

MINUTES OF MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of

NEW ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL OF OSCEOLA COUNTY, INC.

D/B/A MAIN STREET HIGH SCHOOL

January 25, 2021

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of New Alternative Education High School of Osceola County, Inc. d/b/a Main Street High School was held on Thursday, January 25, at 4:30 p.m. In light of Executive Order 20-69 (Emergency Management – COVID-19 – Local Government Public Meetings), dated March 20, 2020, which allows the Governance Board to “utilize communications media technology, such as telephonic and video conferencing,” this meeting was conducted by the Governance Board via electronic communication and will be live-streamed on Zoom.

The following Governing Board Members were present via Zoom video conference: Charlie Barnett, Board Chairman; Gary Smith, Treasurer; Marvin Pitts, and Belinda Kirkegard.

Also present via Zoom video conference were: Thom Jackson, President & CEO, EdisonLearning; Dr. Sherrell Hobbs, SVP Achievement Operations and Results, EdisonLearning; Ken Edwards, Chief Financial Officer, EdisonLearning; Michelle Schmitt, Senior Controller, EdisonLearning; Jennifer Anglin, Director of Career and Technical Education Programs, EdisonLearning; Dr. Eunice Casey, Director of Specialized Student Services, EdisonLearning; Marines Alvarez, Human Resources, EdisonLearning; Ralph Arza, Principal, Arza and Associates; and Luis Sullivan, Assistant to Mr. Ralph Arza.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 P.M.

A quorum was present.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Barnett and Dr. Eunice Casey recorded the Minutes.

Chairman Barnett welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance.

There was no public input.

Consent Items

The first order of business was the December 10th Board Minutes which were approved on a motion by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Pitts.

Governance Items

Mr. Jackson shared with the Board, that given the urgency of the issue at hand, it was important to convene this meeting. He explained that about three weeks ago he received an urgent request from Mr. Arza, to meet with regards to 9 areas of concerns raised by Dr. Pace, as follows:

1. Lack of Certified Personnel

2. Enrollment
3. Decreased average daily attendance
4. Lack of progress monitoring
5. Student progression
6. Data reporting
7. Graduation rate
8. Students in the DJJ System
9. Lack of urgency with response to the district's concerns

With regards to certified personnel, Mr. Jackson stated that the board is aware of the challenges. However, in terms of having certified teachers in the core content areas, we were within compliance and had approval by the Board and the District, for those for whom we requested waivers.

With reference to enrollment, Mr. Jackson shared that the district was questioning the increase in enrollment over the time period between the October and February FTE. Mr. Jackson explained that this is typically what happens as feeder schools hold on to their students until after the first FTE count. Those students are withdrawn as it becomes clear to the feeder schools that they will not meet their graduation requirement. Mr. Jackson stated that we have engaged in conversations with the district to try to have those students enroll earlier but those students continue to be transferred late.

In terms of attendance, Mr. Jackson acknowledged that with all our efforts with phone calls and home visits, this is an area where we continue to struggle and average between 32 and 78%.

With reference to the lack of progress monitoring, Mr. Jackson shared that we were able to demonstrate to Dr. Pace that we have several progress monitoring tools that we currently use. However, her concerns were with regards to course completion rates. Mr. Jackson clarified that given our current model of giving each student "another chance" it is possible for us to have a student with multiple enrollments over a three-year span, showing as having earned only three credits. Mr. Jackson explained that unlike the district's response to have the student earn a GED and in line with our mission, we target these students in order to give them the opportunity to earn their high school diploma. Mr. Jackson shared that we demonstrated to Dr. Pace that we do have systems in place to progress monitor each student and provide them with the services each individual student needs.

On data reporting and the graduation rate, Mr. Jackson mentioned that as Dr. Hobbs and her team dug into the data, the more they were concerned about its accuracy. Mr. Jackson explained that we relied on self-reporting by the Principal Academic Officer (PAO) and because of the pandemic, we were not in the building to verify the data. Mr. Jackson reported that with respect to the graduation data, there was a clear distinction between what was being reported to us by the PAO and what was reported in the district's system. The primary example of this was the graduation rate that the PAO reported to us, was in the low to mid 30% and based on active students but the rate as reported by the district was 6.4% and included both active and inactive students. In providing context, Mr. Jackson mentioned that the typical graduation rate for dropout recovery schools is around 29% and that we exceeded this number in most of our other schools.

Mr. Jackson explained that the lack of urgency with regards to the PAO and the leadership team at the school was also noted by Dr. Hobbs and Dr. Casey.

Mr. Smith inquired about the concern with regards to the 22 enrolled students who ended up in DJJ and whether all of the issues raised was as a result of not having enough resources. Mr. Jackson clarified that we do have students who enroll with us who are in various stages in the juvenile justice program and although some of them graduate, they still have their responsibilities and obligations to fulfill with the DJJ.

Dr. Hobbs then reviewed the school's organizational chart, the attendance process and tracking at the school, and all the tools and resources that we currently have at Main Street and as outlined in the Corrective Action Plan, we will implement to progress monitor and support students. Dr. Hobbs reviewed the identified staffing for data reporting purposes and described a more direct and granular approach in analyzing the school's data.

In reviewing the deficiencies, Dr. Hobbs clarified that some of the job functions were not being performed by the Academic Advisor such as the attendance, retention, and graduation tracking and using the data to inform student support. Mr. Jackson clarified that the plan is to add a resource with the specific responsibility of gathering, and collecting the data that is separate from the school itself, and reporting that data directly so there is more transparency in the data being reported and analyzed.

Mr. Jackson shared that the previous district administration did not make the systems available to the management company and we had to rely on the PAO to self-report the data which was then verified when we conducted school visits. However, because of the pandemic we were not able to visit the schools and verify the data. Mr. Jackson stated that the current school board administration is now making the system available to us directly and we now have multiple points of verification.

Mr. Barnett, asked for clarification with regards to the data and if we were referring to data in terms of attendance and the graduation rate or progress monitoring and student progression data. Mr. Jackson responded that the data included all of the above.

Mr. Pitts expressed concerns with regards to the incorrect data being reported by the PAO. Mr. Schroeder, the Academic Advisor interjected and stated that he was responsible for submitting the data. Mr. Barnett explained that the PAO was presenting the school's report to the board and that those reports did not show anything near the current 6.4% graduation rate and as a result of the PAO's Reports presented, he thought the school was around 30%.

Mr. Arza added that when contacted about the concerns mentioned, Mr. Jackson and Dr. Hobbs reacted immediately and that the Management Company is only as good as the data given to them. However, there has to be a level of integrity with the data that is given and what criteria is given along with the data. Mr. Arza shared that there will be a Board Meeting and workshop that he and Dr. Hobbs will be attending in case any issues come up with regards to this matter.

Mr. Jackson shared that moving forward, we need to ensure we do not have a repeat of what happened in terms of the graduation rate. The attendance, course completion and graduation rate are all intertwined and adding more reliable progress monitoring where our internal systems are

talking with each other and the appropriate individualized interventions are in place to address these, is included in the Corrective Action Plan.

With regards to the lack of sense of urgency, Mr. Jackson shared that when the team met with Dr. Pace and her team, the Corrective Action Plan was presented so she can see we were in fact responsive to her concerns, and were addressing each of them. Mr. Jackson said that Dr. Pace visited the school, reviewed the plan and asked that we add some weekly reports that include:

1. Percentage of active students compared to enrollment
2. Percentage of students in the 2021 cohort that are on track for graduation
3. Semester credits earned
4. Progress on staff vacancies
5. Plan to identify and track students

The Board Members requested that they also received copies of the weekly report being submitted to Dr. Pace. Mr. Jackson confirmed that these reports would be made available to the Board as well. Mr. Smith requested that we have a meeting in February for an update on the Corrective Action Plan.

Mr. Jackson shared that Dr. Pace mentioned some Title 1 deficiencies which the EdisonLearning Team is now investigating to appropriately address. Mr. Jackson also mentioned that in the meeting we learned that a number of reports which the PAO told us had been submitted to the district, had in fact not been submitted and was three weeks late. The PAO indicated to us that she submitted these reports but upon meeting with Dr. Pace, we learned that was not the case.

Ms Kirkegard raised a question with regards to the auditing functions of the Management Company and Mr. Jackson shared that the Management Team does conduct visits to each of the schools and verify the school's data. However, during the period in question, as a result of the pandemic, we did not sufficiently adjust our auditing function to check the data we were given and relied on the self-reporting.

Mr. Arza shared that he will relay that we had our meeting today and that we are definitely concerned and changing our plans to monitor this situation. Mr. Arza shared the best practice of uniting Boards in order to take advantage of best practices and an idea we should consider.

The final item for discussion was with regards to the leadership team at the school and the prevalent theme of this meeting. Mr. Jackson explained that as part of the corrective action that we are seeking to make a change, effective immediately, in the leadership team at the school which includes the PAO position and a change of the Academic Advisor. Mr. Jackson clarified that the current salary for the PAO position would probably need to be increased by about 10% and that the plan is to assign Dr. Hobbs as the Interim PAO at Main Street. This would give us the opportunity to identify whether this is just a leadership problem or whether we have challenges in some of the other instructional positions.

Mr. Barnett asked for a motion to approve the action plan, at which time Mr. Schroeder requested the opportunity to address the board on his behalf. The chairman declined this request, stating that the public's input was at the beginning and nothing was said.

Mr. Smith then motioned to approve, with a second by Ms. Kirkegard, that the Board approve the recommended Corrective Action Plan that addresses all of the concerns raised by Dr. Pace in addition to making the immediate change in the school leadership in terms of the PAO and the Academic Advisor.

On a motion by Mr. Pitts and seconded by Ms. Kirkegard the Board approved that Dr. Hobbs be appointed Interim PAO at Main Street until a qualified leader is in place at the school.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

By: 

Title: Chair _____