools planning to open in 22-23. He stated there are three eligible and max award would be 400k.

Motion: Motion to approve the amended subgrant timeline and process.

Motion: Hilda Parlér

Second: Lynn Kroeger

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

READY TO OPEN UPDATES

- Ms. Baquero gave brief updates on the eight RTO schools. She reported on facility and enrollment. She explained that there will be another report in May and June. She stated that in June, RTO schools will appear for interviews before final recommendations to SBE as to whether they are ready to open to students.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Ms. Baquero reviewed the proposed meeting calendar.

Motion: Motion to approve the 22-23 CSAB calendar.

Motion: Rita Haire

Second: John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

ADJOURNMENT

- Ms. Kroeger expressed her gratitude for her time on CSAB and stated she learned so much. She commended Chair Turner for her perseverance, tenacity, and sacrifice. She stated she is a wise leader and it's been a privilege to serve with her. Ms. Turner stated she feels the same about her and will miss her terribly. Ms. Kroeger thanked Ms. Baquero for helping keep her on task and having everything at her fingertips. She concluded by thanking Director Dave Machado and his commitment to charter schools, patient advice, and wise counsel.
- **Ms. Kroeger made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1 PM. Ms. Parlér seconded and the meeting adjourned unanimously.**