



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes February 24, 2021

Zoom Conference Call
Atmosphere Academy Charter School
5959 Broadway
New York, New York 10463

Board Members Attending

Dr. Michael Lagas
Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.
Mr. Mervin Burton
Mr. James Spitzer
Mr. Alan Dillon

Board Members Absent:

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Colin J. Greene
Mr. Bryan Fryer (left after item 6.1)
Mr. Peter Markey (left after item 6.1)
Mr. Christian Roman
Mr. Benjamin Pah
Mrs. Katherine Brennan
Mrs. Elizabeth Kelly
Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum
Ms. Lena Litvak (left after item 6.5)
Mr. Darryl Jenkins (just for item 6.4 and 6.5)
Class of 2020 Alumnus (just
for item 6.5)
No other public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

At approximately 5:06PM, Dr. Lagas opened the conference call and called the Board meeting to order.

Agenda Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

No Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

Agenda item 3. Board Reports

The Accountability Committee met this month. The Board provided a summary of the meeting related to Officer Evaluations.

The Governance Committee met this month. The Board and Mr. C. Greene provided a summary of the meeting, in which the Board discussed adding board members in the future, our SUNY HS application, and partnering with different organizations like the Island School.

The Finance Committee topics were reviewed during subsequent agenda items, so no report was given.

Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public

There were no comments.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

The board had no objections or additions.

Agenda Item 6.1. Finance Update

Mr. Fryer presented the financials for the month ending 1/31. Our cash balance at the end of the month is much higher now than it was at this point last year. The per pupil funding is partly responsible for this increase. There was a slight change in the per pupil funding for P5. We also have more students attending from other school districts, resulting in more funds coming in.

Mr. Fryer also discussed that there are still outstanding grants receivable. Mr. Fryer is working with the DOE to get all payments sorted out to ensure that we are receiving the proper funds.

Mr. Fryer presented the P&L for Atmosphere, and explained that Atmosphere is currently under budget for operating expenses. Mr. Fryer gave the Board his projections for the rest of the year.

Mr. C. Greene discussed billing topics related to our facility funding.

Mrs. Kelly discussed our SPED funding and some of the obstacles that Atmosphere ran into this month. Mrs. Kelly held multiple meetings with the DOE to ensure that she was submitting our SPED billing correctly, as there was a change in the way the DOE processes billing this cycle. The billing has since been submitted and accepted.

Mr. Rosenblum and Mr. C. Greene discussed the potential to switch banks. It was determined that this would not take place until at least the summer.

Agenda Item 6.2. Board Minutes

Mr. Rosenblum presented the January Board meeting minutes for approval by the Board. These were sent to the Board in advance for their review.

Mr. Spitzer moved to approve the board meeting minutes for January 2021.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. J. Greene, Mr. Spitzer, Dr. Lagas

Vote no: None

Motion adopted. January minutes approved.

Agenda Item 6.3. Achievement Update

Mr. C. Greene discussed updates to the State Test. It is still unclear when our students would take the State Test. Mr. Greene discussed the possibility that students may opt out, given that many are still learning remotely.

Ms. Litvak provided an update on Achievement. She discussed our policies related to student accountability, such as ensuring that students keep their cameras on during class and limiting distractions in the household for remote students. Ms. Litvak discussed the delays related to Achievement and the fact that students are learning at a slower pace than in previous years, given that most are still remote.

Ms. Litvak presented data from the most recent Achievement day, which took place over mid-winter recess. She also presented some predictions around how our students would perform on the State Test, given data from previous years.

The prediction notes that our Class of 2021 students would perform better than the Class of 2018 and Class of 2019. Mr. C. Greene noted that if the State Test does not take place until next year, our current 8th grade students would not be included in our data. This would be unfortunate given that they have attended Atmosphere for three years and have built the skills at Atmosphere that they need to perform well. There would be other challenges associated with the State Test, depending on what SUNY decides.

The Class of 2022 is performing slightly worse than Class of 2021. That said, there is still very promising data about how our Class of 2022 students would do on the State Test, given data from previous years.

There are more obstacles for the Class of 2023, as this is their first year at Atmosphere and some of the students have never been inside our building to understand how Atmosphere operates. That said, there is still very promising data for the Class of 2023, especially given that most students are remote.

Ms. Litvak is also working with the instructional leaders, such as our English Instructional Leader, to ensure our students are growing academically and moving in the right direction. She noted that remote learning presents a problem around student interaction and lack of focus, which causes things to move slower than in previous years. Mrs. Brennan noted that our instructional materials, such as posters, are also not available remotely, which makes it difficult for remote students to engage with those materials.

Mr. C. Greene verbally recognized Ms. Litvak, Mrs. Brennan and Mrs. Kelly for their diligence in maintaining our high bar around student outcomes and noting that our data looks better than we were expecting in this remote world.

Agenda Item 6.4. High School Placement Update (discussed after item 6.5)

Mr. Roman and Mr. Jenkins presented on the high school placement process.

Mr. Jenkins spoke about the differences related to the high school placement process pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19. Families are unable to attend in-person events as they would in previous years. More meetings and open houses are virtual. Mr. Jenkins discussed that the deadlines for HS applications have been pushed back, and rolling admissions have been put into place due to the pandemic.

Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Roman also touched on the comparative data between this year and previous years. We are pushing for students to apply to multiple schools (public, private and charter) so they have options of where to go. There has been a slight increase of students who are applying to schools out of state and out of NYC, as the pandemic is causing families to want to leave the city. Almost half of Atmosphere's 8th grade students are also taking the exams necessary to attend specialized schools, which is fantastic.

Atmosphere has been able to form new partnerships with 11 high schools this year, in addition to the schools with which we already work, to ensure more of our students apply and get accepted.

Agenda Item 6.5. Alumni Update (discussed prior to item 6.4)

Mr. Roman had a class of 2020 alumnus speak about his experience at Grace Church School. The alumnus spoke about his experience in high school. He is doing hybrid learning right now, so is in person some days. The school is different from Atmosphere when it comes to student demographics. The alumnus spoke very eloquently about some of his experiences with his teachers as well. The Board asked the alumnus a few questions about his experiences. The alumnus mentioned Atmosphere's Achievement program, and how it prepared him well for high school. The alumnus also spoke about the social aspect of remote learning, and how it makes it more difficult to make friends. The alumnus has also been able to make friends through TEAK outside of school. All in all, things are going very well for the alumnus and he is very happy at his current school.

After the alumnus left the meeting, Mr. Roman spoke briefly about an alumni survey requesting feedback on their current experiences. He spoke about the schools that they currently attend. Mr.

Roman will continue to invite alumni to Board meetings to speak on their experiences.

Agenda Item 6.6. Student Recruitment Update

Mr. Rosenblum provided updated student recruitment numbers for the Board. Atmosphere's application numbers are moving in the right direction. The open houses that have been planned with partner elementary schools have been helping increase the number of applications. Mr. Rosenblum will keep pushing to get application numbers up, and ensure that as many families as possible are engaged with Atmosphere Academy.

Agenda Item 6.7. Q2 Update

Mrs. Brennan provided an update on Q2 academic performance numbers and compared them with Q1 numbers. There is an increase in As in Q2 across all three grade levels. There was also a slight increase in our 6th grade failure percentage between Q1 and Q2. This data is in alignment with the data that Ms. Litvak presented earlier in the meeting.

Since the middle of the quarter, the number of students with 2 or more Fs has decreased, which is something to celebrate. That being said, Mrs. Brennan will work to ensure that the number drops even further. Our failure percentage is still higher than it was last year. The same is true of students with 4 or more Fs.

Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. Brennan spoke about the intervention steps that Atmosphere is taking to ensure students get up to speed and grow academically. Intervention teams have been added in 6th and 7th grade. Atmosphere will utilize its usual summer school program, but will also create a culture summer school program for students with high absences and high demerit counts. The curriculum for both summer school programs will be adjusted to reflect learning loss during COVID-19.

Mrs. Brennan also spoke to some of the meetings that the officers have held with parents to stress the urgency of student academic crisis with parents.

Mrs. Brennan also discussed the use of Go Guardian, a new program that Atmosphere instituted that allows us to monitor what students are doing on their school devices during class time.

Mr. Pah shared the STARS data for Q2. Our number of STAR students has increased slightly since Q1 of this year, but is still below Q4 of last year.

Mr. Roman shared the Culture data for Q2. The data this quarter seems to be more accurate than last quarter, with less students getting core values honors. This means that more teachers are entering demerits and merits into our system correctly. Mr. Roman spoke about some of the common demerits that we are seeing. The merit data is looking promising, and shows that students are receiving positive reinforcement for positive behavior. The number of merits given out between quarters has also increased greatly.

Agenda Item 6.8. Vendor Relationships

In the interest of time, this agenda item will be discussed at another meeting.

Agenda Item 6.9. ESIC IMAT Conference

In the interest of time, this agenda item will be discussed at another meeting.

Agenda Item 6.10. Reopening Update

In the interest of time, this agenda item will be discussed at another meeting.

Agenda Item 7. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 8. Executive Session

No Executive Session was held during this meeting.

Agenda Item 9. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Agenda Item 10. New Business

There was no new business.

Agenda Item 11. Adjournment

At approximately 8:21 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. Burton, Mr. Dillon, Mr. J. Greene, Dr. Lagas, Mr. Spitzer

Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.