

Career Academy of South Bend, Inc.
Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors
December 12, 2011

Directors Present: Larry Garatoni, Tracy Graham (partial), Steve Hartz (partial) , Rob Staley, James Summers, Suzanne Wiwi
Absent: Vivian Sallie
Also attending: Yolanda Turner-Smith, Charles Loeser, Kelly Nichols, Bill Martindale

A meeting of the Board of Directors of Career Academy of South Bend was held at the school, 3801 Crescent Circle, South Bend, Indiana, at 7:00 am on December 12, 2011, pursuant to notice posted at the entrance to the building.

- A. Call To Order: Larry Garatoni presided and called the meeting to order.
- B. Records & Review of Prior Meeting: Larry asked for approval of the minutes and the memorandum of the last meeting, on October 25. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes and memorandum were approved.
- C. Additional Agenda Items: Rob said an item needing future consideration is a lease between SBCA and The Crossing. Steve added that there also needs to be a lease between SBCA and The Apprentice Academy.
- D. Review Of Action Plan:
 1. In connection with item A, "Complete Accounting Analysis," Larry introduced Bill Martindale, now starting his third week as the school's Business Manager, saying Bill has already accomplished a lot, including preparing the school's first monthly financial statements (sent with Larry's December 11 email). Having Bill on board is a start toward getting the accounting analysis completed. Larry hadn't had time to review the financial statements (for July-November),
 2. Item B, Board visit to a Crossings School: Rob suggested wait until February, when The Crossing's school at the Career Academy building (second floor) will be established. Larry explained this will be a third Crossing school in St. Joseph County, the other two will continue operating. Larry asked if Rob has any students lined up to attend the Crossing school at the Career Academy. Rob explained the plan is to encourage students now at other Crossing schools to transfer if they want to participate in the Crossing's building trades program with Sonny Villa¹ or if they live on the west

¹ Re Sonny Villa see <http://www.sonnyvilla.com/>; re Crossing students involvement with Sonny Villa's home renovations program, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atXdLL_wjU4.

side of South Bend, or if they want to participate in dual credit programs with The Apprentice Academy. Rob's guessing the Crossing at the Career Academy will start with about 20 students. Larry asked if there are any students who have transferred from Career Academy to The Crossing. Yolanda said there are three who have transferred. Rob said he expects they will probably come to the Crossing school here since it's the same building where they started.

2. As to items C (teacher evaluations), D (schedule students to meet business people), E (improve utilization of 90-minute blocks), F (insure proficiency in use of project based learning), G (use videotaping to improve teaching techniques) and H (have Academics Committee become functional), Larry said since these are scheduled for completion in January, discussion can be deferred unless there are comment.

- Yolanda said videotaping of team leaders was started with the school's first professional development session in September, as per Larry's suggestion, but it's an ongoing process. Larry commented that that's one of the techniques described in the movie "The Finland Phenomenon" as to why schools there are so successful (we should get a copy of the movie).
- As to the Academics Committee, Rob and Suzanne plan to meet with Yolanda starting in January.

3. Item I, Strategic Planning: Larry said this will take some time, but it will start tomorrow (December 13) at 2pm, all board members are invited to participate but there will be additional opportunity later. The session tomorrow will include Larry, Steve, Yolanda, Bill, Charlie, and three members of Yolanda's team (Mike Parsons, Tammy Milby, and Dian Swoape). The board will be notified when further sessions are scheduled.

E. Business Manager Report & Claims Approval: Larry commented that the list of claims shows an expense of roughly \$4,400 for a credit card payment, that needs to be broken down into the various items. Bill said that will be done for future purposes, this first version of the claims list is a list of checks paid, so everything paid by a single check is shown as a single item. Yolanda explained the school has only one credit card, which is used by several people, often for expenses involving conferences and training. Rob said credit card use needs to be watched very carefully, he reviews all credit card use in his organization (The Crossing) every month, it can easily get out of control. Bill said that's exactly the kind of financial control the school needs to establish. Rob suggested perhaps consider a card through Amazon, which he likes because the card is in the school's name, but he gets a monthly report for each person who uses it, plus every use earns points towards book purchases. Yolanda commented we also need to track these expenses carefully because some might be reimbursable, such as special education expenses and teacher training. Larry suggested approval of the claims list with the understanding that detail on the credit card payment will follow. Rob so moved, Tracy seconded, the motion was unanimously approved.

Larry said there's a format for the reports that Bill will prepare for the board in the future: a profit & loss statement, with comparison to budget. As time goes on, the statements will be more detailed, perhaps detailing costs for each class. Bill said it will take time to create a good system for being able to see and extract useful information, versus requiring enormous time to input information that's not really useful for management. Larry said that's exactly what we're looking for, not just bookkeeping but seeing the significance in the numbers. Larry commented any board member should feel free to contact Bill or Yolanda at any time, the goal is complete transparency.

F. Review Of Liability & Insurance: Larry asked if there were any questions about Charlie's memo on charitable immunity laws. Rob asked why this is an issue, he was under the impression that the law protected board members. Charlie said one of the themes of Brian Carpenter's presentation (which Rob couldn't attend) was that board members can be personally liable for what happens at a school, that's why this is an agenda item. As described in the memo, Charlie said, there's an Indiana statute providing that unpaid members of a charity's board are exempt from liability for negligence. The Indiana statute goes further than the federal statute that Brian spoke about, which includes limitations on the protection (for example, specifying that there's no immunity against liability for "gross negligence"). Many charitable organizations don't have any liability insurance, it's expensive, and the legislature wants to encourage people to participate in charities.

That's the background, Charlie said, for following up on Brian's suggestion that the board should evaluate its liability insurance and consider buying more. The current policy, which costs \$3,000/year, provides \$3 million in coverage (an educator liability policy, which also covers the board and officers, of \$1 million per claim and \$2 million aggregate, plus an umbrella policy of \$2 million per claim. Adding an extra \$ 1 million in coverage would cost an extra \$1,750/year; adding an extra \$ 2 million in coverage would cost an extra \$3,500/year. Rob said he thinks \$3 million is sufficient. Tracy said most boards he's involved with don't have any insurance at all. Steve moved that we keep the insurance we already have, and not add more; the motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

G. Other Recommendations Of Brian Carpenter: Larry asked the board's views on other recommendations from the meeting with Brian Carpenter, and the discussion/decisions were as follows:

	Recommendation	Comments/decision
1	Each board member should sign the ethics section of the bylaws	Approved
2	Have an annual disclosure document for each member to confirm no conflicts	Approved
3	Revise bylaws to say that if a member	Rob & Suzanne spoke in favor. Approved

	who misses 3 meetings in a row (or ¼ of meetings in a year) is automatically off the board, but may ask to be reinstated	
4	Adopt "board policy" documents, e.g., re the board's role with management.	Rob & Suzanne spoke in favor. Approved. Consider using policy documents Yolanda has used in other charter schools.
5	Insert into bylaws a provision saying that all new board members are required to read the school's charter	Approved, as to reading the narrative portion of the charter (not the attachments).
6	Board members should receive report every month on number of students	<p>Agreed, the current enrollment should be a part of the school leader's reports.</p> <p>Larry commented this is important to know even though the premise for this in Brian's presentation doesn't apply to us: the premise was that board members were potentially liable for overcharging, if the school's reports to the state claimed more students than were actually there; but in Indiana, the only enrollment date that matters for tuition purposes (other than the Special Ed count day in December) is the Count Day in September.</p> <p>As to the Special Ed count day (December 1), Yolanda reported that the school is receiving transferred Special Ed students whose other schools have decided, in case conferences held on or after the count day, that this is a better fit for them. In other words, SBCA won't receive any revenue for them, since they weren't here on December 1. But we'll take them anyway. Rob was surprised any other school would keep the money and transfer the student, but apparently that's not unusual. It's ironic: charter schools have been criticized for doing that, but in our case, it's the other way around.</p>
7	An auditor should be involved in confirming the student count data used for tuition purposes	Not adopted.
8	Amend bylaws to change the language (which is common to just about every school's bylaws) describing the treasurer's duties: the bylaws describe the treasurer's duties as if the treasurer were CFO, but shouldn't say that	Approved.
9	Create a "Board calendar" showing	Approved. Rob asked if we're posting notices

	matters needing to be done, school year by school year; such as renewing D&O policy	of board meetings on the door as required by law. Yolanda said yes, and also on website, as per new requirement of BSU.
10	Visit Hi-Tech High School in San Diego, which BC suggests is a good model	Board members may visit on their own, the school will not cover the expense.
11	Write key result indicators to track our objectives – including but not limited to our charter targets	Approved, this was already decided & started before the meeting with Brian.

H. Report On NWEA Testing. Yolanda explained the school has completed its first standardized tests, using the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) “Measures of Academic Progress” (MAP) tests. BSU will provide benchmarks for us, based on schools similar to SBCA, to help put the results in perspective.

These are intended as measures of progress: the key metric is from one test to another. The “NWEA School Overview” document, subtitled “Growth Seasons: Fall 10 – Fall 11” shows charts with “Student Count for Growth” data for only a few students for whom the school had prior test data from other schools. On the right of each chart is the “Student Count for Season” data with the scores for all SBCA students, including “% Proficient” scores for each grade in reading, math, and language usage. In the future, now that there is a starting point for all SBCA students, the “Student Count for Growth” data will cover all SBCA students and should be a useful measure for growth. The next tests are scheduled for January, to be followed by the “Spring” tests, which will probably be done in May.

Yolanda introduced Chad Addie, SBCA’s Education Manager for seventh & eighth grade, to explain the score results. Chad explained these are “Computer-Based Adaptive Assessments”: students take the tests on a computer, and the questions automatically adjust to the student’s appropriate level of learning, based on the student’s responses; so that each test is customized to the student.² This was described in Yolanda’s report presented at the October 25 meeting (at pp. 8-9 of the October 25 minutes). The tests use a scale called RIT (Rasch Unit) to measure student achievement and growth. This is very useful for identifying what each student and group of students needs. The “% Proficient” scores were low, but that was expected; that is the starting point. The tests are being used for individualized instruction during the “enrichment” time at the end of the school day. This is a “Response To Intervention” approach (“RTI”, not to be confused with the “RIT” scale).

Chad explained since RIT scores are a national standard, there are national norms against which SBCA students can be measured, as shown in the spreadsheet (a

² As described on the NWEA website, <http://www.nwea.org/products-services/computer-based-adaptive-assessments>.

copy is attached as an appendix to these minutes). SBCA average scores were significantly below the national norms:

SBCA NWEA FALL 11	MATH	Math Norms	READING	Reading Norms	LANG. USAGE	Lang Use Norms	GENERAL SCI.	Science Norms
ALL GRADES TESTED	217.2		208.5		208.6		205.3	
7th GRADE ALL	210.6	225.6	203.6	216.3	202.8	215.8	201.9	208.2
8th GRADE ALL	219.3	230.2	211.1	219.3	211.3	218.7	206.4	211.2
9th GRADE ALL	220.5	233.8	208.9	221.4	209.5	220.6	205.8	213.2

Average growth in a year, Chad explained, is 4 to 6 RIT points. Larry commented that that would leave SBCA students far short of national norms. Chad said it's important to recognize that there is a lot of work ahead: while some SBCA students are very strong academically, the majority (about 2/3) are below the 50th percentile nationally. From Chad's experience in other schools, he believes that with aggressive targeting of individual student weaknesses, and the extra instructional time allowed by the longer school day, it should be possible to bring SBCA students to grade level fairly quickly, which of course requires progress greater than the average 4-6 points per year. The MAP test system allows setting goals and measuring progress student by student, multiple times during the year. It's important not to focus on group averages, to use a student by student approach, such as with the most capable students, who have been pulled out of the normal math and are being introduced to high school material (algebra) in eighth grade. It's important for students to know where they are, and to have goals for progress, keeping in mind that what matters is progress rather than the starting point.

Chad pointed out that in general, the eighth grade students scored higher than the ninth grade students. Larry asked if a grade level is equivalent to about 5 RIT points, what does it tell us that the seventh grade average math score was 210 vs. a national norm of 225. Chad said what this shows is that the majority of SBCA seventh graders are at a fourth or fifth grade math proficiency. Rob cautioned against using class averages, which can be very misleading; what the data is really useful for is assessing and responding to individual students; it's not useful to focus on how many students at a point in time have met a uniform "passing" rate, what matters is progress.

Larry said while it's natural that class averages are used in assessing schools, it would be useful, in order to really understand our starting point, to see the individual scores that make up the averages. Yolanda said she'll have a more detailed report prepared.

Chad said many students wanted to know how well they did on the tests, and it's important never to say "you failed" just because a score may be below a norm. That's not "failure"; the question is progress, for which kids need to believe in themselves.

There's nothing unrealistic about that. Using these tests and the RTI individualized coaching, the school where Chad worked previously went from about the 40th percentile in the state to the "most improved" in the state for the last three years. This approach can work, it just takes hard work.

Rob warned that the more tests kids are required to take, the greater the risk that they may stop caring and may not try their best, which can lead to scores dropping. Yolanda said she understands that, but we will do a mid-year assessment, in part because team leader bonuses have been tied to the results. Chad said SBCA's experience so far suggests that the practice of taking a test is beneficial, the experience of taking a test helps prepare students to do better the next time; there is a risk of over-testing, but not if the kids see it as meaningful (for example, seeing kids pulled out of regular math to take algebra because they did well on the test).

Larry asked to what extent there have been changes in teaching based on the tests, other than individualized coaching. Yolanda said the results have been used for modifying projects to make sure they engage students in skills and knowledge they need. A new cohort has been established in the high school to allow classes to focus on needed skills.

Rob said reading is the most important of all skills, what's being done to address low reading scores. Yolanda said in addition to the RTI approach, the school is working on an accelerated reading program, which will be implemented after Christmas. Rob suggested serious consideration be given to the "Read 180" program and some others that have been beneficial for The Crossing; a topic to follow up in Academic Committee meetings.

Steve commented that a valuable part of this procedure is that unlike focusing on ISTEP, which naturally leads to focusing on the group that can be brought from "fail" to "pass," this approach values progress by all students, whether above or below any "norm" measure.

Yolanda commented that the next tests (the "Acuity" tests, to be administered next week) are a good predictor of likely results of ISTEP (and ECA for students past eighth grade). The kids know these tests will be used not only to measure them but to measure the teachers, which is empowering.

Tracy said that as a parent, he's been very impressed with the Kumon reading and math programs, which his daughter and nephew have used. From what he's seen personally & what he's read, the results are remarkable.

Suzanne suggested there are other assessments (including locally based assessments) that are more useful for teaching purposes than ISTEP. For example, ISTEP gives a student a writing score, but that's not useful for actually learning how to write,

which depends on identifying mistakes, doing rewrites, and gradually acquiring skills. Another advantage of such assessments is that they're friendlier from the kids' perspective: they're seen as part of day to day teaching. And it's important, Suzanne said, that the focus is on kids learning how to think rather than being tested on knowing facts. Yolanda said the school has been focusing on reading comprehension, critical for developing the ability to learn. Science projects are paired up with English, every project requires a written report, which is graded using the "6+1" writing program. Eighth and ninth graders are being introduced to the MLA system for writing papers and citing sources.

Tracy asked Yolanda for her perspective on the NWEA results, in particular, the average ninth grade scores in all subjects being below the seventh grade norms. Yolanda said there's certainly work to do, but there's already been considerable improvement from what was seen in the informal pre-assessments done at the beginning of the year, and the Spring NWEA scores should reflect that. Tracy asked if she expects those results to be significantly higher. Yolanda said she expects they will be somewhat higher.

Tracy said he's concerned that these scores and the staff survey results point to the school being identified as a place for troubled kids. Larry said the results should not be surprising since it's to be expected that the kids coming to a new school are those who were not satisfied at other schools. Rob said that's true of charter schools generally: they start off attracting low-performing kids. Tracy said he understands that, but that can't be our school's identity.

Yolanda said the description of disciplinary problems in the staff survey reflects learning a new system, not what the school is going to be. The school does not have a "discipline dean", many teachers aren't accustomed to that, they're used to sending a kid to "the office" when there's a discipline problem, but that's not our system. In some cases, out-of-class disciplinary measures are used, but team leaders are expected to handle more on their own than at many schools. Some of the teachers are doing well with it; it's doable. The disciplinary question is related to effective teaching in 90-minute blocks: if the kids aren't kept active, that's when behavior is likely to be a problem.

Larry suggested this be taken up in discussion of the survey and that the discussion of NWEA assessments be wrapped up, which from the board's standpoint means, most of all, that any tool that Yolanda believes is necessary, the board wants her to have.

Rob said he's confident both the test scores and discipline issues will be turned around. From his experience with other boards, it's unusual to be discussing these topics in such detail, but that's exactly what should be the focus.

I. Results Of Staff Survey: Larry asked if the results of the staff survey as circulated to the board have been shared with all staff members. Yolanda said in some

of the comments, there are names mentioned, which she will redact before providing copies to the staff. Larry said that after that's done and the staff sees the results, he and Steve will meet with the staff, together with Yolanda, to make sure the staff knows that their comments are taken very seriously; Yolanda will work with the staff to develop teams to address each problem identified in the survey; each team will develop an action plan, and will follow up until the problem is resolved. Some problems by their nature are never fully resolved, such as needing better communication within the organization – even if doing fairly well, it should be better. But it should be possible to make substantial progress, and it's important that the staff sees it that way, which future surveys should show.

Rob asked Yolanda for her perspective on the reason for the staff survey results. Yolanda said in part it's a result of introducing a different concept for discipline; but even though the results show some are doing ok, it's important if any of the team leaders feel discipline is a problem & they're not being adequately supported. She's been holding meetings to get feedback on an ongoing basis, and sometimes has implemented suggestions, while trying to make sure it's understood that even if a suggestion isn't taken up, it's not for lack of listening. It's understandable that team leaders should have doubts about the longer school day, especially whether the time after 3:00 is productive. Start-ups are challenging. Start-up problems with the building (such as a day with no heat) upset the students & the staff. With more experience, there's a growing camaraderie.

Rob said he doesn't think any of these findings are abnormal or surprising, the only thing unusual is that we've uncovered this and discussed it. This reinforces Rob's belief that 90-minute blocks are very challenging to use, perhaps it would be better not to try 90-minute blocks unless there's been extensive and very effective training for it. As to discipline, Rob agrees with Yolanda's approach, but it's natural for teachers to want an easier system, for someone else to deal with problems. That's a paradigm shift: teachers will say they want to teach rather than deal with problems; but in fact, effective teaching requires first dealing successfully with kids at an emotional level. It's hard, so in the same way, the school leadership needs to be focusing on the morale of the staff, finding ways to celebrate successes and keep people enthused. Yolanda said she knows that's important and works at it, such as with personal notes at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and a ham or turkey and SBCA Christmas ornaments. She's had one-on-one evaluations with over half the staff and is working on the others (where problems were identified, there are ongoing follow-up meetings).

Rob said he'd not understood this when he started out as a school leader, but he's become convinced that a school's culture is its most important asset, so important that it needs constant attention and focus, even if that requires hiring someone just for that purpose. Every staff member needs to be convinced that the school's leadership cares, really cares, about him/her, that's the only way to keep people motivated and successful.

[8:40 am: Steve Hartz and Kelly Nichols left]

Suzanne said her school pays a lot of attention to teacher morale, using a program called "FISH" ("Fun In the School House")³, including sharing lunches and celebrations. A school can't succeed academically without a culture of teamwork and respect. Suzanne said he agrees with Rob that 90-minute blocks are difficult, some subjects are more conducive than others, but it requires a lot of training.

Yolanda said she's found project-based learning resources for math and science, and has made some connections with teachers from other schools.

On the question of discipline, Suzanne recalled the discussion at earlier board meetings about using a slogan for the school; she suggested considering the success of Butler University with its motivation system ("The Butler Way") triggering on key words which are constantly stressed, consistently by all teachers. If students are surrounded by well-chosen and consistent themes starting when they arrive in the seventh grade, it will have a big impact. Yolanda said she likes the idea, the school has a "6 R's" theme, but it only works with time and everyone teaching to it. Rob concurred, for The Crossing, the "RELIT" message⁴ ("core values") has had a huge impact on students.

[8:45 am: Tracy Graham left]

Rob said something else to consider is a compromise between the traditional 60-minute block and 90-minute blocks: a lot of schools have adopted 70-minute blocks, considered to be easier to train for. Per research done for The Crossing, a lot of schools that moved to 90-minute blocks are moving away from it. Suzanne said her math teachers and science teachers use 70-minute blocks, sometime rotating for a project that needs more time. Rob said longer blocks, since it's harder to keep the students minds occupied for the whole time, often result in discipline problems. Yolanda said she's been stressing, for the teachers having problems, using segments: seven minutes of presenting new material, 20 minutes to work on applying it, then more new material. Suzanne suggested having an agenda for each class, so the students see from the start what they're supposed to learn. Yolanda said the school is using the agenda approach. Rob suggested that the Academics Committee follow up on this discussion and come back to the board with a report. It was agreed Rob, Suzanne & Yolanda would meet.

The overview of the staff survey, Larry said, is that it's essential that we avoid the creation of a "we/they" perspective between staff and the school leadership, there has to be an "us" perspective; so if team leaders think there's a problem, there's a problem, and it's essential to get their input & involvement on solutions. That's not to say every

³ Described at website, <http://www.charthouse.com/content.aspx?nodeid=16741>.

⁴ Discussed at the July 28 board meeting.

suggestion will be accepted, but it has to be clear that the school leadership is listening, taking all contributions seriously, and making its considered best judgment. Rob said he would like to see a document detailing the results of the review, identifying each problem and what's being done to address it. Yolanda said the board will see exactly that, but it's an ongoing process, not a one-time fix. Larry said the same sort of survey will be taken again, probably 3 or 4 time during the year. Yolanda said there will also be surveys of parents and students.

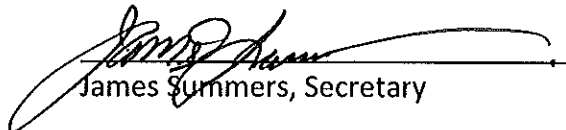
Suzanne said that her main reaction to the staff survey is that teachers need to take ownership of discipline problems rather than expecting someone else to handle them. The other matter that seems to concern teachers most is the school's practice on substitute. Rob asked if the school uses subs. Yolanda said the school relies on team leaders who have down time to fill in for absences; usually outside subs are hired only when there are two or three teachers out. The school needs to add to its sub list, one of the subs that had been relied on has now been hired a replace a teacher who left. Suzanne said some level of in-house substituting is appropriate, and teachers should get more comfortable with that as they have more experience working together.

Rob said it can't be expected that there won't be problems, there's a natural cycle with a certain amount of "storming" before the "performing." Suzanne said it took years for her to resolve some of the problems that her school had from the start. Larry said he had the same experience starting up businesses.

J. School Leader Report: Yolanda reported attendance has been declining, it started at 96% and is now at 88%. The school is calling parents. There was an issue with tardies, but since starting the lock-out room, where the students are required to do some writing, that's declined considerably (if a student is late, he's required to write for the entire next period; useful academically as well as for discipline).

Yolanda said some students have been lost to transfers, partly from parents' job changes. There are now 149 students attending, from a start of 163. Rob asked if marketing for next year has started. Yolanda said marketing is going to be headed by Kelly, in tandem with marketing for The Apprentice Academy. Larry said we need a major marketing push. Rob asked the decision has been made whether to add 11th grade next year. Larry said that's on the management team action plan, he expects the decision will probably be to go ahead with it.

Yolanda said she would follow up with a written report. The meeting was concluded at 9 am.


James Summers, Secretary

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