

MINUTES
of the meeting of the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
April 14, 2020

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Nevada held a public meeting on April 14, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting.

1. Call to order and Roll Call

Board Chair John Bentham called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. In attendance were Board members Travis Mizer, LeNora Bredsguard (left at 8:08 p.m.), Cody Noble, Sarah McClellan, Will Harty, Gary McClain, and John Bentham.

Also present was Principals Lee Esplin, Cesar Tiu, Ruby Norland, Christina Threeton, Jessica Scobell, Elaine Kelley, and Kate Lackey; as well as Somerset Academy Inc. representatives Bernie Montero and Suzette Ruiz. Academica Representatives Crystal Thiriot, Ryan Reeves, Marla Devitt, Marc Clayton, Trevor Goodsell, Matt Padron, and Gayle Jefferson were also in attendance.

2. Public Comment and Discussion

There was no public comment.

3. Student/School Achievement Recognition

Member Bentham acknowledged that the Somerset family had a student from the Somerset Stephanie campus pass away from a home accident. Principal Ruby Norland addressed the Board with a few words about the student and her family. Member Bentham called for a moment of silence.

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes from the February 18, 2020 Board Meeting
- b. Approval of EL Policy/Plan
- c. Approval of Recommendation from the Finance Committee:
 1. School Financial Performance (Not for Action)
 2. Approval of Initial Budget for the 2020/2021 School Year
 3. Acceptance of Grant Funds from:
 - a. Title IV A Sub Grant
 - b. School Safety Facility Improvements
 - c. CSP Grant for Aliante and Skye Canyon
 4. Approval of the Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment Lease for the 2020/2021 School Year

Member McClellan moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Member Noble seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

5. Academic Progress Reports and Updates on School Initiatives

Principal Elaine Kelley addressed the Board and stated that the Aliante campus was using i-Ready to distribute instructional lessons. The students were required to complete at least three ELA and three math lessons per week with two Zoom instructional meetings per week with the teacher. The teachers held two grade level Zoom meetings per week, with an administrator attending at least one of the two meetings. The administrators held Zoom meetings three times per week. Paper packets had been distributed amongst all grade levels and forty Chromebooks had been issued to families in need. Principal Kelley stated that, although about 20 students did not connect with teachers the first few days, all had received face-to-face contact soon after. One student, with a medical situation at home, had received paper packets.

Member McClellan asked for an explanation of the Academic Performance Framework contained in the support materials. Ms. Crystal Thiriot addressed the Board and stated that the Academic Performance Framework was included for informational purposes. The framework compared the campuses to the nearest district school and was based on Star ratings. Ms. Thiriot explained that, due to the current virtual learning situation, new Star ratings would not be issued. All Star ratings would carry forward. Mr. Trevor Goodsell addressed the Board and stated that the Academic Performance Framework would be similar to the Financial Performance Framework. If a charter was significantly low for two or three years it could lead to a notice of concern. He further explained that they were not currently being used and were for informational purposes only.

Principal Cesar Tiu addressed the Board and stated that distance learning was going well at the Lone Mountain campus. A survey was sent to the families and staff to help understand the successes and struggles of the students and teachers. Most of the concerns were related to families with more than one student in the school and differing amounts of work required. Laptops had been distributed to those in need. He stated that teachers were to be available for their students from 7:45 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. to help with any questions. If a student did not attend two Zoom meetings in a row an administrator would need to be contacted. Member Bentham asked about attendance, to which Principal Tiu stated that only two students had been absent in the previous week.

Principal Jessica Scobell addressed the Board and stated that during the first two weeks of distance learning the Losee campus team had worked to ensure that the families had access to technology and connectivity. Packets were handed out to parents who had requested. The elementary school had utilized a hybrid of Zoom, i-Ready, and lessons prepared and posted on the virtual learning portal on the website. The lessons included fillable PDF forms, reading, and different lessons that students could do at their own pace. Principal Scobell stated that many of the parents were essential workers and were not always available to help their children log on. Teachers posted videos of lessons that could be accessed at any time. Over one hundred Chromebooks had been distributed, with more to be distributed on Friday.

Principal Scobell stated that the middle and high school classes were using Edgenuity, which had previously been used for credit retrieval. Every core content course was aligned with Nevada State content standards. The lessons included activities that culminated in a quiz and students were required to complete three lessons per core class per week. The teachers held Zoom tutorial sessions, reset the tests and quizzes, and provided help and assistance for the students. For the AP, Anatomy, and Physiology classes, which did not have an Edgenuity equivalent, the teachers set up course work through Google Classroom. The AP students would be able to take an abbreviated and adjusted AP test in May. Principal Scobell stated that the elective classes had been delayed for two weeks to allow the core classes to stabilize. The elective teachers had started posting one to two assignments per week or an ongoing project that was monitored.

She further stated that weekly parent updates were being done to outline grading and attendance protocol. Member Bentham asked if the students who were just being issued technology had been participating. Principal Scobell stated that most families that were picking up technology on Friday had found that they needed additional devices because of multiple students in the family. Attendance the week before spring break had been 97%.

Principal Kate Lackey addressed the Board and stated that the majority of the Skye Canyon students were learning digitally. The teachers were developing lessons that were fully aligned to the standards and curriculum. The lessons were put on the main website and then on to the teacher pages to ensure easy access in one location. The teachers had also utilized Zoom, Seesaw, and Google Classroom to track, monitor, and receive digital lessons. Some students preferred paper packets, which were distributed at the campus. Twenty-five Chromebooks had been distributed to families in need. Principal Lackey stated that the campus had 100% participation; adding that the teachers were diligent about reaching out to the students. Principal Lackey further stated that the SPED department was meeting all the IEP minutes, meeting the IEP goals, and attending all the IEP meetings. Member McClellan asked if the grading system was determined by campus or if there was a system-wide standard. Principal Lackey stated that all of the campuses were aligned; however, the grading was somewhat individualized according to campus needs.

Principal Lee Esplin addressed the Board and stated that the teachers had started immediately to learn the different platforms, including Zoom, Google Classroom and i-Ready. The Read by Three coach had created videos using Foundations to ensure that the Read by Three students received sufficient support. The middle and high school teachers were using Edgenuity. The students were required to be on the platform 150 minutes per week for core classes and 100 minutes for elective classes. The SPED students were required to be on the platform for 100 minutes to ensure they were not overwhelmed but were learning. Principal Esplin stated that the departments and grade levels were collaborating using Zoom. He further stated that the AP teachers were collaborating with the college board to ensure that the students were prepared to take the AP exams.

Principal Esplin stated that they were working with CSN to find a time for the students who had met the prescreening requirements for dual credit to take the required assessments. He stated that he had been working with his team to ensure that the graduating students had an actual graduation ceremony. Discussion ensued regarding possible settings for the ceremonies for the Sky Pointe and Losee campuses.

Principal Ruby Norland addressed the Board and stated that they were working to meet the family's needs with the right amount of distance learning to ease family concerns. During the first two weeks they had used a combination of paper packets and distance learning in the elementary grades. This week they had transitioned to all virtual learning for all grades. Thirty-two laptops had been distributed to families in need. Principal Norland stated that elementary teachers were holding Zoom meetings for one hour three times per week. Middle school students were having one Zoom sessions every day. The Read by Three coach had worked with students from the first week. The RTI students would begin receiving extra instruction starting on Monday. Principal Norland stated that they had 100% attendance for the first week and 8 absences the second week.

Member Bentham asked for an explanation of the requirements for special instruction. Principal Norland stated that students who had scored less than 40% on the MAPS assessment were identified as Read by Three students. Those students received additional intervention in reading by meeting with a teacher from two to five times per week. RTI students met daily with a teacher in small groups to provide

intensive instruction. Those students were receiving the small group instruction in addition to the normal lessons.

Principal Christina Threton addressed the Board and stated that they had been providing a distance education checklist to the North Las Vegas campus families for each grade level; adding that the list was posted on the website, sent to each family via email, and posted on the teacher's Seesaw or Google Classroom. The checklist was for two weeks and included the assignments with due dates for the assignments. The teachers were using i-Ready, requiring one lesson per day, and genuine work to keep moving and progressing through the standards for the remainder of the year. Most of the teachers were using a flipped classroom model where they were providing the concept through different platforms such as power point or prerecorded video. They were using Zoom for question and answer sessions, group work and breakout sessions.

Principal Threton stated that they held staff meetings once a week and grade level planning meetings once a week. The SPED teachers were meeting with their students throughout the day to provide their minutes. The instructional aides were working with the Read by Three students in breakout rooms. Principal Threton further stated that all communication with students was being tracked on a spreadsheet. The average attendance was 97%, with about 35 students who did not participate. She was making calls and would visit homes in necessary to reach the students. They had distributed seventy laptops to families. Member Bentham asked for a report of the Saturday sessions that were held prior to the State closure order. Principal Threton reported that they had been able to hold three sessions with over 140 students attending each Saturday. The sessions were 2 ½ hours filled with SBAC prep, filling the gap, and testing strategies.

Member Mizer asked if parents had asked about Star ratings, to which Principal Threton replied in the negative. Member Mizer asked about the student retention rate. Principal Threton stated that the retention for the 2019/2020 school year had been about 75%. Ms. Thiriot stated that the preliminary numbers show about a 95% retention rate, with 8th grade being about 25 students short of being full.

Member Bentham welcomed comments from the Florida representatives. Mr. Bernie Montero addressed the Board and stated that, although Florida was operating a little bit differently, the distance learning was similar. Ms. Suzette Ruiz addressed the Board and stated that she had joined the principal meetings and was able to see collaboration of ideas and activities. She stated that the Board should be proud of the work and leadership provided by the principals and congratulated the principals. Member Bentham noted that the principals had developed and implemented a plan quickly to provide for the students.

Principal Kelley thanked Academica for their support through the transition to distance learning and Florida for the collaboration. She reviewed the principal cohort discussions and collaborations, including: twice weekly Zoom principal meetings, sharing of distance education plans, an ongoing text group, distribution of packets and technology, final exams and end of year projects, end of year promotions, self-evaluations, and the 2020/2021 PD calendar. Principal Kelley stated that system responsibilities such as purchase orders, grant approvals, payroll approvals, and the coordination of reports due to the state were being completed. She further stated that she would be using the CSP grant money to purchase Chromebooks and Chromebook carts for the Aliante campus. The purchase would provide each grade level teacher and each SPED teacher with a cart.

Member Bentham asked Member Bredsguard and Member McClellan, as educators, to comment on the reports presented by the principals. Member Bredsguard stated that she was pleased to see that the RTI students were meeting in small groups. Member McClellan stated that it was inspiring to see how well Somerset had been able to rise to the challenge much better than district schools.

6. Educational Assistance Update

Mr. Trevor Goodsell addressed the Board with an update on financial performance stating that, with the closure of the Strip and restaurants, there would be a shortfall in sales tax. He stated that Nevada was the fourth most sales tax reliant state for funding. Mr. Goodsell stated that notice had been received from the charter authority that the DSA would decrease 4% for the current year through decreasing the fourth quarter funding by 16%. He stated that, even with the decrease, Somerset was projected to run a surplus. Mr. Goodsell further explained that State grants were to be cut, with the exception of salaries. Member McClellan asked if repayment of funds previously received would be required, to which Mr. Goodsell replied in the negative. Member Noble asked how the cuts would affect the bond obligations. Mr. Goodsell stated that, although he was in contact with the underwriters and financial advisors, he did not yet know how the bonds would be affected; however, the difficulty meeting bond covenants would not be unique to Somerset.

Mr. Goodsell explained that the principals had asked for an expansion of the educational assistance program to include long term subs. He stated that the 2019/2020 budget had included \$45,000 with \$12,450 being issued to date. The amount would probably double with the end of the college semester. The amount issued for the 2018/2019 school year was \$35,000. Mr. Goodsell stated that, with some limits, expanding the program would be good. Principal Scobell stated that the campuses had many long term subs who were dedicated to Somerset; however, most lacked the financial resources to finish a program for licensure. Member Noble stated that most Board members were in favor of the expansion; however, they would need to be able to review and discuss the policy before voting. Member McClain asked what the 2020/2021 initial budget had contained for educational assistance, to which Mr. Goodsell replied that it had been \$90,000. Ms. Thiriot apologized that the policy that had been written had not been included with the support materials.

This item was tabled.

7. Review and Approval of Turf Replacement for the Sky Pointe Campus

Ms. Gayle Jefferson addressed the Board to explain the bid process and reviewed the bids received as contained in the support materials. She stated that the bids were evaluated using a rubric with a recommendation to select Green Living Services. The bid provided an eight-year warranty that would allow for up to 5000 students per day. Discussion ensued regarding the difference between the bids. Mr. Goodsell stated that bonds funds would be used for the turf replacement, which would leave approximately \$20,000 in bond funds. Member Mizer asked if the warranty contained any exclusions that the Board should know about. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and stated that he had reviewed the warranty and discussed the coverage with the provider. The provider expressed that the warranty would cover any defects as long as the turf was maintained correctly.

Member Noble noted that the bid contained options and asked if any of the options were being considered. Ms. Jefferson stated that option three would use the existing turf and place it on the hill on the west side of the campus. Principal Esplin explained that the rock that was currently on the hill often washed down onto the field. He further explained that if the rock were replaced with the turf it would provide an area for spectators to sit. Member Bentham stated that the approval could include an amount not to exceed and asked for a more accurate account of the money was left in bond proceeds after the base bid. Mr. Goodsell stated that, after the base bid, there would be \$24,453; adding that at 5.25% it was equivalent to \$1,656 per year. Member Noble stated that the difference would be negligible in comparison to the benefit to the school. Member Harty agreed that it would be negligible; however, given the current statewide shutdown, money was going to be very tight in the future. He stated that although all expenditures would need to be reviewed carefully he was in favor in this situation.

Member Noble moved to approve the bid of Green Living Services up to the amount of \$270,000, giving Principal Esplin the opportunity to negotiate options. Member Bredsguard seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

8. Review and Approval for NSLP to Include all Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Campuses

Mr. Goodsell stated that the DSA funding formula would be changing during the next legislative session to a weighted formula. One of the weights in the new formula would be free and reduced lunch, with participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as the only audited program to be used for verification of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch. He explained that the previous year counts would be used to calculate the weighted funding. The Somerset campuses that were not participating in NSLP for the 2020/2021 school year would not qualify for the weighted funds for the 2021/2022 school year. Mr. Goodsell stated that, although there would be some initial expenses to implement the program at the campuses, the program would become self-sustaining after about one year.

Member Bentham asked if the principals approved adding the program to their campuses. Principal Kelley stated that they understood the necessity; however, because of the restrictions involved with the program, they would have preferred to remain with their current lunch vendors. Member Noble expressed concern with beginning the program, along with the restrictions and added expenses, and not having enough facts available to fully understand the implications. Mr. Goodsell explained that he could not provide actual numbers because the funding formula would not be determined until the 2021 legislative session. He stated that once the funding was determined it would be too late to avoid the loss of the weighted funding for the campuses without NSLP; adding that the lost funding revenue would be detrimental to the financial strength of the system.

Member Noble reiterated the need for actual models showing the expected loss in revenue. Mr. Goodsell stated that the only information available to possibly use as a model was provided before the State closure due to COVID-19 and would not provide accurate models. Mr. Reeves stated that, although actual formulas were not available, the Charter Authority had been informed by the Department of Education that Care Act money being received from the federal government would be distributed based upon NSLP percentages. He further explained that the Department of Education would be testifying at the hearings and advising the legislature to follow that standard for the funding formula. Member Noble again expressed concern with being asked to approve the program without actual facts and figures. Member Bentham also expressed concern with the program and the restrictions it would bring to the campuses.

Member Noble asked if the vote could be tabled until Mr. Goodsell could provide models of the possible impact. Member Harty stated that, although he shared Member Noble's concern with the lack of actual facts, he understood that providing the facts before the legislative session was not possible. He stated that he did not like the prospect of weighted funding; however, he was prepared to accept the need to meet the requirements to avoid a funding penalty. Member Mizer also expressed an understanding of Member Noble's concern; however, he would vote to approve to avoid any potential funding loss. Member McClellan concurred with the need to approve to avoid any funding loss. Member McClain asked if delaying the vote would prevent the ability to begin the program. Mr. Goodsell stated that the timeline would be tight to meet the bidding requirements. Discussion ensued regarding the timeline for the bidding process and the startup costs for implementing the program.

Member Bentham asked if it would be possible to stop the program if the funding formula did not impact the system as predicted. Mr. Goodsell stated that, with a year to year contract, the program could be discontinued after one year. Member Noble stated that it was likely that implementing the program would be the best direction for the system; however, he was not yet satisfied that the Board was being given enough information to make a decision. Member Harty stated that any models or scenarios that could be provided would not be accurate until an actual decision was made by the legislature; adding that it would likely be a long and political process to determine the formula.

Member Mizer moved to approve the National School Lunch Program, as presented. Member Harty seconded the motion, and the Board voted to approve with a vote of 4 to 2, with Members Noble and Bentham voting in opposition.

9. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Revisions to the Somerset Financial Policies and Procedures Manual

This item was tabled.

10. Discussion Regarding Somerset Academy's 10th Anniversary

Member Bentham stated that an event or celebration should be held next year and asked the Board and principals to think of ideas for a celebration. He stated that the celebration could include a fundraising element for the Somerset Foundation.

11. Academica Announcements and Notifications

Mr. Reeves stated that, although Somerset Academy did not qualify for the Payroll Protection Loan, Academica would commit to pass any savings they might receive to help Somerset if needed; adding that they would continue to pursue any available grants that may help with the funding shortfall. Member Bentham noted that non-profits, such as education, may become eligible. Mr. Goodsell stated that they continue to pursue all avenues available for financial assistance.

12. Member Comment

Member Mizer stated that funding would continue to be a huge concern. Member McClellan thanked everyone for all the hard work at this difficult time. Member Noble stated that he had been impressed that the administrators, teachers, and Academica had worked hard to make the change to virtual learning seamless. Member Harty also noted the seamless transition and thanked the administrators and teachers for their efforts. Member McClain echoed the sentiments previously expressed.

Member Bentham stated that he had been made aware that the land next to the Sky Pointe campus would be available through a bankruptcy auction. He asked Academica to explore any options to purchase the land. Mr. Reeves stated he would begin the process of exploration into the property.

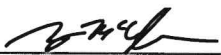
13. Public Comment and Discussion

Principal Threeton mentioned that, with the North Las Vegas lease would be expiring soon, other options could also be explored.

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Approved on: June 2, 2020


Gary McClain (Jun 3, 2020 08:33 PDT)

**Secretary of the Board of Directors
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas**