

**Polaris Charter Academy
Board Meeting Minutes**

Date:	Monday, April 15, 2024
Time:	6:30pm (In-Person) Polaris Charter Academy
Topic(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key State of the School Updates • Board Committee Reports

ATTENDANCE CATEGORY	BOARD MEMBERS & FELLOWS	SCHOOL STAFF
Attending In Person	Tina Yarovsky Roel Vivit Yaa Boakye Stahili Muhammad	John Lydon Lissette Sanchez Elizabeth Whiting
Attending by Zoom	Ayanna Berry Mike Davison Ben Brenton Chris Haworth Derek Ohanian Ian Roche	Michelle Navarre (**Board Ex Officio) Francesca Peck
Unable to Attend	Lauren Levine Lacey Mizell	

EXPECTED GUESTS & VISITORS

Tina Yarovsky, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

Opening Business/Open Session

Approval of Minutes:

Roel gave motion to approve. Mike seconded. All voted to approve.

Open Session for Public Comment

No one was present for public comment.

New Member Vote

Tina explained background of Antonio Gonzalez who conducted feasibility study for the Polaris School expansion. Michelle commented on Antonio’s dedication and commitment to the school. Derek agreed with the note of revisiting board membership should school expansion project move forward. Michelle explained that Antonio would then have to move off the board.

Vote on Candidacy of Antonio Gonzalez: Derek gave a vote to approve. Roel seconded. Vote carried. Antonio was informed and shared excitement for joining the team.

State of the School (Michelle Navarre)

Math Justice League Blog – Teacher Zoe Walker has been leading Math work at Polaris. Zoe is an exceptional teacher and has been growing her capacity in leading adults through this work. Link to blog: <https://mailchi.mp/f64b09e397ec/west-leaders-monthly-newsletter-march-1568350?e=815b0386a0>

Leadership Update – John Lydon will be leaving Polaris after this school year. Polaris is appreciative of all his work, wishes him all the best, and will work with him for a smooth transition to set the school up for success.

Restorative Practice Institute – Francesca shared that 48 teachers and school leaders from across the country visited the school to analyze proactive and responsive practices. Rewarding for students and staff to hear the stories, affirmed the work, and renewed commitment to the work of dissemination of best practices.

Black History Month Celebration of Learning – annual committee identifies a focus. This year, crews were assigned a Black artist, such as Bisa Butler, to study and create a piece of work inspired by the artist to celebrate their contributions. The Bisa Butler inspired pieces by the second graders will be showcased at the Spring Benefit.

The Illinois Assessment for Readiness (IAR), the accountability measure for ELA and Math, window is open. Polaris is in the commendable rating, a tier below the highest rating.

Polaris got its initial budget allocation a week ago. There is a district move away from student-based budgeting. Now, every school will get certain staff positions. There is a concern with no longer having direct funding and a transparency model. There is no way to make direct comparisons to other schools. Polaris is down in total funding. This is an initial projection. There will be an impact of the CTU contract in negotiation. Michelle shared budget for students in CPS facilities. Those not in CPS facilities receive a significant increase through the facilities supplement. Tina raised question about timing for creation of next year's budget with this process in place. Michelle explained that we will have to be prepared with different scenarios.

Enrollment – working through staffing middle school to support all students with considerations of moving from 2 to 1 class. Harder to fill spots in older grades.

Legal update. Michelle provided update on former staff lawsuit; the first time Polaris has been sued by a former employee. Able to reduce to \$55K split between back wages and emotional distress. We did not take on any blame. Michelle appreciated support and thought partnership from the Board.

Illinois HB5609 – caps at 3% for administrative costs, district gets 2%, INCS gets 1% for board training and operational requirements; ensures authorizer can grant no less than a 5-year renewal. If goes into law, given elected school board, they would need to renew for no less than 5-years.

Student Situation – Level 6 violation. Grade 6 student brought edibles and gave to student. Mom has been informed. Mother of student who gave has not attended 2 meetings with the school. After investigation, this has been confirmed. In history of school, only 1 student has been expelled due to a

stabbing. Expulsion taken seriously by the school. An independent counsel gives a recommendation that is given to the board for an expulsion of 1 to 3 years. Wanted to be made aware that school is trying to meet with parent. Mother contacted CPS. Michelle will provide updates. Stahili asked if board members able to attend hearing. Michelle will find out and clarify who is allowed to attend.

Tina welcomed Michelle back.

Board Fellows Update

Variety ways of communicating across members of PCA. Primary goal: make effective and 1 central space. People were creating own things.

Create a dashboard for centralized space

Deliverables: 1) messaging guide 2) created pitches 3) dashboard 4) internship program for implementation support to drive forward deliverables

Yaa expressed her appreciation for the work and team at Polaris, lifting circle experiences with students.

Internship Program: Job description for Social Media & Content Creation Intern. Communicates key responsibilities. 2-year Commitment of 1K per quarter for interns. Opened to all, inclusive.

Importance of messaging: elevator pitches (5 pitches for parents, for Board members to share with donors) – not to be scripted, but to understand what makes Polaris unique – shared language for communication about Polaris. Build community and culture where people are talking about Polaris. Crafted e-mail for parents and guides for when and how to use it.

Messaging Guide: Good Brand Tone and Voice for Polaris

Resources in zip folder.

Tina expressed gratitude for the tremendous work of Yaa. Board members expressed their gratitude for the work. Michelle expressed gratitude for the investment of time to get to know students and families and turning time investment into something the school community can use.

Open to feedback. Last deliverable – training on resources.

Yaa has a full-time position at Medline. Walking across stage in June with MBA.

Development Committee:

Roel and Elizabeth provided details on the Spring Benefit with asks for the selling of tickets and securing sponsorships and raffle tickets by the end of April.

Board discussed the use of new app to conduct raffle and obtain donations. The Spring Event will move forward with using the app.

Finance Committee:

Finance review – Budget unfavorable to plan. Unfavorable to revenue. Enrollment is reason for shortfall.

Expenses are as according to plan.

Cash – 2.3M cash on hand, same as last year

Months of cash on hand is lower. 4 months – a concern (enrollment and fundraising); 33K under budget – need to look at recruitment (money is budgeted – Michelle said they know money is there and planning to spend it).

ERC – Synergy says PCA qualifies under gross receipts test. Don't know if we should apply for this. Since this is a larger amount with more scrutiny from government, we need to make sure we qualify. Mike will look more into this and present to the board to determine if we should apply.

Tina – is it ok in June or will we need to meet ahead of June

Lissette – believe we have time and will get that to the board.

Governance Committee:

Pipeline – Antonio joined! Ana – keeping eye out as potential board member. Tina encouraged others for pipeline candidates.

INCA Annual board training dates have been shared. There are also on-demand trainings.

Conflict of interest forms will require a quick turnaround. Michelle will send last year's conflict of interest forms for reference.

Key Dates Action Items:

Annual Spring Benefit - May 9th.

Tina asked for a motion to bring the meeting to close at 8:36 PM. Roel brought a motion to close and Stahili seconded. All approved.