

MINUTES
of the strategic planning meeting of the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
March 6, 2021

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Nevada held a public strategic planning meeting on March 6, 2021, at 8:00 a.m. at 6630 Surrey St., Las Vegas, NV 89119.

1. Call to order and Roll Call

Board Chair John Bentham called the meeting to order at 8:17 a.m. In attendance were Board members John Bentham, LeNora Bredsguard, Sarah McClellan, Cody Noble, Will Harty, and Renee Fairless.

Also present were Principals Lee Esplin (via Zoom), Cesar Tiu, Christina Threeton, Jessica Scobell, Kate Lackey, Shannon Manning, and Interim Principal Renae Notaro; as well as Somerset Academy Inc. representative Suzette Ruiz. Academica Representatives Gary McClain, Ryan Reeves, Jessica Barr, and Marla Devitt were also in attendance.

2. Public Comment and Discussion

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from the February 2, 2021 Board Meeting

Member Noble moved to approve minutes of the February 2, 2021 board meeting. Member McClellan seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

5. Data Executive Summary from Jessica Barr

Ms. Jessica Barr addressed the Board and stated that the support materials contained the 5 Star roadmaps and full data analysis for every campus. Ms. Barr stated that the impact of the pandemic was appearing in across, as well as in the national data. Proficiency regression was the number one area impacted in terms of school and student performance. She noted that ELA and reading carried over fairly well; however, math took a large hit across the nation. The most vulnerable student populations, including special education, EL learners, students who were in the bottom quartile, and economically disadvantaged students, were impacted the most.

Ms. Barr stated that, in regards to Star rating projections, middle schools were maintaining pretty well. She attributed this to the fact that middle school students were more adapted to the online learning environment; adding that the middle school metric was also not as hard as the elementary metric. Ms. Barr stated that a drop in elementary ratings was anticipated across the State. She reminded the Board that the schools were in recovery mode following the pandemic and online learning. Ms. Barr stated that the Biden

administration had announced that test waivers would not be granted for the 2020/2021 school year; however, there were some potential flexibilities. Although Star ratings would not be issued for the 2020/2021 school year, by Federal mandate Star ratings would be issued next year and all data would be publically reported. Nevada would continue to track subgroup data; however, TSI designations would not be issued until next year. Ms. Barr provided highlights and areas of focus for each campus.

Aliante Highlights:

- Proficiency is in recovery since Fall
- 6th grade reading growth
- 6-8th reading Opportunity Gap
- 6th & 8th grade math growth
- 6th & 7th Opportunity Gap
- Middle school projected to be 4 Star
- Reading proficiency increases in 1st-5th grade
- Math proficiency increases in 1st-5th grade

Aliante Areas of Focus

- Whole school consistency and sustainability
- Elementary growth in math and reading
- Elementary math AGP
- Elementary math Opportunity Gap
- Elementary subpopulations: special education and EL learners
- Middle school reading AGP
- Middle subpopulations: special education

Lone Mountain Highlights:

- Proficiency is in recovery since Fall
- Reading proficiency increases in K-5th grade
- Math proficiency increases in K-5th grade
- 5th grade math growth
- 8th grade reading growth and proficiency
- Middle school reading/math Opportunity Gap
- 6th-8th math proficiency increases
- Middle school 5 Star projection

Lone Mountain Areas of Focus:

- Whole school consistency and sustainability
- Growth in 4th grade math
- Growth in 4th and 5th grade reading
- Elementary math/reading Opportunity Gap
- Elementary subpopulations: special education and EL learners
- Middle school math MGP

- Middle school reading AGP
- Middle school subpopulations: special education and EL learners

Losee Highlights:

- Reading proficiency increases K-5th grade
- Math proficiency increases K-5th grade
- Elementary exceptional reading and math growth
- Elementary 3 Star projection
- 6th grade reading Opportunity Gap
- 6th-8th math proficiency increased/maintained
- Middle school math Opportunity Gap

Losee Areas of Focus:

- Elementary continuation of best practice that led to observed improvements
- 5th grade math Opportunity Gap
- Elementary subpopulations: special education
- Middle school reading MGP/AGP/Gap
- Middle school math MGP/AGP
- Middle school subpopulation: special education

North Las Vegas Highlights:

- Proficiency in recovery since Fall
- Reading proficiency increases K-5th grade
- Math proficiency increases K-5th grade
- 5th grade reading growth
- Elementary school 3 Star projection
- Middle school consistent math growth across all grades
- Middle school reading/math Opportunity Gap
- 6th-8th math proficiency increases
- Middle school 4 Star projection

North Las Vegas Areas of Focus:

- Whole school consistency and sustainability
- Elementary continuation of best practices that led to observed improvements
- Growth in math 4th and 5th grade
- Growth in reading 4th grade
- Elementary math/reading Opportunity Gap
- Elementary subpopulations: special education
- Middle school MGP/AGP
- Middle school subpopulations: special education

Skye Canyon Highlights:

- Elementary special education students on track to meet a majority of State expectations
- Small number of elementary students to shift to higher projection
- Middle school consistent reading growth – close to goal
- 8th grade math growth and Opportunity Gap
- Middle school 4 Star projection

Skye Canyon Areas of Focus:

- Whole school consistency and sustainability
- Elementary growth in reading and math
- Elementary math/reading Opportunity Gap
- Elementary subpopulations: EL learners
- 6th/7th grade math AGP/GAP
- Middle school subpopulation: special education and EL learners

Skye Pointe Highlights:

- Proficiency in recovery since Fall
- Reading proficiency increases K,2,4,5
- Math proficiency increases 2nd-5th grade
- 4th/5th reading growth/Opportunity Gap
- 4th/5th math growth/Opportunity Gap
- Elementary 5 Star projection
- 8th grade math growth
- Middle school reading/math Opportunity Gap
- Middle school math/reading AGP
- Middle school 4 Star projection

Skye Pointe Areas of Focus:

- Whole school consistency and sustainability
- Elementary continuation of best practices that led to 5 Star projection
- Math growth K-2
- Elementary subpopulations: EL learners
- 6th-8th, 10th/11th grade reading growth
- Middle/high subpopulation: special education and EL learners

Stephanie Highlights:

- Proficiency in recovery since Fall
- Reading proficiency increases K-5
- Math proficiency increases K-5
- Consistent, quality reading growth K-5
- 4th/5th Reading AGP/Opportunity Gap

- Reading proficiency increases 6-8
- Math proficiency increases 6-8
- Consistent, quality reading/math growth 6-8
- Middle school 5 Star projection

Stephanie Areas of Focus:

- Whole school consistency and sustainability
- Elementary math growth
- Math Opportunity Gap
- Elementary subpopulations: special education
- Middle school continuation of best practices that led to 5 Star projection
- Middle school subpopulation: monitor special education

Member Harty asked what the Star projection was for Stephanie elementary, to which Ms. Barr replied that it was projected to be a 3 Star. Member Bentham noted that most of the slides showed that proficiency was in recover mode; however, it was missing on a couple of slides. Ms. Barr explained that there were a couple of campuses that were not in full recovery mode; adding that the principals at those campuses were aware and addressing the issue. Member Noble asked how the Board should view large swings in the Star rating projections. Ms. Barr explained that, because the 5th grade students were the only elementary students who had been tested during the last SBAC testing in 2019, the elementary campuses projected ratings were based solely on the performance of the 5th grade students. She noted that a small number of students could impact the Star rating. Ms. Barr stated that the Board and principals should be concerned; however, the principals were creating strategic plans to respond to the areas of concern which should help raise the Star ratings.

Member Bredsguard asked the principals if they held collaboration meetings, to which the principals replied that they met every two weeks to collaborate. Member Bredsguard asked what caused the false drop in the data. Ms. Barr explained that false drops could be attributed two possible scenarios. In the first scenario the students who were flagged for false drops had full effort on the first test and on the second test they had major decrease in effort which would lead to a false drop. In the second scenario the student had help on the first test, typically from a parent, and did not have help on the second test. Member Bredsguard asked if there was a noticeable difference in the at home MAP testing and the on campus MAP testing. Principal Cesar Tiu addressed the Board and stated that the Lone Mountain i-Ready testing had been done at home and the MAP testing had been done on campus. He stated that there was a difference when the students were on campus with teachers monitoring the tests. Member Bredsguard asked if data was available regarding the different subgroup populations at each campus. Discussion ensued regarding the percentage of vulnerable population at each campus.

Member Fairless asked Principal Tiu if he had used the data to develop a prescription with hi team. Principal Tiu replied in the affirmative and stated that after school tutoring would be starting to target the Opportunity Gap students. Member Fairless suggested that the system find a strong EL person to walk through all the campus to help monitor the progress. Member Fairless asked if all SPED and EL populations were on all campuses. Principal Christina Threton addressed the Board and stated that it had been difficult to convince the families to bring their children to campus. During the recent WIDA testing

the families were able to observe the safety measures in place which should result in a higher number willing to be on campus. Principal Jessica Scobell addressed the Board and stated that her campus had many multi-generation families who were hesitant to allow the children on campus due to the potential risk to elderly family members. She further stated that many parents at her campus were out of work and were not willing to take their children to school. Member Fairless encouraged the principals to educate the families on the current CDC and State guidelines to increase the confidence in the safety measures at the schools.

Member Bentham stated that Ms. Barr had mentioned that Lone Mountain had a high percentage of new students and asked if the high percentage was campus-wide. Principal Tiu stated that the influx was across all grade levels; however, the campus had a lot of new 6th grade students. Discussion ensued regarding the higher level of student turnover at all campuses for the current year, a portion of which could be attributed to the pandemic causing a higher overall transiency rate in the county. Ms. Barr stated that a small percentage of incoming students who were not proficient could bring down the Star rating. Member Fairless noted that the growth of those non-proficient students would help improve the ratings.

Member Fairless noted that the Sky Pointe 5th grade teacher had the highest growth and suggested that the system have that teacher visit all the campuses to help the other 5th grade teams. Member Fairless asked Principal Lackey if her 5th grade team was strong. Principal Lackey stated that she had a strong 5th grade team. She stated that the current 5th grade students had been a challenging group since the campus opened and the 5th grade team worked hard and had created a strong action plan to help the students. Member Fairless stated that i-Ready was the tool was invaluable when with EL and SPED students to provide differentiated instruction prescriptions.

Member Bentham commended the principals for their phenomenal work during a year when plans were changed over and over. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and commended them for taking the time to hold a strategic planning meeting along with the time spend during Board meetings discusses the students and education related issues. He stated that a study had been conducted four or five years ago concerning how much time school boards in the State of Nevada spend on academics, the result was that less 3% for the state. Ms. Barr stated that CCSD had been 0%. Mr. Reeves noted that the Board was two hours into the meeting and the discussion had been focused on the students and the student's education.

6. Discussion Regarding the Fourth Quarter Academic Plan

Principal Lee Esplin addressed the Board and stated that the middle and high school plan was to have the students who were in person start attending four days per week full time starting March 16th. He explained that the middle and high students who were not in person could request to be put on a waitlist. In order to bring back a student the schedule would need to be reviewed to ensure that each of the student's classes would not be over capacity if the student returned. Principal Esplin stated that most of the elementary classes were at capacity; however a waiver request had been submitted to increase capacity levels. Principal Esplin stated that the campuses should be careful in bringing back students so that they could ensure that quality teaching was maintained as the students head to the testing time.

Principal Scobell stated that the parents were continually being surveyed. 43.5% of the elementary students were attending class in person. 39% of the middle school students were attending in person. 29%

of high school students were attending in person. Every student who requested in person learning was able to attend in person. Principal Scobell stated that a recent survey asked parents of virtual students if they would change to in person if the student was able to attend for the full day and only 37 additional parents would opt to come back with the full day option. She noted that one of the benefits of the pandemic was the ability to have every class be a small group learning environment. The students had benefited from three hours of structured instruction with 10-12 students. Principal Scobell stated that she was proposing that the a.m. cohort be in person and the p.m. cohort remain virtual. The remainder of the typical elementary school day lessons and activities, such as lunch, recess, i-Ready, and small group interventions would be built in to a p.m. session for the families who requested full day in person.

Principal Tiu reviewed recent parent and teacher survey results regarding in person, virtual, and hybrid options. He explained that there were multiple hurdles to returning all K-8 students full day including capacity, spacing requirements, lunch capacity, and unequitable education to grade levels that are unable to return due to the restrictions. Principal Tiu stated that the K-5 students would remain in a a.m./p.m. model, while the middle school students would return to full day in person starting March 15th. Member McClellan asked if the campus was open to further changes if a waiver was received. Mr. Tiu stated that the middle school students on the waitlist to return would be the first change made if a waiver was received. Discussion ensued regarding providing and equitable education for all students while maintaining consistency if more changes were made during the final quarter.

Interim Principal Renae Notaro addressed the Board and stated that currently 44% of elementary students and 18% of middle school students attended in person. She noted that parents were becoming more comfortable with the idea of in person learning. Interim Principal Notaro stated that the three foot spacing was preventing adding more students in person. If a waiver was received the plan was to move to a full-day in person model. She noted that moving to full-day presented concerns that needed to be addressed.

Principal Shannon Manning addressed the Board noted that Aliante had a large number of families who wished to remain virtual for the remainder of the school year. Currently for elementary students, 244 attend in person in the morning and 187 attend in person in the afternoon. 166 students attend virtually in the morning and 181 students attend virtually in the afternoon. For middle school students, 135 attend in person in the morning and the remaining 196 middle school students attend virtually in the afternoon. Principal Manning stated that communication had been sent to the families regarding increased capacity; however, only 14 additional students opted for in person learning based on the communication. Based on the family interest in returning to campus, the fourth quarter plan was to have middle school continue in the current format. K-5 would continue with a.m. and p.m. cohorts and add a third cohort, an intervention extension, which would be full-day. The third cohort students would attend part of the day with their teacher and part of the day in extension and intervention activities with an instructional aide.

Principal Threton stated that students were currently on campus and on line from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Students in need of additional instruction log in for Power Hour and small groups with interventionists at 1:30 p.m. She noted that families were becoming more comfortable with bringing students back on campus; however, there were many families that wanted to continue with distance education for the fourth quarter. The fourth quarter plan was to remain with the current plan while offering an option for the families that need full day care.

Principal Lackey stated that 88% of elementary students were in person and 67% of the middle school students were in person. She stated that available space while maintaining the required distance requirements was preventing full day in person instruction. Principal Lackey stated that the fourth quarter plan was to continue with synchronous learning K-8 with three hour a.m. and p.m. cohorts. She noted that 5th grade would be going to a block schedule to maximize instruction.

9. 10 Year Anniversary Discussion

Member Bentham stated that an option for a celebration would be to rent Wet N Wild. A small fee could be charged per person or per family. The cabanas could be raffled off by the campus PTOs to raise money. Activities could be organized throughout the day. Member Bentham stated that the water park would be available for the last weekend of September. Discussion ensued regarding possible activities, fundraising potential, and making a Wet N Wild weekend an annual event while holding a separate celebration for the anniversary.

8. Discussion Regarding Somerset Academy Administrative Leadership Structure

Member Bentham stated that the principal cohort was successfully collaborating and helping each other. He stated that the purpose of the discussion would be to determine any needs not being met by the Lead Principal structure in order to work towards a solution during the upcoming months. Principal Esplin stated that the collaborative evaluation system used during the last year was the most valuable evaluation he had received in his years as an educator. He stated that, although the principal cohort met together every other week, they interacted daily to help and support each other. The current structure had the system moving in a positive direction. Principal Lackey stated that the collaboration provided great support to the principals. Principal Scobell stated that the lack of bureaucracy was refreshing and allowed the principals to make the best decisions for the individual campuses while being able to collaborate and support each other.

Member McClellan asked if support was available for mentoring new principals. Principal Manning stated that all of the system principals offered support and followed up with her after her first day to ensure she had the support she needed. She stated that she also felt comfortable reaching out to Mr. McClain or Board members for support. Member Noble stated that there were some communication gaps; however, that did not mean any other system would be better. Discussion ensued regarding collaboration and communication between the principal cohort and the Board.

7. Discussion Regarding Academic Impact on Classroom Ratio

Mr. McClain addressed the Board and stated that Board had requested information on the academic impact on classroom ration. He noted that smaller class size usually lead to better learning environments; however, the research and articles were often contradictory. Member Noble stated that the class size issue had typically been tied to revenue; however, the Board would like to discuss what the class size meant to the learning environment. Principal Threeton stated that research showed that smaller K-2 classes were

beneficial to the learning environment. Principal Scobell noted that if the K-2 class size was reduced to 18, without adding an extra class, then the school would experience an influx of district students in 3rd grade who would possibly need to be brought up to grade level. Discussion ensued regarding options for smaller K-2 class sized or more targeted interventions with instructional aides in K-2.

Member Fairless stated that at Mater Academy she had been given flexibility from her Board to have class sizes from 24 to 27 students. She stated that the most important variables in a classroom was the teacher effectiveness and the curriculum being used; adding that the Mater teachers preferred an even number of students. Principal Threeton stated that having flexibility would give the Principal authority to move students among classes while maintaining the overall grade level number. A more effective teacher could possibly take an additional student, while a newer teacher could have one less. There were many variables to consider such as how many EL learners or SPED students were in a class. Discussion ensued regarding allowing flexibility in class sizes while maintaining the grade level maximum enrollment. Principal Scobell stated that flexibility at the high school level would be beneficial. If an AP class had reached the maximum enrollment of 31 with one more student requesting the class, she would like to be able to add that one student without having to create an additional class to have two 16 student classes.

Member Fairless moved to allow the Somerset principals the flexibility to not allow an elementary class to exceed 28 students, the flexibility from 25 to 28; for middle school the flexibility to exceed to 33 students; while maintaining the overall class size set by the Board.

Further discussion ensued regarding flexibility. The principals detailed scenarios where having flexibility would be beneficial to the overall learning environment. Member Bentham tasked the principal cohort to present at the next Board meeting, a recommendation for class size average for elementary, middle, and high school grades partnered with the flexibility to have the class size be the average in the grade level. The Board deferred a vote on the motion until further information was presented.

4. Report on Goals

a. All Schools to be 4 or 5 Starts by September 2022

Member Bentham asked if any of the principals were concerned with the information in the Road to 5 Star roadmaps contained in the support materials. The principals all indicated that they were comfortable with the roadmaps. Principal Scobell stated that consistent quality instruction and constantly revisiting the data were the keys to improving the Star ratings.

b. Utilize Character and Leadership Programs in the Schools by 2021-2022

Member Bentham stated that, in the difficulties faced this year, it had provided an obstacle to meeting this goal. Principal Lackey stated that Principal Esplin was working on quotes for the Leader in Me program. Members Bentham and Harty stated that they would like to see a centralized location to pay for the program so that it was not a campus by campus expense and decision. Member Esplin stated that he along with negotiating quotes he was working to ensure that the coaching and training was beneficial. Discussion ensued regarding funding the program.

c. Become Financially Sound to Facilitate Increasing Teacher Pay and Facility Maintenance

Member Bentham stated that teacher pay was an important topic. Member Harty stated that the Board had previously been provided with a detailed salary study and requested an update. Discussion

ensued regarding the salary range for Somerset, including benefits and bonuses, in comparison with the district salary table. Principal Lackey stated that a big challenge she faced was that new teachers sometimes made more than established teachers because of past increases being below the new teacher rate. Further discussion ensued regarding balancing the salaries more equitably. Mr. Reeves outlined many of the funding and pay challenges, including the limited increase in State funding and an increase in PERS contributions. Member Bentham stated that the teachers had stepped up and worked hard in during difficult challenges and he would like to find a way to recognize their efforts.

10. Member Comment

Member Fairless stated that she was excited to be a part of the Somerset system; adding that the campuses seem to have grown closer over the last year as they worked through the pandemic. Member Harty thanked the principals. He noted that, as an employee of North Las Vegas, he was grateful for how the North Las Vegas campuses have worked through the pandemic. He stated that he would like to discuss accreditation for independent study during a future meeting.

Member Bentham stated that he was proud of the Somerset system leaders for being leaders, not only on their campuses, but in the State. He asked if Academic had found any more information on the land next to Sky Pointe. Member McClellan stated that she was also thankful for the leaders. Member Noble stated that his kids and the entire system had benefitted from the dedication of the Somerset leaders and teachers.

Mr. Reeves provided a brief update on charter school growth in the valley. Mr. Reeves stated that preliminary student retention looked great for enrollment next year.

Principal Scobell stated that a football program would be starting at the Losee campus 2022 school year. A new band teacher had a lot of marching band experience and would be starting that program also.


11. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:43

Approved on: April 6, 2021



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