

MINUTES
of the meeting of the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS of SOMERSET ACADEMY OF LAS VEGAS
June 28, 2019

The Board of Directors of Somerset Academy of Nevada held a public meeting on June 28, 2019, at 11:30 a.m. at 6475 Valley Dr., North Las Vegas, Nevada 89084.

1. Call to order and Roll Call

Board Chair John Bentham called the meeting to order at 11:33 a.m. with a quorum present. In attendance were Board members Will Harty, Cody Noble, John Bentham, Gary McClain, and Travis Mizer (via telephone, left the meeting at 12:37 p.m.).

Board Member Sarah McClellan was not present at this meeting.

Also present were Principals Ruby Norland, Elaine Kelley, Lee Esplin, Cesar Tiu, Christina Threeton, Kate Lackey, and Interim Principal Michele Lorig. Academica representatives Ryan Reeves and Crystal Thiriot were also in attendance.

2. Public Comment and Discussion

There was no request for public comment.

3. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Somerset Academy of Las Vegas' System-Wide Administrative Structure and Possible Designation of Administrative Positions and Assignments

Member Bentham explained that Executive Director John Barlow's retirement triggered discussion regarding Somerset's administrative structure. Mr. Ryan Reeves addressed the Board and introduced the proposed changes as outlined in the support materials. He explained that the principals presented the Board with a model that some members believed put too much responsibility on the principals, especially with new principals and some schools focusing on improvements. On the other hand, the prior structure created difficulties because the Executive Director was meant to provide support to the principals, and he was also tasked with evaluating them. The plan outlined in the support materials attempted to strike a balance between both models.

Member Harty was concerned about how the principals would be evaluated under the proposed model. Mr. Reeves explained that the principals would evaluate themselves using data created by components such as performance framework and school surveys. Academica staff and the Florida partnership would assist in the preparation of documents to facilitate this process. Member Bentham mentioned Pinecrest Academy's Board, which had a subcommittee to assist and evaluate principal self-evaluations. Member Harty concluded that although he remained skeptical overall, the idea of an objective performance review method brought him closer to a level of comfort with the proposed model.

Member Noble noted that, although the proposed model incorporated a lot of what the principals presented, he was reticent to push any additional responsibilities on the principals. His opinion was that the Board needed a point of contact with the campuses, and the principals needed an individual to go to for support. He thought that the proposed Administrative Coordinator position met those needs; however, he was concerned about the principal self-evaluation method. Though he appreciated the proposed structure as a starting point, he believed more input from the principals was necessary.

Member Bentham agreed that the plan outlined was a good start and hoped that the transition process would be organic over the first year so that the system could be fine-tuned. He added that the Administrative Coordinator should be the primary entity to address parental concerns, rather than Academics as suggested in the proposal. He suggested that the Administrative Coordinator be involved in applying for grants. Ms. Crystal Thiriot addressed the Board and stated that she would add applying for grants to the job description. Member Bentham added that this individual could serve as a five STAR specialist. Finally, he noted that he did not think the title Administrative Coordinator encapsulated the responsibilities of the position very well. Mr. Reeves understood the Board's point of view regarding Academics fielding parental concerns, given that Somerset previously relied on the Executive Director to perform this function. Mr. Reeves also clarified that under the new model, ultimate responsibility regarding school data would lie with the schools, though they could turn to the Administrative Coordinator for support.

Member McClain emphasized that trust in the system and each other was vital to success and encouraged the principals to participate in this decision. Member Mizer asserted that he did not believe the timing was right for a self-administered structure; he believed they needed an Executive Director's supervision until they were running all 4 to 5 STAR schools.

Member Harty wanted to know how principals would obtain salary increases. Mr. Reeves responded that a raise structure did not yet exist, and he suggested fashioning one after the teachers' existing raise structure in which a percentage raise was applied based on objective and subjective evaluation factors. Member Bentham was curious to know how Pinecrest Academy determined raises, to which Mr. Reeves replied that the aforementioned Principal Evaluation Committee determined evaluation methods and salary amounts and then presented those to the Board in the form of a Consent Agenda.

Member Harty saw the Administrative Coordinator as a critical component of this proposed system, and he was open to an increase in the proposed salary for that individual. Mr. Reeves maintained that the proposed salary range was designated accordingly; while the Administrative Coordinator position would be close to principal level, many of this individual's responsibilities would fall below principal level.

Member Harty wondered how they would objectively know whether the new system was working. Discussion ensued regarding whether this individual would ultimately bear responsibility for objective performance indicators at the individual campuses. It was decided that campus leaderships were to be accountable for STAR ratings and more thought needed to be given to how to measure the success of the proposed Administrative Coordinator.

Principal Elaine Kelley addressed the Board and reminded them that the STAR ratings were not issued until the end of the year, so there would need to be some other form of measurement throughout the year. Member Bentham pointed out that there were several indicators to measure educational growth throughout the year, and if trust and accountability thrived and the principals appeared happy, then the position could be considered successful. Member Noble underscored that the proposed system would promote accountability by encouraging the principals to independently identify and address issues along the way rather than wait for an end-of-year performance review. Principal Lee Esplin addressed the Board and stated that the Administrative Coordinator could not fairly be evaluated based on STAR ratings or data growth because he/she may not play any role in that. Rather, a mechanism would need to be developed to assess the support that that position would provide.

Principal Esplin and other Somerset principals asked whether their existing SPED Facilitator positions would be necessary if those responsibilities would fall under the Administrative Coordinator's purview. Mr. Reeves responded that the thought was simply to find areas the Administrative Coordinator could strengthen, and maybe SPED was not the right area. Principal Esplin suggested that the Administrative Coordinator could help with grant writing. Member Noble interjected that it would be most beneficial to get input from the principal cohort regarding what support would be most useful.

Principal Kate Lackey addressed the Board to inquire as to what "working together" would look like. Member Bentham responded that the principal cohort would meet together to decide what kind of support would be most beneficial to them. Principal Lackey noted that she would strongly prefer that someone who was supporting the principals have experience as a former principal. Discussion ensued regarding what was meant by "supporting the principals", whether that type of support was necessary, and what type of an individual could provide that level of support. It was determined that it was more important to vote on whether or not to move to this system in the first place and discuss this further afterward.

Principal Ruby Norland addressed the Board and contributed that she did not think this sounded like a full-time position, and she thought the salary range was too high. She argued that her AP's worked more than full time and their salaries were not even close to the proposed Administrative Coordinator salary. Member Noble and Mr. Reeves clarified that while the position would be full-time, the Lead Principal aspect would not require the entire workweek and so the individual would be assigned additional responsibilities.

Principal Kelley wondered how the Administrative Coordinator would be chosen. Member Harty recommended the principals pick the individual to fill this position. Principal Esplin remarked that he also believed that the salary range was much too high for an administrative position when the AP's were paid far less. Member Noble and Mr. Reeves responded that the level of support they would expect from this individual would require a certain level of expertise that would merit the pay range in question.

Mr. Reeves suggested that the principals continue this discussion in a meeting of their own. The principals could bring their decisions regarding a job description, title, and salary range to the Board, along with a candidate's name if they could find someone suitable. Member McClain agreed; stating that he thought they were getting close to making all of these decision, and pointed out that the principals had already begun to discuss this change in structure when they learned of Executive Director Barlow's retirement.

Principal Christina Threeton addressed the Board and opined that qualitative data such as service, leadership, and character needed to be considered in the evaluation of principal performance. Member Harty asked Principal Threeton to comment on whether she thought a principal should be evaluating him/herself on subjective measures; adding that this was his main problem with the proposed model. Principal Threeton responded that the evaluations should be collaborative and supported the idea of forming an Evaluation Committee.

Member Harty moved to approve the Administrative Coordinator position pending the principals coming back with a more detailed job description and potentially an individual to fill the position. Member Bentham seconded the motion.

Member Noble expressed uneasiness over making a firm decision regarding the Administrative Coordinator position.

This motion was withdrawn and no vote was taken.

Member McClain moved to approve moving away from the Executive Director structure and putting in place a principal-led structure with a proper support position yet to be determined. Member Harty seconded the motion.

Principal Kelley was concerned about what would happen if the principals made decisions the Board chose not to support. Discussion ensued regarding how the principals were to proceed. After deciding what type of support they needed, they were to present a candidate's name to the Board, provided they could agree on someone suitable.

The Board discussed the wording of the motion and agreed that they wanted to eliminate the Executive Director position and leave it up to the principals to determine what type of a support person would be most beneficial as a replacement.

The motion was carried with one abstention by Member Noble.

Mr. Reeves concluded by saying that board governance trainings taught him that the Board members are supposed to decide what the school needs and leave it up to the administrators to decide how to meet those needs. Therefore, he reassured the group that they were handling this in a proper manner.

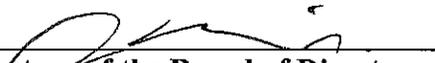
4. Public Comment and Discussion

There was no request for public comment.

5. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Approved on: 8-8-2019


Secretary of the Board of Directors
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas