Meeting Minutes

I. Public comment

There was no public comment.

II. Public comment update

Anjya responded to public comment by Ian Ulmer of Brownsville Ascend Middle School at the January 20 board meeting. Mr. Ulmer encouraged Ascend to create a position for an educational technologist. Anjya expressed appreciation to Mr. Ulmer for raising the question and stated that, given the uncertainties around the pandemic, technology will be a critical and continued part of our instructional program in the coming school year. The benefit of this function is top of mind as we develop budgets and staffing models for next year.

III. Consent agenda

Stephanie presented to the board the minutes of the January 20 meeting. Kwaku moved to approved the minutes, Nadine seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. Financial report

Glenn provided the Board with updates from the recent finance committee meeting. A thoughtful and conservative budget approach has placed Ascend in a strong financial position. We are awaiting state confirmation on per pupil for this year and next, and anticipate it being flat this year with a potential reduction of 5% in SY22-23. Additional stimulus funds received will be focused on addressing COVID learning loss. Glenn also reported that two brokerage firms presented to the finance committee, who will decide where to invest before the end of the month.

V. Schools and network update

Brandon shared an update on school reopening. Ascend has begun welcoming students and additional staff back to our buildings through learning pods. At this time our schools are hosting 26 pods across the
network, serving over 300 students. In-person learning will launch across the network on April 6. All schools will strive to enroll as many students as possible in in-person grades based on family demand. A gradual reopening of schools this spring will reduce student isolation, strengthen academic learning and better prepare us all for hybrid schooling in the fall.

Nadine reported on the academic committee’s most recent meeting and provided updates from Ascend’s town halls and the school leader TNTP survey results. Over 90% of staff members participated in the TNTP survey, and this data was the basis for 19 town halls that took place in January. Key themes that emerged across the network include principals being seen as effective leaders who staff trust, school leaders feeling their work makes a difference for students, the work of school leaders being less sustainable than ever this year, and while network’s DEIA work has begun to take root, leaders are seeking more systemic changes with regard to our DEIA commitment.

Carl reviewed student enrollment data with the Board. Ascend continues to be overenrolled this year, however next year’s application numbers are low, which is consistent with other charters and the DOE. Efforts are underway to reach a broader audience of families via digital strategies. Families have shared that they are interested in in-person school, so schools and the student recruitment team are informing prospective families of our reopening plans.

Aaron provided an overview of school staff hiring. Normally hiring season kicks off in October, but this year COVID delayed that process to mid-December. The network has begun hiring teachers and staff for SY21-22 and retention remains around 80%.

Jordan updated the Board on Ascend’s DEIA work. The Equity Advisory Committee has established its goals for the year and DEIA commitment statement workshops are being facilitated within schools and teams across the network. The leadership competency model project working group is working to align leader hiring tools to competency model.

VI. Board matters: Committee membership

Stephanie reviewed the Board committee membership. All returning Trustees expressed a desire to stay on their chosen committees with the exception of Stephanie switching from the finance to academic committees. The Board decided to defer discussion of committee membership for the new Trustees so Tracy, Stanley and Emmanuel can learn more about Ascend’s committees through the ACS Board onboarding sessions.

VII. Executive session (minutes recorded separately)

At 7:19pm, Kwaku moved to enter executive session to discuss the appointment of two principals to Canarsie Ascend Lower School and East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School. Oral seconded the motion, and all Trustees voted in favor and entered executive session.

VIII. Exit executive session; resumption of open meeting

At 7:29pm, Kwaku moved to exit executive session. Glenn seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

IX. Principal hiring

Oral moved to approve Justin Moorman’s hiring as principal of Canarsie Ascend Lower School, effective for SY21-22. Kwaku seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Oral moved to appoint Shanice Sanchez as principal of East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School, effective for SY21-22. Kwaku seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.
X. Adjournment

Nadine moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:31pm. Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Name ____________________________________________ Date ________________________________