RLOACS Board Meeting

Meeting Minutes November 15, 2016

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| Present: Absent: | Dr. Rob McBrayer, Chair; Eunice Spilliards, Vice-Chair; Greg Chambers, Treasurer; Amleht Alston; Anne Bridgers; Sergio Nuno; Dr. Karen Wicks, Executive Director; Les Wicks, Facilities Development  Guests: Ed Royall, RLOA’s Auditors Elliott-Davis; Prospective Member Deanne Spikes  Sheree Darien, Secretary |
| Venue: | Student Dining Hall |
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A quorum was present.

* **Old business:** 
  + **Open Meeting** - Chair

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Dr. McBrayer.

* + **Approval of Minutes of Board Meetings** – A motion was made by Eunice Spilliards and seconded by Anne Bridgers to accept the minutes of the October 18th Board Meeting, and the motion carried.
* **New business:**
* **RLOA New Mission Statement**– Dr. McBrayer read the mission statement.
* **Recognition of Middle School Young Scholars**  - Dr. Wicks introduced Mr. Gregg Dixon, the Young Scholars Teacher, who described the purpose of the Model United Nations, in which the Middle School Young Scholars participated for the second year in a row. He handed out certificates to each student and gave special recognition to Alana Couch and Amelia Gunderson for the awards they earned at the event. Dr. Wicks thanked all the parents who came for the Board’s recognition of their children and recognized Mr. Dixon and Mrs. Kattia Chaves (the Young Scholars Coordinator) for the impressive work of the Young Scholars Program.
* **2016 Audited Financials**– Ed Royall of Elliott-Davis distributed the 2016 audited financial documents to the Board and went over the audit in detail. He described the examination of Federal Programs’ expenditures, and indicated that there were no findings. Further, there were no findings of any kind. Mr. Chambers described the conversation with Mr. Royall on the previous Sunday with regard to the GAP requirement to include in the school’s liabilities our share of the state’s retirement shortfall, even though we are not required to cover the state pension fund shortfall and that he did not think it was appropriate. Mr. Royall indicated that he did further checking and the school has no choice but to present the financials with the inclusion of the retirement shortfall. Mr. Chambers made a motion to accept the 2016 Audited Financials as presented, Mrs. Spilliards seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.
* **Finance Report for October 2016** –
  + Dr. Wicks filled in for Bill Moser, who was absent, in presenting and discussing the October 2016 financial report, noting changes from the September financial report, in particular: Increases in Title I and IDEA allocations and Career Counselor, resulting in an overall increase of $188K in revenue. The budget balance increased by $151.3K, and the Fund Balance increased by $148K. The total income for the fiscal year is $2.500M and the net income for the fiscal year is $423.4K. The total checking/savings line is $148,033.18. The total liabilities are current as of 10-31-16.
  + The Chair called for the Board’s approval of the October financials. Greg Chambers made a motion to approve the October financials, and Amleht Alston seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
* **Update on New Campus Financing –**  Dr. and Mr. Wicks described the delays in the financing process. We are currently awaiting EideBailly recasting of the financial forecasts in light of the information that was not included in the original feasibility study. Once this analysis has been completed and re-submitted to the USDA along with the 2016 Audited Financials, we anticipate that the USDA will re-issue their take-out letter and the anticipation notes will go back into the market for pricing and then sale.

* **Board Resolution regarding Facilities Development Agreement and EideBailly Agreement** –
  + Facilities Development has offered to abrogate its agreement with RLOA in the best interest of the school’s moving forward with the financing for the new campus. Board members expressed concern that it was “unconscionable” not to pay Facilities Development for supervision of the construction of the new campus facility and reiterated their desire for Facilities Development to continue to perform this function, as they know Mr. Wicks has a vested interest in the financial health of the school and its long-term success. However, if his willingness to cancel the contract yet continue to provide the service will motivate the USDA to allow the bond process to proceed, the Board approved the Resolution to abrogate the Facilities Development Agreement. Ms. Alston made a motion to approve the Resolution, and Mr. Chambers seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The EideBailly Agreement to perform an updated financial forecast with current financial information was also unanimously approved with a motion by Ms. Alston and seconded by Mrs. Spilliards.
  + Mrs. Spilliards recommended that the Board form a Construction Committee consisting of Dr. McBrayer, Mr. Chambers, and Mr. Nuno to oversee the ongoing aspects of the new campus construction process for matters that need attention between Board meetings. Ms. Alston asked that Dr. McBrayer, Mr. Chambers, and Mr. Nuno come back to the remaining Board members with details of their role spelled out before the Board reaches a decision whether this committee should be formed.
* **School Updates**
* **Enrollment:** As of 11-11-16 enrollment is 629.
* **Make-Up Days Due to Weather:** We have notified staff and parents that we will run full Fridays instead of half-days on 11-11, 12-2, 12-9, 12-16, 1-6 while we await a decision from the district if we will need to make up all 8 days. Both Beaufort and Jasper Counties are making up all 8 days. The five days we are making up fall within the first semester classes. Any additional make up days will fall in the second semester.
* **Palmetto Electric Bright Ideas Grants:** All 7 RLOA teacher applicants received grants totaling $6,600 for the innovative proposals they submitted: Mr. Armstrong (engineering), Mrs. Brown (special education), Mr. Dixon (young scholars), Mrs. Hooper (special education), Ms. Moore (digital graphics), Mrs. Perez (science), and Mrs. Vasiu (math). We are excited to see what their students produce!
* **Teacher Evaluation System ADEPT/SAFE-T and SLO (Student Learning Objectives):** Dr. Stevenson submitted the HQ (Highly Qualifed) report on November 4, 2016 to the district. There are some areas we must review but overall we are seeing improvement in ensuring all staff members are either Certified, Highly Qualified, or have the appropriate degree. Dr. Stevenson is working closely with the Department of Education to assist with alternative route educators. Dr. Stevenson was recently trained to become a trainer for Mentor Teachers across the state. She will also be attending the New Teacher Evaluation Training the week of November 15. SAFE-T observations have started and teams are reminded to make sure that they schedule observations with their team mates and review teacher documents in a timely fashion. SLO mid year conferences will begin during the month of December.
* **Testing:**
  + **Association for Career and Technical Education Reports**: The ACTE’s My College Options reports have returned, and we are thrilled with the specificity found in them. Each report uses student data to match each child with recommended scholarships and recommended colleges, and the report even tells each high school scholar whether or not he or she is a match for the colleges of his/her choice. Peggy Jansen, high school liaison, has offered to run as many reports as we can scan and submit, so we are considering whether a portion of middle school students are mature enough to complete the documentation.
  + **Gifted and Talented Assessments**: The HMH COGAT and Iowa tests are completed and returned for scoring. Teachers did an excellent job following the schedule and supporting students appropriately (according to the administration guides).
  + **PSAT/NMSQT**: The PSAT/NMSQT has been completed. We elected to take the College Board’s makeup date (November 2) because of the storm days. This did not appear to allow students to prepare more, as a number of them did not utilize the practice packets. We did a grade 8/grade 10 workshop on the importance of the assessment in which we walked students through the guide and benefits of high scores. The passion for the assessment simply wasn’t there.
* **Elementary:**
  + - **Panorama Surveys:** We are part of a pilot program initiated by the SC Charter School Alliance to gauge student, staff, and parent feelings about our school’s culture and climate and the factors that we should consider in adjusting our programs. All classroom surveys have been completed for the 2016-2017 school year in grades 3-5. As a way to receive more data the SC Alliance has extended the surveys to Friday, November 11, 2016. Please see: Climate Surveys Report as of 11/7/16 under the ADEPT section for status.
    - **Professional Development:** Based upon teacher feedback from Professional Development, the Literacy Team (Jones, Ager, Floyd) will be working with Dr. Stevenson to make adjustments to ensure that teachers are being supported and any issues hindering the instructional process are addressed.
    - **Support:** Dr. Stevenson has begun supporting teachers by modeling in classrooms as an additional support system to assist teachers in grades K-5 as needed.
    - **Parent Conferences:** Parent conference letters went home on November 1, 2016. Conferences began the week of November 7, 2016. Conferences with administrators, the Special Education/Response to Intervention Coordinator, and the guidance counselor for students struggling academically and behaviorally are also in process.
    - **Literacy:** We had an Elementary Literacy Parade in which elementary students, teachers, and administrators dressed up as story book characters. The students and staff paraded in the parking lot and received applause for their costumes. The parade was a great success in encouraging reading. Dr. Wicks dressed up as Minnie Mouse and read and acted out Dr. Seuss stories and *Two Bad Ants* to elementary classrooms for an entire day to promote literacy.
    - **Emotional Support:** Dr. Stevenson and Ms. Barr are working closely with several students and families to help with student support in the areas of academics, behavior, and social well-being. They have also begun No Bullying presentations about the negative impact of bullying in grades K-5.
    - **Benchmarks:** Ms. Blathers is working closely with teachers to ensure that benchmarks are completed by November 11, 2016. The data will be analyzed and shared with teachers during the administrative PLC with Dr. Stevenson. This data gives specific information about how students are doing in specific content areas so that the team can determine areas of support or adjustment that are needed.
    - **Lions Club Hearing and Screening Tests:** The Lions Club spent two days on our campus doing hearing and vision screenings on our elementary students. From these screenings, parents will be notified of the hearing or vision needs of their children with follow up with pediatricians. This initiative was spearheaded by Nurse Williams. This is the third year the Lions Club has come at no cost to provide this needed service.
    - **Parental Involvement:** As a Title I School we know that Parental Involvement is very important. This has been a big push in the Elementary Grades this year. We have had successful events with grandparents and with dads. The next event will be with moms. We have received great feedback from parents and are looking at doing a community-based event for the Jasper County senior community.
* **Middle School:** 
  + - **Band Partnership with Jazz Corner**: David Masteller of the Junior Jazz Foundation (Jazz Corner) is working with Mr. Cameron (music teacher) to expand the middle level band program into actual training in playing instruments. The outreach to the Jazz Corner comes as a suggestion from Dr. McBrayer. Mr. Cameron has already expressed his interest in using one of the elective blocks in middle level as a set annual Art/Music block next year in which students can train in a single art (band or visual art) for a whole year over three years (as is offered in traditional schools). We are open to this and discussing how it would look next year.
    - **First Career Workshop**: Our first full-school career workshop was completed on November 2 while 8A took the PSAT/NMSQT. All students viewed the first Career Cluster video on fields in Agriculture/Agribusiness and began their first ever professional cover letter. As a teaching team, we had our work cut out for us, as students had lots of questions about the kinds of details that were appropriate, the formatting of the letter… so many questions! Students also completed what for many was their first ever career interest inventory. We will meet as a whole school again soon to continue this process of career exploration.
    - **Internet Connectivity**: Students have already communicated how much they appreciate the improvements in internet connectivity. When we go into classrooms, more students are working in programs smoothly than ever before. Of course, we have had problems in offices and we have all had problems with phones, but the children seem to be the beneficiaries of the new access points. As Ms. Moore gets the kinks worked out of the new configuration, we will see even more benefits.
    - **Mastery Connect for Personalization**: As we are in Phase 2 of personalization (more personal work, more small groups), teachers are now using Mastery Connect to assess student mastery for particular standards. This information is a key element in us knowing how prepared students are for standardized tests, and the standard assessment function comes along with the purchased benchmarks. This is a gift that just keeps giving. :)
    - **Model UN Recognition**: The middle level Model UN team brought us home two Distinguished Delegates this year, Alana Couch for Lebanon and Amanda Gunderson for Sudan. This is the second highest award available for Model UN participation, and we couldn’t be prouder of the hard work they had to do to achieve such excellence in their ability to argue a country’s issues.
    - **Personalization Partnership with Representative Jeff Bradley**: Dr. John Lundin of University of South Carolina Beaufort will be pushing into two B-level math groups (Grade 7 and 8) to support instruction for struggling students using Khan Academy during independent work time. This is on par with what we are already doing, as student groups have already been assigned online practice programs according to their strengths and weaknesses in all core areas. He has already observed classes for about four sessions, and beginning the week of November 14th he will pull two small groups (of about five each) to focus laser-like attention on efficient and effective growth.
    - **Palmetto’s Finest Site Visit**: We hosted the two-member Palmetto’s Finest Site Team. While they were not allowed to give us feedback, since this is a state-wide competition, they did offer some of their observations. It seemed clear that they have never visited a K-12 charter school in modular classrooms as they remarked on the number of roles the leadership team has in meeting the needs of teachers and students. We await word if we have made the cut for the next round.
    - **Panorama Surveys**: Middle schoolers completed the Panorama Survey in October.
* **High School**:
  + **Mentorship of Young Males**  - Dr. Wicks and Mr. Morse met with the gentleman Mr. Chambers recommended to mentor our young males. He as an impressive resume and many years of experience volunteering in schools mentoring male youths. He began this past week.
  + **Athletics:** Volleyball make-up games will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of the week of November 14th. Games must be made up to start the playoff system for a state champion. Varsity Girls and Boys Basketball has begun. We are again playing all home games at the Hardeeville Middle School gym. A good number of our games are in Charleston and beyond. We are completing the NCAA application process for our school and students.
  + **SCCANGo:** November 14th our seniors participated in SCCanGo in which they filled out college applications.
  + **Benchmarks:** Benchmark testing was completed this week. Teachers are analyzing data to determine the direction of the course of study.
  + **Spirit Week:** Our first Spirit Week will be the week of November 14th. The high school students will be allowed to dress down as long as they are dressed for the theme of the day. The themes are as follows:
    - Monday - Nerd/Geek Day (students dress in nerdy fashion)
    - Tuesday - Tuesday Twinsday (students dress alike)
    - Wednesday - Wear Red Day (wear red for red ribbon week)
    - Thursday - Throwback Thursday (students wear fashions from different decades)
    - Friday - Dress for Halloween
* **STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math)/PBL (Project-Based Learning)/PLTW (Project Lead the Way):**
  + - **STEAM Night:** The STEAM Team (Mr. Floyd, Ms. Blathers, Mrs. Traynham, Ms. Felder) are planning a STEAM Night in December. Mr. Floyd and Ms. Blathers are working to create partnerships with local companies such as Gulfstream, JCB, Mitsubishi and a couple others. We will have an area displaying STEAM projects in the classroom. We will also have art students at SCAD with displays. There will be tables set up with STEAM activities for parents and children to do together, and we will have a robotics field on which students can drive robots.
    - **AdvanED Accreditation and AdvancED STEM Certification:** We have paid to begin the process for accreditation and STEM certification through AdvancED. Mrs. Traynham has created a document to help us through the process and to keep us organized. This is a comprehensive look at all our programs and how students are progressing in their academic achievement and experience in career readiness. Dr. Wicks and Mr. Floyd attended the AdvancED Conference on November 11th to learn from those who have successfully gone through the accreditation and certification process how to achieve the level of growth needed to receive these two important distinctions that will set our school apart as an education leader.
    - **PBL:** Ms. Blathers and Ms. Felder are continually doing projects in elementary school classrooms that have taken the level of student engagement to new heights. Mr. Floyd and Ms. Traynham are looking forward to getting back to supporting PBL in middle and high school as they complete their mentorship with high school teachers in science and English.
    - **Robotics:** The robotics teams have had two competitions so far. They are up against a higher level of competition this year but are learning from the process of how to take performance to the next level.
* **Literacy:** 
  + **Support:** The Literacy team is continuing to support K-12 teachers through professional development, modeling, small group/grade level PLCs, and one-on-one support. All teachers, interventionists, and paraprofessionals who requested and signed up for modeling of guided reading groups have received support. Literacy professional development on October 31st focused on a review of the process and procedures for administering Fountas &Pinnell reading benchmarks and scoring running records in 1st-5th grade.
  + **Benchmarks:** Preparations have been made for Winter Reading Level benchmarks to take place K-5. Kindergarten will be administering the DRA2 literacy assessment and the window has been set from December 5th to December 16th. 1st-5th grade will be administering the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment and the window has been set from November 28th to December 16th.
  + **Literacy Night:** A Literacy Night has been scheduled to take place November 17th from 6-7:30pm for grades K-12. Sessions are continuing to be signed up for this week and fliers will be made to go home with students next week. We will use this opportunity to reach out to parents by inviting them to bring a covered dish starting at 5:00 to share in the cafeteria until the literacy activities in the classroom begin at 6:00. We expect greater parent participation by sharing a meal. Based upon teacher feedback from Professional Development the Literacy Team (Jones, Ager, Floyd) will be working with Dr. Stevenson to make adjustments to ensure that teachers are being supported and any issues hindering the instructional process is addressed.
* **Beta Club:** Beta induction will be held December 8, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. We will be inducting 31 students and moving 6 students from Junior to Senior Beta status. A Beta meeting for students who remained in good standing academically and behaviorally will be held on Wednesday, November 16th. We are planning a field trip for these students as a reward.
* **English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)/Title III:** We have great expectations about ESOL teachers’ development from all the knowledge, interaction, and professional experience offered in TESOL 2016 the ESOL conference held in Asheville, NC November 9-11. The district contributed toward expenses for Dr. Wicks, Mrs. Chaves, and four members of her team to attend. Lesson plans for the first quarter as well as monitoring instruments have been revised and filed for the Title III audit, but mainly to ensure that our commitment to serve our students is taking place to the best standards. Teachers who presented concerns about a few ESOL students have been required to hold a parent-teacher conference in the presence of an ESOL teacher. All conferences when there are concerns are documented. We appreciate assistant principals’ reinforcing this procedure as well as making sure all parental communication that is sent to all parents is translated according to Power School information on language for school-home communication.
* **Title I:** Parent-Teacher conference signing sheets and monthly phone contacts are due at the end of each month to our parent liaison. Intervention attendance and paraprofessionals schedules are due at the end of each month. The district contributed toward the costs of Dr. Wicks and Mrs. Chaves attending the Title I Conference in Myrtle Beach two weeks ago. They brought back great resources and information to help teachers improve the academic progress of our students.
* **Young Scholars:** The Middle School Young Scholars accomplished a second place for Honorific participation at the school level and two honorific delegates for two individual delegates at the Model United Nations. The High School conference will take place in February, and Cultures Day in May.
* **Special Education:** We are currently serving 48 students with Individual Education Plans (IEP). We have 3 students who are beginning the referral process. Ms. Lee completed the 2016-2017 Child Count and submitted it to the district. Mrs. Hooper received a Bright Ideas Grant in the amount of $1000 to purchase TouchPhonics to use with her students to increase their reading levels to grade level. Mrs. Brown received a Bright Ideas Grant in the amount of $600 to purchase an iPad to increase the work the Dog Club is doing. This will include reading with lower elementary age students alongside a dog.
* **Response to Intervention (RtI):** The RtI staff is working diligently with the Fountas & Pinnell program to improve the reading levels of all students who are significantly below grade level. They are pulling several students in Kindergarten and 1st grade who are in need of additional intensive interventions. Benchmarks will be conducted during the weeks following the Thanksgiving break to assess the growth of all of our students.
* **I.T.:** The new access points have caused some connectivity issues as Ms. Moore works through the protocols to align all access points within our network. The additional level of connectivity will make smoother use of technology across campus.
* **Guidance:** Individual and small group counseling is in full effect. With the death of one of our seniors, counseling needs have increased in the short term, and we have been blessed that counselors from sister charter schools and the local school district have assisted our guidance counselor in meeting the immediate needs of our students and staff dealing with grief. Classroom guidance is focusing on bullying and the effects of bullying. Holidays Around the World will occur in December as part of guidance support.
* **Board Vacancy**.
  + The Board interviewed Deanne Spikes, who came upon the recommendation of Anne Bridgers. After Mrs. Spikes exited the room, Mrs. Spilliards made a motion to appoint Mrs. Spikes as a Board member. Ms. Alston seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Spikes was invited to return to the meeting, and she was welcomed to the Board. Dr. Wicks described the initiation process. She then indicated that Mrs. Darien had not provided the name of a candidate from TCL and that a final seat still needs to be filled in order to fill the 9 Board seats. Mrs. Spilliards and Mrs. Bridgers indicated that they would approach additional educators/former educators, who will be invited to the January Board meeting.
  + Dr. Wicks provided a copy of a draft ballot, which presents the three members who are up for re-election, Mrs. Bridgers, Mr. Nuno, and Mrs. Spilliards. The ballot will be finalized and distributed to all stakeholders on November 28th.
* **Public Comment** – No public comment.

* **Executive Session** – No Executive Session.
* **Motion to Adjourn** – With no further business to discuss, at 8:36pm Mrs. Spilliards made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Nuno seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.