

**Minutes of the  
North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board  
Via Cisco Webex Remote Meeting  
February 8, 2021  
9:00 am**

Attendance/NCCSAB	Jamey Falkenbury (non-voting) Joel Ford Rita Haire Sherry Reeves Cheryl Turner Lynn Kroeger	Alex Quigley Terry Stoops Hilda Parlér - <i>Absent</i> Heather Vuncannon Bruce Friend – <i>Arrived 10:22am</i>
Attendance/SBE/DPI	<i>Office of Charter Schools</i>  Dave Machado, Director Ashley Baquero, Consultant Claire Porter, Consultant Joseph Letterio, Consultant Shaunda Cooper, Consultant Darian Jones, Consultant Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jay Whalen, NC ACCESS Davida Robinson, NC ACCESS Barbara O’Neal, NC ACCESS	<i>Attorney General</i> Tiffany Lucas Stephanie Lloyd  <i>State Board of Education</i> Allison Schafer  <i>Charter School Teacher of the Year Advisory</i> Ashley Bailey

**CALL TO ORDER**

- Ms. Ashley Baquero, Office of Charter Schools (OCS) Consultant, took roll call and a quorum was established.
- A moment of silence was held for Mr. Ken Stanley, a Union Academy teacher who recently passed due to COVID. Ms. Lynn Kroeger spoke about him and the board’s thoughts and prayers for him and others that have lost their lives due to the pandemic.
- The North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board (CSAB) meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Mr. Alex Quigley. Mr. Quigley led the CSAB in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Quigley read the Ethics Statement and CSAB Mission Statement.
- Ms. Cheryl Turner recused from discussion and voting on the GO BIG application.

**Motion: Approve the CSAB January 20, 2021 Special Called Meeting Minutes and the January 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Cheryl Turner**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

Passed      Failed

**Motion: Approve the January 2021 agenda.**

**Motion: Cheryl Turner**

**Second: Lynn Kroeger**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

Passed                      Failed

### AMENDMENTS

- Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consultant, explained that there are several amendment requests this month.

#### Queen City STEM Weighted Lottery

- Ms. Baquero explained the school opened in 2015 and serves grades K-10 in Mecklenburg County. The school is an NC ACCESS grant recipient and designated Title I. She explained the school has set a goal of reaching 53% economically disadvantaged students by year 2024.

**Motion: Approve the Queen City STEM amendment request.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Heather Vuncannon**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

Passed                      Failed

#### Kestrel Heights Mission, NSLP, and Transportation

- Ms. Baquero gave background on the school and explained that the school is requesting an amendment to revise its mission and add National School Lunch Program and Transportation.
- Ms. Baquero spoke about the budget and stated the school has added multiple line items including over \$140k for transportation costs and additional funding for nutrition costs.

- Dr. Rita Haire asked about the change to the mission regarding Paideia Proposal referenced in the original mission. Ms. Baquero stated the original charter application looks much different than ones that are used now and the curriculum has been changed in previous years.

**Motion: Approve the Kestrel Heights amendment request.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Rita Haire**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

**Passed**

**Failed**

*Wilmington School of the Arts Grade Levels Served*

- Ms. Baquero gave background on the school and explained that the school is seeking to move up its grade levels served to add 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade for the next school year. She stated the original projection was to serve grades K-3 next year. This would be an addition of two more grades than originally proposed.
- Ms. Baquero introduced the school leader Ms. Susan Hogan. Ms. Hogan stated that marketing efforts have not begun but as of this morning she has ten applicants for both grade levels. Ms. Reeves asked about projected enrollment. Ms. Hogan stated the enrollment will most likely be lower than the original projections, but they are not requesting a change in enrollment numbers, just adding one class of 4<sup>th</sup> and one class of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Hogan confirmed her CSADM projection was input as needed.
- Ms. Baquero explained that CSADM was discussed with Ms. Hogan, as a new charter leader, and recommended that projections for ADM in the original application not be changed because the projections are revised as needed within the CSADM system and those are currently correct as entered in that system. Ms. Hogan stated they would love to get the total enrollment projected originally, but at this point the facility is not allowing those numbers. She stated the budget is based on lower enrollment of 220 students.
- Dr. Haire asked if the school uses a weighted lottery. Ms. Hogan stated yes. Dr. Haire asked for confirmation the school can add two additional classes to the facility. Ms. Hogan stated yes, they can push into another area of the current church space.
- Mr. Quigley asked for staff recommendation. Ms. Baquero and Mr. Dave Machado, OCS Director, stated OCS supports this request because the school can serve these students and with the low enrollment it would be beneficial to the school to keep enrollment up.

- Ms. Reeves and Ms. Turner questioned Ms. Hogan about adding 6<sup>th</sup> grade in year 3 but not adding 7<sup>th</sup> grade until year 5.
- Dr. Haire asked if we could approve adding grades 3-5 and then look at middle school grades down the road. Ms. Hogan stated she is completely fine with that. Ms. Turner stated if the school wants to add 6<sup>th</sup> grade after year two, and they aren't low-performing, they will be able to do it without approval.

**Motion: Approve the Wilmington School of the Arts request to add grades 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> beginning in year two.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Lynn Kroeger**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

**Passed**

**Failed**

*Telra Institute Enrollment Increase Request*

- Ms. Baquero explained that the school, planning to open next fall in Mecklenburg County is requesting an enrollment increase for year one of 30 additional students. Mr. Ronak Bhatt, Chancellor of the school, spoke about the increased demand they are seeing in applications and the desire to allow more families to take advantage of the opportunity. He stated in retrospect, he believes they were too conservative with enrollment projections. He stated they are already at 387 applications for 240 spots.
- Ms. Turner asked if the school is using the weighted lottery. Dr. Bhatt stated yes. Mr. Quigley asked if he now works for the school. Dr. Bhatt stated yes. Dr. Haire asked about the lease costs. Dr. Bhatt stated they have flexibility and access to additional rooms without increased rent costs, although there will be additional operational costs like technology for the rooms. Dr. Haire asked if he is in the budget. Dr. Bhatt stated, yes under principal because there are limitations on how you can amend the budget template.
- Ms. Turner stated she has concern because schools often do not meet their first year enrollment projections and this is a very unusual year.
- Mr. Quigley asked staff if this board has approved requests like this previously. Ms. Baquero stated yes they have seen enrollment decreases requests, but she is not aware of enrollment increase approvals. Ms. Turner stated she only recalls approving schools that have delayed and then went with second year enrollment.
- Mr. Quigley stated there has to be integrity in the application process and be careful not to set a precedent for changing enrollment before opening. Mr. Quigley stated he would like to see

data on whether CSAB has acted on these type of requests previously. He also stated that the school can take additional students, they just won't get state funding.

**Motion: Table this amendment request until OCS can do research on enrollment increases during year one.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Terry Stoops**

- Dr. Haire stated it is worth noting they are not adding additional grade levels and they have over 100 applications above the projected enrollment.

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

**Passed**

**Failed**

*United Community School*

- Ms. Baquero explained that this is a request to expand to high school. She stated United Community School, serving K-8 in Mecklenburg, meet two of the three requirements for expansion without approval. Because the school was placed on the continually low-performing list for state accountability, the school must seek SBE approval.
- She stated the school was making great progress in 2018-2019, and was not low-performing, but because the continually low-performing status is based on three years of data, and there was no data in 2019-2020, the school retained that status.
- She explained that the principal, Ms. Erika Hedgepeth, is present to answer questions. She stated they currently have about 242 students, and they are seeking to add 19 students next year for that 9th grade.
- Ms. Turner asked if the school was just recently up for renewal. Ms. Hedgepeth stated they were renewed in 2019. Ms. Shaunda Cooper, OCS Consultant, stated they are going to start the renewal process again soon.
- Ms. Turner stated she is not concerned with the academic data, but with the high school program. She stated specifically, the high school program is so small and half of it is virtual. Ms. Hedgepeth stated they are partnering with the NC Virtual Public School for the first time this year, to allow 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to take high school courses, and it has been successful. She stated they would like to renew that program just for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the science and social studies courses. She continued that we have teachers who are in person in place as well as teacher assistants to make sure that we can have the hands-on part and it won't feel like a virtual kid sitting at the computers for the whole day. Just like we have now that we're doing the hybrid

learning, so even though we are implementing the, I believe it's called the partnership course program, we have teachers in house to be face to face with students. She stated the school will have an advisory program that will take place in person and in our budget, we have a high school coordinator.

- Ms. Reeves asked how many of the 19 students does she anticipate pursuing the Occupational Course of Study. Ms. Hedgepeth stated they haven't determined how many would be eligible and would have meetings with parents to determine placement. Ms. Reeves asked if she had a best guess. Ms. Hedgepeth stated there are three currently in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class that may qualify. Ms. Reeves stated she is asking because it becomes difficult to run multiple programs with a small high school because staffing is critical because each group requires different staff.
- Ms. Reeves asked what the 9<sup>th</sup> grade schedule would look like next year. Ms. Hedgepeth explained so currently our 8th grade, all of our middle school students begin the day with a morning meeting and it does look a little bit differently in middle school, but we plan to continue that even with the 9th graders. She explained that they found it successful to start the day with a touch in. She continued to explain the schedule including core classes, breaks, language, and she spoke about internship and community partnerships.
- Ms. Reeves asked if it is a year-round schedule. Ms. Hedgepeth stated yes. Ms. Reeves stated she wonders if the schedule meets seat requirements for high school. Ms. Hedgepeth stated the schedule is tentative and there are breaks in the schedule that can be used for learning time. Ms. Reeves stated it looks more like a middle school schedule.
- Dr. Haire asked about looping. Ms. Hedgepeth replied that the students would loop with their classes, the teachers may not always loop with their students. She stated it depends on the staffing situation and teacher comfort level and licensure areas. She stated the staff is very tight-knit and we have an open-door policy to make sure everyone is working with their strengths. She stated looping has benefits, and some of those are social.
- Mr. Quigley asked if the staff has a recommendation. Mr. Machado stated he started a high school with 26 students, so he knows the difficulties in small programming. He stated he is hesitant about the same things mentioned here today, but he also has faith in Ms. Hedgepeth. Mr. Quigley asked if they would have been able to do this barring the low-performing status. Mr. Machado stated yes. Mr. Quigley stated he is inclined to let it play out with the data and letting them get off that low-performing list.
- The discussion was paused for the next agenda item.

## **SUPERINTENDENT CATHERINE TRUITT**

- Ms. Catherine Truitt, North Carolina Superintendent, spoke to the CSAB. She stated she remembers reading the charter applications when she worked for Governor McCrory and she knows how much time goes into the process and how important the advice of CSAB is to making sound decisions. She thanked the board and Mr. Quigley for laying the groundwork for this work. She stated the board will be instrumental in helping charter schools come out of the pandemic.
- Ms. Truitt stated that during the primary race for this role, there was a democratic candidate that was the only democratic charter school supporter, and she has hired him to help with ESSA school funding and learning loss recovery.
- CSAB thanked her for her pragmatic approach and focus on collaboration and her unifying effort to help all children regardless of race, background, or what school they attend.

## **AMENDMENTS, CONTINUED**

### *United Community School*

- Mr. Quigley stated he recognizes the pandemic created issues with data, but there is a process for adding grade levels and CSAB should be particular about bringing requests to the SBE that are urgently needed.
- Ms. Hedgepeth stated she would like to speak to the data. She stated that in 2018-2019 the school exceeded growth, and were actually recognized in the top 10% of the state of North Carolina for our growth, and we moved our school letter grade up to a C. She stated she shared data in our application to show that had we been allowed to, or asked for our internal data, we would have been able to most likely show that same growth or similar and meet proficiency to be at an overall performance grade of a C. She continued that she used NC Check-in data for reading and math to show what the school believed would have shown in the 2019-2020 data.
- Mr. Quigley stated he believes they have done an excellent job and he agrees they probably would have moved off the low-performing list, but there are processes for this.
- Ms. Reeves stated her concern is not with the low-performing label, but with the high school programming itself. She believes the school needs to do research on what a quality high school experience looks like. Dr. Haire stated she agrees. Ms. Turner stated she also is concerned with the programming and whether it is a viable program.

- Dr. Terry Stoops agrees but he doesn't want the school to lose aspiration to start a high school. He strongly supports the school coming back after they get another year under their belt. He stated his son attends a small high school and believes it is critical for him.
- Ms. Hedgepeth asked if the board could give her specific advice on the programming, because the school will always be small and a place for students that want that small learning environment. She stated the school is a Basic School Model and A+ arts integrated, so the school will always have those types of components. She stated the school model is based on individual learning needs and a tight knit community, so she isn't sure what she needs to do to please the board and stay true to the school's vision. She stated they worked very hard on the high school program proposal and the budget is viable with all the high school components. She stated they are going into year eight and they feel ready for this.
- Ms. Reeves stated that in year one of her high school, they had six or seven teachers for a small program because there are diverse needs for different high school programs such as Occupational Course of Study. She stated she would feel more comfortable seeing a four-year plan for a group of students.
- Ms. Turner asked if they were to vote this down this month, could they come back this year. Mr. Quigley stated one problem may be that it is a three-month process, but he doesn't see why they couldn't. Mr. Quigley stated high school programming is very complicated and he understands that students often want to stay at their K-8 school. He stated that in another year they may not need to make this request.
- Ms. Hedgepeth stated she wanted to add that they have the facility space and the financing to do this.
- Dr. Haire wants to confirm that the school could come back this year if the leadership works on the programming. Ms. Baquero stated yes, technically they could come back, but it would be a matter of timing as Mr. Quigley stated previously.

**Motion: Motion to deny United Community School's request to expand to high school.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Lynn Kroeger**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Opposed: None**

**Passed**

**Failed**

**NC CYBER ACADEMY**

- Mr. Martez Hill, Superintendent, submitted data from the 2019-2020 school year to the CSAB. Ms. Reeves thanked the school for the detailed information on academic performance.
- Mr. Bruce Friend asked about enrollment for next year. Mr. James Mullins, Chief Operating Officer, stated that intent to returns run from April 1<sup>st</sup> for six weeks and then run their lottery. He stated current enrollment is just over 2,600 and they know they will have a waitlist with the 2,592 cap in place for next year. He stated if it is anything like next year, they expect over 1,000 on the waitlist.
- Mr. Quigley stated the NC Check-In data looks solid. Ms. Reeves stated testing participation was very high and asked if they had to do anything differently due to the pandemic. Mr. Hill stated he charged the executive leadership team to ensure communication with families to incentivize and inform students on participation. He stated that in prior years there was not a systematic approach to this type of communication.
- Mr. Quigley commended the leadership team for making progress and turn around at the school.
- Mr. Machado asked if there is any relationship with the school’s prior financial company. Mr. Hill stated the contract ended on June 30, 2020, and now they are trying to ensure that company provides all necessary information to complete the 2019-2020 audit. The school is now using Acadia Northstar so they are simply trying to gather information from the former company to gather information needed. He stated they used the company for credit card purposes as well but they are moving away from the company for all purposes.

**2021 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION INTERVIEWS**

<b>Interview Time</b>	<b>Committee (Lead)</b>	<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Applicant Type</b>
10:50-11:50	Performance (SR)	Great Opportunities Boarding School for Girls (GO BIG)	Standard – Second Round
12:00-1:00	Performance (SR)	Dogwood Classical Academy	Standard – Second Round

- Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant, introduced today’s applicant interviews and reviewed the time allotments for each interview. She stated the options today are for the CSAB to either recommend approval or denial to the SBE for these second round interviews.

*Great Opportunities Boarding School for Girls (GO BIG)*

- Ms. Turner is recused from discussion and voting on this application.
- Ms. Rackley introduced and gave an overview of GO BIG including proposed location in Mecklenburg County and proposed enrollment. She explained at capacity the school would serve grades K-5 and 600 students. She stated the school will offer National School Lunch Program (NSLP), transportation, and a weighted lottery.
- GO BIG board members gave an introductory statement that spoke about the school’s mission to serve as a boarding school for girls with a STEM focus.
- Ms. Reeves began the interview process. She stated the school submitted its justification for single-sex education.
- Dr. Haire stated she has some questions about the budget including why decreases to child nutrition were made.
- Ms. Lynn Kroeger asked for a summary of budgetary changes.
- Ms. Chantee Cloud stated that breakfast will be school breakfast program, lunch through NSLP, and dinner through at risk after school program. She stated they believe they will also be CEP eligible. She spoke about other resources for nutrition. She stated the utility line items were made based on consultation with residential utility representatives and believe those are adequate for residential programs. She stated additional custodian staff and 24-hour security monitoring was added. She spoke about the security features included. She stated they are currently in negotiations for a building within their budget.
- Ms. Kroeger asked why the facility lease increased. Ms. Ladredia Matthews stated they are engaged in negotiations for a facility that could house the educational and boarding program. She stated the contract has only been discussed in closed session and want to protect that information. She stated they could talk about the layout. Ms. Reeves asked if the facility will have capability for both the classrooms and residential side. Ms. Matthews stated absolutely. Another board member stated the facility is a current school and has everything sufficient for a school building. She stated the footprint is a total of 80,000 square feet. She spoke about phased construction for boarding in year two.

- Ms. Reeves asked what they expect for per pupil income. A board member explained expected funding through state, local, and federal funds. Ms. Reeves stated so about \$8,000 per student for non-EC students. Ms. Reeves wondered how that would be sufficient to provide a residential program, starting in year two. She stated most schools can barely tuck away 3-5% for fund balance. Ms. Crystal Pemberton stated they are working with American Charter Development and they are confident in their program and flexible in the proposed model reflected in the budget in the facility line item. The board members stated they believe the budget is sufficient for all needs.
- Ms. Kroeger stated she understands they received utility costs from looking at other schools, but the breakdown is only about 50 cents per square foot which seems very low. She stated showers and residential utilities take more. Ms. Pemberton stated they were very intentional on having a surplus to allow for revisions based on feedback. She stated they are also relying on dorm parents to assist and participate in dinner for scholars which would provide staff support.
- Mr. Quigley asked if the dorm parents are also some of the teachers in the budget. He asked if the dorm parents have full apartments they are living in. Ms. Pemberton stated yes. He stated he just can't believe this is feasible when regular schools are struggling to make ends meet. He stated their number of students would work out to be \$540 per student for nutrition. He stated that works out for \$3 per day for meals which can't be possible. Ms. Pemberton stated they anticipate the school will be CEP eligible as well as receive reimbursements from the NSLP breakfast and lunch program. Mr. Quigley stated even if that works, which most schools lose money on NSLP, then you have \$3 to purchase dinner for students. He stated the board is exceptional, but it doesn't seem to be feasible, which is why we don't see residential charter schools. He doesn't believe a charter school is the vehicle for this type of program.
- Ms. Pemberton spoke about the SEED schools and the board has spoken with the organization and they have been able to run programs successfully and ours would be the first elementary level. She stated they have been in operation for 15-20 years. She stated they are active fundraisers.
- Ms. Reeves asked if they've looked at the SEED budgets to compare to NC allotments. Ms. Reeves continued that even though the nutrition budget looks large, it breaks down differently when you're talking about three meals per day.
- Ms. Pemberton stated SEED schools started in similar way to our proposed school and their Florida budget would more closely reflect what we have here along with active fundraising. She stated the school would apply for grants as well that would value the novelty of the proposal. The board also spoke about CEP eligibility.

- Mr. Quigley stated they understand the CEP program, but it would not cover all costs associated with a full three meals a day. He stated it seems like this type of program would need a significant grant for start-up, but we can't evaluate applications with the hope they raise money.
- Dr. Haire stated she pulled up a budget for a typical charter school with lower enrollment. Dr. Haire pointed out many line items that are budgeted much higher than the presented budget that would need to meet the needs of a residential program. She continued that she is concerned that revisions to the budget to meet the needs would pull away from the academic program. She stated it is an innovative idea but doesn't seem viable in its current form.
- Mr. Friend asked if the dorm parents are volunteers and what their responsibilities are. Ms. Pemberton stated the role would also be teachers and live on campus. She stated they supervise evening activities and serve as the parental figure for the boarding. She spoke about her experience as a dorm parent and how she lived on campus for much less money than she would have spent in the regular community. She stated that is what they would offer their dorm parents.
- The board stated that they have heavy hitters that want to help financially, but they need approval from the state to get that commitment.
- Ms. Pemberton gave the closing statement for the GO BIG board.
- Ms. Vuncannon voiced her support for this application. She stated this application is innovative and Charlotte would be the right place for it. She also stated it's a lot to ask of an applicant to seek funding when they haven't been approved by the state. She also confirmed that the boarding component doesn't start until the second year. She stated she understands the issues with the budget and agrees it is probably not sufficient, but she doesn't know how you could get there without approval.
- Mr. Quigley spoke about how sometimes these types of programs partner specifically with a particular company or organization to get it off the ground.
- Mr. Quigley stated he agrees it is innovative, but he can't support the application because he doesn't feel it is ready to go before the SBE. He stated there are far too many questions. He doesn't even know if a charter school is the correct lever for this program. He wondered if perhaps the school should start as a private school by raising funds and using a grant program.
- Dr. Haire stated she believes the board is a group of trailblazers with a great application and she doesn't believe they will be deterred. Dr. Haire continued that the data did not apply because the data supplied wasn't from the same grade levels of this application and also was not from single-sex schools. She stated the data also was not from residential programs. She stated it supports girls in STEM education, but not this particular type of program. She spoke about issues with

the comparative testing data. She stated the professional development seemed exhaustive and difficult to be feasible. She expressed many concerns about the budget and having sufficient personnel for the program. She explained that she believes if charter schools could become residential programs, it should come from DPI and OCS and the application should be different with more questions and standards relevant to a boarding component. She thinks the board would be wise to consider a day school.

- Ms. Kroeger concurred with Dr. Haire. She stated she does not believe the budget is adequate or feasible. She stated the idea is innovative and pursuing a day school is an excellent option.
- Mr. Friend asked if the school could be approved with a residential contingency. Ms. Reeves stated the application has to be approved as written and would need to have a residential component at year two. Mr. Quigley agreed, and the entire vision is based on this residential component. He stated the idea is innovative and the board is dynamic, but the level of preparedness needed is not there.
- Ms. Reeves stated there are many issues that we didn't even touch upon today including wrap around services, data for elementary students in STEM, daily hours for students, being able to accompany disabled students, as well as many other issues brought up during the application evaluation.

**Motion: The CSAB moves to recommend that GO BIG not be moved to Ready to Open Status.**

**Motion: Rita Haire**

**Second: Lynn Kroeger**

**Vote: Bruce Friend, Terry Stoops, Joel Ford, Rita Haire, Lynn Kroeger, Sherry Reeves, Alex Quigley**

**Recused: Cheryl Turner**

**Opposed: Heather Vuncannon**

**Passed**                       **Failed**

*Dogwood Classical Academy*

- Ms. Rackley provided an overview of applicant Dogwood Classical Academy, Cabarrus County, and highlighted other schools within a radius of the proposed school. The school will be at capacity with 848 students in year five. She stated the school will provide catering, transportation, use a weighted lottery, do not yet have a facility, are not a repeat applicant, did not utilize an EMO/CMO, and at the time of application, deemed complete.
- Ms. Amy Shetler, the Board Chair, provided an overview of the board members and partnerships. Ms. Gina Behrens spoke about the school's mission including classical curriculum. She spoke about the school's curriculum.

- Dr. Haire stated the school gave a strong response to why they are using Core Knowledge curriculum. She also commended their marketing efforts. Dr. Haire asked several questions about the budget: Why are there great fluctuations in the professional development line items? Why does the computer cost change from year to year? Why did the school reduce the number of core teachers? Why was the nutrition budget decreased in year five?
- Mr. Arch Lineberger spoke to the budget. He stated they focused on year one for professional development costs. He stated a lot of the professional development will be done for free from Hillsdale College, so the cost is mainly to get them to Michigan. Ms. Shetler stated Barney Charter Schools provide programs for teachers on-site as well. Ms. Reeves asked about the costs for those. Ms. Shetler stated they will also provide development but dealing with the culture and curriculum will be primarily through the Barney Charter Schools partnership. He stated a lot of the costs in the first two years is for travel.
- Mr. Lineberger stated the year two computer line item is for the Chromebook expansion. Ms. Reeves asked about year one. He replied they will have one computer per classroom and a computer lab.
- Ms. Reeves asked about the number of classrooms and technology for testing grades. Ms. Shetler stated two classes of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> and three classes for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She stated they would need to run a tight ship for the testing grades. She stated additional funds may be moved to technology and teacher computers could be utilized.
- Ms. Reeves asked about the reduction in core teachers. She stated it goes from 32 to 28. The board stated that is a mistake and it should be 24 first year and 66 in the fifth year. He stated that would be core content and EC teachers. Dr. Haire asked that it should have increased in year three and four. She stated that will change the budget. Mr. Lineberger asked for confirmation from the other board members. The board stated they have a surplus so they have flexibility if needed for revising the budget.
- Dr. Haire asked about the nutrition budget changes and Mr. Lineberger confirmed that is a mistake.
- Mr. Friend asked about demand for the school and how the board is assessing demand. He stated there are several other traditional public schools and charter schools in the area. He stated he is struggling about whether there is a compelling interest for this school. Ms. Reeves also asked about weighted lottery marketing.
- Ms. Shetler stated the board has provided additional information about need and marketing. She stated they have conducted two community events and were able to boost those numbers over 100. She stated the board is using a marketing company to help with social media marketing. Ms. Shetler stated there are all kinds of new neighborhoods and developments going up in the area and there is no option for a classical model curriculum in the area. Mr. Lineberger and Ms. Behrens spoke about interest and how parents are looking for other

curriculum options. The board stated none of the charters in the area have an A or B school performance grade.

- Mr. Quigley stated the curriculum submitted is the Hillsdale model and the classical model. He asked how the school would mitigate the fact the school is proposing to serve over half black and brown children, but the texts are fairly devoid of texts that represent those populations.
- Mr. Eric Coykendall stated the students would learn about racial history including the Harlem Renaissance and Civil Rights Movement. He stated on a representation level, there may be more from ancient Greeks and Romans, as opposed to black or brown authors, but in terms of actual volume, because there is so much attention to American History, students will get connected to those resources and additional literature.
- Mr. Quigley stated it is important to give students a myriad of texts that represent their own backgrounds and experiences and there is certainly a place for classical texts, but text selection is where you see those priorities.
- Ms. Lisa Matthews stated that the classical model is for all students and the students will learn everything about the history and it is their responsibility to use that knowledge to create the type of country they want to see. She stated the classical model gives you a foundation of learning so you can read other texts. She stated the model teaches students how to think for themselves.
- Ms. Turner asked if that means we don't have to teach other cultures because they will learn how to go out and find that information on their own. Ms. Matthews stated no, they will learn how to learn so they can understand anything they are reading including other texts.
- Dr. Haire asked if any board members have visited other Barney Charter Schools. Ms. Shetler stated that the board has visited several classical academies including Jacksonville Classical Academy and St. Johns Classical Academy, both located in Florida. Dr. Haire confirmed we don't currently have a Barney Charter School in North Carolina. Ms. Shetler stated that is correct.
- Ms. Reeves asked how the demographics compare between Cabarrus County and the schools visited. Mr. Coykendall stated the Atlanta school and Jacksonville school were fairly close to the demographics expected at Dogwood Classical Academy.
- Ms. Shetler gave the board's closing statement. She stated it would be the first BCSI school in North Carolina and spoke about the five areas of the model. She spoke about academic success of the curriculum model and club/extracurricular options for students. Ms. Shetler also spoke about sports offered at BCSI schools. She also spoke about community service programs offered through BCSI schools.
- Mr. Terry Stoops stated that classical education can be done wrong when students are not taught to question and critically engage in text, but this seems to be classical education done

right. He stated this appears to be critical engagement with authors and the ideas of the past, not that the ideas are necessary correct or they have to agree. He voiced his support for the application and believes it would be great for Cabarrus County.

- Dr. Haire believes this charter has a high probability of success with the two secured partnerships.

**Motion: The CSAB moves to recommend that Dogwood Classical Academy be moved to Ready to Open Status.**

**Motion: Lynn Kroeger**

**Second: Rita Haire**

- Mr. Quigley stated he will not support this application because he does not believe it is ready. Mr. Jamey Falkenbury asked what particularly he does not see in the curriculum. Mr. Quigley stated he believes the text selection could be more diverse, but he would have appreciated a response from the board that better responded to those concerns.
- Mr. Falkenbury stated he believes they included enough information, and we shouldn't micromanage the curriculum charter schools are using. He stated the parents are ultimately going to decide if they like the curriculum.
- Mr. Quigley stated he isn't trying to micromanage the curriculum; he didn't feel satisfied with the answers the board provided and generally the application could have used more breadth and depth.
- Mr. Friend stated he is not completely satisfied with the level of demand but hopes the board could prove him wrong. Mr. Falkenbury spoke about his ties to the county and believes the demand is there and will probably exceed the seats available.
- Dr. Haire stated she believes this application will satisfy several of the legislative purposes for charter schools.
- Ms. Reeves stated her biggest concern is the demand. She also stated she believes this approach will be attractive to families and asked the board to be cognizant to reach the weighted lottery applicants.

**Vote: Terry Stoops, Joel Ford, Bruce Friend, Lynn Kroeger, Sherry Reeves, Heather Vuncannon**

**Opposed: Alex Quigley, Cheryl Turner**

**Passed**

**Failed**

## **NC ACCESS PROGRAM UPDATE**

- Mr. Jay Whalen, Program Administrator, gave an update on the CSP/NC ACCESS grant program to CSAB. He stated 42 subgrants have been awarded to date and we are coming up on the third application cycle. Ms. Davida Robinson, Subgrant Program Manager, stated 30 letters of intent were submitted. She explained the breakdown of applications for the four categories. She stated of the 30 submissions, 25 have been designated as eligible to apply.
- Ms. Robinson spoke about the evaluation process and stated recommendations would be brought to the board and they intend to award 10-15 subgrants this year. Mr. Whalen stated the process is the same as previous years.
- Mr. Whalen spoke about the fellowship program with 66 fellows and 11 visiting fellows in this year's cohort. He stated some leaders from Restart Schools have been invited to development opportunities. He stated the Minority School Leaders Program has begun and there are fourteen participants. Mr. Whalen stated they are now offering professional development to all charter schools and there has been an overwhelming response to those. He stated all are free to participants. Dr. Barbara O'Neal stated that there is a great demand and need for professional development among teaching staff. She spoke about the Minority School Leaders Program.

## **NORTH CAROLINA VIRTUAL ACADEMY**

- Ms. Lauren Acome, Superintendent, gave an overview of 2019-2020 internal data showing academic progress at NCVA. She pointed out the demographic data showing the diverse population the school serves. She spoke about the NWEA Map Assessment data and that the school showed growth in all areas except 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading which remained the same.
- She pointed out that math instruction has been an area of focus for the school and data has evidenced significant growth in that subject. She spoke about Map assessment comparisons to state and local data. She stated the graduation rate increase 11.3% and ACT scores increased and 66.2% of juniors were identified as College and Career Ready.
- Mr. Quigley stated he is excited to see the virtual schools trending in the right direction.
- Ms. Acome stated she will be back in May and present current 2020-2021 school year data.
- Ms. Acome spoke about the academic goals, culture, and social emotional supports at the school. Mr. Friend commended the school for the social emotional supports available. Mr. Machado commended Ms. Acome for being a great partner and being so responsive to OCS requests.

## **2021 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE**

- Ms. Rackley presented the 2021 Charter School Application Timeline. She reviewed the proposed dates for submissions, evaluation, and interviews. She stated the timeline is very

similar to last year's timeline but streamlined a bit to make it easier for stakeholders to understand. She stated accelerated and replication applicants are given priority for interviews per statutory requirements. She explained the months needed for interviews are flexible given the fact we don't ever know how many applications will be submitted as complete.

- Dr. Haire asked who provides the applicant training. Ms. Rackley stated OCS staff. Dr. Haire suggested there should be some type of guideline regarding how and when applicants can submit revised materials because it's very difficult to evaluate when we get last minutes submissions of changes. Ms. Rackley stated she would like to get CSAB feedback on that aspect of the application process. Mr. Quigley stated we need to decide what amount of changes are permitted. He stated historically we have nibbled away at the rigidity of the submissions. Mr. Quigley stated we know the budget is a living document, but the board needs to evaluate an applicant's ability to manage a budget. He stated we could decide not to submit anything after the application is submitted. He stated when they resubmit the material, you are essentially having to reevaluate again which is a very time-consuming process.
- Ms. Turner stated we used to not allow those changes and there needs to be some type of limitations. She also stated we need to make sure that if we allow changes, those changes are formalized in the Ready to Open (RTO) process, so it becomes integrated into the actual charter application. Dr. Haire agreed and wondered if the clarification interviews that used to take place had an impact.
- Ms. Baquero stated it becomes much more complicated to follow changes and make those formalized in the application when they take place during an interview. She stated once a school is in the RTO process, formal amendments can take place, but the application interviews are different and basically taking an applicant's word that the changes will take place.
- Mr. Quigley impressed upon the board to draw a hard line on this. He stated the applicant's understanding of the budget and application is a way for us to assess their ability to manage a school. He stated when we make recommendations and they resubmit, we are doing the work for them.
- Ms. Reeves stated clarification interviews did not allow major changes to the application. She stated it was for clarifying areas that may be confusing. Mr. Quigley stated we used to allow responses to the external evaluators, but that could generate dozens of additional pages to review and there was an effort to cut that step out. Mr. Quigley stated we want more information and then the applicants legitimately want to respond so the applicants are doing what they think is correct.
- Mr. Dave Machado, OCS Director, stated he believes the application should be evaluated based on what is submitted in July. He stated the office made mistakes in allowing additional submissions and hand-delivered materials, etc. in an effort to be kind to applicants.
- Dr. Haire stated she believes OCS has done an outstanding job and appreciates the way the office has handled this process.

- Mr. Friend stated his agreement. Dr. Haire asked if it is possible to get approved in Round One. Board members and OCS staff stated yes, that does occur. Mr. Quigley stated CSAB seems to be agreed on the fact that no additional information should be submitted after the initial application.
- Ms. Reeves prefers the process we used this year. She stated the second round could possibly be shortened. She believes the process has evolved and improved. Ms. Vuncannon stated during the former clarification process, the board spent a lot of time policing themselves on what was a clarification process. She agrees with shortened second round. Ms. Vuncannon stated that it would be beneficial to get clear on what crosses the bar for being able to get to a second round so the board is on the same page. Mr. Friend stated he believes the board was very strategic about which boards received second interviews. Mr. Friend asked if there is a way to make applicants understand time limits are strict.
- Mr. Quigley suggested OCS doing a virtual meeting with all complete application boards to go over expectations and process for the applicants.
- Ms. Kroeger suggested the CSAB submit a list of questions to the boards after the first round and they answer only those questions. Mr. Quigley stated it would be good to have a specific limit on the number of the questions and the committee chairs work with OCS staff to determine those questions. Ms. Turner agrees and stated we need to have a firm deadline for submission of materials.
- Mr. Quigley stated he would love to get the application deadline moved up to start interviews in the summer, so the schools have additional time to get facilities locked down. Mr. Machado stated that is a long-term goal.

**Motion: The CSAB moves to recommend that SBE approve the 2021 Charter School Application Timeline.**

**Motion: Sherry Reeves**

**Second: Cheryl Turner**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

### **DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

- Mr. Machado gave an overview of the February SBE's discussion and action on charter items.
- Mr. Machado stated he anticipates some more tough questions on the renewal recommendations next month.
- He stated the team is working on the annual charter school report, RTO trainings are taking place, NC ACCESS is providing professional development programming to so many charter schools.

- Mr. Machado stated we are very fortunate to have Ashley Bailey as an advisor on this board and it's been unfortunate we haven't been able to meet in person.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

- Ms. Reeves made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:06 p.m. and Mr. Friend seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned via acclamation.