



## Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information	
<b>Date:</b>	October 15, 2014
<b>Time:</b>	7:00pm
<b>Location:</b>	Renaissance Academy, 3435 North 1120 East, Lehi, UT. 1 <sup>st</sup> floor in the Rousseau room (southwest corner classroom)
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	November 5, 2014

Attendee Information			
Board Members		Invited Guests	
Attended	Name	Attended	Name
x	Carolyn Bayly, Board Chair	x	Jared VanOrden
x	Mariah Fralick, Board Vice Chair	<b>Public in Attendance</b>	
x	Ryan Hunter, Treasurer	Attended	Name
x	Cameron Sabin, Board Member	x	Randall James
x	Jennifer Orten, Board Member	x	Mike Bentley
Schoolhouse		x	Sierra Hansen
Attended	Name	x	Liz Harding
x	Mark Ursic, Executive Director	x	Monica Schow
x	Stephanie McCappin, Dean	x	Tracy Scott
x	Holly Lyons, Executive Assistant	x	Valerie Fox
		x	Robyn Cherrington
		x	Joylin Lincoln
		x	Wendy Ruper
		x	Allison Milne
		x	Alyson Harper
		x	Shannon Topham
		x	Janalee Goebel
		x	Sarah Christensen
		x	Sonya Jolley

Motions and Approvals			
#	Motion made by	Motion	Vote
1	Ryan Hunter	Ryan moved to approve the minutes--with the removal of the "vote" noted in Motions and Approvals.	Mariah seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
2	Ryan Hunter	Ryan moved to go into a closed session.	All voted in favor by name.
3	Ryan Hunter	Ryan moved to close the meeting.	Cameron Sabin seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10pm.

Time	Topic/Subject Discussion
7:06pm	<b>Welcome and Call to Order.</b>
7:06pm	<p><b>Public Comment</b></p> <p>Sierra Hansen, stating that she was speaking on behalf herself as well as other parents, expressed a concern with teacher turnover and under-enrollment. She said she feels that teacher turnover is disruptive to the learning environment. Ms. Hansen’s daughter has experienced having a teacher leave the school mid-year twice. Ms. Hansen proposed several ideas, including bringing in a third-party professional to look for ways to improve teacher retention, hiring a principle to advocate for teachers, and implementing a more rigorous hiring and firing process that would utilize a system of checks and balances. Ms. Hansen shared the opinion that under-enrollment is a result of teacher turnover. She also expressed unrest with the fact that Board members serve under terms of “indefinite service,” although conceding that no new people have attempted to join the Board in a while.</p>
7:10pm	<p><b>Public Comment</b></p> <p>Joylin Lincoln introduced herself to say she is running for the State School Board in District 9.</p>
7:11pm	<p>Mariah communicated her appreciation of the attendance, involvement and comments of the public. She stated that teacher and student retention are primary goals for the Board this year. She addressed parent concern with the teacher turnover rate, saying that the standard turnover state-wide is 15%. Carolyn said, “not that we consider it ok” (for our school to have high teacher turnover), but she pointed out that looking at average statistics helps the Board approach the issue logically and realistically.</p> <p>Parent in attendance Elizabeth Harding asked why teachers have left Renaissance Academy and gone to other charters schools in Utah, receiving similar pay. She asked what about the school’s environment is not conducive for teachers. At this point Cameron mentioned that not a high percentage of Renaissance Academy teachers get fired.</p> <p>Mariah continued her response to Sierra Hansen’s concerns. She explained that the Board had already hired a third party observer who is currently consulting the Administration and the Board. He provides training and consulting to improve communications and public relations.</p> <p>In regards to concerns of low enrollment, Mark stated that enrollment is off by 10 students. The school originally budgeted for 714 students this year, and we have 704.</p> <p>Parents Elizabeth Harding and Wendy Ruper commented on the community response to Renaissance Academy in comparison to other schools.</p> <p>Mark gave a breakdown of teacher turnover from last year. Out of 19 teachers that left the school, 5 teachers moved out of state. There were 3 teachers who left to start a family, 4 resigned in order to take different occupations, and 1 teacher resigned to go back to a school where she had assistant-taught previously.</p> <p>Cameron pointed out that looking at the teachers whose cause for leaving was related to their relationship with the school would be most useful. Mark and Cameron both assured that compensation is not the issue. Mark surveys the three surrounding school districts every year to ensure that Renaissance Academy offers competitive salaries. Cameron emphasized that a lack of checks and balances is one of the key differences between charter and district schools. The freedom that charter school administrations have to make changes without the barriers of bureaucracy (including in HR) is</p>

	<p>one of the primary advantages of charter schools.</p> <p>Jennifer asked the parents in attendance what teacher concerns they may have heard that had not yet been addressed. Elizabeth Harding stated that parents in attendance were present because of their students. However, Ms. Harding did give concerns about how teachers are treated.</p> <p>Carolyn pointed out that the Board is empathetic to teacher treatment as well; four-out-of-the-five Board members have more than one student at the school. And Jennifer spoke to clarify that as a Board member, her response to current parent feedback was not in criticism, but in concern—she wanted to solicit <i>more</i> feedback.</p>
7:27pm	<p><b>Red Apple Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student enrollment is 704. So the approved budget will have to be trimmed to fit that number.</li> <li>-Carolyn pointed out that the handout still shows an approved budget for 729 students, but that it should show 714. Ryan said the outdated number wasn't reflected in the budget calculations, but that it is a reference number.</li> <li>-Carolyn asked if the FEC line in Revenue includes the school's recent FEC-run events. Jared replied-potentially not.</li> <li>-Carolyn asked what the revenue from the carnival came to. Sonya Jolley said it was around \$7,000. Mariah asked about the middle school dance. Sonya replied that the event would have just broke even.</li> <li>-Ryan pointed out that there is an approximately \$2,200 increase on one line item. Jared said he would earmark that item and report on it next month.</li> </ul>
7:30pm	<p>Mark asked Jared when a report with the revenue for the actual enrollment number would be available. Jared replied that it takes the state about a month, and that it would take a similar timeframe to make projections. Mark indicated that it may need to be done sooner in order to make the appropriate budget adjustments without being too aggressive or too conservative.</p> <p>The UCA application is typically done in October, but this year SAGE scores didn't come in <i>until</i> October, so the state pushed the deadline for the application to the 7<sup>th</sup> of November.</p> <p>One of the things the school has focused on a lot in the past was reading. The approach to reading has changed this year and so funds for that will shift placement.</p> <p>Mariah asked if the next Board meeting should be scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup> because of the November 7<sup>th</sup> deadline, and the Board agreed that their next meeting would be November 5<sup>th</sup> (rather than November 19<sup>th</sup>). Cameron asked if the school has made all of the curriculum changes and purchases that it will do in this year, and Mark affirmed it has.</p> <p>Mariah asked when the state would have an open meeting about SAGE scores. The scores will not be available to the public until October 20<sup>th</sup>. Until then, SAGE results can only viewed in-school, and it will be difficult to discuss the UCA Application until the information about SAGE scores is released to the public.</p>
7:38pm	<p><b>Expansion Update</b></p> <p>Mark explained that because of changes in staffing, the decision about expansion should be postponed. He suggested a meeting with the FEC in order to get parent feedback, and proposed bringing in faculty to speak at the meeting. He said there are changes in the workplace atmosphere that are noteworthy, but may not be noticeable to those who don't work at the school. Stephanie has spearheaded an employee recognition program that allows teachers to give recognition to each other and includes a teacher of the</p>

month award. The Administration had attempted to implement similar programs in past years, and had a very difficult time garnering any support. This year, staff internal support has seen a marked improvement, and teachers have been very eager to help each other and to help in recent initiatives to promote the school and start new programs. However, there is still a need for a marketing plan for the school, as well as a teacher and student retention plan. Per the decision to start the dialogue on enrollment strategies after October 1<sup>st</sup>, Mark recommended not focusing on expansion at this point, but instead focusing on those strategies.

Mark and Carolyn talked about bringing the issue of 9th grade into public discussion. Whether 9th grade will remain part of the school would affect how the school approaches expansion. A parent in attendance asked the Board why students are leaving after 9th grade. Mariah replied that focus groups with 8th grade students had revealed several reasons. The rest of the Board and the Administration chimed in to describe reasons for enrollment drop-off in ninth grade, including students wanting an interim year for the jump from junior high to high school and students wanting to participate in extracurricular that Renaissance Academy does not offer. So far, several programs have been added to help with the latter reason, including the Mr. Luthy's addition of two basketball teams (a boys' team and a girls' team) for the coming season. Carolyn clarified that the 9th grade is the only grade that would be put on the table, not 7th or 8th grade.

Mariah asked about progress on the simulator space. Mark explained some delays with approval from the fire marshal. Once the contractors are ready to begin, constructing the space will be a two month project. The goal is to have the simulator space finished by the end of January.

7:58pm

**Board Goals**

Mariah presented the Board's current goals:

- 1) Finish the simulator
- 2) Student retention
- 3) Teacher retention
- 4) Create a stronger marketing and communications plan
- 5) Provide more professional development and support

**Teacher Retention** Mark restated the breakdown of reasons teachers left at the end of last school year: 5 teachers moved, 3 teachers left to start a family, 6 left for another teaching job, 3 were terminated, and 2 left teaching. He said in order to create a plan for increasing teacher retention, it would be important to look at what areas the school has influence over. Mark also pointed out that charter schools draw in younger employees. Fifty percent of teachers leave teaching within the first 5 years. The Administration was able to strike a deal with 2 out of the 3 teachers who were leaving to start a family. They are still with the school, working part time to mentor grade level teams with new teachers.

Cameron said he is less concerned with "who you count" from last year, but more concerned with what set of teachers we need to focus on influencing to stay. A parent in attendance asked to know what grade levels had all teachers leave. The Board's response was that whether or not they would like to disclose that information, it is not legal to discuss it publically. Another question from the parents in attendance was whether they could know what the criteria was for firing teachers. Mark's response was to explain that professional development participation played a big part in evaluating teachers at the end of last year. The Administration was looking for teachers to be engaged in their own improvement as teachers.

Mariah asked Mark for a rough estimate of numbers to shoot for in the goals. Mark stated that a goal of 85% teacher retention would be a good place to start. There are currently 43 teachers, so that would mean retaining 37 teachers.

**Student Retention** Mariah said the state sends in-year transfer rates to show how many students have left the school during the school year. Renaissance Academy is among the lowest in the state, with only 3% in-year transfers.

Cameron suggested adding student growth goals- adding to the student population every year. As for what numbers to goal at for student retention, initially the Board suggesting starting with an enrollment goal of 720 students. But Ryan and Carolyn discussed the lack of data from previous years, concluding that the goal to start with would be 100% retention. Carolyn commented that the biggest drop-off in student population is from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Ryan then made the suggestion to create per-grade retention rate goals. From this year to last year the re-enrollment was 76%.

**Marketing and Communication** The Board and Administration talked about potential mailers that would target specific audiences by covering different topics, such as doing one mailer featuring the simulator and another featuring afterschool programs.

At this point a parent interjected to comment on the culture of the school for the teachers, and the conversation turned to the recent resignation of Mrs. Hook in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Jennifer told the parents that having four children at the school and spending time on the Board has made her more aware of the need for changes that occur in staffing, and that she is impressed in general with the caliber of people that were added to the staff this year. She let the parents know that their concerns are shared by the Board.

Cameron reminded those in attendance that, in fairness to the school and to the individual, as well as for legal reasons, there are many particulars about HR situations that cannot be shared. One parent, Janalee Goebel, asked if there was another place, other than Board Meeting, where parents could collaborate and contribute solutions. The Board said a work session for the FEC and the Administration to talk about teacher retention before the next Board Meeting would be a good way for parents to have their voices heard. Official scheduling and any agenda for the parent meeting will be announced in the RAPP and on Facebook.

Mariah reiterated the purpose of the Board as a governing body who measures goals with numbers. Despite this purpose, the Board has similar concerns, as collectively they represent parents of many students at the school.

The Board and Administration continued to discuss student retention, especially reasons for enrollment attrition from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. They discussed marketing and communication solutions, including the possibility of creating a more open-ended parent survey this year. The only actual goals for the Board are student and teacher retention, and other goals are strategies to those ends. Ryan advised the rest of the Board to stand clearly on the side of governance for the school and not on the side of management.

9:02pm

**New Board Member Discussion**

An advertisement soliciting applicants for positions on the Board will be placed in the upcoming school newsletter. Cameron explained that a board member is voted onto the Board by a majority of the sitting Board. Members serve 3 year terms. The Board meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month, and meetings

	<p>start at 7pm, sometimes lasting past midnight. Jared VanOrden provided a description of the Board's role, stating that the Board is in charge of policy, while the Administration is in charge of procedure.</p> <p>In the future, information about Board meetings and information will appear regularly in the school newsletter. Sonya Jolley stated that the FEC, as an advocate for the parents, could streamline parent issues to present to the Board more regularly.</p> <p>It was noted that an updated Charter should be posted to the school website.</p> <p>Jennifer praised the direction that the school has taken in new staffing, added programs, and capable leadership.</p>
9:16pm	<p><b>Approval of minutes</b>  Ryan moved to approve the minutes-with the removal of the "vote" noted in Motions and Approvals. That vote was the approval of Motion #3. With that change, Mariah seconded the motion. All voted in favor.</p>
9:17pm	<p><b>Charter review</b>  The Board discussed edits in the Charter to be submitted to the State. These edits include:  -The Mission and Vision Statement in Section 3  -The description of Board member election in Section 6  -Additions to the description of the Parent Organization's responsibilities (These were consolidated from random spots in the charter. The list being added will go in the order that they come in the charter.)  -An edit to the Admission Procedures after the first day of school  -Edits to wording in Article VI: Trustees</p>
9:32pm	<p><b>Motion.</b> Ryan moved to go into a closed session described under Section 53-4-204 "<i>(a) a discussion of the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual and (d) strategy sessions to discuss the purchasing, exchange, lease or sale of real property.</i>" All voted in favor by name to move into a closed session at 9: 32 pm.</p>
10:16	<p><i>Back in open session</i></p>
10:16pm	<p>The Board signed the contract with Ben Horsley to consult the Administration and the Board regarding Renaissance Academy internal and public relations.</p>
10:16pm	<p><b>Motion.</b> Ryan moved to close the meeting. Cameron seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:16pm.</p>