

Board of Directors Meeting

October 24, 2023

7:30am

Location: 79 W. Monroe Street

Board Members Present: Jim Frank, Greg Jones, Josh Tolman, Nancy Jimenez

Board Members Absent: Harriet Meyer, David Epstein, Jim Palos, Justin Manly

Others: Michelle Trojan, Barry Rodgers, Melissa Zaikos, Daena Adams, Tim Ligue, Ami Gandhi, Katie Jacobs, Lucy Weatherly, Leah Martin, Greer Tagler

Call to Order – Jim Frank called the meeting to order at 7:34am.

Call for Public Comment – Jim Frank made a call for public comment. No one was present or requested to speak. Closed public comment.

Approval of Minutes – Greg Jones made a motion to approve minutes from the board meeting in September 2023. Josh Tolman seconded. Greg Jones and Nancy Jimenez also approved.

Start of Year Data Attendance & Grades – Dr. Daena Adams, Chief of Schools

ATTENDANCE

Dr. Adams referred to data on attendance and GPA. Barry Rodgers: Investing students in the value of showing up on time. It's our job to make school a place where students want to be.

Last year at this time, attendance Downtown was 87% - today it's 93.6%.

Similar rates Belmont now as a year ago - 91%.

Middle School at Belmont attendance two percentage points higher than CPS average.

In all cases, our current attendance rates exceed CPS averages (approx. 96% vs. 94%).

Public transportation can sometimes cause issues. Transportation from Belmont has been a bonus - two full buses each day bringing kids to the Downtown Campus.

GRADES

October GPA @ Belmont = 2.53

October GPA @ Downtown = 2.87

October GPA @ CPS = 3.18

October GPA @ CPS Charters = 2.11

Ryan Everett: GPA means different things at different schools depending on level of rigor at each school, when it comes to college access. The group also talked about engaging parents, too, in explaining more thoroughly about how GPA breaks down and engaging families AND how we (and colleges) think about GPA now that many colleges are now SAT/'test optional.'

C Day Updates – Greer Tagler

Similar happenings at each campus. Two parts: Academic Support and Clubs/Enrichment. A lot of students have out of school responsibilities - Choice Days gives them extra support for academics during the school day. Examples: One-off workshops led by teachers, study halls for honors students, etc.

Both campuses have 35+ clubs - many student-generated. Many have student leaders with staff support. Chinese language and culture club, outdoor adventures club, podcast club, dungeons and dragons club, social media club, astronomy club, rock climbing club, Code Nation internship, Jazz Empowers club, etc.

Belmont Campus partners now with [Intentional Sports](#).

Lucy Weatherly: C Day is a big recruitment tool for prospective families. Nancy Miranda: It also gives our students a chance to show leadership, and have concrete examples of this when they go to apply to colleges.

School Updates – Beginning of Year Testing & Renewal of Downtown Charter - Michelle Trojan and Barry Rodgers

We have a new partnership with [Horizon Education](#) to help us prepare for all-digital SAT this year. This platform is supposed to train us on what the SAT test day realities are. Horizon also gives our teachers data to learn from and then adjust lessons/approach accordingly.

Charter Renewal @ Downtown Campus - we had a visit last week from Illinois State Board of Education. They looked at lesson plans, attendance, SPED compliance, financials, focus groups, school culture ... a lot that leads up to the visit. We will learn preliminary results in November and final results (and length of renewal) in December 2023.

Academic Committee Update – Greg Jones & Josh Tolman

Greg Jones: Post-ISBE visit, we launched a new Academic Committee. What are a few key measures we can identify at both campuses that will be good indicators on how well (or not) academics are going. Also we want a strategy to engage staff in new ways to learn and grow without feeling threatened.

Josh Tolman: How are we tracking and supporting non-college attending students and alumni?

Academic Committee plans to drive Board retreat this winter.

Student Enrollment Updates – Tim Ligue and Lucy Weatherly

Downtown Campus doing lots of fairs and outreach. Feedback we are getting is that our application process is easy to navigate, we are being welcomed back to middle schools, etc.

Shorter window at GoCPS this year - they are closing a month earlier this year (Nov. 9 vs. second week of December, which is what it was last year).

Our team: Five part-time staff. New Chinese language translator. New full-time staff member to help with Belmont 7th grade recruitment. Today, we have three full-time and five very flexible part-time staff members total. Transparent, open relationships with counselors at feeder schools is really important and plays a big role in recruitment efforts.

The group discussed the changing demographics in the neighborhoods around the Belmont Campus, and what this will mean for our recruitment efforts there.

Finance + Operations (Unaudited Financials) – Katie Jacobs and Tim Ligue

FY23 audit in motion - auditors did a day-long visit at each campus, looking at student attendance. Seamless experience overall - no issues came up. Draft financials presented today, and we should have a more formal draft of the FY23 audit any day now. Will go first to the Finance Committee and then to the larger board for review.

Downtown lease is a significant asset and liability.
Final year of ESSR funds is FY24.

Motion to approve the FY23 draft audit by Josh Tolman, seconded by Jim Frank. Approved by Greg Jones and Nancy Jimenez.

Final, approved FY23 audit expected in November.

Postsecondary Update – Ryan Everett

We continue to work on a College ListBuilding tool - the goal is to improve our graduation and persistence outcomes by having students target institutions with better resources and success rates.

Michelle Trojan, Principal, Belmont Campus, may start to do one-on-one outreach to families strategize on options, starting earlier in their high school experience. To share details about benefits of sending kids away to school, even if parents want their children closer to home. (The worry is that two-year schools are close and easy, but have low graduation rates.) Four postsecondary counselors at each campus (50:1 instead of 200:1 at CPS).

Open Items – No open items this meeting.

Adjourn – Greg Jones made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:28am. Josh Tolman seconded the motion. Approved by Jim Frank and Nancy Jimenez.