Meeting Minutes

Trustees in attendance
Emmanuel Fordjour, Gamal Walker, Jackie Wilson, Kwaku Andoh, Nadine Sylvester, Oral Walcott, Shelly Cleary, Stanley Taylor (all via videoconference)

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

Public in attendance
Sasha Banks (via telephone)

Nadine called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

Nadine and Recy opened the meeting by introducing Katherine McGrath, Ascend’s new General Counsel.

I. Public comment
No public comment was made.

II. Public comment update
No public comment was offered at April’s meeting.

III. Consent agenda
Nadine presented to the Board the minutes of the April 13, 2022 meeting and executive session. Shelly moved to approve the meeting minutes and executive session minutes, Oral seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

IV. School and network updates
Shelly summarized the financial highlights from March 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.

Danique updated the Board on Ascend’s strategy for improving student outcomes for SY22-23, with a focus on data, hiring, and family partnerships. The Board asked about new hiring processes and data systems being implemented.

Maryann updated the Board on SY21-22 enrollment and SY22-23 student applications. Enrollment continues to track above goal and will exceed end-of-year targets. Applications for next year are tracking favorably and continue to outpace previous years. Maryann also introduced the Board to Holly Curtis,
Director of Student Recruitment and Enrollment. Holly spoke to the Board about successful initiatives to increase enrollment at Brooklyn Ascend High School (BAHS).

Aaron provided an overview of hiring needs and early retention insights for SY22-23 and updated the Board on newly developing hiring processes. The Board asked about the role of consultants in the hiring and recruitment process.

Jordan shared an update on our efforts to actualize our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism. Our final DEIA workshops and Equity Advisory Committee meeting for SY21-22 were both held this month. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism Leaders (IDEALs) are helping to plan and amplify events across our schools to celebrate Haitian Heritage Month and Pride Month, and continue to plan a DEIA Speaker Series that is open to all members of the Ascend community. Jordan also gave an overview of the quarterly Diversity Dashboard report and the focus areas that were identified from the Q3 report: outcomes for students with an IEP and ELL students. The Board asked about the reporting cadence for the Diversity Dashboard. Recy shared that Jordan will be transitioning out of her role at the end of the month, and that we have posted the role and are working to fill it.

V. Charter renewals

Sophie provided a status update on the four charters currently up for renewal, in addition to a high-level overview of the charter renewal process. We will continue to share status updates as renewal milestones approach.

VI. Executive session: principal hiring

At 6:50 pm, Kwaku moved to enter executive session to discuss principal hiring for the 2022-23 school year. Shelly seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

At 7:35 pm, Stanley moved to exit executive session, which Emmanuel seconded and was unanimously approved.

Oral presented to the Board a vote to approve Lisa Roach, Brittany Michelle, and Jennifer Bauer as Principals for SY22-23. Stanley seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

VII. Executive session: personnel matters

At 7:42 pm, Stanley moved to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter related to a former staff member of Ascend Learning. Shelly seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

At 8:01 pm, Kwaku moved to exit executive session, which Shelly seconded and was unanimously approved.

VIII. Adjournment

At 8:02 pm, Oral moved to adjourn the meeting, which Stanley seconded and was unanimously approved.