

**Ascend Public Charter Schools  
Meeting of the School Board of Trustees  
February 19, 2020  
6:30 pm**

Location:  
Central Brooklyn Ascend Lower School  
465 East 29<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn, NY

Meeting minutes

**Trustees in attendance**

Kwaku Andoh (trustee, via videoconference), Glenn Hopps (trustee, via teleconference), Stephanie Mauterstock (chair, via videoconference), Christine Schlendorf (secretary), Nadine Sylvester (trustee), Oral Walcott (trustee)

**Ascend staff in attendance**

Andy Epstein, Shani Foster (via teleconference), Betsy Goldfarb, Sophie Kramer, Lisa Margosian, Erica Murphy, Carl-Anthony Watson

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm.

**I. Public comment**

No members of the public offered comment.

**II. Public comment update**

No public comments were offered at the prior meeting.

**III. Approval of board meeting minutes**

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the January 22 meeting and the January 22 executive session. Oral moved to approve both the January 22 board meeting and executive session minutes. Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously by all voting directors (Glenn did not vote as he participated via telephone).

**IV. Financial report**

Andy presented the December 31 financial report, which was largely unchanged from the prior month. He highlighted progress with construction at the Linden Boulevard building, as well as the budgeting process for next year. The budget will be discussed more fully in April, but Ascend Learning intends to keep the management fee with Ascend Charter Schools the same next year.

**V. School and network updates**

a. Schools

Erica reported that Ascend projects a 93% graduation rate at Brooklyn Ascend High School, and 100% of seniors have applied to college. The percentage of seniors already accepted into four year colleges surpasses the admissions rate of last year's graduating class, and they have received more financial aid than last year's graduating class as well. Data from the second quarter shows that academic performance has improved at the high school as compared to last year, but some courses remain focal points to accelerate progress.

Erica also reported that following the third benchmark exams in ELA, network growth is projected to remain flat. Positive signs are visible in the third, fifth, and eighth grades, and schools and network staff are working hard to understand the causes of the plateau.

b. Student enrollment

Carl reported that applications for SY20-21 are down as compared to last year, which mirrors enrollment trends across New York City. Numerous activities are underway to draw applications to Ascend.

c. Human capital

Betsy shared the projected number of hires needed over this recruitment cycle. Particular areas of focus include hiring for the resident school director program, recruiting for hard to fill roles, and monitoring retention. The talent team is also engaged in the multi-year work of developing scorecards and competencies for every position.

d. Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Lisa provided an update on the work of the Equity Steering Committee, which has formally adopted Ascend's DEIA commitment language. The Committee will roll out this language across the organization in March and April. A DEIA project manager role has also been designed and posted; this person will drive and facilitate integration of the many projects underway.

e. CEO search update

Oral, a member of the CEO search committee, shared that the committee will have its first meeting on February 24. Dates have been scheduled for candidate reviews and two rounds of interviews.

## **VI. Ascend organizational goals**

Lisa presented revised Ascend Learning organizational goals, which integrate the numerous initiatives underway at Ascend. The vision for Ascend Learning is to foster excellence across the network in service to our schools, which is manifested in four strategic imperatives. The Ascend Charter School board, Ascend Learning board, school directors, and Ascend Learning staff will receive updates on progress towards the goals. The Ascend Learning staff survey will be revised to reflect the new organizational goals.

## **VII. Requesting a planning year for Bushwick Ascend High School**

Lisa explained that when renewing the Bushwick Ascend charter in 2017, Ascend planned to open a second high school under the Bushwick charter in fall 2020. As time passed, Ascend recognized it would not need to open a second high school at this time, which was noted in Ascend's 2019 application to

SUNY for a new charter. SUNY CSI has suggested that Ascend request a planning year for the Bushwick Ascend High School at this time and request a formal charter revision in the future once plans for the second high school are finalized.

Kwaku moved to vote in favor of requesting a planning year for the Bushwick Ascend High School. Nadine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously by all voting directors.

**VIII. Trustee updates from SD meetings**

The Trustee discussion of their conversations with school directors was tabled to next month due to lack of time.

**IX. Management agreement**

Per the terms of the management agreement between Ascend Learning and Ascend Charter Schools, the agreement should be renewed by the end of March. Ascend Learning has expressed its intent to renew the agreement, and has asked Ascend Charter Schools whether it also intends to renew the agreement. The process for renewal was discussed, and the Board expressed its intent to renew the management agreement.

It was acknowledged that this meeting was accidentally scheduled during a school break. Efforts will be made to ensure this does not occur again.

**X. Adjournment**

At 8:22 pm, Nadine moved to adjourn the meeting; Christine seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Name:

Date