

Career Academy of South Bend, Inc.
Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors
December 15, 2020, 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, Rob Mohler, 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 and welcomed David Balkin to the board.

B. Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the October 27 meeting were approved.

C. Election of Officers. Larry noted that the terms of officers end as of December 31, and suggested that officers be elected for a two-year term. On Chad's motion, the following officers were elected for a term ending December 31, 2022: Larry Garatoni as President, Dan Adams as Vice-President, Mike Garatoni as Treasurer, Charles Loeser as Secretary.

D. Principal Update.

1. Career Academy High School.

a. Virtual Exams. Jeremy reported that students are taking semester final exams at home this week with the use of a virtual proctoring system, Examity.

b. Winter School. Because of the potential loss in learning due to the pandemic, the high school has offered virtual instruction over the Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks. 88 students (roughly 25%) signed up, and 54 worked over Thanksgiving, with teacher assistance via Zoom. More students are expected to participate over the Christmas break. This is to help complete the first semester's work. Mike said having a quarter of the high school's students volunteer for extra work during breaks is more than he'd expect. Jeremy said ideally the participation rate should be higher, that will be a goal going forward.

c. Mindplay Reading Program. Jeremy reported that on a nation-wide basis, the long term trend shown by NAEP scores is that the strongest students are scoring higher and weaker students scoring lower than in prior decades, which highlights the critical need for improving reading and verbal ability in the high school years. Career High has introduced the Mindplay "My Virtual Reading Coach" program, which both teaches and provides comprehensive ongoing measures of student abilities. The results have been excellent:

- In the first test, given in August to 280 students, 45% scored as "critical" (two or more years below grade level), 22% as "approaching" (between one and two years below grade level), 26% as "meeting" (grade level), and 7% as "exceeding" (above grade level)
- In the last test, given in December, 41% scored as "critical," 16% as "approaching," 24% as "meeting," and 20% as "exceeding," with average improvement of 0.6 grade levels:

MindPlay Career High School Data December 2020

All Students								
First Test			Last Test			Change		
	Number	%		Number	%		Number	%
Critical	127	45		114	41		-13	-5%
Approaching	61	22		44	16		-15	-6%
Meeting	72	26		66	24		-6	-2%
Exceeding	20	7		56	20		+36	+13%
Total	280	100		280	101			
Average Improvement: 0.6 grade levels								

A closer look shows that the all-student results understate the effectiveness of the program. Since the program automatically tracks the time that each student spends working signed into the software, we can see the results for students who spent at least ten hours using the program between August and December:

Students Using Program For At Least Ten Hours								
First Test			Last Test			Change		
	Number	%		Number	%		Number	%
Critical	61	44		51	37		-10	-7%
Approaching	27	19		12	9		-15	-10%
Meeting	37	27		33	24		-4	-3%
Exceeding	14	10		43	31		+29	+21%
Total	139			139	101			
Average Improvement: 0.94 grade levels								

The markedly better results for the 10+ hour users are exceeded by the results for students who used the program for 20+ hours during the period (roughly one semester):

Students Using Program For At Least Twenty Hours								
First Test			Last Test			Change		
	Number	%		Number	%		Number	%
Critical	19	30		15	23		-4	-7%
Approaching	18	28		5	8		-13	-20%
Meeting	19	30		17	27		-2	-3%
Exceeding	8	13		27	42		+19	+29%
Total	64	101		64	100			
Average Improvement: 1.11 grade levels								

It might seem obvious that those who put in more time should do better, but that is intuitive only to people with a growth mindset; moreover, for more use to produce a better result is proof that the tool works if used properly. Kay asked how were the participants selected? Jeremy said this was mostly grades 9-11 rather than seniors. Marion asked about the status of seniors. Jeremy said the seniors have work to do but he expects all to graduate, he'll provide details in future meetings. Larry said this progress in reading is wonderful. Jeremy said a lot of teachers put in a lot of hours to make this happen. Larry said We are lucky to have such teachers.

2. Career Academy Middle School

a. Semester Exams. Nick reported that most middle school students have taken part of their semester exams, with the Examity virtual proctoring system. The Middle School will use the I-Ready and Pivot ELA and math tests. So far the only data is that 90% of seventh graders have progressed in math.

b. Environmental Learning Center. Nick said the school is making good progress in development of what we're calling the Environmental Learning Center on the vacant land (roughly 35 acres) south of the school. This began last year. Guided by a team of teachers, the students are cutting three trails and creating four lots. With the help of a local university botany department, the students will create a list of all species living within the tract. The ELC will be used by middle school science classes as well as the humanities class (studying the history of the region). When weather and COVID conditions allow, the ELC will enable students to learn a lot while having fun.

3. Success Academy Primary School

a. Boys & Girls Club. Dean said the school has developed a very beneficial relationship with the Boys and Girls Club, which provides a location for virtual learning for our students who can't stay at home, as well as providing before and after school care for those students who need it. Dean plans to continue the relationship for summer school.

b. Behavior Data. Dean said he's reported before on the work led by Assistant Principal Francesca Varga to improve student behavior but wanted follow up with data that makes the case: in the 2019-20 school year, 39.5% of incidents were referred to the principal's office, far too many; in the 2020-21 first semester that's down to 8.5%. Comparing the overall number of incidents this school year versus last is not meaningful since there are so many virtual days in this school year but a comparison can be made by looking only at the period of September 28 through December 2, which is the period of in-person school this year: in 2019-20 there were 128 out of school suspensions during that ten-week period, in 2020 -21 there were 13. Dean said he believes one reason for the improvement is that the need to work together in virtual schooling has led parents to appreciate how hard teachers work and has led teachers to appreciate how hard parents try to help their children. Dean feels there's been major progress.

c. Supper Program and Holiday Meals. Dean said through the service of Chartwells, Success began a supper/holiday meal program two weeks ago, allowing students to take home free meals. 95% of our students are participating. We also gave away over 400 Thanksgiving meals (a turkey and all the fixings for each family) and will distribute Christmas meals. Chad said Beacon Health considers food insecurity in South Bend as severe.

E. School Operations

1. Virtual School. Alex introduced Virtual Program Coordinator Tammy Youngs, who explained how virtual instruction has been modified. Conclusions and changes include

- Having teachers do either all virtual or all hybrid rather than combine both
- More time in math since that's where virtual lags most
- Having "advisory" teachers for virtual as well as on-site students
- Offering both synchronous and asynchronous (recorded) lessons

- Having teachers rather than students move from class to class (call to call)
- Using Odyssey educational software

A “virtual academy” will be offered beginning January 4.

2. Enrollment. Alex reminded the board that there will be a second Count Day in February, which will have budget effect since enrollment always declines during the year. Fortunately the month to month drop-off is lower this year than it's ever been. COVID is probably a factor since it reduces mobility.

3. Free and Reduced Numbers. Alex said the report at the last board meeting of a lower free and reduced rate in our students was a mistake. A full demographic report will be presented at the next meeting.

4. COVID Update. Alex reported that COVID rates continue to trend in the wrong direction.

5. Staff Appreciation. Alex said the board should be aware that the staff has responded in extraordinary fashion to the challenges of this year, working longer hours with more inventiveness and creativity than ever. Larry said please express our thanks.

F. Financials.

1. Audit Update. Kim said the auditors are on track to get the 2019-20 audit completed in January. It was originally due at the end of December but we obtained an extension so the audit for the first time will not be overdue.

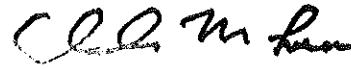
2. October & November Reports. Kim presented financial statements showing that revenue has exceeded budget by roughly \$62,000 as of November 30, while expenses have been under budget by \$14,000 year to date. On motion, the statements were approved.

3. Revised Budget. Kim presented a revised budget based on actual enrollment and other updates. On motion, the revised budget was approved.

G. Trine Report. Emily Gaskill summarized her site visits over the past two months. Her observation was that Success has made great improvement and all three schools are operating excellently despite the pandemic.

H. Public Questions and Comments. Michael Dunn, who has two kids attending Career, said he wanted to share a parent’s perspective. It would be highly appreciated by parents to have an identified standard for when on-site operation will resume. Also, is the decision on on-site operation taking into account the low risk to children from COVID and the harm to children of not going to school? His kids, who are in high ability classes, have nothing to do for about half the day. Some teachers are doing a remarkable job in virtual teaching but overall the quality of education is significantly lower with virtual learning compared to when kids were going to school. Alex said he’ll discuss with the team and respond. Dan Adams said the board appointed a committee to consider the question and the decision was to follow the county health department recommendation, which at that time meant resuming but with worsening COVID conditions now precludes even hybrid operation and requires all virtual. This is very frustrating – board members are parents, too, and know all the downsides of kids not going to school - but COVID is a serious risk to teachers and other staff, and we don’t want to be less protective of staff safety than the majority of schools, which means following the county health department recommendation.

There being no other public comments, the meeting was adjourned at 7:13 pm.



Charles M. Loeser, Secretary