

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

December 9, 2024

9 AM

Attendance – CSRБ Members	
Alex Granados- (nonvoting) - Absent Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge - Remote Alex Quigley Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Dave Machado Todd Godbey Dr. Bartley Danielsen Stephen Gay
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant – Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant - Absent Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant - Absent Megan Carter, Consultant	<i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker - Remote <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer - Absent <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Lee Haywood – TOY - Absent Sarena Fuller – POY - Absent

Recording of December 9 CSRБ Meeting: [DAY 1 MEETING](#)

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Mr. Bruce Friend

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend, Board Chair
- Ms. Parlér recuses from Rolesville Charter
- Mr. Machado recuses from TMSA Amendment

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér motioned to approve agenda for December Meeting

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire motioned to approve November 2024 minutes.

Second: Mr. Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous

Passed

Failed

November Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Amendments: Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Director

TISA EMO Partnership

- Ms. Baquero introduced this amendment and explained why they had to come before the board to create a partnership between the board and EMO. She summarized the reasoning of the school to partner with the EMO and outlined some of the duties that each party would handle. She then went over other details in their application including some that have come to OCS after the application was approved. She also noted that the new budget has changes in it and that some board members – such as the Vice chair, who has stepped down, and the chair – have potential conflicts of interest with the EMO.
- Mr. Friend asked what led to the realization that they needed an EMO during the RTO process, and why they chose this EMO that has no experience running a school in NC or any other state.
 - A TISA Board Member – Ms. Cole – gave a brief introductory statement and gave her credentials opening a language-based school in South Carolina. She said that as the school grew the stress points only got more intense and outlined some of those points. She then touched on the three pillars that a language immersion school like hers and TISA sits on and stated this is why the EMO they chose is for them.
- Mr. Zhuu (Board Chair) noted that after they got approved, they realized they needed to change their facility plans due to high renovation costs. He noted that the EMO came to them saying they wanted to help not as an EMO but as a member of the community and reminded them how difficult it was to start a charter school due to the financial constraints of operating a school independent from the district. He said that the group will help TISA accomplish their plans for the school.
- Dr. Haire noted that the savings in their new budget came from the reduction of almost \$400,000 in teaching positions. She stated the budget being the same is not correct due to those changes. She noted that in the original application, they prided themselves / made it their mission to have small class sizes and that it appeared they were going away from that. Another TISA Board member noted that the group they plan to work with will help them be more efficient with their hiring and noted that their Assistant Principal candidate is also a certified EC teacher and so they can combine those two programs together. She noted other teachers/positions that they plan to combine into one.
- Mr. Friend asked how many board members when they were approved are now leaving due to ties with the EMO. A TISA board member said 2. Mr. Friend asked what other EMO's they considered, and a TISA Board Member discussed which EMO's they looked at including CSUSA. Mr. Friend asked if this EMO started any schools in other states and they discussed the schools in planning and in the RTO phase in South Carolina.
- Mr. Machado stated for the record that he has had no conversation with this organization and is not aware of them even talking to CSUSA.

- Mr. Machado asked if OCS has vetted this group and Ms. Baquero outlined some of the work that they've done based on what they've received from the EMO.
- Mr. Friend noted that what concerns him is the fact that the process they use for EMOs/an independent board is not being utilized here. He noted that schools normally go a few years and then realize they need a management organization and this is the first time he's seen a school try and add a management organization while still in the RTO process.
 - Dr. Haire added that it was also concerning the chair of the board said 'let's start one and partner with them' as well.
 - Ms. Parlér added that the board chair planned to continue serving on the board and with the EMO and noted he should roll off the board of the school.
 - Mr. Zhuu said that things evolve, and they had to create a new management company due to the fact there were no other companies that specialized in language immersion programs. He noted his plans for stepping down from the board when TISA is up and running or if the board asks him to leave. He said that he does a lot of the heavy lifting and that if he left the board, he wants to still serve TISA in some capacity. He reiterated that he can / will step down when/if the board wants him to. Mr. Friend mentioned that he would be required to step down since one can't serve on the school board and the EMO board.
- Mr. Friend reiterated this was a substantial change and some of the reasoning given can be done on their own by reaching out to other people who support their cause. He said it's difficult to wrap his head around the substantial change to their charter.
- Mr. Machado commented that all the reasons the board gave to open/partner with an EMO were asked to them during the application and that if they couldn't answer/provide those things they would've either appealed or walked out extremely upset. He stated this overview of the application process shows that the CSRБ members who approved the TISA board initially had a lot of faith in the board. He also added that it would've been better to start the EMO and use their success in other states / opening another school as proof to partner with TISA. He stated it's hard to ask the board if it's a good thing when two of the leaders are on the EMO board. Overall, this makes him very upset / uncomfortable with the decision.
 - Mr. Zhuu stated they tried to minimize changes to the charter and didn't believe he made any substantial changes. He then said that after making this change, he's been in contact with OCS and they said it was doable as long as they follow the rules.
 - Mr. Zhuu added that he is the only one wearing two hats currently and can step down at any time but wanted to still serve the board of TISA.
 - Mr. Sanchez asked if he thinks that is a substantial conflict of interest and Mr. Zhuu said he does not. Mr. Sanchez reiterated his question by asking if he thinks that the founder of an EMO who is going to receive substantial compensation from a nonprofit charter who he is also the chair of the board is a conflict of interest. Mr. Zhuu said that it is a conflict of interest and after conversing more with Mr. Sanchez reiterated that he is still doing both but that he would step down at any time. Mr. Zhuu stated he's been talking with attorneys who have said he can still serve in both and there are ways to mitigate possible conflicts of interest if he were to do so.
 - Mr. Sanchez asked if TISA stood before CSRБ saying they had the expertise to do all the things needed by themselves but then decided to monetize what he should/would be doing as a volunteer board member by creating an organization and partnering with it. He also noted that the budget has changed substantially and overall, it feels like a dramatic shift from what they initially approved.

- Mr. Godbey stated he is concerned with the precedent this could set with other board leaders across the state.
- Mr. Friend stated this is not the process CSRБ has set up and that this in fact is not a small change.
- Mr. Zhuu reiterated that there are no language immersion EMO's and that's why they went this route with the board's approval. Mr. Friend added that it may be the best EMO for them to partner with but that the timing of it in the whole process plus the conflict of interest that was presented – citing Mr. Sanchez's question – is possibly against the law.
- Mr. Zhuu asked if he were to step down now if that would change the context of the application and reiterated that he's only there because the board asked him to stay on the board.
- Mr. Friend noted that the EMO technically hasn't been approved yet so there's nothing for Mr. Zhuu to step down from.
- Dr. Haire asked why they decided to create an EMO rather than a CMO. Mr. Zhuu stated it would make TISA more attractive to community/business partners and then yielded to another board member. Ms. Wong – the legal counsel for the EMO – asked if there has been any other precedent the board has seen for something like this and if there are any other processes they can follow for proving the quality of the EMO. Mr. Friend stated he can't recall a board coming before them before they opened and asking to partner, but instead they opened the school themselves and a few years later came back before the board asking to partner. He said he could think of a few examples of that situation.
 - Mr. Friend added that he believes this could be the best situation for the board but asked again why they didn't come before the board originally with the desire to partner with an EMO. He said it makes him very uncomfortable.
- The legal counsel thanked them and said it's good to know there's no precedence here and reiterated their concern for the conflict of interest. She stated she would like the board to consider this change due to the circumstances TISA faced when looking for financial resources. She noted there is a concern for a conflict of interest but said that it is needed to help get the school open in August.
- Dr. Haire noted Dr. Zhuu's integrity as a businessman but that it does appear as a major conflict of interest to serve on both entities and merge these two entities together. She said that it could create a situation that would jeopardize that image/integrity.
- Dr. Zhuu thanked everyone for their time but reiterated that their interest is to create a charter school that serves the students. He said that he wouldn't be in the charter school business if he wanted to make money and asked if he were to come again before the board in a year or two after opening if that would be another barrier for TISA. Mr. Friend said he couldn't answer that hypothetical, but they would need to make a good argument.
- Mr. Friend reiterated his previous comment about the change to the original application and the conflicts of interest. Dr. Zhuu thanked CSRБ for the opportunity.
- Mr. Friend asked if they are still on track to open in August 2025 and Dr. Zhuu said they are fully committed to hitting that goal.

Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend motioned to not approve TISA's EMO Partnership amendment request.

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Discussion:

- Mr. Sanchez said that if the chair stays with the organization it will mean a lot more than if they hear about the board chair leaving the organization in a few months.
- Ms. Parlér concurred.
- Ms. Baquero explained the RTO process one more time and Mr. Friend reiterated his excitement for their original application.

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Movement Raleigh Second Year Delay

- Ms. Baquero introduced the amendment and noted that CSRБ must approve second/subsequent delay requests. She went over the history of the application and gave some statistics/data from the school. She noted there are no changes other than the year of opening due to the high construction costs / increased difficulty in finding land for the school. She also stated that if this passes, Movement will have three schools in RTO for 2026.
- Dr. Haire asked if they had a building for Movement Raleigh in the first application. She also asked if the suggestions – such as hiring of certain positions have been done – and a board member from the school came up and mentioned the Superintendent and other positions have been hired (from Raleigh), but others have not been hired yet.
- Mr. Friend asked if it’s the same board for all Movement schools and the board member said yes. Mr. Friend asked if the board has the bandwidth to open three schools in 2026 and the board member stated they will and plan to add more Raleigh area members to their board to assist that school.
- Mr. Machado and the board member discussed the importance to get Raleigh board members to assist with real estate and other things.
- Mr. Sanchez asked where they are in opening schools in other states and the board member said that they opened one in North Charleston, South Carolina grades K-1. He also said they will be opening an elementary school in Fulton County, Georgia in 2025.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if there were any delays for those schools and the board member said no.

Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér motioned to approve Movement Raleigh’s second year delay amendment request.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

TMSA Relocation and Expansion

- Ms. Baquero introduced the amendment and gave some statistics and accolades for TMSA’s various campuses in North Carolina. She went into more detail on the individual requests in the amendment and discussed the rationale behind it. She then mentioned the supporting documents they’ve provided to outline impact on the students.
- The TMSA superintendent introduced himself and gave his credentials. He reiterated what Ms. Baquero mentioned previously and opened up for questions.
- Mr. Gay asked if they’ve gotten around the county’s moratorium on growth due to sewage capacity issues for this new campus. The Superintendent said that after evaluating, they planned to move into an existing charter school location that currently serves students. He, Ms. Baquero and other CSRБ members noted an NDA that was signed (regarding Valor Prep) and confirmed the name of the school affected.
 - Ms. Porter and Mr. Friend discussed the relinquishing of the charter of Valor Prep.
- Mr. Friend asked if there’s been any communication with staff and families and Ms. Porter said that would be happening today at 3:30 and 4:30 respectively. She also outlined what opportunities the students would have and said they would have enrollment priority in TMSA schools.
- Ms. Parlér recused herself from the conversation.
- Mr. Quigley asked why Valor Prep is relinquishing their charter. Ms. Porter stated it was a voluntary relinquishment and that the facility is being purchased and CSUSA will be focusing their time and resources on other programs. She mentioned the relinquishment would be effective June 30th, 2025.
 - Mr. Quigley said that the only reason is because they want to sell the building and Ms. Porter confirmed.
 - Mr. Quigley asked how many students are currently enrolled in the school and Ms. Porter said she believes it’s between 850 and 950.
 - Mr. Quigley asked if this is allowed in an EMO contract and Ms. Porter said she couldn’t answer and would do more research.
- Mr. Friend asked who owned the facility and Ms. Porter said CSUSA. Mr. Quigley asked how much the building is going to be sold for and the square footage. The superintendent of the schools gave the square footage and said it would cost about \$31.5 million. He and Mr. Quigley confirmed it would be ‘bonded out’ after a renegotiation of their bonds.
- Mr. Quigley asked if parents don’t know about this yet and Ms. Porter confirmed they will be told today at 4:30.
- Mr. Sanchez said that 800-900 families would not be losing their school because it would be more profitable / more strategic for the company to sell the building. Ms. Porter said she wouldn’t characterize it like this and said the conversation wasn’t that simple. She did say it was a strategic business move and that they’re looking to make the transition as easy as possible for affected families.
- Mr. Quigley asked Ms. Baquero if there’s been any precedent for a school this size to do something like this. Ms. Baquero said the Valor Prep decision was a decision made by Valor Prep and the amendment before them today is a TMSA amendment.
- Mr. Quigley stated the price listed seems like a reasonable purchase price for a high-quality system providing good education in NC, but he has an issue with the significance of what’s going on with the school’s affected. Mr. Sanchez agreed, and Ms. Baquero noted that the CSRБ could get into that if they wished.

- Mr. Friend asked where the board to Valor Prep is – citing the adage that they give the charter to the board. Ms. Baquero stated OCS has asked for the proper documentation for relinquishing Valor Prep’s charter ASAP so they can begin the closure process in the new year. She also mentioned there is really no precedent.
- Mr. Friend asked how they can approve TMSA moving into this building when they don’t have anything from Valor Prep relinquishing the charter. Ms. Baquero stated they didn’t think it was needed but she and Mr. Friend and Ms. Porter went through how the Valor Prep board meeting went the prior Friday.
- Mr. Quigley asked if the decision was initiated by the board of the school and Ms. Porter noted that the organization that was subcontracted out for marketing decided in a special session Friday to do this.
- Mr. Sanchez asked what the timeline was for this decision. Ms. Porter outlined the timeline of the school including name changes and other appearances before the board. She mentioned some of the employees who were Charter 1 employees and she and Mr. Sanchez discussed the usage of the two campuses (Cabarrus and Valor Prep).
- Mr. Quigley asked what the performance grade for Valor Prep was and Ms. Porter said ‘D’. Mr. Quigley and the Superintendent of TMSA went over the performance grades for the TMSA schools.
- Mr. Quigley asked if Valor Prep kids would get automatic entry and the TMSA representative said they would have preferred enrollment, but they’d have to go through the lottery process. He stated they most likely all would be approved if they did apply.
 - Mr. Quigley asked if it would be K-12, and the superintendent said yes and noted that it was two buildings.
- Mr. Quigley asked about the staff and the superintendent said they would be interviewing everyone and working to try and accommodate and communicate with all students, parents, and staff about their needs and what’s happening moving forward.
- Mr. Quigley said that looking at school performance this looks like a good thing. Dr. Shope concurred and said the board is reacting as such due to the shock value. She stated there should be a step in between despite OCS procedures being met.
- Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Quigley discussed the fact there wasn’t any precedence for this. The superintendent noted Valor was currently under capacity based on the size of the building and noted plans to reopen immediately as TMSA in August 2025. Mr. Sanchez said he wishes CSUSA would come before the board again and give a timeline of how this stuff played out. He said he still has trouble figuring out if this is just a business decision.
 - Ms. Porter commended the leaders of Valor Prep for turning the school around. She apologized for characterizing it solely as a business deal and said she’d be willing to share the timeline to the board. She reiterated they would work with all the families as much as possible to assist with their needs.
 - Mr. Sanchez asked if the statements from the board came after they found out about the school being sold and Ms. Porter stated the Valor Prep board has been in conversation with the TMSA board.
- Mr. Quigley asked if the enrollment of 850 is accurate and Ms. Porter and Mr. Quigley confirmed it is lower at 600. Mr. Quigley mentioned that it is a lot of risk for TMSA to take on and the superintendent stated he thinks they can do it.
- Mr. Quigley asked if there’s another option that would allow students to bypass the entire application process and Ms. Baquero cited admission procedures in law that would not allow students to bypass the application process.

- Mr. Quigley asked if the school does not relinquish the charter when they start enrolling, could they say it's an articulation of another school? He asked again if they could just enroll them, and the TMSA Superintendent said that based on enrollment projections they should be able to enroll most of the current Valor Prep students.
- Mr. Friend said he doesn't think there is an apples-to-apples precedent but cited last month's discussion about the schools in Halifax as something similar. He expressed that he wished there were two amendments as opposed to one.
- Dr. Danielsen stated the KIPP situation was brought on due to financial reasons and Mr. Friend agreed.
- Dr. Haire said that it feels weird they are accepting a relinquished charter that hasn't technically been relinquished yet and that there is no representation unless the outside board is the representation.
 - Ms. Porter said that she is representing Valor. Dr. Haire said that the charter hasn't been relinquished yet. Mr. Friend and Ms. Porter noted again that the board publicly relinquished its charter on Friday afternoon. Dr. Haire noted that it seemed backwards that the management group was not initially willing to list the school they planned to annex.
 - The Superintendent of TMSA said that they did not find those buildings strictly for a transaction; but that the students were the sole reason behind the decision from Valor. He reiterated the desire to serve the students of Valor and noted how that aligned with their goals for TMSA.
 - Mr. Sanchez said that the presentation could have been presented differently as a united front to show that the focus was student-first as opposed to what they heard today. Ms. Porter thanked Mr. Sanchez for the feedback.
- Mr. Quigley said that he wants TMSA and Valor to come back and mention how the process is going for students and in particular, staff. He said this is what makes a turnaround so hard. He made the motion and yielded to Mr. Friend.
 - Mr. Friend asked if to relinquish a charter the school had to come before CSRБ to get approval to relinquish the charter. Ms. Baquero said that normally is the precedent, but last year they stopped due to extenuating circumstances.
 - Mr. Friend asked if legal counsel could answer the question about process. The Superintendent noted he has a letter of intent from all parties. Mr. Friend recommended coming back tomorrow to discuss/vote on approval.
 - Mr. Quigley said that with relinquishment what assets of the state come back to the state and other things. Mr. Walker was not present, so the board ended up deferring to tomorrow.
- Mr. Gay noted that his concern was they were going to add more saturation to Northeast Charlotte which is already over-saturated. He then noted the price they got is a lot and noted previous comments on the financial concerns and # of students previously made by other board members.

Motion: Dr. Bart Danielsen motioned to table TMSA's Relocation and Expansion amendment request until tomorrow so CSRБ can talk with the attorney.

Second: Mr. Eric Sanchez

Vote: Unanimous DM and HP Recuse

- Passed Failed

Renewals 2025 Introduction and Data Review: Ms. Jenna Cook, OCS Consultant

- Ms. Cook introduced the renewal process saying that all schools in renewal will present by tomorrow. She also went over the next steps in the renewal process from agencies within DPI. She went over statutes that impact CSRБ decisions and reiterated that OCS placed schools in renewal category based on applicable statute and policy.

Renewal Presentation and Interviews:

1. 93J RISE Southeast Raleigh Charter

- a. Ms. Cook introduced their school and noted comparability data, growth data, and proficiency data as well as information on their CLP designation. She mentioned that no compliance issues were found, and School Business and other DPI Staff would do a more through dive on all schools next month. She then concluded by mentioning the application/renewal history of the school.

Introduction/Presentation

- Ms. Arthur – the Executive Director – introduced herself and the other members of the staff/board present. She gave her credentials and began her presentation by citing recent growth and proficiency scores. She shared their desire to have a 10-year renewal, citing the specific sections in the statute, and argued that they meet the guidelines for a 10-year renewal.
 - She reiterated that her main demographic is historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged. She mentioned they have seen large growth in those subgroups and outlined comparability data to the schools around them, and from internal data.
 - She mentioned some challenges that the school is facing but noted that despite these challenges they've met or exceeded growth the past few years. She mentioned some success stories/programs they have implemented and concluded by thanking her team and the board.
- Mr. Friend asked for clarification on the comparability data and OCS confirmed. Mr. Friend asked if they are not recommended for higher due to the CLP declaration and Ms. Cook confirmed.
- Mr. Friend asked for a breakdown of students in Wake vs. in Johnston County. Ms. Arthur said that 470/474 in Wake County and the Johnston County subgroup is much smaller.
- Mr. Quigley lauded their principal and said that he is one of the best principals for turnaround in the state. He asked how they turned around this school.
 - The principal noted that he does plan to stick around and the turnaround happened due to cleaning up the low-hanging fruit and highlighted other areas that helped turn the school around.
- Mr. Friend asked how they handled the staff absenteeism issue. The principal noted that it was a challenge and added that some had to leave due to a lapse of COVID era funds. He mentioned that evaluations and assessments were implemented to hold teachers accountable; and, showing teachers the data to hold them accountable for their performance.
- Dr. Danielsen asked where the principal was before, and the principal answered. Dr. Danielsen asked what keeps the culture going if the principal isn't there. The principal said that he believes that the infrastructure is already there and the culture of leadership among the teachers and staff is

now there to continue it on. He also noted that the kids will take ownership of their program and call out things that don't work / make sense.

- Dr. Danielsen – citing the subgroup data – asked for certain percentages of students compared to the rest of the school and the principal answered it's about 94% of the school population.
- Mr. Gay asked if the student population has changed and the principal said no, and Mr. Gay complimented the principal for making a big change. Mr. Quigley added on that they should take note and work to replicate what this principal has done with other schools. Mr. Quigley asked what the board did to empower the principal to turnaround the school. A school leader said that the board empowered them to lead, and they do just that.
- Mr. Sanchez asked about them 'wanting to pursue more' and the school leader said that because of their status as a Title 1 school, they want more time / a larger renewal so that they can really accelerate and grow their school at the pace that they have found works for them.
- Mr. Sanchez asked when the school leader came to the organization, and she answered that she came in 2019 and went over her history at the school. Mr. Sanchez asked OCS if they were at a 3-year renewal due to the Low-Performing Status. He and Ms. Cook went over the definitions. Mr. Sanchez said to the CSRБ that this possibly fits an exception since this leader (the principal) helped bring that school out of a truly transformative time for education (COVID). He said the fact they proved it in a year and what they've heard today warrants an exception. Mr. Friend repeated they will be voting in January.
- Ms. Hilda Parlér asked what they recommended, and the school leader said 10. Ms. Parlér asked what percentage of teachers are licensed and how they're working to improve that. The school leader said 40% and gave the ways they try to increase that number.
- The school leader noted how close they were to exceeding growth two years ago. Mr. Quigley said he believes in the team and said it's rare to see a school that goes from a 3 to a 10-year renewal.
- Mr. Friend wrapped up their presentation and commented on their two schools' athletic competitions this past year.

2. 93P Rolesville Charter Academy

- a. Ms. Cook introduced this school and explained the history of their school, performance data, growth data, and their recommendation per the OCS guidelines.

Introduction / Presentation

- The principal introduced the board president online who began her presentation by giving an overview of the school's history, mission, curriculum, and things that they have done to help award students / incentivize academic achievement. She reiterated that students are the primary focus and dove into her school's motto that she believes embodies her school.
- Another board member came and went over some of the demographics of the school and noted that most of the students come from rural/economically disadvantaged areas. He stated they've been struggling due to a new school opening that's K-12. He said as a result, they've needed to make some big changes. He then discussed some of those changes that teachers and staff and other leaders are / have implemented.
- The school's principal came up and introduced herself. She then went over some of the growth, proficiency and other academic data from the last three years and said that some of the trends are a result of the increase in ED students.

- The Board vice chair came up and introduced herself. She then began summarizing some of the areas where the board and other school leaders are doing to improve the school in academic, staffing, and other needs that students have. These included more science engagement/support; mental health support for students; and ‘Dean’ support for staffers.
- Another board member summarized the presentation and said that the board is strong and has strong leadership. He noted that students are growing in math and reading proficiency and that Rolesville ED students outperformed or performed similarly to Wake County ED students in math and reading last year.
 - He noted the finding they had was quickly addressed and solved as soon as they heard about it.
- A parent of the school confirmed that she has seen the support of the students by the teachers
- Dr. Haire asked if the school that opened is elementary, and a school leader said it was K-12.
- Mr. Gay asked what school they were referring to and the school leader said Wake Prep.
- Dr. Danielsen said that his concern is the demographics changing and that it appeared that their ED population was not doing as well as they were 3 years ago. He asked if the management company was okay with the change in population / prepared to deal with that large increase in ED students. The school leader stated they are prepared and are exploring other options/talking to other schools to help develop programs to improve success in this group of students.
- Dr. Shope asked why the enrollment dropped for the '22 and '23 school year, and they said it was because Wake Prep opened up.
- Mr. Machado noted a school in the Greensboro area that had success in something similar.

LUNCH

3. 61T Movement Charter School

- a. Ms. Cook introduced the school, gave a history of their school, and summarized data on school performance, growth, and other information important to the board.

Introduction / Presentation

- The principal and another school leader – both online – went over comparability and proficiency data for ELA and Math. She noted that they started a new curriculum and had walkthroughs with leaders and the creators of the curriculum.
- The principal then went over data on teacher and student retention and said that he was proud to see the growth and success of both teachers and students because of this increased retention. He then touched on how the culture has changed.
- He concluded his presentation by noting some priorities that can help get their performance grade up. Those include work with teachers to constantly improve their performance and increase their professional development.
- Dr. Haire asked if they were comparing the 2/more races and why they couldn't capture that when they could capture others. The school leader said he'd investigate it and Ms. Cook said that they masked it because it was less than 10.
- Mr. Friend asked if this school is like the one this morning with the CLP status designation and Ms. Cook said yes.

- Dr. Danielsen said that it appears 97% of the population is doing better than the LEA but they just don't have the same things as the other school with turnaround.

4. 79A Bethany Community School

- a. Ms. Cook introduced the school, gave a history of their school, and summarized data on school performance, growth, and other information important to the board.

Introduction / Presentation

- Mr. Morris introduced himself, gave his credentials and introduced the members of his board present. He then began his presentation by giving a history of the school and said that despite the gain in enrollment, they have not added support staff. He said that since he came on, he has worked with the board to dive into what's not happening in the classroom, and other things to update/better their school environment. He stated they are now seeing a student-centered focus.
 - He continued that he has begun to really home in on the mission and noted they have seen almost 11% proficiency growth since 2021. He also celebrated the subgroup data and touched on absenteeism and disciplinary data.
 - He concluded his presentation by asking for a 7-year renewal, citing growth/proficiency data and a strong commitment to compliance with state and local guidelines.
- A school leader came up and noted that they created a strategic plan to help prep their students to succeed in whatever option they choose. She continued to dive into their strategic plan and celebrated how the culture of the school seemed to change in all corners of the school.
- Mr. Machado commented that this is a prime example of a school that needs to be re-evaluated and put in a higher bracket for renewal. Mr. Friend concurred but did note that they didn't fit every guideline for a 7-year renewal. He concluded by thanking the board for coming today.

Introduction to 2024 Charter Application Interviews: Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

Warren Young Explorers School - Standard, 2026

Introduction

- Ms. Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application. She also introduced the choices the CSRБ had regarding this application. She noted the school has come back after making edits to their initial application. She highlighted that they had a facility, and they did have a site visit from Ms. Baquero.

Opening Statement by the School

- Dr. Norwood introduced herself and the board members present behind her. She listed some of her achievements and dedication to Warren County. Each of the other board members introduced themselves, gave their credentials and connection to Warren County, and summarized why they wanted to join this board.
- Another board member came up and mentioned how they took the feedback from last year's application and fixed it. She then discussed the struggles the county faces. She discussed the types of curriculum and certifications they hope students and the school itself will achieve. She mentioned the goals that board members have for the students and mentioned the rich agricultural

history of the county. She then went and addressed specific concerns that the board members brought up last year including a facility and interest survey.

Questions/Deliberation from the CSRБ

- Mr. Sanchez recused
- Ms. Parlér asked what their second choice of location would be if the facility doesn't work out.
 - A board member stated the school has been evaluated by 2 contractors and that it has passed and been certified to be occupied. She said they have toured every available space that might work for a school their size and that they could be upfit. Additionally, they have looked at a current school facility that may be vacant at the time their school opens; and have discussed modular units. Another board member said that a lot of the board members are landowners and so finding the space for those modulares would not be difficult. She also added that the contractors favorite spot was the Norlina school.
- Mr. Friend said that he still has some concerns with the budget – such as PD for staff – but thanked them for addressing some of the concerns from last year.
 - Mr. Friend – addressing the agricultural focus on their curriculum – asked if this could become a school-work pipeline and if they'd talked with any big agricultural employees in the area. A board member mentioned some of the programs they're working with the Farm Bureau and other food processing plants to get internships, and any other farm-classroom materials needed for students.
- Mr. Machado asked how many board members live in / are from Warren County; do they feel that the population would support this school seeing that population is declining; Is the facility owned by the LEA; he's concerned about the small class size strictly from a financial side of things.
 - A board member said that 7/9 board members live in Warren County and the rest has some sort of connection.
 - Mr. Machado and the board confirmed what number of kids will be in classrooms.
- Mr. Machado asked about the transportation plans. A board member said they plan to use cluster stops and presented some of their plans when trying to set up routes for those stops. She and Ms. Parlér discussed the age of the busses and the mileage/mpg for each route.
- Mr. Godbey noted the number of EC is low and some of the estimates for costs are a bit low.
- Dr. Haire asked if Working Landscapes would be providing any assistance/feedback / service to the school.
 - A board member said she works for Working Landscapes and shared what they do. She said that if Warren YES has a school that needs lunch services, they would follow the bid process and they would make sure they are in compliance with conflict of interest policy.
- Ms. Parlér asked why use modulares if you can just build. A board member said that it is very difficult to get favorable terms for financing and that it may be easier to get used modulares at first. She stated it would only be a temporary thing and that hopefully they can get closer to a city center in the future.
- Mr. Friend – citing the budget again – said that the professional development budget was very low, and they might want to reconsider that. A board member said there are other line items for curriculum development and that PD was built into other budget lines. They and Mr. Godbey concurred.
- Mr. Friend asked about the nurse/counselor position and why it's one in the first year, etc.
 - A board member said that is a full FTE and Mr. Friend mentioned that they should really reconsider having a full-time counselor on day 1.
- Dr. Shope commended them on their Facebook page. She asked if certain leaders have been chosen and they stated they haven't hired at this time.
- Mr. Friend asked if they plan to enroll from other surrounding LEA's. The board said they plan to and after another question from Mr. Friend stating they haven't really marketed outside of

Warren County. They reassured they are not going to turn down other students but they want to focus on Warren County.

- Mr. Machado asked what the other charter school was, and the board mentioned it was a school for the recognized tribe of Indians in Warren County and consists almost entirely of their population.
- Mr. Gay asked what their plan was to catch the students that are leaving Warren County each day for other schools. A board member noted the appeal of having a school that is not 40-50 minutes away and the unique educational platform they are implementing will appeal to people frustrated at their current situation. Another board member stated they have also gotten a lot of data from homeschool students who don't want to drive far. She also added they found 26 different places students were going outside of Warren County schools during their initial research.
- A school board member noted that the class size determination was based on other schools and their ADMs.
- Dr. Danielsen said – referring to Mr. Machado's comment – that declining population could be a problem and asked if there are any private schools in Warren County. A few board members and Dr. Danielsen mentioned one in Halifax County/Littleton and one that had only about 20 students K-12.
 - Dr. Danielsen stated the opportunity scholarship program might have an impact on their enrollment. The board members said that the private schools they might go to are far away from the towns they live in and the value of what they're offering is another draw. Another board member said it's an incredibly beautiful place and if it had a good school it may improve the population of the county. A board member also presented her research showing that not many people are thinking/expressing concern about the opportunity scholarship program.

Closing Statement by the School

- A board member thanked the CSRБ for their time and acknowledged that it is difficult to commit to a project like this with all the questions still surrounding it and the community. She reiterated her support for the facility they found, and this school would be an alternative to the options currently available to kids in Warren County. She noted a contract with outside groups – upon approval – to ensure the school is and will remain compliant. She reiterated the board member's support for the school and how they are very qualified to serve these students.

Deliberation by the CSRБ

- Dr. Haire said that it was a good application overall and went into detail on some of the things she liked. She stated the budget was sound and there wasn't much in terms of red flags. She wondered how they are 7/100 in diversity (County) and thanked them for coming back after last year.
 - Mr. Godbey concurred and reiterated that this is why charter schools started.
 - Ms. Parlér concurred and said that she felt she was a student again when reading over the application.
- Dr. Shope asked to go out and visit the school since she is excited to see this school come to fruition. She reiterated Mr. Godbey's comments about taking their feedback and coming back with a stronger application. Mr. Friend concurred with all previous statements.
- Dr. Danielsen agreed but did note there is density concerns with families and school-aged students in Warren County. He cited research that shows that areas that have school choice attract

and retain families. He stated they should work with all the parties to really make sure their marketing messages are in line with what's good with the county.

Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend motioned to approve Warren Young Explorer School's charter application

Second: Dr. Shelley Shope

Discussion:

- Dr. Haire noted how put together and diverse the board is and Ms. Parlér concurred.
- Mr. Machado reiterated his concern for small class size but said that overall, he wishes more charter schools in rural areas were as strong as this one appears to be.

Vote: Unanimous ES - recused

- Passed Failed

Virtual Horizons Charter Schools of North Carolina- Standard Remote, 2026

- Ms. Melanie Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application. She noted this is the 2nd statewide remote application they've received this cycle and they've acquired enough space for records-keeping and other physical space needs. She also introduced the choices the CSRБ had regarding this application.

Opening Statement from the Board

- A board member introduced himself and gave his credentials/connection to charter schools. Each other member of the board came up and introduced themselves, gave their role on the board and expressed why they wanted to be on that board.
- The Board President introduced herself and noted her connections to remote schools in Utah. She then gave her 'Why' and how an experience with her friend in Arizona motivated her to continue advocating for her model of virtual schools.
 - She noted the way students will participate and said that opportunities will be endless for students when they're in the virtual headset. She stated they are seeing greater results due to how immersed kids are in their education.
 - She then explained how they will fulfill their curriculum and noted kids would still have homework and other things they would do through a program like Canvas.
- Another board member noted they were excited to partner with the state since the lack of required capital allows them to use those resources to push and reach students all across the state regardless of situation.
- Another board member introduced himself online and noted his 30-years of experience working with Sysco.

Deliberation and Questions from the CSRБ

- Mr. Friend asked why grades 4-12; how they do standardized assessments; what their experience in running a school; curriculum/teachers and where they are; what are the non-virtual reality experiences students will have; and why not use this technology in an existing school to provide proof of concept.
- Dr. Shope asked if they've decided on a learning platform; how they plan to roll out an in-person training for students when they are working across the state.

- Ms. Parlér asked more about how they'll handle interventions and if they've identified a site for on-site testing.
- Dr. Haire asked why NC, and she and the Board President discussed where it is currently. She asked why not an extension of that pilot in Arizona since there's already roots there. She also asked about experience and how counselors will be provided to every student. She also asked about EC and how they would provide in-person services. She also shared she didn't see any large-scale studies that this type of education is affective on young kids. She also asked if Oasis XRE is connected/how they are connected.
- Mr. Friend asked if any board members had affiliations with Oasis XRE, the Board President said she did and explained her relationship and how she would recuse herself. Mr. Friend noted how intertwined the school is with the technology and asked what would happen if the board decided to go with another technology program. The Board President didn't believe that would happen and another board member said that there are other programs they are actively considering.
- Dr. Danielsen – citing the studies the board provided – said he is not sure how far the research could be extended beyond the group they studied. He said that it appears they are using Virtual Reality for everything including for things that haven't been proven to be useful/helpful and that is an area of concern for him.
 - A board member said that between 20-30 minutes will be virtual reality and the rest of the school day / class time would be normal online students. He then touched on some resources that would be offered to students and said they would be focused on region of the state. He said their goal is to not have students drive further than 45 minutes.
- Ms. Parlér asked if they're not transporting students how do they expect them to get there. Mr. Friend stated there is precedent with other virtual schools. The board member said that it would be custom to each of the student's needs and they would need to figure that out once they find out what those needs are.
- Mr. Friend asked if they're marketing statewide and the board member said they are marketing statewide due to interest in rural areas.
- Mr. Friend asked if any board members have visited any schools that are using this model/technology before and the board president said that her and a few other members have. Mr. Friend asked when the school in Utah is opening, and a board member said it was in the equivalent of NC's RTO process.
- Mr. Friend asked if the curriculum is in line with NC standards. The Board president said that it is, and they'd make sure that everything else is in line with NC standards moving forward. She stated it is easier to start off grades 4-8 since it's easier to grow a charter school rather than start off growing a high school.
- Mr. Friend asked if they had committed to a certain type of technology and the Board President said they'd be using the Meta Quest headset most likely due to cost/accessibility. She also said they are building their system in Canvas and that is what they will most likely be using for their online programs. She explained how they are coming together in the virtual realm as well as the online realm.
 - She noted that there will be regular in-person testing with proctors and other assistance. She stated they will be making sure kids are challenged and that virtual reality allows them to divide students up into groups for more targeted and direct learning.
- Dr. Shope asked if they can explain how the school is going to give students/parents the resource they need and how they are going to do the in-person trainings.
 - The Board president said that every student will get a Chromebook, virtual reality headset and if needed an internet connection. She also said that the rollout would be done regionally and there would be extensive trainings. She noted they also plan to have a support team built into their budget.

- Dr. Danielsen said that he gets the impression that the software is going to be purchased and that would be the heart of the curriculum. He asked who that curriculum/group is going to be. A board member came up and shared the options they are looking at.
- Dr. Danielsen asked why they are the ones planning this instead of a textbook group making the curriculum for a certain state. The Board president explained this situation and noted there are groups that would make it in line with the states standards and the curriculum of school. She also said that there are full year-long courses that are available for some of the companies they are exploring, but they would still have to utilize curriculum specialists that the board is going to choose when figuring out the market available currently. They also noted they have a curriculum coordinator and he and Mr. Friend discussed that person would be hired during the RTO phase.
- Mr. Machado asked who the ‘We’ is in regard to hiring and the board member noted that there would be an ED hired.
- Mr. Machado reiterated Dr. Haire’s question about ‘Why NC’. A board member said that his experience in the McCrory administration and seeing how the growth in this state has exploded, they wanted to help prepare those kids for the needs of the growing workforce.
 - Dr. Haire asked why not focus on Utah first instead of coming to a new state. A board member said that it is a ground-level opportunity and would be a pilot. He also cited his connection to the state and his conversations with another board member that gave him excitement to bring this to NC.
 - The Board president noted there is data to prove that K-6 has success using virtual reality.
- Mr. Quigley noted that he wouldn’t be supporting this application because he believes they should bring their technology to an already established school and show us that it works there.
 - A board member said they are open to proving concept and the board is very flexible in starting a pilot or other approach should that be the way the board goes.

Closing Statement from the School

- A board member gave his credentials and said that his and the board’s desire to bring education to kids that are falling behind is why he believes this new technology will work. He said that this type of program would be a big help and it really will help be an equalizer for kids across the state.
- Another board member said that this is new and exciting but also realized that there is a decision to be made that may not go their way.

Deliberation by the CSRБ

- Dr. Danielsen said that he finds it difficult to see how this technology relates to a school classroom/environment. He said he finds it difficult to see how a student might learn with this technology and cited his experience working with educational technology at NC State currently.
- Dr. Shope stated they have 16 teachers in their budget but didn’t touch on how they would utilize those teachers in their presentation. She said that small oversight might be how the larger picture would shape up.
- Mr. Friend echoed Mr. Quigley’s sentiments citing the interview in September. He said it’s different running a school than using technology that is implemented in a school. He also said he wished to see an example of this working in a school. He also reiterated the curriculum person they mentioned is not in the budget.
- Mr. Sanchez stated until there is a tester/years of beta testing there are a lot of questions on the overall impact of using it to this level. He stated there could be a detriment to kids and cited some basic screen-time research.
- Mr. Friend reiterated the options available to CSRБ for a motion.

Motion: Mr. Eric Sanchez motioned to deny Virtual Horizons Charter Schools of North Carolina's remote charter application

Second: Dr. Bart Danielson

Discussion:

- Mr. Machado said he's intrigued by the technology but wants to see a pilot in a brick-and-mortar charter school that expands to a virtual school. Ms. Parlér agreed.
- Dr. Danielsen said that if a charter school is moving virtual, they already have a curriculum and it's something to fall back on.

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Motion to Adjourn by Mr. Bruce Friend

3:10 pm

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

December 10, 2024

9 AM

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Alex Granados- (nonvoting) - Absent Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge - Absent Alex Quigley Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope – Absent after lunch	Eric Sanchez – Absent after lunch Bruce Friend Dave Machado Todd Godbey Dr. Bartley Danielsen Stephen Gay – Remote, Absent after lunch
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant - Absent Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant Megan Carter, Consultant	<i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer - Absent <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Lee Haywood – TOY - Absent Sarena Fuller – POY - Absent

CSRБ December 10 Meeting Recording: [DAY 2 MEETING](#)

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend, Board Chair
 - Ms. Hilda Parlér recused from the TMSA Amendment discussion
 - Mr. Machado recused from the TMSA Amendment discussion

TMSA Amendment Request from Yesterday

- Mr. Friend noted that he spoke with legal counsel, and it’s not a requirement of the board relinquishing their charter to come before the CSRБ. He confirmed the Valor Prep charter has been rescinded by a vote of their board.
- A representative from TMSA was available but noted he does not have anything else to say.

Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend motioned to approve TMSA’s amendment request.

Second: Mr. Todd Godbey

Discussion:

- Dr. Haire and Mr. Friend and the TMSA Rep confirmed the timeline for this opening.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if the students who attended Valor Prep have priority enrollment and Mr. Friend and the TMSA Rep said yes that is the plan. Mr. Sanchez and Ms. Baquero discussed what statute says on making preferential ‘treatment’ for those applicants and says it’s mostly based off board policy. Ms. Baquero and Mr. Walker stated there is nothing in statute for this type of situation.
- Mr. Quigley stated this isn’t an issue and that there is tons of space. He and Mr. Friend said that if there are more seats than applicants, they can just fill them with everyone who applied. Mr. Friend gave an example of his planned High School.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if they are doing outreach to the Valor Prep and the TMSA rep said they plan to have multiple meetings but already have plans to meet in-person with the students.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if it’s important to their enrollment numbers to have them enrolled and the TMSA Rep said yes.

Vote: Unanimous DM and HP recused

- Passed Failed

Renewal Presentation and Interviews:

10-year schools’ presentation

- Ms. Cook introduced the cohort that was in a 10 and 7-year renewal. She also explained why a few schools in the ‘Low Performing’ category were in the 10-year category and noted they were here to answer any questions the board might have. She concluded by introducing the cohort and mentioning their performance, growth, and comparability scores and any compliance issues that they have.
 - Mr. Friend asked why they aren’t voting today on those. Ms. Cook said they’re waiting on School Business to look at the 2024 audit.
 - Mr. Quigley asked how they can capture in a succinct way what the recommendations are. Ms. Cook said they will be all grouped together and summarized before the final vote would take place. She also said that staff can give a list of recommendations with higher placements as well to the board come voting time.
 - Dr. Haire noted that it’s important to point out how a school can be in a different bracket just based on one or two criteria.
 - Mr. Friend noted they may want to re-evaluate when those audits are due since there are fewer organizations doing Charter School audits and they are prioritizing schools in the renewal cycle.

1. 01F Alamance Community School

- a. Ms. Jenna Cook introduced the school and the leaders of the school. She presented data and enrollment statistics over the last three years and noted any compliance issues that were found in their audits would be discussed next month.

Presentation from the School

- Ms. Painter – the managing director – introduced herself and the other members of leadership that were present today. She began her presentation with an overview of academic data and said that it was unacceptable for them to get a D and just meet growth. She noted her timeline at the school and began discussing ways they plan to grow their performance grade and increase growth.
 - She noted that she re-started handling the hiring/firing of new staff and that she was hiring other support staff to assist students and faculty. As a result, they were able to start last year fully staffed.
 - She continued by saying that all subgroups were meeting growth, and they are focused on maintaining this growth for all subgroups. She also listed some of the other goals/strategies they have created with the entire staff to meet their instructional goals. She stated the climate and culture among students and staff has shifted already because of this change.
 - She continued by listing some challenges and celebrations including their biggest challenge of attracting/retaining high quality teachers. She also celebrated their new gym that was under construction for the last 5 years.

Questions/Concerns from the CSRБ

- Mr. Quigley asked what her biggest learning/hardest challenge on the internal side of things as a leader has been.
 - She stated the disservice to her students that happened last year upset her but this year with the changes in key positions they are doing much better. Mr. Quigley noted his past conversation with Ms. Painter and said that he’s been looking at her and their school from afar and agreed that they deserved a 10-year renewal.
- Mr. Sanchez said that most people come in here trying to prove leadership changes/other things are bad and it was refreshing to see something different.
- Mr. Machado asked for more detail on the leadership structure and Ms. Painter gave a brief overview of her history in the leadership at the school and how it has evolved/changed over the years. She also listed some additions to staff they want to make.
 - Mr. Machado noted that parents are voting with their feet and enrollment is still going up so good job.
- Dr. Shope appreciated the heart in their presentation but stated she is still on the fence for a 10-year renewal for schools that are on the Low Performing List. Ms. Painter said she totally understands, and she and Dr. Shope discussed the ownership of the performance in more detail.
- Mr. Quigley stated he’s more interested in the ability of Ms. Painter. He said that because the school meets the legislative requirements it is ok but did acknowledge a challenge when looking at the ‘low performing’ status. He and Mr. Walker discussed whether the requirement was to give a school a 10-year renewal and Dr. Shope noted some internal conversations that took place as these guidelines were being drafted.
- Mr. Machado – citing a school from yesterday – said they really need to consider that school’s situation as well.
- Dr. Danielson noted how when a good principal comes in / leaves how the situation changes drastically. He cited a conversation with Mr. Godbey from the other day that chains of schools have mentorship programs whereas stand-alone charter schools don’t have as many incentives since they don’t want to lose those good leaders. He expressed concern over teaching / training

the next generation of leaders and gave an example of a program in the NFL. He urged the CSRБ to create incentives to train school leaders for the next generation.

- Mr. Sanchez noted that residency schools are one way to do that and there must be other ways. Mr. Quigley gave some examples of leadership programs and noted one he worked on a few years ago for rising minority leaders in charter schools.
 - Mr. Sanchez stated many charter school organizations have this currently. He and Dr. Danielsen again mentioned the NFL reference.
 - Mr. Quigley said that a problem with new schools is they don't have experience. He cited a few examples of leaders – including Ms. Leslie – leaving their old school to start great schools.
 - Ms. Painter concluded by stating they will be a site for a conference that Charter School Leaders can attend.
2. 32T Discovery Charter School
- a. Ms. Jenna Cook introduced the school and the leaders of the school. Presented data and enrollment statistics over the last three years and any compliance issues that were noted in their audits.

Presentation from the School

- The Founder of the school introduced herself and gave some statistics on their school. She began her presentation by noting they are in their final facility and are closely adhering to their original mission statement. She touched on their academic performance and growth despite opening during the beginning of COVID, and other awards they've received.
 - She stated there were some challenges in the high school this year but are working to improve that moving forward. She also noted they've increased pay and hired other support staff to help with workload/stress.
 - She shared diagnostic testing they're using to help get more data. She also noted a specific challenge with a few families that really shifted focus away from academics and listed a few additions to curriculum/other things to alleviate some challenges and growing pains.
 - She touched on the academic data from the last few years and noted some scores that were higher than the district and others that were not. She then shared reflections and goals for the future. Some of those included working with the population of kids that didn't attend middle school with them, but do attend high school with them, and some difficulties with Math courses.
 - She concluded by mentioning a program they've created to partner with a local community college (Durham Tech).

Questions and Deliberation from the CSRБ

- Ms. Parlér said she loved the presentation.
- Mr. Sanchez asked about the size of the 8th grade class. He and the director discussed how many are taking Math 1. He asked how many are going to leave for this competitor school and the

founder noted it is often due to athletic programs but added they were accepted into the high school athletic association last week. She stated they have been seeing less and less attrition as the years go by, especially as they build up the athletic program for the high school.

- Mr. Sanchez asked how they are going to try and keep those kids (the athletics and engineering issues she mentioned). The founder acknowledged the smaller enrollment but also said that due to size constraints she couldn't keep 80% of her 8th graders if they decided to stay. She also noted some of the areas they are adding in the high school to try and retain more of those 8th graders such as an Adobe Academy. Mr. Sanchez asked since the charter includes high school if they all wanted to come would they have a seat. The founder said that if all of them planned to attend they would figure out how to accommodate them but for the time being she's glad they don't all plan to attend for high school.
 - Dr. Danielsen said that as soon as they build out the high school and their athletics program would they only be there or at another school for an athletic scholarship? The founder said that she has seen kids who left initially for athletic reasons come back to the school.
 - Dr. Haire asked if they know the demographics of the school population and the founder gave the demographics. She also noted how certain demographics have also improved over previous years.
 -
3. 41K Piedmont Classical High School
- a. Ms. Jenna Cook introduced the school and the leaders of the school. Presented data and enrollment statistics over the last three years for the school and any compliance issues that were noted in their audits. She also touched on growth statistics and explained why they were placed at a 7-year renewal.

Presentation from the School

- The Head of School introduced himself and noted that the leadership of the board and the school has stayed fairly the same over the last 5 years. He added that the pandemic was a very difficult time, but they came out on the other end much stronger.
 - He continued by noting how his comparability was much larger after the pandemic when compared to the district and the culture has shifted as well. He noted they are exceeding growth in all subgroups compared to the district, and the lowest comparability is 7 points.
 - He continued by noting other areas of academic excellence and some other accolades they have met. He added that culture among the students has changed, and students are staying and not leaving for other schools.
 - Next, he listed some challenges to success and areas where they hope to have strategic improvements. He mentioned some targeted interventions they have created to allow kids to focus on a topic and have more time to comprehend the material. He also mentioned changes that were implemented to better train their faculty and staff.
 - He listed partnerships that teachers have with other programs across the state to give kids more options and keep kids at the school with no limitations.
 - He concluded his presentation by noting how they had no compliance issues and increased growth that warrants – what they believe – is a 10-year renewal. He thanked the board and summarized data on growth and proficiency for the board.

Questions and Deliberation from the CSRБ

- Mr. Friend asked what's the only thing keeping them from a 10-year renewal bucket. Ms. Cook said that one data point after the pandemic. He and Mr. Machado commented that they are – in

some if not all regards – better than the applications they just evaluated and complimented them on their strong school and subgroup data.

- Mr. Machado and the school leader discussed the curriculum and the type of schedule they use.
- Mr. Godbey asked how long he’s been there, and the Head of School said 5 years. Other board members commended them on their presentation/school.
- Dr. Danielsen stated they don’t meet the statutory guidelines but said that he supports a 10-year placement. Mr. Godbey concurred and noted that going from a 3-year to a 10-year renewal is quite a feat.
- Mr. Friend noted when the renewal votes were and said that if there’s any schools they want to have come back they can put that in January.

Introduction to 2024 Charter Application Interviews: Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

- Ms. Rackley introduced the 2nd round interview criteria and noted that this school come back to answer 7 questions.

Bettis Academy- Second Round, Standard, 2026

- Ms. Melanie Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application. She also introduced the choices the CSRБ had regarding this application since this was a 2nd interview.

Opening Statement by the School

- The Chair of the Board introduced herself and the other board members present before the CSRБ today. She reiterated the board picked Zebulon due to the demand for resources in the area and also for the massive population growth. She noted how board members have interacted with the community and significant interest was demonstrated by over 500 survey / interest applications.
 - She noted the curriculums they will use for ELA, Math and the curriculum would be designed to fit into a community college / Portrait of a Graduate standard.
 - She concluded they are focused on the community needs and address those needs of all people – regardless of their representation/status.

Questions/Deliberation of the CSRБ

- Dr. Haire asked if they have added or made progress adding a Wake Tech representative to the board. The Chair mentioned they’ve made contact with a person but they are confident if they were to get approved they would have an easier time convincing people to get involved.
- Mr. Friend asked about the EC teachers and other staffing concerns from a budget standpoint. The Chair noted that Acadia helped them with the EC numbers. She stated they still have the budget flexibility but wanted to assess further needs after the applications came in to see what they needed at their school.
- Dr. Haire asked who assisted in preparation of the budget and the chair said Acadia.
- Mr. Friend asked if there have been any facility updates, and the chair stated they have found a better-suited parcel of land. She gave some more details on where the parcel of land is and other details.
- Dr. Haire asked what else has been done to communicate need / demand for the school. The Chair stated they didn’t start any of their own events, but went out to community events that generated new students interested/signed up.

- Ms. Parlér asked what events at the Boys and Girls Club they did, and the Board Chair mentioned that it was a lot of drop ins and conversations with parents picked up their children at the Boys and Girls Club.
- Mr. Sanchez – referencing the facility – asked how they would utilize that. The Board Chair implemented how they planned to implement a phased in process starting with brick and mortar with modulars as a backup plan. She said who they planned to work with and that they hoped to phase in building their other schools and athletic facilities since those are big in Wake County.
 - Mr. Sanchez asked how they got the funding for those projects and the Board Chair said that Charter School Development will provide the funds upon approval. Mr. Sanchez asked what the terms would be, and the Board Chair and Mr. Sanchez discussed what those grants would be.
- Mr. Friend thanked the board for being here and for the level of detail in their answers. Ms. Parlér recommended diversifying their board.

Closing Statement by the Board

- The Board chair reiterated the mission of the school and why she is creating this school: to create access to students who may not have the opportunity.

Deliberation by the CSRБ

- Dr. Shope said she can see the commitment of the board/the people speaking.
- Mr. Gay said he saw them take the feedback they received and really work to make their application stronger. He recommended connecting again with the new Wake Tech campus.

Motion: Mr. Stephen Gay motioned to approve Bettis Academy’s charter application

Second: Ms.Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

NC Connections Academy; EMO Pearson- Standard Remote, 2026

- Ms. Melanie Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; an overview of their network of schools across 38 states; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application. She mentioned any/all materials given to OCS and mentioned the choices the CSRБ had regarding this application. She shared the due diligence process implemented by OCS to make sure CSRБ knows/understands this school’s relationship with the EMO. She also mentioned some of their other schools nationwide that were in the news.

Opening Statement by the Board

- Ms. Sutton, Chair of the Board, introduced herself and the other board members, and gave their credentials. She also thanked the board for the time and dedication spent on giving feedback on their initial application and for their work in general.

- She began her statement by noting the mission and goals of the school. She stated the school would have a high quality curriculum given by high quality teachers and students would be supported well. She mentioned their curriculum plans and other programs for students to get digital credentials, industry qualifications, and other CTE opportunities.
- She stated the board and their partner – Pearson – is committed to helping students determine their path regardless of what it might be. She listed some programs her school would implement such as ‘C-Week’ where students would spend time preparing for state testing, catching up on work, or exploring career opportunities. She also discussed ways students were rewarded/incentivized to be engaged in the community.

Questions/Deliberations from the CSRБ

- Dr. Haire thanked them for the presentation and the strong application. She asked if the plan was to have 37 students to 1 teacher based on the budget presented. She also asked if the parent was to be the learning coach at home a requirement.
 - The Treasurer said that it is flexible based on the difficulty of the class and gave an example of this. She said that if a class is harder than the class size is smaller. She stated it also depends on how the student wants to interact with the teacher and how the student wants to engage in the class. She said this is important and they will strive to meet students where they are.
 - Dr. Haire went over more averages based on the budget and said that she didn’t see it working and asked if that was the model. Ms. Tanya – another board member – stated they won’t have all students on at all times and that some will be recorded so it gives students flexibility. She also said that it is something they’d have to look at if a situation like that were to occur.
 - Dr. Haire asked if Pearson had any data/a model on how many students are in a class at one time considering Pearson does this in several other states.
- Mr. Machado asked if there are any original board members to the Connections Board and mentioned some concerns/questions about the fee structure.
 - Ms. Sutton stated there are no connections to the previous school associated with Pearson. Dr. Haire stated they may want to look at the fact that Pearson withdrew their partnership with that school. Another board member stated they don’t have any additional information as to why they are no longer partners.
 - Mr. Machado asked if the board was doing their due diligence to find an EMO that helped them find what didn’t work the first time. Ms. Sutton stated they believe the platform Pearson brings to the table is something parents and students across the state are looking for. Another board member said that it is their understanding the other party didn’t follow their end of the contract, but they don’t know much more.
- Mr. Friend asked what they have in place to hold the EMO accountable with results. He also asked if there’s a particular part of the state they plan to market to more; and how they came up with the enrollment numbers listed on the application. He also asked if they would add more if there was a lot of demand. He concluded by asking what makes them different from the other virtual options in NC.
 - Ms. Sutton responded they are looking for students across the state and their model is flexible to either scale up or scale down the enrollment based on demand. Ms. Sutton stated they looked all over the state (East and West) when doing their marketing and that in the end they are not required to cap it at 750 if the board decides on that.
 - The treasurer stated there are financial reviews each month and an outside auditor contracted by the board and not through Pearson.
 - Mr. Friend asked who handles billing and the Treasurer said that it will be the EMO handling the back end since they have the experience in other states.

- Ms. Parlér asked how they do interventions for kids who are not successful/need additional support.
 - Ms. Sutton stated they will follow all applicable laws/statutes regarding IEP/504 plans. She also said they will set up times for targeted interventions and will have students come into a 1-1 to discuss / go over / complete work if there is evidence they are falling behind. Another board member said they plan to bridge the gap between staffers and students, and everyone is held accountable. She also mentioned they would look to find service providers in a student's area if they need more extensive/in-person services.
- Mr. Friend stated a constant challenge in virtual space is that they attack it from a traditional brick-and-mortar standpoint and that it's hard to determine that. He and Dr. Haire discussed this further and Dr. Haire noted that it's the role of the teacher to track that data.
 - Ms. Sutton said that nationally, Pearson has an average class size of 1:27 online each day.
- Dr. Haire asked if learning coaches are the parents and if that's an expectation at home.
 - A board member said yes, it is an expectation and that they do that so parents are aware of what's going on each day, and they can be involved in their students education.
 - Ms. Parlér asked if parents would be trained in certain areas and a board member said yes. He also added that parents are not required to be learning coaches.
- Mr. Machado asked how many board members have students in a virtual school. Two board members mentioned they either had a student previously in a virtual academy and wanting to go back; or who graduated from a virtual academy.
- Mr. Friend asked what is going to set their school apart. A board member stated there is a great need for jobs that don't require a four-year degree. He thinks their program with the experience they have and the focus on career growth/development, will help fill those jobs and inspire kids to come to their school. He also noted 1-1 mentoring as well. Another board member said the board itself is different in their experiences and credentials and, if given the opportunity, they will make sure every child that comes through their program receives a high-quality education.
- Mr. Friend and OCS confirmed it is time for the EMO to respond now.
- Mr. Godbey asked if the board considered any other EMOs and how they got together.
 - A board member stated they really thought Pearson was the best fit for their model and for all students across North Carolina.
- Dr. Danielsen said he understands that Pearson has a great platform and makes content. Will the board have the authority to place content on the Pearson platform without it being Pearson content.
 - A board member stated they are not going to be putting content on the Pearson platform and explained a bit more on how their roles are going to be.
- Mr. Godbey asked how they can hold teachers accountable if they're hired/held accountable by the EMO. The Board member said that the EMO is accountable to the board.
 - A board member stated there were discussions on that but the model Pearson has used in other states, and the methods the board has in place mitigate any concern. Another board member said that all teachers will be NC certified, and that Pearson isn't going to be making those decisions unilaterally.
- Representatives from the EMO came up and introduced themselves and gave their roles and responsibilities.
 - Mr. Friend said this isn't their first time in NC and asked if any of the members present were a part of that project. He also asked if they are confident in the board to fulfill their mission and duty.
 - One of the Pearson representatives said that she was on in the middle/end of the previous project and explained some of the concerns that went on between the two parties.
 - Another representative came up and mentioned how this board is one of the most outstanding to work with in the last 15-16 years. She mentioned other things they believe set this board apart from others they've partnered with.

- Dr. Haire asked if there were any charges outside of the budget and what exactly is the administrative fee and some other fees. She also had some other questions about individual line items in the budget.
- Mr. Machado asked how the transactions work.
 - A Pearson representative said that funds will be held and managed by the board and all Pearson invoices will be approved at the open public meeting. If the board approves the invoice, then the treasurer handles the payment.
 - Mr. Machado asked about additional operation expenses, and Pearson said the board listed them as the agent so they will be handling all executive / other operational expenses. She explained this relationship further.
- Mr. Friend asked how they plan to handle testing in NC.
- Mr. Friend asked about who hires/handles the staff and the Pearson representative explained the fee structure and how/when that is levied and what it covers.
- Dr. Haire asked about a particular fee and Pearson said that is if a teacher is needed by the school through their Pearson Online program. She and Dr. Haire also discussed the benefits section in their budget and the representative noted specific details about the insurance/other benefits.
- Dr. Danielsen asked if the other Pearson schools they noted as having done better than the state average is because they only mention those. A Pearson representative explained that the mobility rate is very high for online virtual schools. Dr. Danielsen asked if it's for all the state comparisons and he and the Pearson representative discussed whether what is listed in the application is for all the schools, and those are above the state average.
- Mr. Machado – citing declining enrollment in virtual K-12 schools – asked if the market is saturated at this point. The Pearson representative said that he's seen 10% enrollment growth prior to the pandemic and that post-pandemic, their levels stayed the same and are now growing again.
 - Another Pearson representative said that seeing the trends in NC, they decided to start 50% smaller than the other previously mentioned virtual academies. She said they feel very confident in hitting the number due to the demand and desire to have a 'Connections' model of education.
- Ms. Parlér asked about the qualifications of the Lead Administrator and noted the salary is very high. A Pearson representative said that the experience of the candidate and the quality of candidates that are in NC are really exciting.
- Dr. Danielsen asked if the Connections model used across the country use any content that is not owned by Pearson. The Pearson representative said they do create / find pilots to make sure that all schools are in line with state standards. He gave an example of a school in Nevada that had to shift very quickly due to a change in state standards.
- Mr. Friend asked how they handle state testing requirements in NC.
 - The Pearson representative mentioned they hope to have teachers from across the state to make sure they can go to a site and proctor an exam in an area that is easy and accessible to the students. He explained the relationship between the testing and the software and noted their students do well because they focus on making sure the students are comfortable in the environment they are in.

Closing Statement from the Board

- A Board member thanked the board for the time and reiterated the mission and goals of their curriculum and stressed how different and unique this is from other models (virtual and in-person). He also stressed they have done their due diligence and negotiated/read over every aspect of the contract. He said that in the end the board wants to have the best program in the state possible.

Deliberation from the CSRБ

- Mr. Friend mentioned the options available today for this applicant.
 - He noted three things:
 - He appreciated the board noting what they're going to do for the students and it's not about what the technology is going to do for the student.
 - He liked the path to career and college readiness.
 - He liked the fact they had experience in virtual learning
 - He liked the fact they were partnering with an organization with national experience in delivering virtual education.
 - He expressed caution that the challenge they may face is to go after more when you can. He said don't serve more even though you can due to a lot of pressure.
- Ms. Parlér said she didn't feel like this was a pitch and that the board was very well equipped.
- Mr. Machado said he would have liked to see an informal 'cap' but won't hold it against them. He did wish they clarified on one of his other questions.
- Dr. Danielsen stated Pearson does produce an enormous amount of content but didn't like the fact that there was no original content/it was all being created by Pearson. He said he's leery but that he also wants to be modest and say that he does see benefits to this model. He asked if in a different world if they'd be better off just running their own school as opposed to having them deal with a local board.
- Dr. Haire applauded the strength of the board but noted that the budget is very expensive, and that teachers and staff are well-paid. She said that she is impressed by the data presented before them.

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire motioned to approve NC Connections Academy's charter application

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: Pass - 5 yes, 2 no. Mr. Todd Godbey and Mr. Alex Quigley

- Passed Failed

2025 Charter Application Revisions: Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

- Mr. Friend and others discussed with OCS, and they agreed to have Ms. Rackley summarize what was changed and they will bring everything back in January with the possibility of calling a special meeting. Ms. Rackley explained that there were really no changes.
- Mr. Friend mentioned what is going to be happening in the January meeting and other housekeeping items.

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Bruce Friend

2:25 pm