



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes March 29, 2023

Atmosphere Academy Charter School
Zoom Meeting

Board Members Attending

Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.
Mr. Alan Dillon
Dr. Michael Lagas
Mr. Colin J. Greene (ex officio, CEO)

Board Members Not In Attendance:

Mr. Jim Spitzer
Dr. Tzvi Bar-David

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum
Ms. Elizabeth Nash
Mr. Christian Roman
Mrs. Katherine Brennan
Ms. Lona Nguyen (for items 6.2-6.6)
Ms. Joye Rice (for item 6.1)
Mr. Lena Litvak (for item 6.2)
Mr. Peter Markey (for item 6.3)
No other public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

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

Agenda Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was not performed as the meeting was held over Zoom.

Agenda Item 3. Board Reports

The Finance Committee met this month. Those topics will be covered later in this meeting.

The High School Committee and Middle School Committee met this month. Those topics will be covered later in this meeting.

Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public

There were no comments offered.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. C. Greene presented the Agenda for approval by the Board.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the agenda for March.
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Dr. Lagas, Mr. Dillon and Mr. J. Greene
Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

Agenda Item 6.1. Student Recruitment Update

Mr. Rosenblum introduced Ms. Joye Rice, Special Projects Operations Manager, to give an update on Student Recruitment. Ms. Rice presented marketing and advertising strategies that Atmosphere used this year, including bus ads, tv ads, magazine ads, street marketing and other

outlets. Ms. Rice highlighted the pros and cons of each advertising method and spoke about the strategies that Atmosphere will continue utilizing in future years. Atmosphere is doing more community outreach to ensure all community stakeholders spread the word about Atmosphere.

Ms. Rice went on to present efforts undergone by the Community Manager in recruiting since she joined Atmosphere. She also spoke about some of the challenges that Atmosphere faced during recruitment this year. Some partner community centers have been closed and have no reopening date, making it difficult to engage with community centers. Some partner schools were unable to join Zoom or virtual open houses due to lack of Wi-Fi or personal technology. Atmosphere has had lower open house attendance rates than in previous years. They had many sign-ups, but some families did not honor their sign-up and attend.

Ms. Rice spoke about some of the next steps that Atmosphere is taking post-Lottery to engage with more families and engage with those families who accept their seat. This includes summer family events, more canvassing and more open houses.

Agenda Item 6.2. Achievement Update

Ms. Litvak presented Achievement data, including data from the midline exams which were recently given by Atmosphere. The math midline allows Atmosphere to predict proficiency levels and percentages per grade level on the New York State Exams taking place in the coming months. Based on the data, 8th grade projected to be 50% proficient, 7th grade is projected to be 45% proficient and 6th grade is projected to be 45% proficient. Ms. Litvak spoke about comparisons to other schools. Atmosphere wants to ensure that it is hitting its internal goals in terms of proficiency in addition to beating other schools in the district and the state, as they have in previous years.

The English midline also allows Atmosphere to predict proficiency levels and percentages per grade level on the New York State Exams. Based on the data, 8th grade is projected to be 50% proficient, 7th grade is projected to be 40% proficient and 6th grade is projected to be 37% proficient.

Mr. C. Greene and Ms. Litvak also discussed blanks being left on some of the internal exams that students are taking. Atmosphere's instructional leaders are taking steps to ensure that there are no blanks on exams moving forward. Blanks count for 0s on the New York State Exam, which will count heavily against students, something Atmosphere wants to avoid. Ms. Litvak also discussed pacing. Proctors will attend coaching sessions to ensure they keep pacing in mind during exams. Students will also be further trained to ensure they understand how important pacing is when taking timed exams.

Mr. C. Greene spoke about officer involvement in Achievement. This school year, Atmosphere's officers are still involved in Achievement, but not to the extent that they were involved in previous years. Atmosphere's officers can gauge whether other leaders and teachers are running achievement effectively. The board asked more about pacing and what exactly the issue is. Ms. Litvak provided some more information on that topic. Ms. Litvak presented the total number of students with blanks for each question type (critical response or multiple choice) on each midline exam. Ms. Litvak spoke about both

spacing and effort. Both of those are critical attributes that allow scholars to succeed on exams. Atmosphere is seeing that there are less blanks on the math midline than there were on the English midline.

Ms. Litvak and Mr. C. Greene spoke about scoring and next steps. A review for the math and English midlines have been completed. "Sprint" tests will be given over the course of the next 2 weeks to see growth and needed improvements on the proctoring practices. Ms. Litvak also presented data on the latest English multiple choice "sprint" exam that was given.

Agenda Item 6.3. Finance Update

Mr. Markey presented the financials for the month ending 2/28/2023. He presented the enrollment numbers at the end of February, as well as Atmosphere's revenues and expenses for the month of February. At the end of February, Atmosphere's cash position is at \$3.2 million. Year-to-date, Atmosphere shows a revenue just under \$18 million. Mr. Markey presented the statement of financial position. A large portion of the February expenses includes the cost of the Europe and Spain trips for Atmosphere's high school.

The board asked about numbers at the end of the year. Mr. Markey noted that this is something that Atmosphere is still working on. Atmosphere thinks that it will either be break-even or have a positive net income at the end of the year. Mr. C. Greene noted that currently, Atmosphere will have a cash deficit at the end of June. There are some solutions that Atmosphere is exploring including being reimbursed by the DOE for real estate taxes and exploring additional grant funds. Mr. Markey gave an update on the real estate taxes, which will be reviewed by Mr. C. Greene and Mr. Rosenblum. ESSER-3 is a multi-year grant that includes SY 23-24. Mr. Markey noted that we may be able to submit an amendment to get more funding through ESSER-3 prior to June 30th. Mr. C. Greene noted the tools that Atmosphere has put in place to assist with cash and budget management, but this system should have been rolled out earlier to get ahead of cash issues like this.

The board discussed steps for next year to ensure cash is not tight moving forward. This will include robust modeling for major and minor expenses alike.

Agenda Item 6.4. Board Minutes

Mr. Rosenblum presented the February Meeting Minutes for approval by the Board.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the Board Meeting Minutes for February 2023.
Dr. Lagas seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Dr. Lagas, Mr. J. Greene, and Mr. Dillon

Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Minutes approved.

Agenda Item 6.5. Middle School Update

Mr. C. Greene presented an update on Middle School intervention. The Missing Work Tracker allows leaders and teachers to see the real time status of any missing work. It also tracks fidelity to the policy by ensuring teachers are entering the proper information and following-up on assignments properly. Ms. Nguyen created the Missing Work Tracker that was then displayed to the board. The data is automatically pulled from PowerSchool. Officers are now able to have more sophisticated conversations with mid-level managers around their department data. Ms. Nguyen provided more information on the process from a teacher's perspective. Mr. C. Greene noted that the steps are right at the top of the document so teachers can easily note what needs to be done. The board asked who sees this document. Ms. Nash responded that all instructional stakeholders, including teachers, look at this document and use it to their advantage. The board asked about reception of the document. Ms. Nash, Ms. Nguyen and Mr. C. Greene replied that this tracker helps provide a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, so they are grateful for the structure as it was not previously in place.

Mr. C. Greene presented regarding the Quality Control Committee (QCC). This is a committee made up of Atmosphere's leaders and allows them to do formal observations on each grade level. Leaders fill out a Google form while doing audits during quality control committee meetings. This form goes through multiple domains that teachers are evaluated on. Additionally, there is a culture walkthrough form and an operations walkthrough form for leaders to fill out. During quality control committee meetings, leaders split into groups and do rounds of classrooms and facilities. The groups are able to rotate from room to room so every teacher and classroom is seen. Mr. Roman provided the data on the culture report card and provided reasoning for each of the ratings that were given. Mr. Rosenblum commented on the operational items during the QCC, including creating a more robust grading rubric and Google form for leaders to complete. Mr. C. Greene noted that scores will be justified with pictures and anecdotal evidence.

Mr. Roman presented the Black History Month event that took place on February 27th. Scholars were able to learn about Black history through food and culture. HBCU graduates spoke about their experience going to college. Students were able to eat "soul food" provided by a local black-owned business. This event was planned in tandem with Atmosphere's Social Studies Instructional Leader and Social Studies Associate Manager.

Mr. Roman presented data on High School admissions. 13 students are still undecided in terms of their high school. By the end of this week, those 13 students will be put on a path to selecting their school. Over 75% of Atmosphere's 8th graders have applied to Atmosphere's high

school, although all current 8th grade students will automatically be given a seat. 27.8% of Atmosphere's current 8th graders applied to public schools. Some of those students are not interested in joining Atmosphere's high school. Mr. Roman wants to ensure that scholars are not going to lower-tier schools. Two of Atmosphere's students have been accepted to Independent Schools – Horace Mann and Concord Academy. One student will be attending LaGuardia High School of the Arts. No scholars were accepted to specialized high schools through the SHSAT exam. There are summer programs that can help get students accepted to those schools at a later date. There are 12 students that have been accepted to Parochial High Schools.

Agenda Item 6.6. High School Update

Mr. Roman noted that Atmosphere has two assemblies per week for the high school that take place at the end of the school day. Many different topics have been covered during these assemblies, but most recently, alumni have returned to Atmosphere to speak about their experience in college. The alumni are only a few years older than Atmosphere's high school students and are setting a great example for them in understanding where they can go in the future. Mr. C. Greene presented a video of one of Atmosphere's alumni speaking to students.

Mrs. Brennan spoke about AP/Regents prep in the high school. There were some structural conflicts that Atmosphere ran into when preparing for AP/Regents prep. Teachers will be given a list of students that need to attend AP/Regents prep sessions. Saturdays are being utilized to hold AP and Regents prep sessions. Select scholars attend these sessions. Scholars have taken mock AP exams, taken midline exams and broken up into target groups to address specific areas of growth. Teachers are invested in coming in on Saturdays to provide this extra instruction.

Mr. Rosenblum presented pictures from the Europe Trip where scholars visited Rome, Paris and London. This was an incredibly impactful experience for scholars and staff alike.

Mrs. Brennan presented pictures from the 10th grade UN trip. Students were able to get a tour of the UN, including the space where the general assembly meets. Students were able to learn more about the nuances of the United Nations and global politics in general. 10th grade students also went to the African Burial Ground and National Museum of the American Indian. These activities were directly related to their Social Studies and English courses. The 9th grade went to Roosevelt Island, Guggenheim, the Jewish Museum and Carnegie Mansion. Mrs. Brennan also spoke about some of the logistical issues that took place on Roosevelt Island.

Agenda Item 7. Executive Session

At approximately 7:50 PM, the Board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss:

- a) the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation.
- b) the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value.
- c) discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation.

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Dr. Lagas, Mr. J. Greene, and Mr. Dillon

Vote no: None

After the discussion, at approximately 8:19 PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

Mr. Dillon moved to exit Executive Session.

Mr. J. Greene seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Dr. Lagas, Mr. J. Greene, and Mr. Dillon

Vote no: None

Agenda Item 8. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

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 8:19 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Atmosphere Academy
March 29, 2023

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Dr. Lagas, Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.