

MINUTES OF THE
UTAH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Thursday, December 10, 2022

USB E Board Rooms

250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

www.youtube.com/utahscsb

Members Present:

Chair Bryan Bowles (*refrains from voting, unless otherwise noted)

Vice Chair Cynthia Phillips

Member Krystle Bassett

Member Stephanie Speicher

Member Michelle Smith

Member Erik Olson

Member Rabecca Cisneros

Staff Present:

Jennifer Lambert, Director SCSB

Liz Bunker

Joanne Castillo

Smriti Dhakal

William Evans

Marie Steffensen

Others Present:

Assistant Attorney General David Jones

USB E Deputy Superintendent Angie Stallings

USB E Member Matt Hymas

Tim Gustafson

Samuel Kendall

Breanna Jenkins

Mercedes Austin

Call to Order

Vice Chair Cynthia Phillips opened the meeting at 10:08am

Public Comment (10:09 am)

Vice Chair Phillips asked that individuals keep their comments under 3 minutes. Timothy Gustafson, Samuel Kendall, Breanna Jenkins, and Mercedes Austin spoke on Vanguard Academy.

Board Value – Excellence

Vice Chair Phillips expounded on SCSB Value of Excellence.

Board Member Thought (10:20 am)

Member Erik Olson spoke on how a perceived failure could be an opportunity for innovation and a change for the better.

Board Chair Report (10:26 am)

Vice Chair Phillips reminded the Members that the January Board Meeting would take place on Tuesday, January 10, 2023.

Executive Director Report (10:27 am)

Director Jennifer Lambert gave a brief overview of the year: the reorganization of staff, incorporation of new SCSB Values, Board Review, and ongoing staff and Board training. Director Lambert reported on the numbers and kinds of trainings given in the last two months. Director Lambert also highlighted the finalists and winners of the Charter School Art Contest and where all the artwork will appear.

Consent Calendar(10:40 am)

Member Bassett: "I move to approve the consent calendar."

Member Olson: "I'll second that."

Motion passes unanimously.

Probation Status, Compliance, Deficiencies and Remedies – Vanguard Academy

Director Lambert stated that, though statute indicates that the school is to pay for the appointed interim co-director, interim financial officer, and Board Mentor. As SCSB did not want to place an additional financial burden on the school and has offered to pay for those individuals. Because of the time needed to place the officers, the staff recommends that the probation Review Timeline for Vanguard Academy be extended and that the Board consider the deficiencies and resolutions in the March 2, 2023, Board Meeting.

Member Speicher: "I'd like to make a motion that we extend Vanguard Academy's probation review timeline so that the probation deficiencies and Vanguard's resolution of them would be considered at the scheduled State Charter School Board March Board Meeting as noted on Thursday, March 2."

Member Bassett: "I will second that motion."

Motion passes unanimously.

Academic Report

School Performance Coordinator William Evans spoke on how charter schools fared in the 2022 Accountability Report as previously requested by Chair Bryan Bowles. Dr. Evans identified how certain metrics were weighted, who the top 10 schools in the State are, which ones were charter schools, how charter schools performed in comparison to their district counterparts, and where opportunities for relationship and innovative alignments might lie. Member Speicher introduced clarification on what was included in the term "proficiencies." Director Lambert addressed specific concerns regarding early college high schools by expounding on what the metric of "growth" reveals about many high schools. Member Speicher expressed excitement and feelings of validation over the data. Member Speicher suggested that it might be worth asking how the high-performing high schools build community, connection, and retention so that such success in those areas might be replicated with other models. Member Speicher also expressed appreciation for the growth in the lower quartile and what that metric meant given the struggles of students nationwide during the pandemic. Vice Chair Phillips identified how

valuable this metric was from her perspective. Dr. Evans indicated that, nationally, these metrics revealed that charters are more adaptable than their district counterparts when it came to adjusting to challenges posed in the recent pandemic situation. Director Lambert did note an n-size issue with the English Language Learner Growth metric, but Dr. Evans highlighted that many of the charter schools with the F Letter Grade excelled in this metric. Dr. Evans expounded on possible factors behind the Charter School Graduation Rate. USBE Deputy Superintendent Angie Stallings added a celebration point that, of all of the states that test 90% or more of their students in the ACT, Utah was #1 as the state with the highest average score. With respect to the Advance Coursework metric, Member Smith suggested that many charter schools don't offer many CTE pathways while focusing on the college-bound students, and helping these schools find those pathways for advanced vocational coursework could be beneficial. Member Cisneros introduced clarifying discussion on what constitutes a single data point, how that data point is generated, if the comparison between the district and charter schools in this metric is a valid one, and whether or not the mission and vision and purpose of advanced coursework aligns with all charter school models. Dr. Evans indicated that more research and information will be gathered with respect to this metric. Dr. Evans then introduced what the School Performance Team will be doing in the next several months with respect to how schools are doing with respect to their comparison schools, graduation rates in comparison to other high school indicators in order to identify areas where support might be needed, and explore how middle schools are preparing students for high school. Member Cisneros introduced discussion on the relationships between the SCSB and USBE, parent choice, and what environment might be best for an individual student. Member Cisneros also suggested an area of support could be in the training and retention of support staff. Vice Chair Phillips expressed hope that this presentation would be shared in a Director's Meeting, and she praised the improvement in the relationship between the SCSB and districts and between the SCSB and USBE for the better.

Lunch (11:18 am)

Meeting Resumes at 12:20 pm

Enrollment Report (12:20 pm)

Dr. Evans shared on the Enrollment figures from the Annual Review, presented the more holistic way the team is viewing these numbers, and encouraged the Members to shift their way of thinking about schools. Director Lambert identified how the dips in the October 1 counts aligned with COVID-related online learning and the movement back into in-person learning. Dr. Evans identified a lower student enrollment bubble that has begun to manifest in a kindergarten class that is smaller than the outgoing graduating class, and he cautioned that schools need to address how that reality will affect them. Chair Bowles introduced discussion on growth and size stabilization. Director Lambert expressed how charter schools may need to be more mindful and strategic with it comes to their resources. Director Lambert expounded on what the enrollment trend numbers indicate. Member Smith introduced conversation regarding enrollment trend, retention, and transfer rates compared to school grade. Director Lambert clarified what some of the numbers reflect. With respect to Transfer Rate, Dr. Evans posited that the biggest challenges involve students leaving a school in the middle of the year and not at the end of the year. Vice Chair Phillips introduced conversation around in-state transfer. Director Lambert cautioned against comparing charter schools to the District schools as Charter schools are schools of choice. Dr. Evans asked the Members to consider the impact that the current transfer rate has on educators, and Member Speicher began discussions on how movement in and out of classrooms affects the culture created within those classrooms and the institution. Member Cisneros asked if this data has been disaggregated by grade band, and Dr. Evans stated that he would look into that. Director Lambert indicated what the trends have been.

Member Speicher introduced discussion around chronic absenteeism and how that phenomenon might play into transfer rate. Dr. Evans illustrated the interplay between the trends and metrics and introduced data addressing possible enrollment cap removal. USBE Member Hymas introduced discussion on the possibility of the metric being skewed due to targeted population of the charter. Director Lambert offered the idea that a more holistic view of the school would provide a better indication of what was happening within the school than focusing on a single metric would. Director Lambert introduced alternative reasons for the lower percentages of the maximum possible enrollment. In conclusion, Dr. Evans indicated that the Max Authorized metric might need to be viewed differently or used differently to make the number represented more meaningful. Helping schools realize that students are a finite resource might need to become more of a priority than it currently is. Chair Bowles clarified that the bubble has already begun and began conversation on the contraction of enrollment in all schools. Member Speicher offered a silver lining. Dr. Evans offered a way for the members to digest this information as they prepare to consider new satellites and new school proposals.

New School and Satellite Approval Process Review (1:18 pm)

School Support Specialist Marie Steffensen framed the new school and new satellite approval processes with the SCSB mission, vision, and values. Ms. Steffensen identified the differences between new school applications and satellite applications. Emphasis was placed on community support, different/innovative choice, and compliance. Ms. Steffensen asked that the Members try to key into the driving forces behind the opening of a new school or satellite when the schools are interviewed. Ms Steffensen apprised the Members of the trainings the applicants in both groups had to undergo and what considerations had to be met before the application could move on to the next stage. Failure to reach these considerations will result in the application being administratively denied. Ms. Steffensen cited Board Rule for the considerations required of each group. The minimum standards that each considered application in both groups were delineated. Ms. Steffensen indicated how many new school applicants will be presenting in the next Board Meeting. Ms. Steffensen also noted that all the new satellite applications have had to be administratively denied because they failed to reach the consideration threshold, but 2 of them anticipate being able to present to the Board at the February meeting. Director Lambert introduced conversation involving a possible change to Board Rule. Chair Bowles began discussion on when Board Members would receive full applications, and Dr. Evans indicated that they would be forwarded again and be posted publicly.

NACSA Conference Report and Discussion (1:49 pm)

Chair Bowles began discussion on what community input and community support looks like. Director Lambert added that the changes in the education landscape and climate make opening new schools different from what happened not all that long ago. Member Olson spoke about streamlining the new application process and to focus it on the capacity of specific people opening the school. Member Olson also introduced the challenge of not being so risk-averse. Member Bassett spoke on a strategic differentiated capacity interview and what that might look like in the processes at the SCSB. Chair Bowles introduced the onboarding materials developed by NACSA that is available to all authorizers online. Vice Chair Phillips highlighted a session on how authorizers could collaborate well with the state education agency. Vice Chair Phillips also spoke on the tension between good data while honoring unique innovative schools and understanding where the limits of flexibility may lie. Vice Chair Phillips finished with self-reflective questions she found useful. Ms Steffensen found that the SCSB has processes that reflect some of the things presented at the conference and suggested that the SCSB could present at NACSA given the Board's and Staff's experiences with these processes. Member Speicher introduced conversation on next year's NACSA dates, location, and presentation proposal windows and deadlines.

Remediation Coordinator Elisabeth Bunker spoke about being approached by other authorizers to chat with them about CSAF. Dr. Evans spoke about how the Keynote speaker talked about a charter school that served native populations in the Ojibwe language and wondered if such schools could be replicated here in Utah.

Meeting adjourned at 2:14 pm

Member Smith: "I think I get to Move to Adjourn."