

Ascend Public Charter Schools  
Meeting of the Schools Board of Trustees  
October 2, 2019 6:30 pm

Location  
Ascend Learning  
205 Rockaway Parkway  
Brooklyn, NY

Meeting minutes

**Trustees in attendance**

Stephanie Mauterstock (chair), Shelly Cleary (treasurer), Amanda Craft (trustee), Kwaku Andoh (trustee; via audioconference), Glenn Hopps (trustee), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Andy Epstein, Betsy Goldfarb, Carl-Anthony Watson (via videoconference), Dominique Artamin, Erica Murphy, Pascale Artamin, Sophie Kramer, Steven Ramdilal, Susan Pollock, Tanasia Lewis, Zeldia Washington

**Members of the public in attendance**

Angelica Walker, Bushwick Ascend Lower School parent

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:41 pm.

**I. Public comment**

Zelda Washington, school director of Bushwick Ascend Lower School, requested communication to Ascend staff from the Ascend Charter Schools board assuring them of the ongoing work to resolve the matters related to Ascend's senior leadership.

Steven Ramdilal teacher at Bushwick Ascend Middle School, echoed this request.

**II. Public comment update**

Stephanie and Susan responded to the comments made at the August board meeting related to Ascend's senior leadership and DEI work. Stephanie noted that the Ascend Charter Schools (ACS) board has been communicating with the Ascend Learning (AL) board, which is responsible for any decisions relating to Ascend's senior leadership, and that the AL board has not yet made any announcements. Susan noted that Promise54 has delivered the audit reports to the AL board, that Angela Cobb had made selections to the Equity Steering Committee, and that the Committee held its first meeting on October 2.

Carl responded to a comment at August's board meeting regarding the change in the student dress code policy at Brooklyn Ascend Middle School. The school is supporting families through this transition, and a more iterative process involving the network, school staff, and families will be put in place going forward.

### **III. Approval of board meeting minutes**

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the August 21 meeting. Oral moved to approve the August 21 board meeting minutes. Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the August 21 executive session. Amanda moved to approve the August 21 executive session meeting minutes. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

### **IV. Financial report**

#### **a. School financial reports**

Shelly presented the July 31 financial reports and reported on the finance committee's goal setting for the year, which will be presented to the board at an upcoming meeting. Andy shared that the audit is underway, with all three boards and five schools having submitted their materials to the auditor.

### **V. School and network updates**

#### **a. Schools**

Erica reported on the first five weeks of school, during which a strong foundation has been laid and consistent progress observed at each school as compared to last year. The schools and curriculum teams are engaged in implementation visits where they observe successes and areas for growth at each school in order to provide targeted professional development. Erica reported on the strong start at the three new schools and explained efforts to continue supporting the schools as they expand. The high school has also launched stronger this year, with a greater sense of community and improved instruction and culture. Erica also reported on the first round of the F&P reading assessment trainings. Stephanie congratulated the students, teachers, and leaders for the academic success in school year 2018-19, as evidenced in the summary Annual Accountability Plan Progress Report.

#### **b. Talent update**

Betsy reported that the recruitment season ended September 30, and that the team is focused on filling remaining vacancies and beginning to hire for next school year. She noted that the campaign was successful overall in meeting its goal, but the retention goal fell slightly short due to vacancies reported in August. Betsy discussed the ongoing work across the organization to improve offboarding data to gain better insights into the reason for vacancies.

#### **c. Student recruitment update**

Carl discussed the status of enrollment at each school. Several schools are over-enrolled by a small number of students, and a few under-enrolled by a small number, but overall Ascend is over-enrolled by 42 students. The two new lower schools incubating at neighboring Ascend sites are the schools most under-enrolled. There was a discussion of strategies taken to address the specific schools' under-enrollment; no significant action will need to be taken to ensure financial stability if the schools remain under-enrolled.

## VI. Board matters

### a. Board members

Stephanie welcomed Glenn to the board and shared that Kathleen had submitted her resignation from the board, official at the end of September. The board thanked her for her many years of service to Ascend Charter Schools.

### b. Committee appointments

The trustees agreed to appoint themselves to the committees as follows. The hiring committee will include Amanda, Oral, and Stephanie. The nominating committee will consist of Nadine, Oral, and Stephanie. The academic (education) committee will consist of Amanda, Nadine, and Kwaku. The finance committee will include Shelly, Kwaku, Glenn, and Christine. The real estate sub-committee will include Shelly, Glenn, and Christine. The trustees agreed to pause the work of the ad hoc committee on strategy and growth.

### c. Supporting school directors

Stephanie noted that the board has discussed establishing a buddy system between trustees and school directors to build relationships and provide support. The trustees discussed the need for standards to ensure consistent experiences for school leaders, as well as the importance of conveying that this relationship is intended to be one of support and partnership. Zelda suggested a social with the trustees and school directors. Amanda, Stephanie, Susan, and Sophie will plan this initiative.

## VII. Adjournment

At 7:51 pm Kwaku moved to adjourn the meeting; Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Name:

Date