Ascend Public Charter Schools  
Meeting of the Schools Board of Trustees  
November 12, 2019 7:00 pm

Location
Ascend Learning
205 Rockaway Parkway
Brooklyn, NY

Meeting minutes

Trustees in attendance
Amanda Craft (trustee), Christine Schlendorf (secretary), Glenn Hopps (trustee), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee), Shelly Cleary (treasurer)

Ascend staff in attendance
Brandon Sorlie, Brittney Jean-Louis, Carl-Anthony Watson, Cassamara Campbell, Crystal Lane, Erica Murphy, Kay Gardner (via teleconference), Miatta Massaley, Shani Foster, Sophie Kramer, Susan Pollock, Tanasia Lewis, Tracy DeOliveira-Lewis

Amanda called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

I. Public comment

Tanasia Lewis, a teacher at Bushwick Ascend Middle School, expressed concern that her school is in need of additional teachers, particularly substitute teachers and those who can support students with IEPs. She also requested that Ascend Charter Schools board meetings be scheduled earlier in the evening to better accommodate teachers’ schedules, and that town halls allow staff to express their opinions more broadly.

II. Public comment update

At October’s meeting, 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. Brandon responded on behalf of Andy about the steps being taken to address the staffing concerns. Miatta reiterated her request for funds to hire additional teachers; officers will follow up on progress at the next board meeting.

In October, Miatta had requested additional transparency from the board with respect to future steps following Steven Wilson’s departure as CEO. Amanda reported on steps the Ascend Learning board is taking in partnership with a search firm to hire Ascend’s next CEO and the Ascend Learning board’s goal to be transparent in its process and timeline.

III. Approval of board meeting minutes
Amanda presented to the board the minutes of the October 23, 2019 meeting. Christine moved to approve the October 23 board meeting minutes. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. Financial report
   a. School financial reports

Shelly presented the September 30 financial reports and briefed the board on the finance committee’s recent meeting with the auditors. She reported that the audit received an unqualified opinion, and was submitted to SUNY on time. She noted that the lease coverage ratio is falling slightly below loan covenant requirements, and that efforts are underway to bring it into compliance.

V. School and network updates
   a. Implementation visits

Erica presented on trends observed during implementation visits by the curriculum and schools teams to all 15 Ascend schools. These observations will inform professional development for this school year and the next.

   b. Staff survey

Brandon presented on the October staff survey, which overall showed improvements in staff satisfaction compared to last year. School directors are rolling out this data to their teams. Andy and Carl are administering an additional survey to operations staff.

   c. Student recruitment

Carl presented on the array of student recruitment initiatives underway. Our new lower schools remain underenrolled, though Ascend is overenrolled across the network. 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. Shelly and Amanda requested application trends at our new lower schools.

   d. Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Susan shared actions undertaken by the equity steering committee as it drafts language reflecting Ascend’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism, and identifies short and long-term priorities. Listening sessions with six groups selected by the steering committee were completed in October, and the questions have been circulated to all staff through a Google form.

VI. Board matters
   a. Nominating committee

The nominating committee will meet soon to advance the work of growing the board.
VII. Adjournment

At 8:08 pm Oral moved to adjourn the meeting; Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

Name:       Date: