

**Polaris Charter Academy
Board Meeting Minutes**

Date:	Monday, April 10th, 2023
Time:	6:30pm (Via Zoom)
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 via zoom	Tina Yarovsky Lacey Mizell Lauren Levine Chris Haworth Mike Davison Derik Ohanian Roel Vivit Sam Bottum Ben Brenton	Michelle Navarre (**Board Ex Officio) John Lydon Lissette Sanchez Fran Peck Elizabeth Whiting
Attending by Phone		
Unable to Attend	Ian Roche	

EXPECTED GUESTS & VISITORS
Brendan Caldwell Kaitlyn Oh

Tina Yarovsky, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

Opening Business/Open Session

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the February meeting were voted on, Chris Haworth motioned to approve the minutes, Michelle Navarre seconds, minutes approved.

Open Session for Public Comment

No one for public comment

State of the School (John Lydon/ Michelle Navarre)

Black history month – Celebration of learning

The focus is on service and learning which hopes to inspire acts of service from the students of Polaris. One student did a uniform drive for other students that do not have access to uniforms for school, with the focus on “black wall street”. Mental health support and mindfulness were researched and taught as part of one student’s presentation.

Equitable spaces: 50 visitors came to Polaris and learned about the restorative practices group, it's focused on restorative justice and resulted in a very impactful 3-day opportunity to observe this practice in action. Other schools are learning through Polaris how to initiate these programs.

EL Education student's advisory council – of 100 applicants one of Polaris' students was chosen to be a member of the Student Advisory Council, Christopher is an ambassador for EL learning through this 2-year advisory board ship.

Michelle Navarre, head of school, was nominated for a 2023 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership, the site visit will take place on Wednesday, the 12th. Teachers and students will engage in the panel during the visit. There are over 100 nominations and only 6 finalists. As a Golden Apple teaching award winner, Michelle will be the first to be nominated for both and recipient of one.

Deeper learning – hosted in San Diego took place during Spring Break, Michelle and other members of Polaris staff visited to take time to learn about new and groundbreaking topics, with social justice at top of mind.

Top High school Placements – Walter Payton, Lane Tech, Northside College Prep and Global Citizenship Experience Lab were among the top acceptances.

MoY Star Assessment Data:

Mid-year data for data, this year vs. last grades 3-8 growth and proficiency are similar. Math changes with regard to an increase in proficiency over last year. First grade proficiency is significantly higher in math year over last. Illinois assessment for readiness (IAR) holds as a "Commendable" school.

Compliance Date – Document on time is at 99% and 100% submitted which is holding steady year over year.

Antonio Gonzalez – Proposal for facilities feasibility study would include a 30/60/90-day report which would help Polaris to choose a new facility and would provide planning and potential pros and cons. This study helps solidify what goals are, ground up vs. turnkey vs. remodeling. Financial planning is a portion of the study, but overall, the purpose is to be able to factor all choices into decision making so that Polaris staff and board can make informed decisions and be informed consumers.

Board Fellows:

Final project findings: School Selection Decision Making Process Model

15 parents were interviewed; preference, loyalty and advocacy were key. Parents that are at Polaris are advocating for the school and are doing so because they are already a part of the school.

Knowledge is also highly referral based. Flyers were not considered helpful based on the interviews. In-person and open houses were most effective. Scheduling is most difficult; it was identified that no after school was available so that was a deterrent. Current parents are the strongest advocates.

3 main things that are most loved by current parents:

Teachers/ EL learning/ Community approach – By far the teacher quality was the largest factor, the number one reason why parents were so impressed with the school.

More than any other method, word of mouth and referral systems are the most common way Polaris is shared with people in the community.

Competitor profiles were made for other Charters in the area, several key factors were reviewed such as marketing, social media and open house data for the current Charters in the area.

Enrollment K-1 and 6th are high, losses occur in 2nd/3rd/4th and 7th grades statistically. Those age groups can help determine where marketing would be strongest and which age groups to gear advertisement and marketing dollars toward.

A marketing campaign was started last summer using TA's to do envelope stuffing and door knocking to not only to check in on existing families but to get new families involved in the school and its mission.

Finance Committee:

Employee Retention Credits under the CARES Act – The finance committee have begun the process to file for these credits. The lead time is very long & we won't see any cash from this for ~12 months.

Cash balances are strong with \$2.9M on hand at the end of February versus \$3M on hand at the end of Feb 2021.

Net income unfavorable to plan by \$399k. \$126k negative variance in CPS per pupil funding. The plan is based on 415 students. \$144k negative variance in Foundation/Trust Grants. Total expenses are \$46k unfavorable to budget. Teacher salaries are \$67k over budget. Expense for teacher assistants is \$24k over plan. Professional fees are \$12k over budget. SPED contract clinician \$19k over plan. May be able to get additional I funding from CPS. \$22k increase in spending on recruitment. Pension expense ~\$61k lower than plan due to lower number of qualified participants. Office costs ~28k lower than plan mostly due to printing & copying and software costs.

Governance Committee:

2023 Conflict of Interest Forms: We are waiting for the forms and due dates to be issued by CPS

2023 Charter Board Training: All current board members must complete 2 hours of ongoing education training in 2023. New board members must complete 4 hours of training within one year of joining the board.

By Law review has indicated that some small changes should be made, most operational in nature. Board term limits will be changed to allow terms to be a minimum of 3 years with no limits on how many consecutive terms may be served.

Development Committee:

Polaris Benefit planning, early bird price ends at the end of April. All members should purchase tickets four for the event to share with friends and family.

Overview of Board Giving to include the board and their guests.

Invest for kids grant, Polaris was awarded this grant in the past and reapplied. It was applied for this year, and we are awaiting the results of the award at this time.

Board members are encouraged to engage with businesses that would be interested in donating to the benefit. Ideas include restaurants, small businesses, and anyone who would like to participate with gift cards or raffle items.

Tickets can be purchased through Event Brite, fees can be saved by asking Elizabeth to purchase directly from Polaris. Pre-sale of raffle tickets are also going to be available.

Key Dates:

June 12th will be the date for our board and budget meeting.

Tina Yarovsky moved to bring the meeting to close at 8:34, Derik Ohanian moved and Ben Brenton seconded, all approved.