

MINUTES
of the meeting of the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
October 6, 2020

Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on September 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at 6475 Valley Dr., North Las Vegas, NV 89084 and via Zoom webinar.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Board Chair John Bentham called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. In attendance were Board members LeNora Bredsguard, Sarah McClellan, John Bentham, Travis Mizer, Will Harty, Cody Noble (left at 8:00 p.m. and returned at 8:50 p.m.), and Renee Fairless.

Also present were Principal Lee Esplin, Principal Cesar Tiu, Principal Christina Threeton, Principal Jessica Scobell, Principal Elaine Kelley, Principal Kate Lackey, and Principal Ruby Norland; as well as Academica representatives Crystal Thirirot, Ryan Reeves, and Gary McClain.

Member Bentham asked for a moment of silence in honor of former Somerset Lone Mountain student Caleb Naylor.

2. Public Comment

Written public comment was received from Iandia Morgan and Delfina Simpson; the written public comments were distributed to the Board members and are attached to the minutes.

3. Student/School Achievement Recognition

Principal Elaine Kelley addressed the Board and reviewed the Aliante campus student and school achievements:

- 4th grade students had created a virtual quilt about what #VegasStrong meant to them
- Middle school students were building a marble roller coaster
- The PTO had designed a new spirit shirt
- The elementary STEAM students were doing a guided drawing lesson and had also done a paper airplane engineering lesson

Principal Lee Esplin addressed the Board and reviewed the Sky Pointe campus student and school achievements:

- 101 students (double the number in the past) signed up for the PSAT test
- 97 students were taking at least one AP course
- Great collaboration between teachers and with Losee campus on AP courses

- Virtual Homecoming was a great success
- Recently held the web kickoff for 6th grade students
- NJHS induction ceremony was recently held
- Sky Pointe graduate Christian Johnson was admitted into the UNLV Engineering Pathway program
- NSLP had double over the last week

Principal Cesar Tiu addressed the Board and reviewed the Lone Mountain campus student and school achievements:

- Thanked SPED department for hard work leading up to count day
- Successful 5th grade field learning day
- Middle school field learning day upcoming
- Successful House Rock Challenge
- NJHS finalized plan for 2nd quarter

Principal Christina Threton addressed the Board and reviewed the North Las Vegas campus student and school achievements:

- Student Kean Allen Dino had a book (Freshman Year: Heart Struck High School) published and available on Amazon
- Announcements available on YouTube channel – Stallion TV
- NJHS would be hosting virtual dances to help build relationships

Principal Ruby Norland addressed the Board and reviewed the Stephanie campus student and school achievements:

- Held a Parent University question and answer session regarding the return to school
- Planning NJHS and NEHS induction ceremonies
- Shout out to hardworking teachers and instructional assistants preparing for return to in person learning
- Counselor and Safe School Professional providing weekly health and well-being tips on Spotify

4. Approval of Minutes from the September 17, 2020 Board Meeting

Member Mizer moved to approve the minutes form the September 17, 2020 board meeting. Member McClellan seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

5. Academica Progress Reports and Updates on School Initiatives

Principal Kate Lackey addressed the Board and stated that Skye Canyon was able to bring back K-5 with a.m. and p.m. cohorts while maintaining less than 25% on campus. She noted that

the students would remain at home on their specials day, which was every sixth day. The middle school students would continue distance learning until the directives allowed more students on campus. Principal Lackey reviewed the MAP data and noted that the school focus would be on improving in math, which would be indicated on the school performance plan.

Principal Kelley stated that 3rd through 8th grade MAP testing was complete; however, testing was ongoing for K-2nd grades. I-Ready testing was also complete. She stated that math would be the overall school goal which would be reflected on the school performance plan. Grades 1-3 had considerable drops. Grades 4-8 had a slight drop. Principal Kelly further stated that approximately 50% of the kindergarten through 3rd grade students opted for in person learning and would be returning in a.m. and p.m. cohorts. All students would be required to use the car loop.

Principal Jessica Scobell addressed the Board and stated that, with 224 SPED/IEP students from Kindergarten through 12th grade, the Losee campus would be using a more conservative approach when bringing back students. The teachers of the SPED/IEP students were working to develop a unique schedule to meet their needs. She stated that K-2 grade would be included on the initial return to in person learning. They may be able to include 3rd-4th grade students soon.

Principal Scobell stated that MAP testing makeups were being completed and she would have data available by the December meeting. Member Noble asked if Principal Scobell intended to bring students back in the middle of the quarter. Principal Scobell stated that they would probably return in two week increments; adding that mid-quarter returns for elementary students were not as much of a concern as it would be for older grades. Member Harty thanked Principal Scobell for making the difficult decisions based on student needs.

Principal Esplin stated that MAP testing was almost complete at the Sky Pointe campus and data would be available for the December meeting. Mondays were virtual learning days which allowed for special needs and struggling students to be on campus to work with teachers. Students with technology issues were also able to be on campus to help resolve any problems. Principal Esplin explained that they would be bringing back the K-5th grade students who had elected for in person learning with a.m. and p.m. sessions. He stated that the 3rd grade teachers would be teaching the in person and virtual students together using the newly acquired equipment.

Principal Tiu stated that Lone Mountain would be bringing back K-5th grade students in alternating schedules. K-2nd would attend on Mondays and Wednesdays, with 3rd-5th on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The EL and 504 students in 6th-8th grades would be able to meet in person on Tuesdays and Thursdays. IEP students would be able to attend in person any day, to be determined by the teacher to meet the needs of the students. Principal Tiu stated that MAP testing was almost complete in middle school and results would be available soon.

Principal Threton stated that the North Las Vegas staff had worked together to develop a plan; adding that the common goal of ensuring the success of the students had brought the staff closer together. She stated that the low number of students who opted to return in person allowed the school to bring back all grades. With a goal of consistency and stability they were able to keep teacher changes to a minimum. Member Mizer asked if it was possible to target the students needing extra help for in person learning. Principal Threton stated that the final MAP data was

not yet available to identify all the students; adding that once the parents were able to see successful in person learning it would be easier to push the targeted student towards coming to the campus.

Principal Threeton stated that, using the preliminary data, some of the struggling students were identified for intervention; adding that the instructional aides would provide the intervention on the opposite cohort. The multi-purpose room would be available for in person learning students to use on their specialist days to keep their scheduled consistent.

Member Bredsguard noted that the Lone Mountain students had taken the MAP testing in person, and asked if other campuses had done in person or virtual testing. The principals reported various methods from partial in person for some grades to all virtual testing.

Member Bredsguard stated that, with the return to campus, finding substitute teachers would be difficult. She asked if the campuses had a plan for finding substitutes. Principal Esplin stated that the schools used Troop to supply substitutes and explained that Troop currently had 38 available substitutes. Kelly Services had 4 substitutes available. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and stated that Troop had been created to supplement the supply of substitute teachers. A Facebook group of CCSD substitute teachers had been contacted and responses were being received from that group showing interest in joining Troop. Discussion ensued regarding possible substitute teacher sources, including teachers CCSD would not be keeping on staff and Somerset families. Principal Kelley stated that background checks were taking four to six weeks for volunteers and substitute teachers.

Principal Norland stated that special needs and K-2 would be returning to the Stephanie campus with a.m. and p.m. cohorts. The teachers would be teaching in a hybrid model, with in person and virtual simultaneously to ensure that students would not be subjected to multiple teacher changes through the school year. Principal Norland stated that the preliminary data indicated a decline in grade levels. She further noted that the preliminary i-Ready data might have problems with validity for some students; however, they would be able to cross-reference with the MAP data when it was available.

6. Interview of Principal Candidates for the Aliante Campus

- a. Brynn Dessormeau**
- b. Ryan Lewis**
- c. Shannon Manning**

The Board interviewed Brynn Dessormeau, Ryan Lewis, and Shannon Manning for the position of principal at the Somerset Aliante campus. The Board asked a series of question to qualify the applicant for the positions. The questions included the following topics:

- Most important duties of a principal
- Ultimate goal as principal
- Philosophy on accountability and discipline for principals, staff, and students
- Difference between leadership in CCSD and charter schools/Somerset

- School culture development under their leadership
- Meeting the needs of IEP students and what skills they would bring to the school
- Principal collaboration in principal cohort system compared to CCSD or other charter systems
- Star rating system and methods to improve ratings
- Fair and effective principal evaluation methods
- Communication with involved parents
- Mid-year change expectations and challenges

Ms. Brynn Dessormeau addressed the Board to introduce herself and reviewed her experience as reflected on her resume. During the question interview session Ms. Dessormeau relayed the following:

- Ensuring that a school had good teachers who were there for the right reasons, building/maintaining a strong foundation, and promoting the school were important duties of a principal.
- Her ultimate goal as a principal was to service students, to get them where they needed to be, which was on or above grade level.
- Everyone should be held accountable; however, it was important to allow all involved the opportunity to communicate. By using restorative justice, the student was allowed to state their case and talk through the resolution.
- CCSD leadership was more rigid, with a smaller system the principals were able to collaborate, make choices, and enact change for the growth of the students.
- To develop a good school culture a principal had to have a positive attitude, have an open door policy, and a willingness to change if needed.
- She worked to ensure that SPED teachers were providing support for students in regular classes to meet the IEP requirements. She assisted in developing the student learning plan and involved the parents to help them understand the process.
- She currently worked at a three campus system with collaboration between campuses. She had the philosophy that if one leader failed, they all failed; therefore, it was important to work together and share ideas.
- Mater started as a 1 Star school and increased to a 3 Star school by using the data to assess the needs of the students. Changes made mid-year included moving teachers for maximum effectiveness and ensuring consistency in the curriculum.
- Data was important when evaluating teachers, using the data to coach teachers, help them make goals, and periodically review the progress. A leader must be willing to make a teaching change when needed.
- She maintained an open door policy with parents and never delayed taking or returning a phone call. Open communication with a willingness to listen to the parent was important.
- She was excited about the prospect of joining the school mid-year. She would be able to see the staff at their best right away.

Mr. Ryan Lewis addressed the Board to introduce himself and reviewed his experience as reflected on his resume. During the question interview session Mr. Lewis relayed the following:

- Although leadership was always important, it became essential during challenging times. The principal would set the tone for the school while providing direction and support to ensure student success.
- The ultimate goal of a principal was to give every student the opportunity to be successful and meet their life goals.
- Everyone should be held accountable; however, it was important to look at each case and determine how they arrived in the situation. Consistency was essential for students, teachers and staff discipline.
- He looked forward to the opportunity for open communication with others invested in the school and system. Somerset was an established system with a structure and stability.
- To develop school culture a principal had to make the school his own and become the face of the school for the students and the community.
- Inclusion of IEP students with their peers when appropriate helped to meet their needs best. He believed in being honest with the students and families on the capabilities of the students. Often IEP students were not pushed enough to achieve what they were capable of achieving.
- His current role with CCSD was the lead elementary principal. Having a group of principals with common goals in a common system would allow him to discuss issues with someone he trusted.
- When he first became a principal he was at a low 2 Star school which improved to a high 3 Star the next year. His current school had experienced 40% turnover in students resulting in a dip to a 2 Star; however, they were able to bring it back up to a 3 Star school.
- A principal and teachers should be evaluated on the growth of the students. A principal had to observe, listen, and find the strengths in order to evaluate the teachers.
- He was the first at the school and the last to leave which helped him meet the needs of the students and the parents of his community. He would find the most appropriate time to have a complete conversation with a concerned parent.
- A mid-year change would be a challenge; however, he had been through many things in his career and would face the challenge if needed.

Ms. Shannon Manning addressed the Board to introduce herself and reviewed her experience as reflected on her resume. During the question interview session Ms. Manning relayed the following:

- Building relationships with the students, teachers, and stakeholders to ensure a strong climate and culture was the most important duty of a principal, followed by instructional coaching and ensuring student success.

- Her ultimate goals were to ensure that relationships between teachers, students, and stakeholders were established; and that the unique needs of every student were met while improving to a 5 Star school.
- Accountability was vital to ensure that students grew to be responsible members of society. Teachers were responsible for the students and meeting their unique needs and needed to follow the Somerset rules and the guidance of the team.
- She was excited to be able to collaborate with the principal cohort and add her voice to the group. Visibility was an important part of being an administrator.
- It was important that the school continued to function as a family. She would hit the ground learning and meet with the students and families to ensure that the school culture continued to be successful.
- She was a SPED administrator at Shadow Ridge High School and had also supervised the self-contained classrooms to ensure that IEPs were handled correctly. She spoke Spanish and was able to use that skill to work with English language learners.
- Less bureaucracy and more autonomy while also working collaboratively with other principals was one of the things that drew her to Somerset Academy.
- She had been instrumental in reviewing data and determining the steps needed to close the achievement gap to improve the Star rating in her current position.
- Once a principal knew the expectations, they needed to be held accountable to the Board and the stakeholders. A principal should be evaluated on the growth of the students.
- An important part of communication with parents was to listen and understand their perception; however, that did not eliminate the student's accountability. Most situations could be de-escalated if parents knew they were being heard.
- She would be ready to start when needed. Although she was new to elementary school, she was willing to learn, work with others, and continue to study to meet the needs of all of the students.

7. Discussion and Action to Appoint a Principal for the Aliante Campus

Each Board member took a few minutes to voice opinions about the candidate interviews. Member Fairless stated that Ms. Dessormeau had charter school experience and would be her choice. Member Harty expressed concern that Mr. Lewis might not be available when Principal Kelley retired. He was impressed with Ms. Dessormeau and Ms. Manning. Member McClellan stated that, although she liked both Ms. Dessormeau and Ms. Manning, she would give the edge to Ms. Manning.

Member Mizer stated that he would prefer an internal candidate and wanted to repost the position and make a selection at a later date. Member Noble noted that he had not been present for most of the interview for Mr. Lewis; however, of the other two candidates he would prefer Ms. Dessormeau with charter experience. Member Bentham stated that he would be happy with either Ms. Dessormeau or Ms. Manning; however, his preferred choice would be Ms. Manning.

Discussion ensued regarding the experience of the candidates, with Principal Scobell, Principal Kelley, and Principal Esplin providing insight on principal duties and leadership changes at campuses.

Member McClellan moved to appoint Shannon Manning as the principal for the Somerset Aliante campus. Member Harty seconded the motion, and the Board voted to approve with a vote of four votes to two votes, with Members Noble and Fairless in opposition and Member Mizer abstaining.

8. Review and Approval of a Revision to the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Board of Directors Bylaws

Ms. Crystal Thiriot addressed the Board and reviewed the revisions in the bylaws. Board members who were serving on the Board as of October 6, 2020 may serve two standard terms of five years each. If the first term was four years or less the Board member may serve that initial term and two additional five year terms. New Board members after October 6, 2020 would be eligible to serve two standard five year terms. She further stated that an Emeritus status was added to the Bylaws, and reviewed the requirements for an Emeritus member.

Member Bredsguard moved to approve the revision to the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Board of Directors Bylaws, as presented. Member Fairless seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

9. Review and Approval to Submit an Application to Request an Amendment to the Charter to Acquire Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Aliante and Skye Canyon Campuses Through Bonds

Ms. Thiriot stated that the Board had previously approved the Letter of Intent to purchase the Aliante and Skye Canyon campuses and were now being asked to approve the submission of the amendment. The purchase options had opened up in the leases for the two campuses. Member Bentham stated that the market was favorable for purchasing the campuses.

Member Harty moved to approve the submission of an application to request an amendment to the charter to acquire the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas Aliante and Skye Canyon campuses through bonds. Member Bredsguard seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

10. Academica Announcements and Notifications

Ms. Thiriot stated that she had visited all of the Somerset campuses and praised the administrators and teachers for their hard work during the pandemic. She further stated that the Board would need to hold a meeting soon to approve a homeless policy due to the state.

11. Member Comment

Member Fairless stated that she was thankful for the opportunity to serve on the Board. Member Harty thanked the administrators and teachers for their daily work. Member McClellan stated that she was impressed with the individualized and creative school plans that were presented during the meeting. Members Bentham and Bredsguard echoed her comments. Member Mizer thanked the principal cohort for their work and dedication. Member Noble stated that he was impressed with the plans presented and was very appreciative that the principals were able to take the Board's decision and move forward.

12. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Approved on: November 18, 2020

LeNora Bredsguard
LeNora Bredsguard (Nov 24, 2020 11:31 PST)

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

Hello,

I hope you are all well. I am writing to you to first express my sincere appreciation for all the work you do and the difficult at times decisions that must be made. This goes for the Somerset administrators, teachers and staff as well. My children attend Somerset Skye Canyon. During this first quarter of virtual learning, my children (3rd and 5th graders) have transitioned very well and are excelling in their academic, which I am very thankful. Moving into 2nd quarter and upon completing the returning survey that was sent to families regarding, our preference for the am or pm in-person or continued remote learning option was offered. My husband and I sat down and really put a lot of thought into this decision. We felt it was best for our children to continue with remote learning in the midst of flu season approaching combined with the pandemic we're already experiencing. We used the FAQ's document that's attached for your reference to help base our decision that remote learning with the understanding that "live instruction" would still be occurring as it is currently. Yesterday, I was made aware that all students in the remote learning cohort will only have access to recordings from their teachers in-person class that is taught each day. Remote learners will then be required to complete their assignments based on that. I was really taken aback to say the least because this was not my understanding as stated in the FAQ's document. In an attempt to be proactive in knowing what my children will be dealing with in a couple of weeks, I listened to a recorded session of my 5th grader's science class that had been recorded for students who were unable to attend class. I myself who has a Master's Degree had a difficult time following, so I can only imagine how difficult this could be for a child to sit and listen to several hours of recording and then be expected to complete an assignment without being able to participate and ask questions if needed.

I also have concerns about small groups that students were assigned, which we've been told by the teacher will be discontinued. This will be a considerable disservice to the students who really benefit from having this individualized additional support for areas they need assistance in. Where does this leave the remote learners? With remote learners only having access to a recorded session from their teacher(s) seems they are being left to learn on their own and put at the bottom of the totem pole because we as parents are choosing to keep them safe during a pandemic in conjunction with flu season. We didn't realize making this decision would leave us feeling insignificant and that their learning is not a priority. Both options of learning should have the same level of importance. My children's education and safety is essential. They are A and B students and we want their love for school to continue even during these very uncertain times.

I do not like to express a concern without providing solutions that may be possible, so here are a few to consider:

Using the computer or laptop that teachers have been using throughout this 1st quarter in their classrooms for remote learners to zoom into one of the am or pm live sessions. The teacher would only be responsible for monitoring to see if those students have any questions during instruction. This will allow remote learners to feel a part of their class and not so isolated during a time that a lot of isolation is already occurring due to the pandemic. It will also allow students to ask question in real time.

Another option could be to provide in-person classes during the am since the majority of parents selected that option. Then, having the teachers teach the remote learners online in the afternoon.

Splitting the teachers up to do either in-person or remote learning live instruction.

Thank you for taking the time to listen. I sincerely hope these concerns and solutions will strongly be considered to benefit all children and families during these uncertain times while continuing to put forth an effort of maintaining some normalcy and consistency as well as to be inclusive.

Kind regards,

Iandia Morgan