Ascend Public Charter Schools  
Meeting of the School Board of Trustees  
April 13, 2022  
6:00 pm  

Location: Dial-in

Meeting Minutes

Trustees in attendance  
Emmanuel Fordjour, Gamal Walker, Glenn Hopps, Jackie Wilson, Janai Jeter, Nadine Sylvester, Shelly Cleary, Stanley Taylor (all via videoconference)

Ascend staff in attendance  
Aaron Obrochta, Anjya Thomas, Catherine Jessup, Emily Acuna, Jordan Akhurst, Leyde St. Leger, Maryann Li, Recy Dunn, Sophie Kramer, Zonya Hicks (all via tele- or videoconference)

Stanley called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

I. Public comment

No public comment was made.

II. Public comment update

At the March board meeting, Monique Johnson, a teacher at Bushwick Ascend Middle School, requested additional support for Spanish-speaking students, such as offering written assessments in Spanish and hiring additional ELL teachers. Zonya shared that we are auditing ELL services across the schools to improve the comprehensive supports we provide our ELL students, and explained our approach to internal and state assessments for ELL students.

III. Consent agenda

Nadine presented to the Board the minutes of the March 9, 2022 meeting and executive session. Glen and Shelly were absent from the March meeting and abstained from voting. Stanley moved to approve the meeting minutes and executive session minutes, Emmanuel seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. School and network updates

Shelly summarized the financial highlights from February 2022, which continue to show strong financial performance. Net income is favorable to the budget and we are tracking favorably against all covenants, SUNY and financial stability metrics. Shelly also shared an update on the status of COVID stimulus fund approvals and expenditures.

Anjya updated the Board on state testing and reviewed historic benchmark performance data, which show that results from ELA and Math benchmark exams align with performance in past years. Anjya also shared curriculum and school day changes for SY22-23. The Board asked about anticipated state test results and student supports during state testing.

Maryann updated the Board on SY21-22 enrollment and SY22-23 student applications. Enrollment continues to track above goal and will likely exceed end-of-year targets. Applications for next year are
tracking favorably and continue to outpace previous years. Maryann also updated the Board on the SY22-23 lottery, which leaders and over 300+ attended. The Board asked questions about enrollment trends.

Aaron shared that SY22-23 talent recruitment is underway. The Board asked about retention for SY22-23, which is projected to align with past years.

Jordan shared an update on our efforts to actualize our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism. We continue to hold monthly DEIA workshops, which garner strong feedback and demonstrated learning from staff. Our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Leaders (IDEALs) continue to organize the DEIA speaker series and recently planned a pop-up shop featuring Black women entrepreneurs based in our Brownsville community.

V.  Five-year strategic plan update

Recy updated the Board on our next steps for our five-year strategic plan. With input from the Board’s strategic planning task force, we have selected a firm to lead this project, which will begin in July.

VI.  Board matters: SY22-23 schedule

Nadine spoke on behalf of the Nominating Committee and requested input from the Board on board member recruitment for SY22-23.

Sophie queried the Board about the meeting cadence for SY22-23.

VII.  Executive session: SY22-23 hiring

At 6:43 pm, Stanley moved to enter executive session to discuss hiring for the 2022-23 school year. Janai seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

At 7:07 pm, Stanley moved to exit executive session, which Janai seconded and was unanimously approved.

VIII.  Adjournment

At 7:07 pm, Stanley moved to adjourn the meeting, which Shelly seconded and was unanimously approved.