



The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School  
Board of Trustees meeting  
September 26, 2020. 10:00 a.m. By video conference.

*Board members on call:*

*Sarah Navarro  
Atalie Jacobs  
Craig Robinson  
Richard Pohlman  
Kiva Zytnick  
Wendy Pugh  
Marlena McWilliams  
Laure Fleming  
Caroline Hill  
Emily Hedin*

*Board members absent:*

*Jonathan O'Connell*

*Staff on call:*

*Justin Lessek*

The meeting was called to order at 10:05am and hosted via video conference. Members were welcomed by the Chair and participated in a brief team-building activity.

**Orders of Business**

1. Executive Session- New Trustee Vote
  - a. The board briefly went in to Executive Session (excusing any non-members except for the Executive Director). The board discussed the candidacy of Emily Hedin to join the board.
  - b. The board properly motioned and elected Ms. Hedin as a voting Ex-Officio member (a position generally reserved for a senior leader (Exec. Director, Principal, etc.) from a DC Montessori school).
  - c. Ms. Hedin was welcomed back to the meeting as a voting member.
2. Executive Director Updates
  - a. Approx. 20 students are learning in-person with remainder learning remotely. Discussion of specific day-to-day operations included information about the daily schedule, how students are moving through the building, outside instruction, and safety measures the school.
    - i. Board received an update on how the school safety policies are being implemented as potential cases of COVID arise.

- ii. Discussion about how the Re-Opening Task Force (membership of staff, trustees, senior leaders) are meeting and working together to ensure safety is a top priority.
  - b. Technology Update:
    - i. Justin reported that the decision to purchase computers at a 2:1 ratio (double what should have been needed) is paying off as the newer devices are proving better when remote learners experience issues.
    - ii. Frustrations currently around negotiations regarding Google Education.
    - iii. Like many schools, there have been some frustrations from families around technology- working intensely to address issues (and there is some positive feedback regarding attention to issues in parent survey).
  - c. School Enrollment:
    - i. Justin presented enrollment data by subgroup- exceeded goal for enrollment overall and at both the At-Risk and SPED subgroups.
    - ii. ELL enrollment is slightly lower than we had hoped, will need targeted outreach during recruitment.
    - iii. Typical daily attendance over first month has been 95%. A couple of students already demonstrating excessive absences and school is following up with family-based interventions.
  - d. Daily Schedule:
    - i. Board received a quick update on the daily experience for both in-person and distance learners.
  - e. Family Engagement:
    - i. Staff hosted families for goal-setting meetings the week before classes began- establishing strong relationships from the beginning.
    - ii. Have feedback from parents via survey that we will discuss later in the meeting.
    - iii. Family association conversations are going well- with most agreeing that the goal of such an organization is to support the school. Inclusiveness is also a top priority. Discussion currently about how to create an association without creating a hierarchy of families.
  - f. Academic Performance:
    - i. Justin presented BOY performance data as well as other data points (attendance, staff surveys, parent surveys)
    - ii. Board discussed some of the survey outcomes- directionally, the outcomes are positive.
- 3. Problem of Practice: Should we expand next year to offer both 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade? This would be an acceleration of our High School opening.
  - a. Brief presentation of growth data from Justin
  - b. Under current Charter- we can expand by 60 students next year, need to decide if we do this by adding just 8<sup>th</sup> grade, or both 8 and 9.
  - c. Discussion
    - i. Board agrees that this is within the decision rights of the Executive Director, but expects involvement of Board before final decision. Outlines expectation of a follow up call (before Oct 8 MySchoolDC deadline) to discuss.

- ii. During discussion, trustees offer the following items for consideration:
  - 1. What impacts will this decision have for future staffing (especially with such a small cohort of students as our first 9<sup>th</sup> grade)
  - 2. Design should consider what we (and students) desire for a HS experience and build staffing model from this information- answering “can we do that with such a small 1<sup>st</sup> cohort”
  - 3. Noting that requirements for courses are led by graduation requirements- can’t forget that we have to offer things like upper-level language instruction, health, electives, in addition to the full complement of courses. Query if that is financially possible with a small class.
  - 4. Looking at city-wide enrollment data trends, not all students will matriculate, so as they progress the cohort may, in fact, get smaller (exacerbating financial pressures).
  - 5. Next steps: meeting with trustees to present staffing model and financials against the ideal-state.
- 4. Academic Update
  - a. Deep dive of academic data
  - b. Deep dive of survey data
- 5. Approval of Meeting Minutes
  - a. Board reviews, considers, and approves minutes from August 15, 2020
  - b. Motion: Sarah Navarro, Second Laure Fleming- unanimously approved
- 6. Parent Trustee Election
  - a. A closed session to discuss and elect parent representatives to the Board.
  - b. The board properly motioned and voted on the two new parent representatives: Ms. Laura Masimini and Donice Leak
  - c. Members of the Governance Committee will call the new members to notify them of the vote and appointment with hopes they can join the next call.
- 7. Committee Updates
  - a. Ad-hoc School Opening TF (board and non-board participants)
    - i. TF members continue to meet and participate in re-open and safety conversations- salient points covered in ED update
    - ii. More complete update from committee at next meeting
  - b. Governance
    - i. Kuddos to Atalie for running a great process to bring on new parent trustees
    - ii. Request that all members complete the information tracker (link provided) to ensure we are up-to-date on board member skills v. board needs
  - c. Finance
    - i. Working with auditor to complete 990
    - ii. Brief overview of current finances
      - 1. Board discussed how finances are comparing to goals- currently outperforming FAR target

2. Financials in good position driven primarily by higher than expected enrollment.
  3. Noted slight (20K) variance in salary due to addition of gym teacher (as authorized due to higher enrollment)
- d. Ad-hoc Facilities
- i. Selected broker and considering facilities options for next year
  - ii. Will provide a larger update at next meeting- interested members are encouraged to reach out and join committee

#### **Next steps**

- Call for members to join the academic committee, if interested please let Laure know. Important work now is around understanding how to build systems to capture academic data at the "right level" to inform board.
- Justin will schedule time for call before Oct 8 to include board in decision about enrollments for SY 20-21.
- Governance Committee will welcome and on-board new members.
- ?? (Sarah was talking so fast I couldn't get everything here)

#### **Closing**

*Meeting adjourned at 12:47pm.*