

Ascend Public Charter Schools  
Meeting of the Schools Board of Trustees  
October 23, 2019 6:30 pm

Location  
Bushwick Ascend Lower School  
751 Knickerbocker Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY

Meeting minutes

**Trustees in attendance**

Christine Schlendorf (secretary), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee), Shelly Cleary (treasurer, via teleconference), Stephanie Mauterstock (chair, via teleconference)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Andy Epstein, Brandon Sorlie, Carl-Anthony Watson, Christina Pena, Dellianna Burrows, Erica Murphy, Miatta Massaley, Minnyone Davis, Pascale Artamin, Richard Tucker, Shani Foster, Sophie Kramer, Susan Pollock, Zelda Washington

**Others in attendance**

Rick Arroyo (Ascend Learning Board of Directors)

Nadine called the meeting to order at 6:43 pm.

**I. Public comment**

Miatta Massaley, school director at Bushwick Ascend Middle School, expressed concern about her school's ability to hire additional teachers who can support ELL students and students with IEPs. She also requested additional transparency from the board with respect to future steps following Steven Wilson's departure as CEO.

**II. Public comment update**

No public comments were made at the prior meeting.

**III. Approval of board meeting minutes**

Nadine presented to the board the minutes of the October 2, 2019 meeting. Christine moved to approve the October 2 board meeting minutes. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

**IV. Ascend Learning leadership update**

Rick Arroyo, member of the Ascend Learning Board of Directors, presented on the recent work of the Ascend Learning Board, the current status of the organization, and the path forward.

Rick described the work of the Ascend Learning board over the past few months with respect to the organization's leadership for its second decade. Rick spoke of Steven Wilson's accomplishments as a key figure in Ascend's growth and success, and that Ascend now provides thousands of Brooklyn students with an excellent public education. The Ascend Learning board has increased its time commitment and its dialogue with senior Ascend staff, and intends to be in close communication with the Ascend Charter Schools board and with the larger Ascend community to update them on progress. The board has engaged an external firm to assist in planning the organization's leadership structure and in developing the board's membership and engagement.

## **V. Financial report**

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

Shelly presented the August 31 financial reports and briefed the board on the finance committee's recent meeting. She highlighted the decline in projected net income due to under-enrollment, as shown in the August budget, and – at this early point in the year – a lease coverage ratio slightly below lender requirements. Shelly and Andy noted efforts to ensure proper calculation of this metric, and our intent to bring it into compliance by the end of the fiscal year. Andy updated the board on the audit, which is in its final stages.

## **VI. School and network updates**

### **a. Schools**

Brandon presented on last week's ELA benchmark exams, the results of which will be discussed in depth at the upcoming academic committee meeting. This year's goal is for every cohort to improve by seven points, and the benchmark results fall short of that goal. School leaders have created action plans in response to this data. The most exciting results were seen in Central Brooklyn Ascend Middle School, Canarsie Ascend Middle School, and Brownsville Ascend Middle School.

### **b. Student recruitment update**

Carl presented on student recruitment, noting that across the network, Ascend is over-enrolled. The new lower schools are under-enrolled, but families continue to apply. The application for the next school year is open, and there has been a significant increase in the number of applications received compared to the same time last year.

### **c. Diversity, equity, and inclusion update**

Susan shared upcoming plans for the equity steering committee, which meets next on November 4. Listening sessions with six groups selected by the steering committee are scheduled for October 29 and 30.

## **VII. Board matters**

### **a. Supporting school directors**

A social event to kick off a buddy system between trustees and school directors to build relationships and provide support is scheduled for November. The initiative will create standards to ensure consistent experiences for school directors.

b. Upcoming nominating committee meeting

The nominating committee will meet in the coming weeks to advance the work of growing the board.

Trustees made two recommendations for the board package. Shelly suggested the enrollment report reflect enrollment from the start of the school year so changes over the course of the year are visible. Stephanie requested the network dashboard be placed at the front of the package.

**VIII. Adjournment**

At 7:44 pm Oral moved to adjourn the meeting; Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Name:

Date