

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
MAY 8, 2023

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Las Vegas held a public meeting on May 8, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at 4650 Losee Road, North Las Vegas, NV 89081.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Board Chair Travis Mizer. The following Board members were in attendance: Travis Mizer, LeNora Bredsguard, John Bentham, Will Harty, Cody Noble, and Sarah McClellan.

Board Member Renee Fairless was not in attendance.

Also present were the following principals: Lee Esplin, Cesar Tiu, Jessica Scobell, Shannon Manning, Mindi Palomeque, and David Fossett. Somerset Inc. representative Suzette Ruiz attended the meeting; as well as Academica representatives Gary McClain, Ryan Reeves, and Marla Devitt.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

a. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 10, 2023 BOARD MEETING

b. APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

1. SCHOOL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

2. ACCEPTANCE OF AB 495 SUBGRANT FUNDS

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

4. ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. ACADEMIC PROGRESS REPORTS AND CAMPUS UPDATES BY SOMERSET PRINCIPALS

The Somerset Academy of Las Vegas principals addressed the Board to provide updates and highlights from their respective campuses. Principal Lee Esplin stated that all students, except for one who had passed his GED, were expected to graduate. He extended an invitation to all Board members to attend the graduation ceremony, where Member Noble would be delivering a speech. Principal Esplin noted that the campus had experienced a loss of ten staff members. All positions, except one, had been filled. Principal Esplin highlighted that the high school cheerleaders achieved perfect scores in the charter sports league competition, the school presented a series of Broadway shorts, and the boys' volleyball team was gearing up for their first playoff game.

Principal Cesar Tiu expressed appreciation to the Lone Mountain PTO for their generous gifts during Teacher Appreciation Week. The cheerleaders secured third place in their most recent competition, while the varsity boys' volleyball team and varsity girls' soccer team were preparing for

the playoffs. Principal Tiu noted that the middle school Battle of the Books team earned second place at the national competition. Principal Tiu stated that the school was actively engaged in evaluations and training on the new curriculum, and their staff retention stood at 88%.

Principal David Fossett informed the Board that nine teachers would be leaving. There were three open positions in middle school and one in elementary. Testing was nearing completion, and he expected that the school would meet its projected ratings of a 4 Star elementary and 5 Star middle school. He noted that the elementary girls' soccer team was advancing in the playoffs. Member Mizer asked if the Articulation Agreement had impacted middle school student retention. Principal Fossett explained that while many middle school students indicated a desire to return, some might choose to leave before the start of the school year.

Principal Mindi Palomeque reported that there were currently thirty-seven classroom teachers, with thirty who would be returning. With the exception of one support staff member, all others would be returning, and the campus was in the process of hiring seven additional staff members. Principal Palomeque also shared the success of a career day and a 5th-grade etiquette lunch.

Principal Shannon Manning reported that, out of the current fifty-eight teachers, five would not be returning. Additionally, one of the campus personnel would be transitioning to a math interventionist position. The campus was projected to achieve a 4 Star elementary and 5 Star middle school rating. The campus had also received the distinction of being named a Purple Star school.

Principal Jessica Scobell noted the challenges regarding teacher retention. The middle school experienced significant growth due to the absorption of students from the North Las Vegas campus, which led to the swift hiring of thirteen teachers. She noted that not all new hires had proven successful. In total, eighteen teachers would be leaving the campus: seven from high school, seven from middle school, and four from elementary. All but one elementary position had been filled, and Principal Scobell emphasized a deliberate hiring process for the middle and high school positions.

Principal Scobell highlighted several achievements, including 120 out of 122 students graduating in May, with one student completing their studies over the summer and one exploring other options. The boys' volleyball team qualified for the playoffs, and the track team was set to participate in regionals. The campus was piloting a dual enrollment program, with 25 qualified students participating. There was a significant increase in the number of students taking AP tests.

Member Bentham asked about factors other than financial incentives that attracted or deterred teaching candidates when considering Somerset. Principal Scobell responded that the campus's culture served as a strong draw for potential candidates. Member Mizer asked all the principals if there were any changes in assistant principals for the 2023-2024 school year, to which the principals responded in the negative.

b. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF SPCSA VISIT REPORTS

Mr. Gary McClain addressed the Board and stated that the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) had conducted visits to all Somerset campuses. He noted that while the report did not include any strong recommendations, there were some recommendations specific to each campus. There were no outstanding notices for any of the campuses, and the reports contained numerous positive comments.

Member Harty noted that one area where the campuses did not perform as well was in comparison to nearby schools. He questioned whether this was due to parents not providing the necessary information. Principal Esplin clarified that the campuses were being compared to subgroups within local schools that did not report in the same way as required by Somerset schools. The comparison schools were able to report 100% free and reduced lunch (FRL), even if the actual campus wasn't at 100%. Principal Esplin stated that he provided feedback to the SPCSA, suggesting that if comparisons were to be made with neighborhood schools, they should focus on evaluating how Somerset schools were fostering student growth, rather than factors outside the school's control.

MEMBER McCLELLAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE SPCSA VISIT REPORTS, AS PRESENTED. MEMBER BENTHAM SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

c. REPORT ON 2022/2023 STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT PLANS DATA FOR SKY POINTE, LONE MOUNTAIN, ALIANTE, AND SKYE CANYON.

Mr. McClain stated that the SPCSA had required campuses that did not meet certain FRL rates to complete a student recruitment and enrollment plan, which had previously been approved by the Board. The data from the plans had been reported to the SPCSA and had been included in the support materials.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT THE REPORT AS PRESENTED. MEMBER BREDSGUARD SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

d. PRESENTATION REGARDING STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIO

Mr. McClain stated that the Board had tasked the principals with determining the acceptable number of students in the classroom for each grade level. The recommendation from the principals was for grades K-2 to be kept the same or lower, with a range of 26-29 students deemed acceptable for grades 3-5, and 31-35 students for grades 6-12, taking into account advanced courses. Principal Esplin clarified that the discussion was about the optimal number of students a quality teacher could effectively teach, rather than an encouragement to increase class sizes.

Principal Scobell stated that the Losee campus currently had 29-30 students in grades 4 and 5; noting that, even with the larger class sizes, she expected to see student growth due to the teachers in those classes. Discussion ensued regarding the importance of having qualified teachers and the need for flexibility in class sizes based on individual campuses. Principal Scobell noted that the Somerset K-2 class sizes were larger than the Clark County School District (CCSD) K-2 classes, and suggested that by being more flexible in grades 3-5, it might be possible to reduce class sizes in grades K-2 to benefit students with foundational skills.

Member Harty expressed concern about losing control over class sizes and trusting administrators to make the right decisions. Principal Scobell stated that the Board should provide the flexibility needed and have trust in the expertise of the school administrators. Member Mizer asked whether one or two additional students could bridge the gap between Somerset teachers and CCSD teachers. Principal Palomeque stated that it was likely difficult to compete for veteran teachers with twenty years of experience; however, Somerset has the potential to attract highly skilled and experienced teachers, averaging around eight years of experience. Principal Scobell noted that the

recent increase in the base salary had made a significant difference in attracting more teachers with training and experience.

Mr. Reeves addressed the Board and stated that each student in Nevada received funding of approximately \$7200-7500 per pupil, with only a portion of that amount available for teacher salaries due to the need for supplies, curriculum, and other classroom-related expenses. It was estimated that about 50-60% of the funding could be allocated towards salaries.

Member Noble stated that the principal's recommendation involved assessing the capabilities of the existing teachers in a particular grade to determine if they could handle additional students and noted his concern regarding the potential problems with such an approach. Principal Scobell stated that grades 3-5 could be departmentalized, where students rotated among different teachers for various subjects like writing, social studies, science, English, and math. Member Noble asked if there would be scenarios where different classes had varying numbers of students based on the teacher's level of expertise. Principal Scobell noted that the initial discussion revolved around the idea that increasing class sizes would generate more revenue, allowing for better teacher salaries and the attraction of more skilled educators. The principals had not discussed the specifics of individual teachers' capacities to handle more students; however, the general consensus was that experienced teachers could manage slightly larger classrooms compared to long-term substitutes.

Principals Manning and Scobell reviewed CCSD class sizes and noted that the ability to offer lower class sizes was helpful when recruiting teachers. Mr. Reeves stated that with the expected funding increase the average teacher salary could be raised to \$60,000, which would provide raises to experienced teachers. Member Harty stated that they should consider using the large surplus to increase teacher salaries without needing to increase class sizes. Discussion ensued regarding the balance between class size, teacher pay, and the importance of attracting and retaining teachers through competitive compensation and performance-based incentives.

e. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE 2023/2024 SCHOOL YEAR

Mr. McClain stated the proposed schedule maintained the meetings on Mondays. He noted the possibility of needing additional meetings in the future but emphasized the value of having designated days already set on the calendar.

MEMBER BENTHAM MOVED TO ACCEPT THE SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED. MEMBER McCLELLAN SECONDED THE MOTION, AND THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

Mr. McClain reminded Board members to complete the Academics evaluation surveys. He stated that Academics looks at the results to improve the services provided.

6. MEMBER COMMENT

Member McClellan stated that she did not want to procrastinate on the teacher salary issue, and would like to see the resolution this year. Member Bentham agreed and noted that Somerset needed to keep pace with CCSD instead of chasing them. He requested an earlier approval of the school calendar

for the 2024-2025 academic year. Member Mizer thanked the principals for providing a teacher retention update. Member Bredsguard stated that she would like to look at utilizing the surplus for pay for performance increases. Member Harty thanked everyone for contributing to the class size discussion.

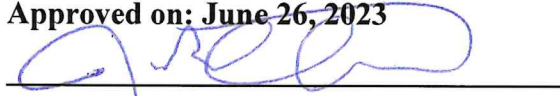
7. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

8. ADJOURN MEETING

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:15 P.M.

Approved on: June 26, 2023



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