

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board
State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction
February 5, 2024
9 AM

Attendance – CSRБ Members	
Alex Granados (nonvoting) 10:30 Arrival Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Alex Quigley (Virtual after Lunch) Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope (Virtual)	Eric Sanchez (Virtual After Lunch) 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- Absent Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant- Virtual Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Consultant Megan Carter, Consultant Julie Whetzel, Consultant Dr. Barbara O’Neal, NC ACCESS- Absent	<i>Attorney</i> Steven Walker <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> William Storrs Maria Mills TJ Worrell Ryan Henderson

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér moved to approve agenda for February Meeting

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

Passed Failed

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moved to approve January 2024 minutes

Second: Mr. Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous

Passed Failed

February Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Wake Forest Charter Academy- 4th Grade Performance: Mrs. Woodruff, Principal

Ms. Hilda Parlér introduced the 4th graders at Wake Forest Charter Academy who performed for the CSRБ member.

Charter Amendments: Ms. Nicky Niewinski, OCS Consultant

Nalanda Academy: Relocation Over 5-miles

- Ms. Niewinski introduced the amendment from Nalanda Academy and mentioned the details pertaining to their change.
- A Board Member from Nalanda Academy mentioned they found an old charter school building (Torchlight) and they are working with investors to finalize the deal between the old owners and Nalanda.
- Dr. Haire asked for the speaker’s name and the Board Secretary introduced herself and the others present in the meeting.
- Mr. Friend asked who is purchasing the building. Answer: ‘Redhook Capital’ based in California and have worked in NC before.
- Mr. Machado asked if they are confident, they will be able to get the building and asked if they are approving relocation on the assumption that the investors will purchase the building.
 - A board member explained the current situation they are working with for this purchase and said that he doesn’t think it is an issue for the investors.
- Mr. Machado asked if this would affect demographics of their proposed students.
 - The Secretary mentioned that they don’t think it will affect them.
- Mr. Friend asked how many applicants/enrollees they have and the Secretary – and another board member – mentioned they are starting to put the application on the website.
- Mr. Quigley stated that he is confident of this partnership and Mr. Sandeep’s work.
- Ms. Baquero stated OCS has spoken with Sandeep to make sure they are in a strong position to open in the Fall.
- Mr. Friend asked how the board was in RTO, and Ms. Baquero mentioned they did not have full participation but they have talked about the participation needed moving forward if this relocation works.
 - Sandeep mentioned what happened last month and how they came about the new property. Also noted they will need to participate more and not just their consultant.

Motion: Dr. Bart Danielsen moved to approve Nalanda Academy’s request to relocate over 5-miles from original location in charter application.

Second: Mr. Todd Godbey

Discussion:

- Mr. Friend mentioned that he is rather uncomfortable with this due to the tight timeline.
- Ms. Parlér asked why K-3 and several board members mentioned that to deny this amendment would kill the application.

- Ms. Baquero mentioned the updates that would take place regarding the RTO process next month.
- Ms. Parlér asked if they plan to do cosmetic changes to the outside and the board secretary said they will consider that.
- Mr. Machado noted that he has the same reservations as Mr. Friend, asked when they needed to have 75% enrollment and OCS said by June.
- Mr. Sanchez and Dr. Haire clarified the numbers that would be needed to get to the 75% by the fall.

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Invest Collegiate Imagine: Mission Statement

- Ms. Niewinski introduced the amendment from ‘IC Imagine’ and mentioned the details pertaining to the change in their mission statement. She also noted that input was solicited from everyone involved with the school and all documents were given to OCS.

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve Invest Collegiate Imagine’s request to amend their mission statement.

Second: Dr. Rita Haire

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

School Improvement Workflow & CLP School Presentations- Nicky Niewinski, OCS Consultant

School Improvement Workflow Introduction:

- Ms. Niewinski began her presentation by giving an overview of the statute pertaining to ‘Low/CLP schools’. Also noted the office’s goal to have 10% reduction in LP charter schools each year and that as of the current data it is at 30% of charter schools in NC.
- Ms. Niewinski showed a map of schools that would fit this description and moved into the new workflow OCS implemented to try and address this.
 - She mentioned there was discussion and focus on aligning what the site visits yielded across their department. She also noted knowledge and other items that people were bringing to the team.
 - She then gave a timeline on other items that they worked on throughout 2023.
- Ms. Niewinski outlined the process for these schools:
 - Pre-Visit- sent the school pre-visit school leadership reflection questions.
 - She shared an internal document that showed what they – OCS staff – look for in their responses and when they go into classrooms.
 - Following classroom visits, they would do a leadership reflection to look at certain key areas in professional development/the classroom. This would be done in tandem with a feedback form that looked at everything else across the school.

- Ms. Niewinski gave data from a post-visit survey sent to all 18 schools and noted that all of them that responded found the visit/feedback helpful in some way.
- Dr. Haire asked if the 18 schools are all CLP and asked if there is another group that ‘lands’ in the CLP category.
 - Ms. Niewinski mentioned that there is another group of CLP schools but OCS team is currently working on renewal visits so plan to visit more CLP/LP schools in the fall. Mentioned that overall, they narrowed it down based on schedules and additional planning to determine who was visited in the spring/fall.
- Dr. Haire asked if a particular example of schools was in the 18, and Ms. Niewinski said no. Dr. Haire added that the questions sent to school leaders were excellent.
- Ms. Parlér asked for a grade breakdown and Ms. Niewinski noted that a majority were K-5 but that there is a lot of variation.

CLP School Presentations:

- Ms. Niewinski went over the outline / guidelines for presenting schools for the next two months. She also listed the schools that would be here in February and March.
1. Apprentice Academy High School
 - Dr. Barry Ross – Founder and Principal – introduced himself and the members here before the board today.
 - He mentioned there are signs of improvement – noting that last year was the first year with 8th graders - and trends in subgroups are also trending in the positive. Stated the goal – for all subgroups – is to exceed growth and not just meet growth.
 - Dr. Ross mentioned goals for the next few years:
 - Improve school grade from D to B and improve proficiency grade to 75% by 2025. He noted action steps to get to this goal and added additional information to help supplement these goals.
 - Dr. Ross also noted training courses – including one with Mr. Quigley – that he and his staff have attended and the meetings that he and his staff are having weekly to improve EOC/EOG results.
 - He noted that 3rd party vendors providing virtual learning is not working.
 - Presented current data for proficiency in all categories (for both HS and MS).
 - Large growth in biology due to hiring of a ‘professional scientist’ but added there is concern with downward trends in English 2 and other categories. Additionally, they are looking to expand/change course timelines to help students prepare for the EOC/EOG exams.
 - Dr. Ross mentioned there is also progress in professional development:
 - He noted board trainings and leadership courses that are ongoing since August of 2023.
 - Noted there are no compliance or financial concerns to address.
 - Dr. Ross finalized his presentation by going over enrollment projections and noted growth in the number of students getting certifications and licenses in the trades.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Mr. Friend asked how many leadership trainings have been participated in for the board/all staff members.

- A board member mentioned they are on #2 for the leaders and Dr. Ross noted that the staff members went through training this past summer.
- Dr. Haire asked if the school was recognized a few years ago for innovation and Dr. Ross confirmed.
 - Dr. Haire asked how those students who go through the CTE program are assessed and Dr. Ross mentioned they aren't assessed per say but they have two distinct labs that help students find career opportunities. He noted that 10th grade students must pick a career pathway and they partner with people and schools in the community to help students complete those career courses. Mentioned the biggest field students go into is automotive.
- Dr. Haire asked when they opened initially, and Dr. Ross said 2019. Dr. Haire asked if they were similar in mission to another school in NC and Dr. Ross said yes, they actually partner with them.
- Dr. Haire also asked how far away they are moving, and Dr. Ross said about 3 miles (around the corner).
- Mr. Machado asked if moving all those times affects recruitment efforts.
 - Dr. Ross responded yes, he believes that's a possibility but the opportunity is always there every time they move.
- Mr. Machado asked if they can offer any of the trade classes on site or if they have to use community college facilities.
 - Dr. Ross stated they use creative ways to do some classes on site, but others have to use off-site facilities. Noted they have also broken into the construction field this year.
- Mr. Machado asked what online platform they are using for online courses.
 - Dr. Ross gave the platforms they use (NCVPS) and noted they also partner with community colleges.
- Mr. Machado asked if they offer transportation for those off-site courses. Dr. Ross stated since most of them are 11th and 12th graders they have their own vehicles, but they do offer help.
- Dr. Haire asked how they assess a baseline for students coming in 7th grade.
 - Dr. Ross explained the process.

2. Monroe Charter Academy

- Mr. Steagall and the school principal introduced themselves.
 - The principal noted their goals for the future and scores have mostly met or exceeded growth for the last 2 years (not counting the year for COVID) and that proficiency has – overall – increased across all subjects.
 - The principal also noted that there was a relatively large jump across all grades and presented a graph highlighting this growth. She added they have continually been recognized by Supt. Truitt for Academic Growth. She also mentioned their School Performance Grade was only 2 points away from a D and has grown significantly.
 - She added the challenge was to get people to do the work and that this year they lost some staff as a result to the intensity of their goals/trainings.
 - The principal also added the professional development taken by both the staff, the administration, and the leadership of the board.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Mr. Machado asked where they are currently located.

- The Board Chair noted they are currently where another school (Apprentice) is moving into. He noted they are working with people to try and find something but it's tough. He also noted that Apprentice was able to pay more money and in the end it was a decision of the pastor who runs Monroe's current facility.
- Mr. Friend asked how the lack of facility has impacted enrollment next year.
 - The principal gave the numbers and the Board chair noted that some of it is due to the 7th grade graduating out. Mr. Friend noted concern and the Principal added they have been very forward with their parents.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if the board has a 'drop-dead' date for when to tell parents and the Board chair said he doesn't want to do that now.
 - Mr. Friend asked about finances and the Board chair noted they are stronger than ever with a larger than normal surplus.
 - Mr. Friend also asked how staff-morale has been affected and the Principal noted all staff indicated they are coming back.
- Dr. Haire asked how 'dire of a situation' are the positions listed on their website for the school. The principal said she hasn't updated the website, but they are down from 9 to 2 open positions.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the lease and the Board Chair stated they have run the course of the lease.
- Ms. Parlér asked if they've considered land and the Board Chair mentioned they have but that due to timeline they are really looking for stand-alone buildings.

3. Next Generation Academy

- Mr. Florence – Principal – introduced himself and Mr. Miller – Board chair – introduced everyone present today.
- Mr. Florence began the presentation by noting the proficiency growth across all subjects over the last few years. He then broke the data down by subgroups and noted growth across most of them.
 - He continued by presenting his DIBELS data and stated they are still looking to improve. Stated their focus was going to shift towards their 3rd graders. Also added that data gathered from the NC Check-ins would help them shift focus to areas of need in grades 3-7.
 - Mr. Florence also added the ways they teach their students.
- Mr. Florence continued by presenting on ways to increase proficiency through teacher, administrator, and leader trainings as well as programs that students and parents can go through.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Dr. Haire asked how the co-founders are involved.
 - Mr. Miller came up and mentioned that Ms. Pam is on the HR compliance side and that Mr. Miller does a little bit of everything. Dr. Haire noted that this shows great heart for the school.
- Dr. Haire asked if it was strictly a STEM school.
 - Mr. Miller said that not specifically, but they are revamping their STEM programs after receiving several grants.
- Dr. Eldridge thanked them for responding so quickly to the feedback given from OCS.
- Ms. Baquero noted they have only 1 more quarterly update and after that they should not have to come back again per the current stipulations.

- Dr. Eldridge asked OCS a feedback-specific question and Ms. Baquero answered it accordingly. Mr. Friend and Ms. Baquero discussed the fact some schools may have to be looked at further if they don't meet growth this year.

- 4. Rocky Mount Preparatory
- Dr. Collins – Head of School – introduced herself and the other board members that were present today.
 - Began by discussing academic trends between 2022 and 2023 in the 3rd and 4th grade. Also noted that – when broken down via subgroups – that there is not a large gap. Also added that there are projections for growth in both 3rd grade and HS subjects.
 - She added the results of their DIBELS assessment and broke it down by age group.
 - Noted what she thought led to low performance including a large EC population, high turnover rate and high disciplinary rates.
 - She did add that disciplinary rates are down 65% this year.
- Dr. Collins mentioned the goals they have to meet their stipulations and added data on their current progress in both ELA and Math. She additionally outlined models and platforms recently implemented for teachers/staff and any Professional Developments given/offered to teachers/staff.
 - Dr. Collins mentioned they have met growth but are still waiting on final documentation.
- Dr. Collins concluded by presenting their next steps which included:
 - Increasing student enrollment,
 - Replace NCVPS and increase engagement across K-12 from parents.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Ms. Parlér asked what those 'K-Data nights' meant.
 - The accountability director gave a brief overview of the night and things that they do during the day. He also mentioned that it was done every quarter.
- Ms. Parlér asked how they are increasing enrollment.
 - Dr. Collins mentioned they are sending out surveys to existing parents to learn how many seats are going to be in their weighted lottery, and also an expansion in the CTE department to give the students more options.
- Dr. Danielsen – citing turmoil in Rocky Mount Public Schools – if there was any opportunity to market to those students affected by the turmoil?
 - Dr. Collins mentioned that it is in the plans.
- Dr. Haire asked what current enrollment was: Dr. Collins said almost 900.
- Dr. Haire asked about the scholar from home program and Dr. Collins gave an overview of the program and the reasons why they are doing it.
- Dr. Eldridge asked what the outcome was with the money issue they previously had. Dr. Collins said that in laymen terms it was a coding issue, but their support group was able to go in and separate everything to follow the stipulations of the investigation.
 - Dr. Eldridge mentioned that he is really hoping to see them succeed due to the history of this school. Dr. Collins extended an offer to come down to the school and see the growth in-person.

5. Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology

- Ms. Howard introduced herself and the members of her school’s leadership team that joined them today.
 - She began her presentation by touching on successes from last year to this year, but also noted there are challenges. She stated some of the challenges revolve around charter renewal and teacher mental wellness.
 - She continued by diving into proficiency results broken down by subgroup and compared with the district. She additionally noted there was a substantial increase in the number of career and college ready students in all subjects.
- Ms. Howard outlined trends in math and reading I-Ready schoolwide scores and shifted towards what their goals were for the future.
 - She mentioned they want to increase rigor in lesson planning, increase teacher pedagogy in math, embed cultural education into learning experiences, and expand focus on data analysis and emotional well-being.
 - Said that ‘Rhythm Checks’ are helping boost morale and well-being of students.
 - Showed trends in growth and attendance to outline progress and also trainings that were provided to improve instructional outcomes.

Questions from CSRБ

- Dr. Haire asked a question about enrollment.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if the rumor to have ZECA go private was real? Ms. Howard said not from her.
- Mr. Friend asked about the lack of minutes on the website, and he and the board members had a discussion on this, and Mr. Friend asked them to just go back and make sure everything is there.

6. Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy

- Dr. Wray, school leader, introduced himself and the members of the board that were with him. He began his presentation by mentioning the goals for his school.
 - Attendance goals were movable since it is difficult to analyze with a small staff and they asked members to shift their focus and ask how this would affect the team.
 - Discussed EOG results for past 3 years and noted they ‘left some points on the board’ because of their lack of enrollment. He added this year – with expanded enrollment – they will have enough to cover all categories.
 - Additionally mentioned some students were within a few questions of being proficient on the EOC’s.
- Shared professional development they’ve attended and added it is incredibly helpful for all of them and has helped them grow significantly.
- Concluded by re-stating the successes his school has had – including having 2 teachers in each subject – and reiterated their focus on what “matters most”. Focus on “where they are now” has helped him increase his focus and his skillset.
 - Before finalizing, he added some of the other improvements that his school has undergone to improve student wellness and success of the board.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Dr. Eldridge thanked them for their report and noted the commitment is there due to all board members being present.
 - Dr. Eldridge asked where the audit was, and Dr. Wray noted their accountant has continued to push it down the chain and they are currently looking for another auditor.
 - Dr. Eldridge asked what the ramifications are for the school since this is part of the SBE stipulation, and he and OCS staff went over stipulations and rules pertaining to late audits.
- Ms. Parlér asked about the racial/ethnic breakdowns.
 - Answer: majority is Black and Lumbee (from Robeson County).
 - Ms. Parlér added that they might want to diversify the board a little bit.
 - Dr. Haire added she is glad to see a lot of effort to give materials to families in native language although there is a small Hispanic population.
- Dr. Wray noted the transportation they provide is unique to the area. Ms. Parlér asked if they had cluster stops. Answer: No. They go right to the people who need it.

Lunch – Reconvene at 1:15 pm

Renewal Presentation and Interview: Childrens Village Academy- Susan Brigman, NC DPI Section Chief, Specialty Programs

- Ms. Brigman introduced herself.
 - Stated they are asking for \$162,000+ for unallowable costs; asking them to upload an updated inventory listing in CCIP that encompasses all furniture including items purchased in previous cohorts; and going forward the subgrantee must submit supporting documentation on the same day.
 - Additionally stated they strongly recommend the school hire a program director who is physically present in NC to help resolve challenges and have smoother operation in the program. Additionally, attending the monthly 21st CCLC statewide meetings / trainings.
- Ms. Brigman mentioned the final day to submit payment is February 16th and moved to the programmatic monitoring.
 - 3 indicators that have not been provided (more details on the EBOARD Letter). Added they did satisfy the third indicator's requirements after the fact but they want to see background checks done before the program begins per the requirements of the grant.
 - She noted that the response for this is due back on February 16th.
- Mr. Machado asked if it's normal procedure to do 2 weeks for a response and Ms. Brigman said yes that's standard procedure.
- Mr. Machado also asked if there were any additional communications outside of this letter and Ms. Brigman mentioned additional communications. Mr. Machado asked if the request for them to submit the \$162,000+ would be seen for the first time with this letter; Ms. Brigman said yes and the amount had been reduced.

Presentation from the School

- Ms. Jones gave a presentation on the school. She started out by giving an overview of the Charter School.
 - She mentioned that they are addressing the financial concerns, by partnering with an accounting solutions firm to conduct an analysis of the 2008 loan and have identified the outstanding loan balances and terms surrounding that. Also stated they were working with their legal team to make a new loan agreement.

- Mr. McCaffery outlined the methodology he used to analyze the finances of the school.
 - Touched on findings he made and there were 2 loans: (1) a Promissory note with 9% interest and 5-year term and as of 12/31/2023 it was a little over \$13,000. He noted that the board member has waived the rest of that loan and it'll be documented in the new agreement.
 - Loan 2 was executed in Sept. 2022 for \$31,500 and that it will begin repayment in 2024 on a 3-year schedule. They don't have any promissory note but have found evidence through wire transfers.
- Mr. McCaffery stated that both outstanding balances have been documented in the new agreement and they will contract with a known industry financial leader.
- Ms. Jones reiterated Mr. McCaffery's point and added they will continue a partnership with MAS to improve the internal controls of CVA and that they will continue to partner with MAS to improve financial processes.
- Ms. Jones then moved into General Governance Concerns:
 - Damage to minutes from hurricanes and they are creating a folder with all available board meeting minutes. She additionally noted they will work with their attorneys to insure open-meetings and create laws/policies on nepotism and COI.
 - Additionally, the board will implement a plan to address financial concerns and ensure compliant board oversight. She noted new board member specialized in COI as an attorney and they've partnered with experts in the community to improve operational and internal controls.
- Ms. Jones concluded by asking that the CSRFB take this into consideration as there is a need for the school in this community. She gave a few examples of CVA students and asked the board to consider renewal.
- Dr. Haire asked about the promissory note and went into a detailed description of the numbers based on what she had. She and Mr. McCaffery conversed on what the numbers exactly were. He noted that the promissory note was not really written well at all and explained what they looked at to get to the \$13,000+ amount.
- Mr. Friend asked if the minutes were predominantly not digitized, and Ms. Jones said that prior to 2011 they were stored in basements/attics of the school.
- Mr. Machado asked how long Mr. McCaffery was working with the school and he said since early January 2024. Mr. Machado asked if the documents he provided were basically a recreation of what he found based on the loan and Mr. McCaffery said yes.
- Mr. Machado asked what the board would do differently looking back in hindsight and the Board Chair said that they weren't prepared to face this type of challenge. She reiterated again the need in the community and asked for the board to work with them to rectify this.
 - Ms. Jones echoed that some of these findings were surprising to them.
- Mr. Machado asked if they had the funds to pay off this \$162,000+ by next Friday and they said no. Ms. Jones did add they would have to go back and look at the budget and the finances to see if it were possible as they did just get the letters today.
 - Ms. Jones added they did have a hearing on the 19th with the 21st Century program.
- Dr. Eldridge noted that hearing is going to be super important to the future of this school.
- Dr. Haire asked if Ms. Peggy Carr was still the vice chair and if she was still on the call. Ms. Jones noted that she was online.
- Mr. Friend noted that no one on the board has mentioned what she – as a school leader – has said.

- Mr. Harper – treasurer of the board – noted the board has a commitment to get their house in order and they were unprepared – based on what they’ve seen in their audits – for this financial disaster. He also added that it will be easier to fix the governance issues but not the financial concerns. He reiterated his commitment to serving the students and there is full commitment from all board members to fixing their financial house by doing the steps outlined.
- Mr. Friend asked how many students they had and what they built the budget on initially.
 - Ms. Jones said 151 currently and that they built the budget on 170 initially.
- Mr. Friend noted that he would like to see the bylaws and see what has changed in several areas before the March Meeting.
- Dr. Eldridge stated what they found should have been found in a previous audit.
 - Ms. Jones added they are working with a past recorder to get pre-2011 minutes but none of the people who would have them are with the school anymore.
- Mr. Friend said that the original decision was to do a 3-year renewal but now the office’s recommendation was to do a non-renewal. Ms. Baquero said that the compliance findings are what put them in nonrenewal due to the fact it appeared drawn out. Mr. Friend asked what will happen between now and the March meeting and Ms. Baquero noted that additional documentation can be provided, and they would be able to give that to the board.
- Dr. Haire asked Dr. Carr if there were any personal notes to document some of these transactions. Answer: actions taken to rectify concerns when they were put on monitoring in 2011. Stated they constantly looked at ways to rectify the loan and their focus was predominantly on serving the students.
- Ms. Baquero gave a history of the financial disciplinary status from 2012.
- Mr. Friend asked Ms. Brigman what happens next since they said they don’t have that money.
 - Ms. Brigman said it would be grounds to move towards termination of the grant. She said that it is not up to her in the end, but she will catch the Senior Director up to speed.
- Dr. Eldridge asked if this was going to be reviewed in the Feb. 19th meeting and Ms. Brigman said that it could be appealed and it was separate from the findings they found earlier.
- Mr. Hostetler said it was a very difficult process to navigate but he thinks it is the same as the others where they would have 30 days. Added that it was confusing as to what they were talking about so it will most likely not be done by the March meeting.
- Mr. Gay asked if there would be any holes in the budget because of this and Ms. Brigman said that any future funds were on hold until these were rectified. Ms. Jones said that it would hurt their Cohort 15 funds.
- Dr. Eldridge said he was going to rely on DPI/OCS for a timeline.

Non-Renewal Placement: Ridgeview Charter School 36F

- Ms. Williams – founder and principal – introduced herself and the board members and began her presentation on the school.
 - She began by highlighting the plan to improve drastically over the next 3 years. She added that since COVID they have had clean financial audits and strengthened governance policies. She added there was a need in the community for their school and cited demographic and socioeconomic data for both the community and the school.
 - Ms. Williams added this year they’ve seen an increase in students needing food and social/mental health assistance. Said that when the students came to Ridgeview from the community, students were behind on their academic performance.

- Ms. Williams added that spring projections show a strong majority of their students are behind in math and reading. She noted that after Christmas there have been discussions to secure professional development strategies for teachers as well as increase monitoring of grade level meetings. She added they didn't start academic improvement efforts because of noncompliance status, but instead had already been working on this continuously.
 - Went over additional action steps they were implementing / have implemented since 2022 and discussed what action steps they would implement in the future. Stressed that overall focus was to improve readiness and strength of both staff and students.
 - Touched on improvements in technology access and how they've utilized grants to improve facility technology.
- Improvements in the bell schedule, EOY surveys to parents and staff, and Professional Development for teachers and administrators.
- This is a 3-year plan that will continue for more than 3 years.
- Ms. Samuel – board chair – introduced herself and her experience on the board of the school. She noted that the statistics don't always show the true story.
 - She added they wanted to bring resources to the community that did not exist prior to their inception, and they have brought resources that kids in the community don't have through Ridgeview.
 - She acknowledged the academic struggles are there but financially they are strong. She stressed that all money is going to the students, and they see this school as hope for a brighter future. They said that shutting down the school would eliminate that hope for those students.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Ms. Parlér asked why some of the students are transient.
 - Ms. Williams mentioned their parents get jobs in Charlotte, and that they are receiving kids in foster care.
- Ms. Baquero asked what the reading curriculum is and when they plan to fix concern expressed in staff survey.
 - Ms. Williams gave the program and this survey was from this past January. She added that teachers had only 1 semester to learn this model and that they would need more training.
 - Ms. Baquero asked if they used LETRS and Ms. Williams said they aim to use it.
- Mr. Machado and Ms. Williams went back and forth on the history of the school (when it opened, etc.) and Mr. Machado asked what they would do differently.
 - Ms. Williams said that she would really have more open houses and secure their enrollment. She also said she would like to have educated the public more on what a charter school is.
- Mr. Friend asked more about the board members and who all is present/online. He additionally asked when they last met, and he and Dr. Eldridge noted that the minutes weren't online since August of 2022.
- Mr. Friend said that he is a bit disappointed that only 1 board member is present considering their school is at risk of closing. The Board chair responded saying they all came individually and she wasn't sure where the others were but the board works well together.

- Dr. Haire asked if any teaching positions are currently open. Ms. Williams mentioned there is one 5th grade teacher position open as of Christmas 2023 and they have one position as a long-term substitute (Middle School Science).

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Bruce Friend

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Unanimous.

2:56 pm

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State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

February 6, 2024

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Recording of February CSRБ Meeting:

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Bruce Friend, Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Mr. Bruce Friend
 - Ms. Parlér recused from ALA Charlotte, Gate City Charter, Summit Creek Academy, Valor Prep.
 - Mr. Machado recused from Summit Creek, Valor Prep

CLP School Presentations- Nicky Niewinski, OCS Consultant

Ms. Nicky Niewinski introduced the schools presenting today and in March and mentioned that today’s schools are not stipulation schools.

1. ALA Charlotte
 - a. Siobhan Papa and Carmi Green introduced themselves and gave their credentials.
 - i. Ms. Green went over her school’s historical data including population data, demographics, EOG/EOC Proficiency, Growth, and Subgroup data.
 - ii. Included their school improvement plan and began discussing items and priorities in their plan.

- b. Ms. Green mentioned that there have been increases in trainings over the summer due to large group of new teachers hired. Mentioned other professional development opportunities for administrators as well as support systems in place to assist students who need help.
- c. Ms. Green mentioned a few new beginnings at the school:
 - i. New Leadership and a new building
 - ii. Re-establishing student culture
 - iii. Focused K-6 grades
- d. Ms. Green discussed academic growth statistics for FY 24 noting that nearly 64% of students have met Winter growth benchmarks for 23-24.
 - i. Noted they are not where they want to be with proficiency and growth. However, there have been gains in overall performance in math and ELA combined. Their goal is 40% EOG growth.
- e. Ms. Green concluded her presentation by mentioning action steps they are implementing:
 - i. Focused math skills practice
 - ii. Focused reading skills practice
 - iii. Reading Portfolios G3 & RTA
 - iv. Ongoing training for staff
 - v. Data driven PLC
 - vi. Added a learning coach to help students retain growth.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Mr. Machado asked about student population:
 - Ms. Green stated they have about 120 students. Mr. Machado asked how many students are retained each year, and Ms. Green answered about 30-35 students and the rest were new.
 - Mr. Machado asked how demographics changed from the old location to the new one. Ms. Green answered demographics haven't changed much.
 - Mr. Quigley asked if it was location that caused students not to follow them to the new school, and Ms. Green said that it was and gave some examples of parent stories. Ms. Green and Mr. Quigley also discussed how many parents lived near the old facility.
 - Mr. Friend asked if there was staff turnover. Ms. Green mentioned there was some staff turnover and explained why.
 - Dr. Haire asked about comparability pre and post COVID, and Ms. Green mentioned they are implementing new supports to assist students.
 - Dr. Haire also asked a follow-up question noting proficiency data on the charts presented. Ms. Green noted that they are focusing strictly on math tutoring and have hired a performance coach.
2. Classical Charter Schools of Wilmington
- a. Mr. Marcus – Headmaster – introduced himself and the people he had with him. Introduced his school and shared data and history on the building. Also noted enrollment numbers are on a good trajectory based on past data.
 - i. Building itself has been improved with new HVAC unit and school safety grant from the Center for Safer Schools.

- b. Mr. Marcus noted original charter application and how it compared to their current demographics. He also noted awards they have won this year.
 - i. Shared curriculum used and schedule they provide for students. Mentioned that students were assessed weekly and went over staff-student ratio.
 - ii. Shared growth and proficiency data on a demographic basis compared to the surrounding area (New Hanover County).
 - iii. Concluded presentation by comparing data from other majority African American schools in the area.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Ms. Parlér asked who the extra personnel are to ensure the academic piece gets done correctly. Mr. Marcus mentioned staff present and ones at the school. Ms. Parlér asked specifically about the coaches, and Mr. Marcus mentioned the ways they enhance the curriculum, and they are in all courses/classes.
 - Ms. Parlér asked if they are full time and Mr. Marcus explained the length of times for the positions.
- CSRБ member asked how many teachers they have, and Mr. Marcus mentioned they are at 22-23 teachers which is about 23 students per grade. He also mentioned that the coaches are not teachers.
- Mr. Quigley asked how they can afford all this with only 140 kids. Mr. Marcus mentioned that the COVID grants were used to fill those staff and enhance the student's experience.
 - Mr. Quigley followed up asking how they'll handle that after the funds run out, and Mr. Marcus deferred to another board member. That member mentioned they won't be able to have as many as they do now but do plan to continue having some due to their effectiveness.
 - A CSRБ member asked about expansion plans and the Board member stated they have already begun discussions with the county, builders, and their financial people to start putting plans in place.
- Mr. Quigley asked why student enrollment is so low; and the board member mentioned they have issues in various parts of their plan (such as transportation) but also due to parents being skeptical about charter schools.
- Ms. Baquero asked if the housing prices in the area were trending in a certain direction. The board member stated they were trending upwards in the city area. He also said they've been able to save money due to the Roger Bacon Academy waiving their fee each year.
- Dr. Haire asked if they think enrollment is low due to them being year-round.
 - The board member believes it is a possibility.
 - Dr. Haire asked about their location and she and the board member conversed this.
 - Dr. Haire stated the data is promising and is surprised that students aren't coming to the school.
- Dr. Danielsen added that the school was very on-task when he visited a few months ago. Dr. Danielsen asked if they could give their method.
 - Mr. Marcus mentioned the increase in technology has freed teachers to be more attentive to their students, and making sure they are getting their work done.
 - Dr. Danielsen discussed a personal example of using technology to teach vs. being in a classroom. Noted that he was impressed with the innovation.
 - Ms. Parlér asked for more information about the benchmarks and Dr. Marcus explained.

- Ms. Parlér asked what the attendance was like.
 - Mr. Marcus stated it was low due to the demographics of students served. They have started an incentive program to encourage kids to attend.
- Mr. Machado commented that he is appreciative of Roger Bacon being committed to this neighborhood.
- Ms. Baquero and Mr. Quigley commented on difference between importance/broadcasting of lab school data vs. charter school data.

3. Gate City Charter

- a. Ms. Hill – Regional Director – introduced herself and noted her role at Gate City. She introduced Dr. Robertson and the board chair (not present at the meeting). Ms. Hill then read the Board Chair’s statement.
- b. Dr. Robertson introduced herself and her credentials.
 - i. Started by mentioning the demographics of the school including the FRL population and the ages served by the school.
 - ii. Summarized academic data and pointed out key growth areas and statistics across all demographics. Touched on trends that have occurred over the last few years.
 - iii. Discussed goals they are striving for and areas they see as opportunities for growth. Stressed desire for an increase in parental engagement.
 - iv. Shared areas viewed in positive light, including waitlist growth and increase in enrollment.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Dr. Haire asked about enrollment based off data on the website vs. what was presented. Dr. Robertson noted they have lost some students over the course of the school year. She clarified the total enrollment number and – after a question from Dr. Haire – added they did not provide transportation.
- Mr. Quigley asked of the 1400 applications how many do they bring in, and Dr. Robertson explained the numbers of students accepted. Mr. Quigley further asked how all grades couldn’t be covered if there’s a waitlist at all levels and 1400 applications. Dr. Robertson went over the grades that did and did not have waitlists.
 - Mr. Quigley asked about retention rates and Dr. Robertson estimated 75-80%.
- Mr. Machado asked about the sister school and Dr. Robertson confirmed that it was a partnership and explained their relationship with the school.

4. Summit Creek Academy

- a. Ms. Hill – same as above – introduced Principal Brown and read a statement from the board president since he was unable to be there.
- b. Ms. Brown introduced herself and gave her credentials and the credentials of the school. Mentioned the history of the school and plans for expansion in the years to come.
- c. Ms. Brown touched on demographics of the school and FRL, IEP and EL students.
 - i. Summarized academic data from the past two years and noted growth in performance grade and proficiency. She also noted they are outperforming the surrounding schools.

- ii. Gave summary by-grade data for ELA and Math proficiency and touched on overall growth data by grade for the last two years.
- iii. Shared goals for the coming years and action steps they will take to achieve these goals.
- d. Ms. Brown concluded her presentation by touching on the progress towards the goals and how they are targeting ‘bubble students’ to achieve proficiency goals. Mentioned progress towards absenteeism reduction and turnover rate reduction.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Ms. Baquero asked how they are working on chronic absenteeism. Ms. Brown noted they hired two social workers and have split the alphabet to make phone calls and set up plans to help students attend and stay in school.
- Dr. Danielsen asked what performance grade constitutes a ‘C’ rating and Ms. Brown said she believes it’s a 55.

5. Valor Prep

- a. Ms. Roman – Director at Valor Prep – introduced herself and the absent board chair. Ms. Roman gave her credentials and touched on the historical data of Valor Prep in EOC/EOG proficiency, both by Subgroup and by Race/Ethnicity.
 - i. Ms. Roman also mentioned the history of the school.
- b. Shared growth and performance grade data over the last 2 years. Introduced their goal to outline action steps to address concerns across the school.
- c. Ms. Roman next explained a new partnership with Charter 1 and introduced the new plans and curriculum they are using with data to back up their effectiveness. Noted that there are improvements in proficiency scores over FY23 based on FY24 benchmark data.
 - i. In areas that are not increasing in proficiency, they are taking steps to rectify the problem and move the overall needle.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Dr. Danielsen asked about total enrollment and Ms. Roman mentioned the numbers of students.
 - He then asked about projections for next fall, and Ms. Roman noted there were 330 applications for next year K-12.
- Mr. Friend asked how many staffers came over when the name changed, and Ms. Roman said that over 60% were new teachers. She added that she has observed every classroom and has worked with teachers who have concerns and who are not meeting their standards/expectations.
 - Mr. Friend asked if any of the original school’s board is still here, and Ms. Roman said that it hasn’t changed.
- Dr. Haire asked when the partnership with Charter 1 began, and Ms. Roman said it began the end of the 2022 calendar year.
 - Dr. Haire asked if there was another ‘Cabarrus Charter’ and Ms. Baquero said no. Dr. Haire noted two distinct websites (one for Cabarrus Charter and the other for Valor Prep) and added that may need to be looked at.
 - A representative from Charter USA came up and clarified the situation.

Renewals 2024 Vote

- Ms. Jenna Cook explained the voting procedure and rules pertaining to the voting procedure. She mentioned that OCS put schools in a recommended bracket / guideline and that it was the CSRБ’s job to put them in a final renewal group for voting.
 - Ms. Cook then discussed additional statutory guidelines and other policies pertaining to this upcoming vote.
- Ms. Jenna Cook did an introduction of each school in each recommendation guide.

10-Year Placements:

Neuse Charter School, Sugar Creek Charter, Community School of Davidson

- Dr. Eldridge recapped the information they’ve been given on each school.
- Mr. Quigley asked if they had a choice, and they all said yes it was based on statute.

Motion: Mr. Alex Quigley moved that 10-year placements receive a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2024.

Second: Mr. Todd Godbey

Vote: Unanimous (Mr. Sanchez- Absent)

- Passed Failed

7-year Placements:

Marjorie Williams Academy, Carolina International School, Community Public Charter, Hobgood Charter School

- Ms. Parlér asked if they were voting individually or as a whole. Mr. Friend responded by saying that was the choice of the committee.
- Mr. Machado recommended discussing Community Public Charter to a 10-year renewal and Hobgood to a 10-year renewal citing the lack of data being the only reason they weren’t there.

Motion: Mr. Dave Machado moved that Community Public Charter and Hobgood Charter School receive a 10-year renewal term starting July 1, 2024.

Second: Dr. Shelley Shope

Discussion:

- Mr. Machado clarified – after questions from CSRБ members – that the data they had qualified them for a 10-year renewal, but it was the lack of data due to COVID that kept them lower.
- Dr. Haire asked what would stack them higher than other 7-year schools citing data from the schools.
- Mr. Godbey and Dr. Haire went over past data for Marjorie Williams Academy and Mr. Friend and others continued discussion on the data. Dr. Haire believes they could be a 10-year as well.
- Mr. Godbey asked about the financial noncompliance warning and Ms. Baquero said that was due to low ADM. Mr. Godbey asked if that would disqualify, and Ms. Baquero said it was based on

the interpretation of the statute. Dr. Eldridge added additional data and other members continued listing statistics and data from the school.

- Dr. Eldridge noted he is concerned about the two schools in the motion being low performing one of the years they were opened.
 - CSRБ’s lawyer added that the CSRБ is not recommending anymore but in fact mandating/creating new rules.
 - Ms. Parlér asked if the motion could be changed, and Mr. Machado changed his motion to reflect proper verbiage. Dr. Danielsen seconded if needed again.
 - Discussion:
 - Dr. Eldridge, Dr. Haire and others reiterated their previous points. Mr. Friend reiterated his confusion as to why Marjorie Williams wouldn’t be considered for a 10-year as well.
 - Mr. Godbey and others discussed the data availability of all the schools in question.
 - Mr. Quigley said that 7-years was a long time and that it would be 2030 before they needed to renew (giving them a ton of time to prove their growth). Dr. Haire agreed that 7-years is a lot of time. Dr. Danielsen disagreed and gave his reasoning why. More discussion ensued.
 - Mr. Gay and Dr. Shope stated they understand the points that were made, but cannot move forward with Dave’s motion.
 - Mr. Quigley asked if they could give them a 10 if they get good data next year, and others said it might be able to happen. Dr. Haire commented again on the lack of data.
 - Mr. Sanchez mentioned the idea that 7-years is not a penalty.
 - Mr. Friend reiterated the motion was to make those two schools a 10-year renewal.
 - Vote:
 - Yay: Shelly Shope, Stephen Gay, Bart Danielsen, Dave Machado
 - Nay: Eric Sanchez, Hilda Parlér, Rita Haire, Bruce Friend, John Eldridge, Todd Godbey, Alex Quigley.

Vote: 4:7

- Passed Failed

Motion: Mr. Bruce Friend moved that 7-year placements receive a 7-year renewal term starting July 1, 2024.

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

3-year Placements:

The Capitol Encore Academy, Carter G. Woodson School, KIPP Halifax College Preparatory, Steele Creek Preparatory Academy (Mr. Dave Machado recused), Tillery Charter Academy, Southwest Charlotte STEM Academy, Pocosin Innovative Charter.

- Mr. Friend reiterated these were OCS recommendations.
- Mr. Friend asked if any of these had 3-years prior to this vote, Ashley listed them.

Motion: Ms. Hilda Parlér moves to recommend Steele Creek Preparatory Academy to receive a 3-year placement starting July 1, 2024

Second: Mr. Todd Godbey

Discussion:

- Dr. Haire hopes they improve over these 3 years.

Vote: Unanimous; Mr. Dave Machado recused

- Passed Failed

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moves to recommend remaining 3-year recommendations to receive a 3-year placement starting July 1, 2024

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Vote: Unanimous

- Passed Failed

Funding in Arrears Presentation: Alexis Schauss, NC DPI Chief Financial Office, Financial and Business Services

- Ms. Schauss introduced herself and mentioned that the funding model was brought before the SBE last month and would be up for final approval next month.
 - She then discussed what the definition of ‘Funding in Arrears’ meant and touched on the Report Requirements.
- She mentioned that the ADM was the backbone of the State Public School Fund and the driver of the individual PSU. She then dove into the current state budgeted allotted ADM and the current initial allotted ADM.
 - She went into adjustments to funding and the rules pertaining to those. She said that the actual final funding is based on Month 1 of the actual ADM.
- Discussed overall issues in the process and suggested a recommendation for the Budgeted ADM to address these issues and how it would improve the overall process. She provided recommendations for new charter and lab schools as well.
 - She also made recommendations for funding in areas like EC, EL and Driver Education funds – among others.

Discussion:

- Dr. Eldridge asked if there’s been discussion on any changes due to increased voucher usage. Ms. Schauss said there would be no big changes as things don’t change based on whether they go to private, etc. She further explained the discussions she has had.

- Dr. Danielsen asked if a lot of homeschools become or will become private schools and Ms. Schauss mentioned that she was not an expert in the area and said that overall, it appeared easier than ever to get a voucher.
- Mr. Quigley asked a question about ADM. Ms. Schauss went into the contingency fund and mentioned that it was based on projections. She touched on how they prepare for the ‘next year’s’ budget and the data they look at to get those projections.
 - Ms. Baquero and Mr. Quigley went into detail about statutory hypotheticals and Ms. Schauss clarified the process that she uses and stressed the need for clear data to be able to request accurate funding. She said that the penalty for over-funding is on her.
 - Stated that within reason a school should be able to reasonably predict what their enrollment will be for the upcoming year.
- Mr. Friend asked about when they submit projections, and Ms. Schauss said that normally it would be late January but due to law changes, they plan to send those out this week. Mr. Friend commented that it was going to be difficult moving forward since charter schools are now able to have virtual academies.
- Dr. Danielsen asked about counties that lost population and Ms. Schauss said that the declines are smoothed out without punishing the areas that are growing. She added that it gives these counties one year to adjust.
- Ms. Schauss said that with this report, there will be a budget request and explained what else will be done before formalizing it per SBE policy.

Lunch

Renewals Guideline Discussion: Rupen R. Fofaria, Director Board Operations and Policy

- Mr. Friend went over the process that he, Dr. Eldridge, and Ms. Baquero went through to review the recommendations for renewals based on the statute. He then introduced Mr. Fofaria from the SBE.
- Mr. Fofaria introduced himself and the SBE policy in reference (CHTR-007).
 - He said that the rule was last edited/reviewed in 2018.
- Mr. Fofaria introduced the sections that have proposed edits but also touched on ‘redlines’ outside of the renewal guidelines themselves (such as a report and other requirements of OCS/Charter Schools).
 - He then proceeded to go section by section detailing the proposed changes (both substantive and technical) to the policy and why those changes were made. He walked through the ‘table of guidelines’ (the current renewal guidelines), and the definitions related to this section. He also outlined the changes in each section.
- Mr. Fofaria – while also discussing the changes to each section – mentioned that these changes were made in conjunction with concerns that the State Board had (such as compliance issues) and based on changes in legislation affecting Charter Schools.

Questions from the CSRБ

- Ms. Parlér asked about the changes to the ‘finance’ definition and Mr. Fofaria said it was meant to get in line with the DPI office’s official title.
- Dr. Danielsen said he was concerned about the comparability of data with schools and the LEA. Dr. Danielsen asked if Ashley could pull up Wake County schools. He then went into an analysis on the Wake County proficiency scores. He said that based on the standards presented, over 40%

of Wake County schools wouldn't fit the proposed standards. He then did the same thing as Wake County for CMS.

- He cited a chart that showed schools with higher EDS % are more likely to fail or be lower than the comparability data of the LEA.
- Says that the policy the SBE is proposing will disproportionately affect schools with higher EDS populations and those with higher minority students.
- Mr. Fofaria responded by saying if the school is serving majority EDS/POC/EL it would be compared not to the district data but to the subgroup data. He, Ms. Baquero, and Dr. Danielsen conversed on how the school would get that data and they came to the agreement that the school would have to ask for the data to be compared to the subgroup.
- Dr. Eldridge agreed with Dr. Danielsen and said this could affect the schools that are most likely to be closed. He said he is in line with Dr. Danielsen and believes a study needs to be done to see how to do this in a fair way. He and Mr. Fofaria went over the data again like the points previously mentioned.
- Mr. Machado added that it wouldn't affect schools closing. Argued that it is going to make the discussion on what school gets a certain recommendation more intense. Says that it may penalize schools that are in high standing.
 - Mr. Fofaria said that he believes there's a lot of discretion in this policy – not rule. Mr. Machado added that overall, this is a very difficult bar to pass.
- Mr. Friend and Dr. Danielsen went into hypotheticals and compared two schools that were within 5 points. Mr. Fofaria reiterated again how the policy came about.
 - Mr. Fofaria added that there is a difference between what is looked at (%'s and points) and a discussion ensued among OCS and CSRБ members as to what they use. Dr. Eldridge added that looking at what makes a kid proficient is more skewed too and they need to find a way to look at that metric a little clearer. Argued there needs to be more structure in the comparability section but overall doesn't see any other issues. Mr. Fofaria agreed and said that the urgency to get this done is on the schools.
 - Dr. Eldridge argued that he doesn't feel a sense of urgency due to the fact people would have to change their presentations/data dependent on what this policy said. Mr. Machado agreed with Dr. Eldridge.
- Mr. Granados argued this could be a way to look at things more holistically. Ashley mentioned they are currently using the guidelines in place now. She mentioned how the data would change if they used metrics in this/current recommendations.
- Dr. Danielsen suggested redefining comparability as a possible solution.
- Mr. Friend agreed with the points made but also argued CSRБ's need to fulfill their mission and hold these schools accountable.
- Dr. Shope said that she does have some questions but will bring them up later and Mr. Gay said the same thing.
- Mr. Fofaria concluded by saying that he recognizes the concerns and – citing what's happening now – urged urgency so there is quality and accountability.

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Bruce Friend

Second: Ms. Hilda Parlér

Unanimous