

Career Academy of South Bend, Inc.
Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors
January 26, 2021, via Zoom

Directors Present: Dan Adams, Kay Antonelli, David Balkin, Chad Hartzell, Marian Hodges, Larry Garatoni, Mark Melnick, Michael Garatoni

Directors Absent : Nick Swisher

Staff Attending: Alex Hammel, Dean Fecher, Jeremy Lugbill, Nick Garstka, Kim Richardson

Also Attending: Emily Gaskill, Charles Loeser

- A. Call to Order. Larry Garatoni called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
- B. Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the December 15, 2020 meeting were approved.
- C. School Operations.
 1. COVID-19 Review. Alex reported that the high school and middle school, after returning to 100% virtual at the end of November, as of January 19 resumed a hybrid schedule. Elementary school students are back in school Monday thru Thursday with all students on-line Friday. The county has been at an orange rating from the state for the last six weeks. Since then active cases in St. Joseph County dropped from roughly 3800 to 2000. He recommends continuing what we are doing and monitoring the data with the goal of operating face to face as soon as possible. When the staff can be vaccinated is not yet clear.

Alex said the middle school and high school have had 19 cases since the pandemic while Success Academy has had 7 cases. We haven't had any cases of transfer within the buildings. We've working diligently to get students to wear masks and keeping them distanced as much as they can. Mike Garatoni asked if we're below the county. Alex said yes, we're doing better than the county.
 2. Strategic Plan. Alex said his team has been reviewing the strategic plan both to consider what modifications may be appropriate due to COVID and to move the plan forward by identifying actions for achieving goals and what metrics are appropriate. His team has been building consensus and will have recommendations for the board to consider in a longer meeting exclusively for this purpose. Some goals and metrics are standard, such as financial viability, for which student enrollment is key and obvious metrics are staff to student ratios and expenditures per student. But that's a starting point, we need to consider metrics for our distinctive goals. Larry said we also need to reconsider goals and strategies.
 3. PowerSchool Analytics. Alex wanted to make everyone aware of a program called "Performance Matters," an analytical program within PowerSchool, our student information system, which holds our standard student data, including demographics, grades,

and attendance. The application allows analytics with multiple data sets, for example looking for correlation between absences and grades. We're uploading into PowerSchool our other data sources, for example data from Mindplay, Ascend , I-Ready and other academic programs. This will make it possible to use all our data in combination without the labor of compiling it. There are a few databases that still need to be uploaded to this system but we've uploaded about 70% of the data that wasn't in PowerSchool to begin with, so we'll soon have a means for analytical use of all student data.

4. RFP For Food Service. Alex reported that every five years a school in the federal school lunch program is required to do an RFP for food service We have had our food service provider, Chartwells, for the past 5 years and the service is excellent but the RFP is a legally required process, including a requirement of board approval for doing an RFP. Dan asked who other than Chartwells are we talking to? Sam Ells explained we'll publish a notice and anyone can request details, then submit a bid by March 3. On motion, the board unanimously approved authorizing and directing the issuance of an RFP in accord with requirements of the national school lunch program.

D. Principals' Update.

1. Career Academy High School.

a) Winter School and Academic Catching Up. Jeremy described the "winter school" program, offered this year for the first time, in the context of the unique challenge of the pandemic, but first expressed thanks to Aaron Esper, one of our star teachers, who teaches chemistry and dual credit biology. Mr. Esper gave up a great deal of his time over Thanksgiving break and over Christmas break to zoom with our students and to help them. He has been an important part of our academic success in prior years, for example Career Middle School ranking second and Career High School ranking 13th among 334 school corporations in pass rate for the 2019 ILEARN biology test.

Winter school provided an opportunity for students to earn credit in subjects they were failing. It was an innovative way to counter the learning loss from operating on a virtual or hybrid basis for so much of the first semester. Getting students to work over the Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks was difficult but helped some students get back on track.

But the success of winter school was limited in comparison to the problem. Like so many high schools across the state and the country, we had far more students fail courses in the first semester this year than in prior years. 157 of our 360 students had two or more F's during the first quarter so we were looking to target that group of students with the winter school program. But only 88 students signed up for winter school and only 54 started the program.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas 9 students withdrew, reducing the program to 45 students, of whom 22 successfully completed the program and earned credit.

In our December board meeting there were questions about the reasons for students failing. Of the 45 students in the program, 40 only logged in once and 33 had been chronically absent during the semester.

Larry said he was astonished that so many students don't care enough about their lives to be motivated to participate. Jeremy said it's critical that students feel connected with either an adult at the school or with a program or sport or extracurricular activity, especially the most vulnerable students, who don't have the support at home or don't have the role models that were successful in high school and went on to college. We succeed through relationships and through the advisory class where we are teaching employability skills, teaching mind sets, teaching grit, hard work. This just doesn't work as well when kids see teachers on a screen.

Jeremy said he and teachers are meeting with students and parents on Zoom, showing them the classes they need to graduate, making calls. Larry asked if he could project what the graduation rate is going to be. Jeremy commented it won't be next month but he will be able to do that. Summer school could help since kids have until October to meet graduation requirements to be counted in our graduation rate.

Larry said we need to find a way to help these kids, let's create a committee. Dave Balkin said he would like to participate in that. Larry said whoever wants to participate should send him an email.

b) Winter Surveys. Jeremy said the winter surveys of staff, students, and parents was different from prior years due to COVID. We looked at areas for growth and strengths. The high school's focus for growth is engagement, motivating our students. We're making more calls and using some new apps that provide engagement strategies, such as Yellowdig¹ - a way to game-ify threaded discussions, giving students points for making comments on other students' threads, asking questions and uploading content. Teachers are modifying their methods based on what kids respond to. For example, one of our star teachers divides his 90-minute block into segments of no more than 30 minutes, sometimes using ability grouping so that discussion can be at the 'just hard enough' level that interests participants without boring or overwhelming anyone, but starting and ending together to avoid anyone feeling left out.

In this year of unprecedented challenge, our teachers are supporting and learning from each other as never before. This is borne out in the many survey comments referring to feeling supported by each other and by leadership. The staff outlook is mostly positive: we feel like people around us care, we feel that we can collaborate with each other, we feel supported, we feel like we are moving in the right direction.

¹ The website description, <https://www.yellowdig.co/>: "Yellowdig sparks real interactions that result in real communities, allowing students to learn the way they were always meant to—together."

2. Career Academy Middle School

a) Survey and Academic Issues. Nick said much of Jeremy's report applied to the middle school as well; the schools work closely together and have many teachers that overlap. The biggest problem for the middle school is that students just aren't logging in. At home you can get lost in a video game, you can get lost looking at TV, you can walk away. In a case today I called the parent, who said the student told her that he was logging in, but he hadn't logged into a class in the last 2 weeks. When a parent hears this, it's a shock but despite fear of the virus this can lead to agreement that it's time to send this student to school.

Constant communication is called for. We call if the student is absent for more than 2 classes. The number of parents electing all-virtual is down. With students coming back, we can try to get them back on track. For habitual truancies in theory the Department of Child Services should be involved but they are overwhelmed. We are sending our School Resource Officer, Lee Ross, to students' homes, sometimes with a translator, but it is difficult, often no one answers, and Officer Ross can't be everywhere. We need students back in school.

b) Academic progress. We are finishing up our I-Ready mid-year testing, most students are finished but some are only now back in the building. We are seeing overall growth in math and reading for students who are attending, but not as much as I would like to see. Next month we should have results from I-Ready from beginning of year to mid-year.

3. Success Academy Primary School

a) Survey and Academic Issues. Dean said that for Success as with the other schools, attendance is the biggest problem this year, while there are few discipline issues for those who are at school. Transportation has been a much bigger issue for our children now mostly because parents don't have gas money or their vehicles break down and they can't get them fixed because they don't have the money right now to do. We are in constant communication with our parents through phone calls and emails. We have been encouraging parents of virtual students to come back in person and in January we had over 55 students return. We have been communicating with our truancy department because we do have students who have been absent 20+ days.

Like the other schools, the survey shows the staff feeling supported. Of the 27 comments, 14 refer to administrative support. Dean said he is meeting once a week with every team including each grade level team, the specials team, and the support staff team. We have reacted quickly to COVID, for example if we find out at 1:00 by 2:30 we have notified every parent in that classroom, parents pick the kids up and we are off to virtual learning for the next two weeks. 8 of the comments refer to the teachers supporting each other or staff supporting each other, grade level teams feeling that they are supporting each other. Our student success center is helping with students who are making poor choices or have behavioral problems. We are also having small group "bridge" meetings twice a week with our teachers, talking about

things like unconscious bias, white privilege and racial equity, and how this affects our students and our families. We believe this is creating a stronger relationship between our teachers and parents and teachers and students.

b) Community. Dean introduced Darris Garner, who is part of the bridge meetings and is part of our culture team and also part of a group called FACES, which stands for Family and Community Engagement Specialists.

Darris explained that FACES was created in response to COVID to build bridges between our families and engage the community. It is relatively new, having started in December. We just finished Operation Christmas, in which we adopted one of the families here at Success Academy and we really wrapped our arms around them and really showed them love. We became the village for that family, providing a \$150 gift card from Walmart and a \$100 VISA gift card. With community members and staff members donating, we were able to purchase gifts for the students, including clothes, and provided the family with a washer and dryer. We have also partnered with the social committee here at Success Academy and did a holiday ornament sale that raised \$330, to be used for other things that we are going to be doing in FACES. We are currently in our Winter wonderland project, getting donations of hats, scarves and gloves. In the future, looking beyond COVID, we would like to partner with some local colleges and offer satellite classes for our parents. FACES would love to partner with the board and even with Trine hopefully in the future as well.

Dean commented that one of the things that really stuck out to him was the student that we adopted for Christmas mentioned to our social worker that one thing that he really wants and hasn't had was a Christmas tree. So they got a Christmas tree for that family and the father who we delivered the Christmas tree to as well as the student were thrilled about that.

Dan Adams asked the principals what's being done to respond to the survey negative comments. Dean said Success has a school improvement team that will work with him to decide what actions to take. Jeremy said the high school and middle school have created teams to follow up. Alex commented that was done in the past and is what they are doing now. He will make a note for the next board meeting to share that information and we will have a list of strategies to work through to address the negative comments.

E. Financials.

Kim Richardson presented the December financial statements. Fiscal year to date through December 31 we exceeded our budgeted revenue by \$88,000. That's largely from summer school reimbursement that wasn't budgeted. Other factors were a grant for \$25,000, the Anthem refund we received, and our collection on textbooks. Larry asked what was the grant? Kim explained that is a grant that the CTE department received to write curriculum. Alex replied that it was a person that he had worked with in the past who reached out to him asking if we wanted to do some development so we got that grant from them to develop some

lessons. That came up after we had budgeted so it was a \$25,000 grant that we hadn't anticipated.

Kim showed the bottom line for expenses through December 31: we were under budget by \$47,000. A lot of the line items that we were under budget on are electric, gas and field trips and travel: because of COVID a lot of those things we haven't been doing. For employee salaries, payroll taxes and benefits, we are under budget by \$10,000. She has added in a line to break out professional services for marketing. Grand total after depreciation and loan expense we are under budget by \$132,000.

Larry commented on a budget this size he thinks that is terrific budgeting and terrific cost control.

Larry asked for a motion to approve the financials. On motion made and seconded, the financials were accepted and approved.

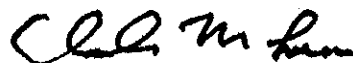
F. Trine Report.

Emily Gaskill said she didn't do site visits this month for the middle school and high school since they returned back to their hybrid mode of instruction on the day that we had it scheduled and we didn't want to be in the buildings as the teachers might feel overwhelmed to deal with students returning and a site visit at the same time. Emily visited Success last week and was impressed with the implementation of training in reading and math.

Benchmark and financial data will be updated next meeting so there will be a longer presentation.

In terms of upcoming partnerships and collaborations, Trine's Franks School of Education donated some materials and resources to Success Academy to help build up its school library, and a Franks School professor toured the Career and Success campuses to prepare for having some of her students there in future years to build up that partnership. Trine is also continuing to coach and mentor the Career high school students who are taking part in Trine's Innovation One Challenge, <https://www.trine.edu/innovation-one/i1-challenge/>. That will be in March and is being held virtually, she'll follow up with details. Please note quarterly financials ending December 31 are due in February reporting.

There being no other business or public comment or question, the meeting was adjourned.



Charles M. Loeser, Secretary