

**MEETING MINUTES
OF
CATALYST ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL**

October 1, 2024

Held in Person at Catalyst Academy Charter School and virtually Via Zoom

Trustee Attendees: Rachel Amankulor, Alison McCarthy, Kaylan Moore, Tom Walenchok, Majestic Lane

Other Attendees: Brian Smith, Kathy Clark, Meryl Johnson

Rachel Amankulor called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the September 3, 2024, meeting were reviewed. There were no changes. *Majestic Lane moved to approve the minutes from the August 6, 2024 meeting.. The motion was seconded by Rachel Amankulor and carried unanimously.*

Monthly Financial Update. Brian Smith provided a review of the August 2024 financials to the Board. Mr. Smith reported that overall, there has been positive financial movement in the past month. He attributed this to the fact that enrollment is around 320 scholars, which continues to hold above the adopted budget baseline of 305. However, Mr. Smith cautioned that although this increase in student enrollment will increase district tuition revenue, it will also provide a corresponding increase in some expenses, such as payroll/benefits related to additional special education personnel, the addition of a 1st grade classroom/teacher and additional scholar technology (e.g., chromebooks). Mr. Smith noted that additional areas where there will be increasing expenses vs the original budget include technology (for the purchase of staff laptops) and furniture. Regarding the increased furniture expense, the completion of the third floor opened up additional classroom and support spaces; however, at the time, the school did not properly account for the total furniture need during initial planning stages and need an increased number of large white boards, desks, chairs, etc. Furthermore, there is worn out furniture that needs to be replaced (broken desks, front entry/office furniture).

Mr. Smith informed the Board that the original 5-year Federal Charter School Program grant was set to end on 9/30/2024. However, the school asked for and received an extension to 9/30/2025. The scope of the extension relates to \$15,400 for professional development related activities; the school projects expending approximately 92% of the original \$1.3M grant budget. Additionally, the Maplewood Foundation issued a discharge notice to PNC Bank to convert the remainder of the low-interest loan balance to a grant (approximate balance was \$121 k). Mr. Smith also reported that Pittsburgh Public began making 2024-2025 tuition payments in September, which is slightly

earlier than in prior years. This helped to alleviate cash flow concerns that may have required tapping the line of credit.

Vendor Payments. Mr. Smith reviewed the vendor payments and noted that all expenses were in line. He reminded the Board that the rent payments are now higher; he also pointed out that there were invoices for painting the classrooms and other areas of the school as well as invoices for furniture. *Majestic Lane made a motion to approve the vendor payments. The motion was seconded by Tom Walenchok and carried unanimously.*

Human Resources Update. Mr. Smith reviewed the human resources report. He noted that there were no new hires to report; however there are a number of positions open including two (2) STEM teacher positions, an additional Counselor, a part-time Enrichment Teacher/Support, a School Security Guard/Resource Officer and a Grade Level Support Teacher.

Attendance Report. Mr. Smith reported that early indications for the school year indicate that attendance is improving. The goal in 2024-2025 is for only one out of three scholars to be chronically (33%) absent and have the average daily attendance at 95%. For August and September, the average daily attendance hovered around 92-93%. In addition, for August and September the chronic absenteeism percentage was 18% and 32% respectively. Furthermore, Mr. Smith noted that 28 scholars, representing about 9% of total enrollment, have exactly 90% attendance. They are calculated in the chronic absenteeism statistic.

Enrollment Report. Mr. Smith stated that enrollment is currently holding steady at around 320 scholars. He noted that the budget assumed 305; in addition, it is still expected to see additional student attrition in the coming weeks.

Academic and Operations Update. Meryl Johnson gave an update on the 2023-2024 PSSA scores in ELA and Math. Ms. Johnson notes that there was a significant improvement in the score over the prior year, with an 11% increase in proficiency in 3rd grade ELA and a 12% increase in 3rd grade math. In addition, 4th graders Math PSSA scores improved 10% over their math scores when they were 3rd graders. In science, the 4th grade received a 26.7% of students who scored either advanced or proficient. Ms. Johnson also spoke with the Board about MAP results and noted that that results indicate average growth in reading. She stated that the schoolwide growth in reading in the past year (fall to fall) was in the 41st percentile. Further, Ms. Johnson noted that nationally, Catalyst's achievement level in reading increased from the 21st percentile to the 24th percentile in the past year. Regarding math, Ms. Johnson stated that the MAP results indicate some improvement in math growth, as the schoolwide growth in math (fall to fall) was in the 27th percentile, up from 23rd last year.

Ms. Johnson also discussed with the Board that the beginning year of STEP assessments have been completed. She noted that about ½ of first graders entered at/above grade level, which reflected positive kindergarten growth. She noted that first grade last year did not maintain grade level growth expectations; however, growth is occurring across grade levels, but not keeping pace with grade level expectations (3 Steps per year). Ms. Johnson also spoke about the use of data to inform the next steps for the academic team including targeted PD and planning; focusing on math responsive block and high quality lessons with an eye towards PSSAs, augmenting the upper grade

classroom libraries with more rigorous, high interest texts, coaching from the Deans of Instruction, partnering with Literacy Pittsburgh for additional tutoring, and sharing data school and community wide during curriculum night and a staff meeting. Finally Ms. Johnson showed photos to the Board from when school began as well as from last week's spirit week – she noted that Thursday was “Royalty Day.”

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

The Board was reminded that the next meeting is scheduled for November 12th due to election day.