

**Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School  
Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, September 26, 2018

**Meeting Location:** Fuller Conference Center, Kucharski Room

**Members present:** Reed Hillman, Keith Blanchette, Louis Fazen, Richard McGrath, Pamela Boisvert, Jasmin Rivas, Dan Soucy, Christine Tieri, Jessica Miller

**Members absent:** Dan Pear

**In Attendance:** Jim Donahue, Tina Krasnecky, Lisa DeTora, James Connally

Order of Business:

*Public Access 1\*On docketed item*

Convene open session

1. Approval of Minutes – June 27, 2018 Meeting
2. Approval of Revised Attendance Policy
3. Approval of FY2018 Audited Financial Statements
4. Year to date Fiscal 2019 Financial Performance
5. Status of Accountability Plan
6. Principal's Report
7. Executive Director's Report
8. OSA Board Meeting Schedule for 2018-2019
9. Discussion of the Performance Review of the Principal and Pending Review of the Executive Director

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Meeting called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Quorum established.

Public Access 1

No Comments

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 27, 2018

1. Minutes were reviewed; Dr. Fazen requested two amendments on Page 2 and 4. Committee fully agreed on those edits.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to approve minutes with revisions.

MOTION: Dr. Fazen made a motion for approval.

SECONDED: Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

## 1. Revised Attendance Policy

Ms. DeTora reviewed the revised attendance policy. The goal for the Academy is a 96% daily student attendance rate. Ms. DeTora reported that DESE does review attendance rates.

Excusable absences versus Unaccusable absences were explained. Documentation is also required by the Academy from a doctor for any excusable absences.

Ms. Boisvert asked if an excused absence counts towards the 96% rate.

Ms. DeTora noted that it does count. Each student can miss up to eight days, and still reach the 96% rate.

Dr. Fazen asked if the Academy keeps track of any medical issues.

Ms. DeTora noted that the Academy is very sensitive to personal information and HIPPA, but does keep track if there is a flu epidemic, etc. The OSA Board will be looped in if any Academy student has ten unexcused absences; the Board will be asked to generate a letter, reiterating the attendance policy. There can be or may be consequences for unexcused absences i.e., detainment in a grade or summer school.

Mr. McGrath asked if the 96% was mandated by DESE; 95% is mandated, that is why the Academy would like to exceed that 95% with a 96% rate.

Ms. DeTora noted that the new policy will assist the Academy with attendance as it establishes a procedure.

Ms. Miller noted that the school's newsletter talks about the Academy's goal for attendance; and suggested perhaps creating a perfect attendance award and/or creating a perfect attendance reward program i.e., ice cream party.

Ms. Boisvert asked if summer school were required, who would be responsible for providing the schooling.

Ms. DeTora noted that it is the responsibility of the Academy if students require summer school for frequent absences.

Mr. Hillman asked if the date for the policy was retroactive, or when would the policy take effect.

Ms. DeTora noted that the policy would be effective for the 2018-2019 school year.

Mr. Hillman asked if there were any further questions regarding the revised attendance policy.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to approval the revised attendance policy.

MOTION: Mr. McGrath made a motion for approval.

SECONDED: Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion.

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

## 2. Approval of the FY2018 Audited Financial Statements

Mr. Donahue recognized the work of Ms. Krasnecky in concert with Mr. Blanchette for a clean audit for the first year of the Academy.

Ms. Krasnecky addressed the auditor's board report, in which the auditors noted that they did not encounter difficulties with management when conducting the audit. The report also noted two adjustments made to the financial statements after it was submitted to the auditors. The adjustments include a note on an \$806 entry and in-kind donations that were not booked from the Parent's Advisory Council worth \$3,463 during the course of the school year, which would have no effect on the financial statements. The report also highlighted the lack of sick leave and vacation policy for administration officials, including the Principal, the Administrative Assistant, and the Custodian. The management letter, which is submitted to DESE, stipulated that there were no deficiencies within internal controls.

Ms. Krasnecky noted that the financial statements, once approved by the board, will be submitted to DESE. The auditors gave the Academy a clean opinion, finding essentially nothing wrong with the financials, the processes, the procedures, and that the numbers were accounted for correctly. Ms. Krasnecky noted that in a government audit, discussion of budget numbers is required.

Dr. Fazen asked if it was either good or bad that the budget shows a surplus of \$24,914, and if that money needs to be turned back in to the state.

Ms. Krasnecky replied that it is good because the Academy was very close to budget, in the case of surplus, you have to turn the surplus back to the state if it [the surplus] is greater than 20% of the next year's operating budget. The auditors performed a 20% excess carryover calculation which was a part of the audit and determined it was not enough of an accumulated surplus to give back to the state. The auditors want to ensure that the school is spending the money it generates, hence the need for the calculation. Mr. Donahue added that you should expect to see the school's surplus grow in the coming years as the operating expenses typically do not grow at the rate of tuition growth.

Ms. Krasnecky noted that now that the Academy has completed its first year, it will conduct an End of Year Financial Report, which is an excel spreadsheet containing the financial data which comes off of the audit. It is then uploaded to DESE, allowing the public to compare the financial metrics of the Academy to those of other charter schools. One cash metric, at the end of June 2018, will appear low primarily because the state did not pay the Academy its tuition by June 30<sup>th</sup>. There was an error on their part, it was a timing difference; the money arrived early in July.

The auditors also noted the management agreement, between OSV and OSA is unique given that most charter schools do not have such a relationship between institutions. Mr. Blanchette added that the Board of Trustees at Old Sturbridge Academy Public Charter School have voted to accept the representation of management and the statement of limited assurance that there are no material modifications that should be made to the general purpose financial statements made by Alexander, Aronson, Finning, and Company as embodied in the general purpose financial statements and independent auditor's report as of and for the year ending in June 30, 2018.

Mr. Hillman asked if there were any further questions regarding the auditor's financial statements.

Mr. Hillman entertained a motion to approve the FY2018 auditor's financial statements.

MOTION: Mr. Blanchette made a motion for approval.

SECONDED: Mr. Soucy seconded the motion.

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

### 3. Year-to-Date Fiscal 2019 Financial Performance

Ms. Krasnecky stated that the Academy's fiscal year runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. In comparison to last July and August from last year, to this year, the numbers are very similar despite the Academy having different needs. For instance, the Academy needed to pay rent on the building during those two months, whereas a year ago, that was not the case as the building was still under construction, and last year furniture was purchased to furnish the school.

Mr. Blanchette noted that the purchasing of furniture as an expense was offset this year by the rent; hence the similar numbers between the two fiscal years.

Ms. Krasnecky stated that beginning in September, we will be comparing ourselves to the budget, to ensure that we meet budgeted goals, that spending is in line with what we expected, and if we are tracking towards the full year surplus. The state typically pays promptly at the end of every month, with that one exception on June 30<sup>th</sup>. In general, there is really nothing remarkable about the balance sheet: it is representing an ongoing school at this time. Fiscal performance is close to what is expected.

Dr. Fazen asked if there is enough budgeted for staff development, conferences, conventions, and meetings.

Ms. Krasnecky responded that the majority of those are attended during July and August and that the team is confident that they budgeted the correct amount for development, conferences, conventions, and meetings.

Mr. Hillman asked if there were any further questions.  
There were no further questions.

#### 4. Status of Accountability Plan

Ms. DeTora stated that the accountability plan is a back and forth process between both her and the Department of Education. Every charter school has to do this. The document will be eventually sent to DESE. The document articulates the school's strengths. The leadership team identified the strengths as three key design elements: the Academy's partnership with EL Education; the Four Commitments, including commitment to community, high quality work, real-world application of learning, and imagination immersion exploration; and finally, the partnership with Old Sturbridge Village, which enhances the overall educational experience.

Mr. McGrath added that listing the relationship with Old Sturbridge Village as the third strength of the Academy, neither the first nor the second, answers the question that the school could stand on its own if it did not have a relationship with the Village.

Ms. DeTora described the process and outcome measures of mastery of knowledge and skills, and high quality work, and character. The Academy implements student led conferences, something a lot of EL schools do not do until their fifth year. In addition, the Academy also plans on disseminating the plan on how to run these student led conferences to other area charter schools. This is a five year plan, to be revisited in 2022. This breaks down the five year rollout of the key design elements.

Ms. Rivas asked if the data will be collected annually, and how will that data inform what the school will do in the future.

Ms. DeTora replied that DESE will walk the Academy leadership through the process, and this document is a tool which makes clear the areas the school is working in: the commitment to EL Education, the Four Commitments, and the relationship with Old Sturbridge Village. These are broad areas that define the school.

Mr. Hillman asked if there were any further questions regarding the Accountability Plan.  
Ms. DeTora added that all charter schools undergo this process.

Ms. Rivas asked if the Academy has reached out to other area charter schools regarding the student led conferences.

Ms. DeTora replied not yet, but that they are excited to start doing so, the school just needs to determine what exactly they plan on disseminating.

## 5. Principal's Report

Ms. DeTora stated that the Academy is now in year two. Classes started on August 22<sup>nd</sup> with a total of 200 students. There are now 40 new kindergarteners, who are thriving. In terms of teachers, the Academy added a fulltime occupational therapist, a new fourth grade teacher who came from Genesee Community Charter School (the mentor school), two kindergarten aides, a behavior specialist, another fulltime special education teacher, and a new art teacher. Staffing changes include a second grade teacher moved to fourth grade, a kindergarten teacher moved to first grade, and a first grade teacher looped to second grade. The Academy had a 100% lead teacher retention rate. Additions include a Spanish class, now K-4, we also added the Social Thinking and Zones curriculum. Social and emotional learning are very important. Music is now in Learning Through Experiences, and at Town Meeting, with Mr. Jim O'Brien from the Village who volunteers. Music has evolved from being a standalone class. Tomorrow is the day the MCAS data is un-embargoed. There is only one year's worth of data, with a small sample size of 40 students, especially compared to schools that have hundreds of students being tested. This year, the sample size will double to 80 students being tested (both third and fourth grades). These first weeks of school are spent on building routines for the students. The "Year Break" tradition was described. We also introduced out Five Habits of Character: high quality work; courage; collaboration; stewardship; and perseverance. The students are interested in adding a sixth habit: flexibility. Each week is dedicated to a new habit. In addition, we have our Town Meeting at 2:15 every Friday at the Visitor Center Theater. Parents are welcome to attend. In terms of assessments, we gave the MAP (Measure of Academic Performance) test, which is given to K-4 students three times a year (Fall, Winter, and Spring) to develop a baseline data, and track it over time. This is a good indicator of MCAS performance. The Learning Through Experience (LTE) lessons occur on Tuesdays in the Village for the Fall, Thursdays for the Winter, and back to Tuesdays for the Spring. Steven Lee-Davis is the liaison for the school to the Village. This is a great source of collaboration between the Academy and museum. Finally, in terms of EL Education, we create a work plan every year, measuring: high quality work; mastery of skills; and character. The Academy has the very best in training on EL Education. And Steven Lee-Davis will be presenting a master class at the national EL conference in Philadelphia. The mentorship school will be coming in October. In addition, the Academy is offering a Spanish Crew, a total Spanish immersion experience for the students, which is garnering EL attention.

Mr. Hillman asked if there are any questions.

6. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Donahue stated that the Academy is in a great place in its second year, now that the school is officially off the ground. One area of focus this year is insuring that we are providing the best possible Special Education. In addition, we can leverage the Village with the needs of students who are struggling with their learning, or emotional needs, inside the classroom. We added a field for the children behind the school for recreational purposes. And we are working on a planning initiative for the campus that would incorporate the charter school, Old Sturbridge Village, everything from utilities, roads, and infrastructure. In the meantime, Brad King is reaching out to Vanguard in regards to making non-permanent additions to the current school building. When it comes to constructing a permanent, brick and mortar building, we want to take our time and get it right, which is typical of the process. In addition, Mr. Donahue mentioned that the Village is documenting and tracking IT services and needs of the school. Unless there is something for Executive Session, we will have Ms. DeTora's review open.

Mr. Hillman asked if there are any questions for Mr. Donahue.

7. OSA Board Meeting Schedule for 2018-2019

Meeting schedule was reviewed.

The next meeting of the OSA Board will be on November 28, 2018, at 5:15 p.m.

8. Performance Review of the Principal and Pending Review of the Executive Director

Mr. Donahue noted that when conducting the performance review of the principal [Ms. DeTora], he used two instruments, the DESE recommended instrument for evaluating school principals, and the instrument used at Old Sturbridge Village when evaluating members of the senior leadership team. Ms. DeTora is a responsive and effective communicator. Ms. DeTora's performance, especially in the first year of the charter school, was exceptional bringing positive energy and was able to effectively address numerous issues at a time. In the first year of the school, Ms. DeTora did exactly what she needed to do to support her teachers, students, and team. Ms. DeTora demonstrated an enormous passion for the job, working all hours along the clock. As we move into the second year, Ms. DeTora will spend more time with bigger picture issues, especially with teachers and parents. Ms. DeTora's approach will now naturally shift from reactive to more proactive.

Mr. Hillman asked Mr. Soucy if the Governance Committee wanted to comment on the evaluation of Ms. DeTora.

Mr. Soucy stated that the Governance Committee used both the detailed state rubric and the rubric from Old Sturbridge Village. This method of evaluation covers numerous perspectives. The Committee agrees with Mr. Donahue's evaluation of Ms. DeTora's performance.

Mr. Hillman explained that there is an error on the agenda that performance evaluations of professional competence are conducted in open meeting, not executive session unless the board wishes to discuss reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health. Those topics would be suitable for an executive session.

Ms. Miller added that from a parent's perspective, the first year of the school could not have gone more smoothly. The teachers are very excited about their work.

Ms. Rivas stated that the staff retention speaks volumes about Ms. DeTora's performance.

Mr. Hillman added that the student retention is another indicator of her great performance.

The review for the Executive Director is pending the recommendations of the Governance Committee.

## 9. Development Committee

Dr. Fazen noted that the Academy has now formed a Development Committee. The members are Ms. Rivas, Dr. Fazen, and Mr. Connally from Old Sturbridge Village.

Dr. Fazen asked Mr. Connally to introduce himself and if he had anything he would like to add. Part of the management contract includes development with the Village.

Mr. Connally added that he was Mr. Donahue's Executive Intern the previous summer, and is excited to be returning to the Village and helping the Academy. In addition, Mr. Connally is excited by the new opportunities provided by the Academy. One of the first actions taken by the new Committee will be to conduct a needs assessment at the Academy and at the educational LTE programs.

### *Public Access 2*

No comments

Mr. Hillman thanked members of the public.

Next OSA Board meeting will be November 28, 2018, at 5:15 p.m.

Motion: Mr. Hillman asked for a motion to adjourn.

Seconded: Dr. Fazen seconded the motion.

Vote: ALL IN FAVOR.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Renée M. Chambers on behalf of Daniel J. Pear  
Secretary, OSA Board

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Daniel J. Pear, Secretary  
OSA Board