



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
January 5, 2023

MINUTES

On January 5, 2023, the EdAdvance Board of Directors held a Zoom online meeting during which a quorum was present. President John Kissko called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM and recorded the following members in attendance:

1. Roll Call:

Name (District): Joseph Abdella, Region 12
 Deb Bell, Region 7
 Kate Conetta, Danbury
 Roxy Fainer, Thomaston
 John Kissko, Torrington
 Karen Kulesa, Plymouth
 Alison Plante, Newtown
 Sarah Robichaud, Colebrook

**EdAdvance
Personnel:**

Jeffrey Kitching, Executive Director
Jonathan P. Costa, Sr., Assistant Executive Director
Richard Carmelich, III, Chief Operations Officer
Tracey Lay, Chief Talent & Development Officer
Carol Montory, Board Clerk

2. Approval of November 3, 2022 Minutes

Upon a motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Joseph Abdella, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the November 3, 2022 meeting.

3. Approval of December 1, 2022 Minutes

Upon a motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Joseph Abdella, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the December 1, 2022 meeting.

4. Questions and Comments from the Public: None

5. Old Business: None

6. New Business:

a) Action Item: Head Start: Prenatal to Five Waiver for Non-Federal Share

Upon a motion by Joseph Abdella, duly seconded by Sarah Robichaud, the Board of Directors unanimously approved of EdAdvance's request to submit a waiver for \$284,866.74 out of our \$689,387 in Non-Federal Share for the Head Start grant year 2022.

b) Presentation: Review of Torrington Property Acquisitions

Jeff reported that the acquisition of East School was completed over the holiday break. He thanked Torrington Mayor, Elinor Carbone; Torrington Public Schools Superintendent, Sue Lubomski; and John Kissko, our Board of Directors President, for their support and assistance during this process. He also thanked Rich Carmelich, our Chief Operations Officer, for his continuing work on this project. We are currently working with Thomaston Savings Bank reviewing our funding options for the needed construction and renovations on East School. We also expect to close on the Grove Street Torrington property sometime this month. We encountered a few delays with the Torrington Planning and Zoning Commission, but they have been worked out and things should be moving smoothly again.

c) Approval: Personnel Reports for November and December 2022

Upon motion by Kate Conetta, duly seconded by Sarah Robichaud, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Personnel Reports for November and December 2022 as submitted.

7. Reports/Updates:

i. Executive Director's Report – *Jeffrey C. Kitching*

- Jeff reported that the US Department of Education awarded EdAdvance a multi-year \$8.7 million dollar federal grant to provide "School-Based Mental Health Support" for nine school districts in northwest CT – Barkhamsted, Colebrook, Explorations, Norfolk, Region 1, Region 7, Region 12, Region 14, and Region 20 (Reg 6 and Litchfield). This is by far the largest grant the agency has ever received. This grant will be spread across a five-year period and will provide a 0.5 FTE school counselor or social worker in each of 28 schools across the region, as well as a number of other support services for the region, including a 6th grade Social Emotional Learning unit, vaping/tobacco use counseling for students and no-cost PD workshops for relevant school staff. Funding was written into the grant to be allocated to recruit staff by providing higher than average salaries, relocation stipends and yearly loan repayment or tuition stipends among other benefits. We have already hired a staff member with a Human Resources background to start working on the grant and expect to be fully staffed in September.
- Jeff spoke about our newly formed Data Services Division. This department has been created to assist districts with PowerSchool, High School Scheduling, Teaching and Learning, among other needs in the areas of data collection, analysis, and action planning related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Jeff announced that EdAdvance will be hosting a Legislative Breakfast on January 19 in cooperation with Northwest Hills Council of Governments, the NW Chamber of Commerce, and CAPSS.

ii. School/Program Services – *Jonathan P. Costa, Sr.*

- Jonathan reported that data work continues in his department with a rollout of an enhancement to Naviance to track college applications. It provides information on vocational placements to show students all their choices and vocational opportunities beyond high school.
- School Services will be holding two Science of Reading Support workshops in January to assist our districts in the waiver process.
- Work continues on the Teacher Evaluation plan which will give districts a lot of flexibility.
- Jonathan spoke about a new artificial intelligence tool, ChatGPT, that was developed that can write paragraphs of human-like text. This is the first wave of AI to challenge student work and writing. A Princeton student has developed an app that he claims can detect whether text is written by ChatGPT.

iii. Business and Operations – *Richard Carmelich*

- Rich reported the following:
 - The Technology department is hard at work conducting a security audit at Gilbert School. A new full-time Technology staff member was hired in December, and they will be providing support to Gilbert School 5 days a week.
 - Our Facilities department has been busy assisting the agency with the new property purchases, creating office space at PLA, and the roof and boiler replacements here in Litchfield.
 - The Finance department has been assisting the auditors gather information for the audit. Typically, we present the audit to the Board in February, but last year it was in May. This year, we expect it to be completed in February or March.
 - Our Food Services department is working with school districts on the sunsetting of the free meals for every student program.
 - The Transportation department is back up and running after the holiday break.

iv. Talent and Development – *Tracey Lay*

- Tracey reported that the Agency Culture Committee provided “Cookies & Cocoa for Our Colleagues” for our off-site staff. Our Transportation department delivered them to our sites.
- Yoga classes will be starting again on February 7 for six sessions, in-person at our Litchfield facility and virtually at WorkspaceCT.
- The agency will be holding a food drive in conjunction with Northwest CT Community Foundation Stock the Shelves. It kicks off on January 17 and ends on January 23, the day of our Winter Breakfast.

8. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Joseph Abdella, duly seconded by Kate Conetta, the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 PM.

Minutes recorded by:
Carol Montory, Board Clerk



Deb Bell, Secretary