

**MINUTES**  
**OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS**  
**FEBRUARY 27, 2023**

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on February 27, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at 7038 Sky Pointe Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89131.

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Board Chair Travis Mizer called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. In attendance were Board members Travis Mizer, Sarah McClellan, LeNora Bredsguard (arrived at 6:16 p.m.), Will Harty, Cody Noble (arrived at 6:25 p.m.), John Bentham, and Renee Fairless.

Also present were Principal Lee Esplin, Principal Cesar Tiu, Principal Jessica Scobell, Principal Shannon Manning, Principal Mindi Palomeque, Principal Kate Lackey, and Principal David Fossett; as well as Somerset Inc. representative Suzette Ruiz, and Academica representatives Gary McClain, Ryan Reeves, Trevor Goodsell, and Marla Devitt.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

Member Mizer stated that student recognitions would take place prior to the consent agenda.

Principal Scobell recognized the 3A State Championship Basketball team members and coaches: Roderick Johnson, Maurice Wicks-Wesley, Daezhon Meno, Antwan Jones, Jordan Finley, Christin Haylock, Elijah Lopez, KeSean White, Kieran Daniel, Quintin Favors, Cameron McCary, Jeremiah Kilgore, Malachi Richardson, Head Coach Darrius Banks, Assistant Coach John Banks, Assistant Coach Chauncey Lanier, and Assistant Coach Gary Lenoir.

Principal Esplin recognized Jason Cole and Gwen Aballe for presenting at the Leader in Me symposium; Jason Cole as a National Honor Society scholarship finalist, and Reina Garner as a National Merit Scholarship finalist. Principal Esplin recognized the 3A Girls Cross Country State and Region Championship team members and coaches: Olivia Nuno, Kennedy Cox, Elliot Davidson, Ella Christensen, Mackenzie Teel, Brylin Horsley, Lilly Martell, Coach Paul Sheppard, and Coach Robert Nelson. Paul Sheppard was also recognized as the Nevada 3A Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year and US Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Nevada Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year. Principal Esplin recognized the State Championship Dance team members and coach: Dayana Barnett, Velia Castillo, Alexandra Cox, Isabella Cox, Madeleine Greenburg, Amiyah-Lynae Hightower, Sydney Hulet, Isabella Martin, Julianna Medellin, Emma Price, Kylie Price, and Coach Jake Phillips.

Member Mizer extended his congratulations to the students and coaches who had received recognition, and stated that it was great to see the sports programs flourishing.

### **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 6, 2023 BOARD MEETING**
- b. ACCEPTANCE OF THE FY23 MCKINNEY VENTO FUNDING**
- c. APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**
  - 1. SCHOOL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**
  - 2. APPROVAL OF TEMPORARY PRICE INCREASE AMENDMENT FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM**

**MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER HARTY SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.**

### **4. ANNUAL MEETING**

- a. ANNUAL ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS**

Mr. Gary McClain addressed the Board and noted that Member McClellan had completed the maximum number of consecutive years of service as the vice chairperson. The position would need to be filled by electing a new vice chairperson.

**MEMBER HARTY MOVED TO ELECT TRAVIS MIZER AS THE BOARD CHAIR, LENORA BREDSGUARD AS THE BOARD VICE CHAIR, WILL HARTY AS THE BOARD TREASURER, AND JOHN BENTHAM AS THE BOARD SECRETARY. THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.**

### **5. ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- a. SOMERSET PRINCIPAL REPORTS**

The campus principals addressed the Board to provide updates and highlights from their respective campuses. Principal Jessica Scobell, from the Losee campus, reported on the success of the recent cultural celebrations held at the school and efforts made to establish cultural ceremonies as traditions. She noted that the school had recently received mid-year data reports for both the elementary and middle schools. The elementary school was projected to achieve a 3 Star rating. She noted that the school had a particular emphasis on improving student academic proficiency in ELA and math. To achieve this goal, the school had transitioned the power hour to include math and repurposed a math strategist to serve as a math interventionist, focusing on training instructional assistants and working with small groups of students in math. The school had seen positive growth in i-Ready scores. Although there was still a concern about the number of students at the proficient level, the students showed high growth and movement towards proficiency. The school had focused on attendance by hosting parent attendance workshops and would be holding a science boot camp. The elementary school was on track to achieve a high 3 Star or low 4 Star rating.

Principal Scobell stated that at the middle school level, the school faced more challenges but was moving in the right direction. The school had good teachers who were working hard and had focused on using i-Ready and targeted interventions, including the math boost class for grades 6 and 7. Reading classes had also been expanded to include 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The mid-year projection for the middle school was a 3 Star rating.

Principal Scobell explained that in high school, the two areas of concern were 9th grade credit sufficiency and attendance. The school had worked to address these issues by holding one-on-one meetings with students, meeting with parents to encourage credit remediation, and focusing on ACT student growth. Overall, the school was making positive strides academically. The school had also seen a decrease in turnover, and for the first time, had not accepted any new students in grades 3-5. This decrease in transiency allowed the school to focus on getting to know the students and helping them academically.

Member Bentham inquired about the school's work on attendance, and Principal Scobell reported that the school had seen benefits from hosting parent attendance workshops for any elementary student on the pathway to chronic absenteeism. These workshops created a sense of community and helped to address the issue of absenteeism.

Principal Mindi Palomeque, from the North Las Vegas campus, praised the excellent collaboration among the principals, which enabled her to provide a positive report. She then shared the K-5 winter data, which indicated an impressive 10% increase in ELA achievement since fall, and projected a further 9.4% increase in ELA and 11.2% in math for the SBAC. All grade levels had either met or exceeded the typical growth medians in ELA, and four of the grade levels had met or exceeded the medians in math, with targeted course corrections implemented for the one grade level that did not meet the math median. The school took several corrective measures, including increasing instructional minutes in math for 5th-grade students and providing targeted tutoring for SBAC prep questions. Additionally, the campus had implemented ideas gathered from Somerset Florida on i-Ready, PLCs, tutoring, and overall instructional strategies.

Principal Palomeque announced that the school would be holding a literacy night focusing on make-it, take-it activities and the science of reading for parents. She highlighted the interactive bulletin boards featuring cultures from around the world. She also shared that the present growth data matched the 2022 end-of-year growth data, and the school may be rated as a high 3 Star or low 4 Star school.

Member Harty noted that the elementary was projected as a 2 Star school, prompting Principal Palomeque to explain that the projected rating did not factor in attendance points, and the rating should improve when absences could be excused. She explained that the attendance guidelines allowed attendance to be excused if the student visited the in-house nurse. Member Harty asked about the consequences the campus would face if they did not achieve a 3 Star rating, to which Mr. McClain replied that the school would receive a notice of concern, noting that the past notices had been resolved. Member Fairless explained that the Star rating projection used last year's data in certain areas of the rating, including chronic absenteeism, until firm data was available.

Principal Shannon Manning, from the Aliante campus, discussed the progress and strategies implemented at the Aliante campus to address opportunity gaps and improve student performance. One of the strategies involved conducting data checks and having one-on-one conversations with teachers to identify specific students who needed targeted support. As the school experienced an increase in English Learners (EL), they implemented a corrective action plan which included weekly meetings and one-on-one WIDA testing with EL students, and hired an EL strategist for the following year.

Principal Manning noted that the school's continuous improvement plan prioritized growth over proficiency. The school differentiated instruction, created honor classes in 5th grade and middle school, and established resource classrooms with highly qualified Special Education math and ELA teachers. The school also implemented the "Leader in Me" program, and teachers worked with students on the blue and purple lists to provide targeted instruction and support. The middle school was projected to achieve a high 4-star rating, but with continued effort to close opportunity gaps, could earn a 5-star rating. Similarly, the elementary school was projected at a high 2-star rating, but she was optimistic that with continued efforts, they could raise it to a 4-star rating.

Principal Kate Lackey, from the Skye Canyon campus, provided a positive update on the school's ELA data, with all grade levels showing high achievement and growth, and the 5th grade projected to have a 71.9% proficiency in the SBAC exam. While math growth was also high, there was a need to focus on improving the curriculum and finding a better fit for the school. Skye Canyon elementary was projected at a high 4 star, but she expected it to be a 5 Star school. Principal Lackey stated that chronic absenteeism was a concern, but they were proactively meeting with families. The school had several exciting events, including field trips, career day, a wax museum, and Battle of the Books. The middle school had revamped its schedule to include a day focusing on leadership skills for the Leader in Me program. In response to a question from Member Bentham, Principal Lackey noted that a nearby elementary school had similar math data and higher ELA data but was also a 4 Star school.

Principal Lee Esplin, from the Sky Pointe campus, provided an update on various initiatives and events at Sky Pointe campus. He mentioned that a Leader in Me symposium was recently held in Las Vegas, and Sky Pointe was selected for a site visit. He noted that CCSD canceled visits to twelve other schools. As a result, Sky Pointe accommodated more attendees of the symposium. He also encouraged Board members to attend the upcoming leadership day at Lone Mountain; adding that Sky Pointe would be holding an additional leadership day. Principal Esplin highlighted several events such as academic and multicultural night, high school boys' basketball playoffs, a lock-in day with various activities, and staff bowling night. The campus also had some dances and field trips planned.

Principal Esplin shared that the school was trending at a high 4 Star in elementary, with a focus on improving chronic absenteeism. He explained that the school had made efforts to reduce the rate from 18% to under 10% and aimed to bring it below 5% to gain full points. All junior and senior students who were not enrolled in an AP or dual credit class would be enrolled in a CTE program for the 23/24 school year. Principal Esplin identified proficiency as an area of focus in elementary and middle schools. The school had made adjustments in 5th-grade departmentalization to push students towards proficiency. Middle school was trending as a 5 Star school.

Principal Cesar Tiu, from the Lone Mountain campus, provided an update on the academic performance and initiatives at the middle and elementary schools. He stated that the middle school was projected to be a 5 Star with an 85.5 index score, while the elementary school was projected to be a 3 Star, four points away from achieving 4 Stars. Areas of focus for improvement included English learners, attendance, proficiency growth, and attendance. Principal Tiu shared that the school had increased elementary enrichment time with a focus on math, added three interventionists for 3rd to 5th grades to target the bubble kids, and hired an excellent EL interventionist. They had also started

a Saturday SBAC boot camp and provided before and after school tutoring to support student learning.

Principal Tiu acknowledged that math was a concern in the middle school, with students in the low growth, high achievement quadrant. To address this, they had increased math enrichment time. Member Bentham inquired about the Saturday SBAC camps, and Principal Tiu explained that the priority was for the bubble kids in 3rd through 8th grade. Member Fairless asked about the turnout for bubble kids and if attendance was mandatory. Principal Tiu clarified that it was not mandatory but highly encouraged. Principal Tiu shared that Lone Mountain would host a leadership day on March 8th and had held spring induction ceremonies for NEHS and NJHS. The school celebrated Black History Month and held an Amazing Shape challenge. The Quiz Bowl team participated in the state competition.

Member Mizer asked Principal Tiu about the chronic absenteeism percentage for the campus, to which Principal Tiu responded that it was less than 10%. Member Mizer then asked the principals if incentive plans were being used for attendance, and Principal Lackey confirmed that they were using incentive plans. However, Principal Fossett explained that the schools had not been able to use such plans during the pandemic. Member Fairless noted that several proposed legislative bills aimed at eliminating chronic absenteeism from the Star rating requirements had been proposed. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board confirming that there were bills to adjust how chronic absenteeism was measured and the weight given to the measure. He noted that the change might need to be made in the Department of Education instead of the legislature.

Principal David Fossett, from the Stephanie campus, announced that Assistant Principal Jose Herrera had been hired as the principal of a new charter school, and Darryl Wyatt had been hired as a new assistant principal. The elementary campus had improved to a projected 3 Star rating; however, they were still striving to improve. They had implemented new curriculum for math and ELA interventions. Principal Fossett shared that the campus had previously struggled with chronic absenteeism, with a rate of 21%. However, they had successfully reduced it to 15% by using methods such as phone calls for borderline students and one-on-one meetings for those with higher absenteeism rates. The middle school was projected to be a 5 Star campus. Principal Fossett stated that the elementary girls' basketball team remained undefeated in the playoffs, and the robotics team had won several competitions in its first year. When Member Mizer asked about how parents responded to the articulation agreement, Principal Fossett explained that the Academics marketing department had created a graphic to be pushed out to families, which he expected would help retain students in the middle school grades

#### **b. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE 2023/2024 MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT**

Mr. Trevor Goodsell addressed the Board and began by highlighting that the student to teacher ratio had previously increased to 26 to 1 in elementary and 31 to 1 in middle and high school. He further explained that the ratio was increased during the summer to accommodate teacher raises to match CCSD. Mr. Goodsell noted that two budgets had been prepared, one calculated at 26 to 1 and 31 to 1, and the other calculated at 25 to 1 and 30 to 1. He shared that the latter ratio resulted in a \$46,000 surplus, while the former ratio resulted in a \$1.9 million surplus. Both proposals included a reduction from the increase in students implemented to accommodate teacher raises. Mr. Goodsell then outlined the challenges faced in preparing the budget for the 23/24 school year. The first challenge

was that the funding number was unknown until the State budget was finalized by the legislature. The second challenge was that PERS had made a significant jump of close to 4%. The third challenge was that most vendors had increased costs by 3-5%.

Mr. Goodsell informed the Board that the budget had been calculated with a 1.5% funding increase; however, the proposed increase might be closer to a 10% increase. He proposed that the Board approve the 26 to 1 and 31 to 1 ratios until the true funding numbers were known. The Board could revisit the enrollment if the funding increase came in higher and then allow natural attrition to reduce the ratio. Mr. Reeves added that the regular legislative session would run 120 days from February 1st unless an extension was approved. Member Harty asked about the due date for the final budget, to which Mr. Goodsell replied that it was mid-June, allowing for a change in enrollment prior to the due date if the funding allowed a ratio reduction.

Discussion ensued with Member Noble suggesting having a conversation about the impact of class sizes on children rather than just focusing on financial concerns. Mr. Goodsell noted that they were currently reducing class sizes and attempting to keep teachers with salary increases. Member Harty expressed concern about the decrease in surplus and the need to stay competitive with teacher salaries. Member Bredsguard and Member Mizer mentioned the trade-offs of class size versus teacher quality. Member Fairless emphasized the importance of teacher salaries in attracting high-quality educators. Member Harty requested to see data on teacher salaries to ensure they were competitive.

Principal Scobell expressed concern about being able to hire and retain fully credentialed teachers due to budget constraints. She noted that it was important to find ways to compete with other schools to attract and keep qualified teachers. Member Harty asked Principal Scobell if she would increase class sizes to 28 to 1 if the Board allowed. Principal Scobell explained that they already had 27 to 29 students per class in grades 3-5 and had seen academic growth due to highly qualified teachers. She stated that having two more students in a class would have little impact, but having an unlicensed substitute would negatively impact students. Member Noble stated the Board would be open to a discussion regarding class sizes and attracting qualified teachers. The Board requested a more in-depth conversation about teacher salaries and class sizes in the context of what was best for the Somerset students.

**MEMBER McCLELLAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT FOR THE 2023/2024 SCHOOL YEAR, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER BENTHAM SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.**

**c. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS ACADEMIC CALENDAR FOR THE 2023/2024 SCHOOL YEAR**

Principal Esplin reviewed the calendar for the 2023/2024 school year. All major holidays were the same as CCSD with the exception of a full week off for Thanksgiving. Member Bentham asked if having professional development days on Wednesday had been beneficial. Principal Esplin replied in the affirmative and stated that if a data day was scheduled for a Friday, many students would not attend for the scheduled half day.

**MEMBER NOBLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE CALENDAR, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.**

**d. APPROVAL OF EOC WEIGHTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL CORE CLASSES**

Principal Esplin stated that the State required a weight amount be approved for end of course exams for the high school core classes.

**MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO APPROVE, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER FAIRLESS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.**

**6. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS**

Mr. Reeves stated that he would continue to watch the legislative session. Principal Esplin noted that there was a bill regarding adding math to the Read by 3 plan. Mr. Reeves reviewed other proposed bills and the work of the Academics lobbyist.

**7. MEMBER COMMENT**

Member Bredsguard stated that she appreciated the discussion on class size. She also appreciated visiting Florida schools. Member Noble thanked the principals for their innovation and collaboration. Member Bentham stated that he wanted to see an increase of fine arts. He noted that charter schools did not have adequate facilities for sports programs. Member McClellan appreciated the celebrations at the beginning of the meeting. She also stated that it was important to continue the teacher pay program. Member Fairless congratulated the principals on their academic growth. Member Mizer stated that the teacher salary discussion should also include principal salaries.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**9. ADJOURN MEETING**

**THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:47 P.M.**

**Approved on: April 10, 2023**



John Bentham (Apr 11, 2023 10:35 PDT)

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