

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST LEADERSHIP ACADEMY  
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING  
September 17, 2019**

Pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) 38-431.02, notice was provided to the public on September 13, 2019, that the Governing Board for Southwest Leadership Academy would hold a meeting open to the public on September 17, 2019 at 10:30 AM (MST) at Southwest Leadership Academy located at 4301 West Fillmore Street, Phoenix, AZ 85043

1. **Call to order and roll call.** Board president, Mike Gantt called the meeting to order at 10:37 AM (MST). Present were: Michael Gantt, Ruben Olivas (telephonically) Mark Hendershot, Terry Hines (telephonically), and Brian Heath constituting the entire Board.
2. **Introduction of Visitors:** Dr. Geiger introduced Jessica Vensel, the new assistant principal at SLA and former principal at CSA; Principal of SLA, Dr. Greg Fowler; Superintendent and Regional Education Director, Dr. Philip Geiger and Paula Signorelli, Director of Business Operations.
3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes** from the July 10, 2019 Special Board Meeting

**A motion was made by Mr. Hendershot, seconded by Mr. Heath to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2019 Board meeting attached. The motion passed unanimously.**

4. **Financial Reports** – Ms. Signorelli discussed the August financials that were provided to the Board. She indicated that we are only being funded for 249 students despite the fact that we have 333 students enrolled, She noted that with the 40<sup>th</sup> day count, that will be adjusted retroactively. The Board did not have any questions following Ms. Signorelli’s review of the income statement, the balance sheet and the statement of cash flow.

**A motion was made by Mr. Hendershot, seconded by Mr. Gantt, to receive the financial report for August 2019 as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.**

5. **Update on School Board Policies** – Dr. Geiger discussed the process the Board is going through to prepare, develop, and approve a comprehensive set of SLA board policies that

meet the state and federal laws and regulations. The Board had contracted with the Arizona School Boards Association last year to provide a fully vetted set of recommended policies for Arizona charter schools. Dr. Geiger has now reviewed, amended and provided the policies to the Board for its consideration.

During the discussion, Mr. Heath indicated that he would not be voting on policies as he is concerned about the possible perception of a conflict of interest since he is employed by Rite of Passage as the Regional Executive Director and thereby an ex-officio member of the Board.

The Board expressed its interest in having the management company for the school, Rite of Passage, review all of the proposed policies prior to the Board completing its review so that the Board's policies are compatible with the established ROP policies. Mr. Gantt indicated that he would like to have ROP's perspective before a Board committee reviews and recommends policy to the full board. The Board did agree that it would address Section A (Foundations and Basic Commitments), Section B (School Governing Board and Operations), Section C (General School Operations) Section E (support services) and Section K (school-community relations) first.

In order for the Board to consider adopting these sections at the December 17, 2019 meeting, the Board requested that Mr. Heath obtain ROP's comments and recommendations on or before November 17, 2019 after which a board committee will review and collaborate further with the management firm. Mr. Heath also commented on the fact that these policies are created specifically for Arizona charter schools. To get started on other more complex sections, Mr. Heath asked Ms. Signorelli to start the ROP review process on the proposed finance and personnel sections of the ASBA recommended policies to which she agreed.

**Motion: Move was made by Mr. Olivas, seconded by Mr. Hendershot, to appoint Mike Gantt, Mark Hendershot, and Terry Hines to the policy review Committee which will collaborate with ROP to provide recommended policies for the Board to consider at each of its next regularly scheduled board meetings during the FY20 school year with**

**the first sections noted above completed by ROP by November 17 2019. Gantt, Hendershot and Olivas voted yes as did Ms. Hines and Mr. Heath abstained. Motion passed.**

- 6. Review of the Management Agreement with Rite of Passage** – At the June Board meeting, the Board asked about the management agreement but it was not until after meeting the board was advised by ROP that the term of the agreement was over and the agreement automatically renewed. At the June Board meeting, the Board asked that it have an opportunity to review the document so that any recommended changes can be made 60 days prior to June 30, 2020. Membership on the committee was made available to all board members and both Mr. Olivas and Ms. Hines felt they could not take on this responsibility and Mr. Heath indicated that he would recuse himself since he is employed by the management company.

**Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Hendershot, seconded by Mr. Olivas, to appoint Mike Gantt and Mark Hendershot to the Management Agreement Review Committee in consultation with Paula Signorelli and Barbara Ross, representing the management firm, to provide recommended changes to the Board for its consideration at its March 17, 2020 regularly scheduled board meeting. . Gantt, Hendershot and Olivas voted yes as did Ms. Hines and Mr. Heath abstained. Motion passed.**

- 7. Approval of Day Care Agreement with Rise ‘N Shine Preschool** – Dr. Geiger reviewed the changes that have occurred since TLC Preschool decided not renew its lease for FY20. Dr. Geiger indicated that Rise ‘N Shine was one of the final schools considered the last time and that representatives from SLA had visited the site and felt positive about what they saw there. Dr. Geiger indicated that the contract is almost identical to the one that TLC had, with a few exceptions, including increasing the term of the initial lease to two years with one year annual renewals; the addition of room 27 to be used for a preschool office and training center for the two classes that Rise ‘N Shine will teach to SLA students daily, and the removal of SLA’s commitment to ground cover on the outside playground requiring the lessor to provide that if needed.

**Motion: Mr. Hendershot made a motion, seconded by Mr. Heath, to approve the attached contract and terms with Rise ‘N Shine to establish a preschool at SLA for FY20 and FY21 as attached. Motion passed unanimously.**

8. **Submission of School Safety Grant** – Dr. Geiger advised the Board that the Governor is seeking applications from school districts and charters to participate in a \$20 million program to provide resource officers, guidance counselors, and social workers to school for the upcoming year. Dr. Fowler responded to a question about the scope of the application indicating he intended to submit for all three possible resources. Dr. Geiger noted that Nancey Carter is preparing the application on behalf of SLA, which is due no later than September 27, 2019.

**Motion: Mr. Hendershot made a motion, seconded by Mr. Olivas, to authorize the superintendent to submit an application for funding schools safety resources from the Governor’s Special Fund for School Safety. The motion passed unanimously.**

9. **Principal’s Report-** Dr. Fowler noted that currently there are 333 students enrolled with average attendance of 227, a 68% attendance rate. He said that the school continues to enroll students daily, but we are also losing students due to 10 day drops when the student has failed to attend school for 10 consecutive days.

Dr. Fowler said that the interscholastic sports program are going well and that the football team won two of its last three games. He was pleased to acknowledge the new girls’ volleyball team and the large squad that has come out for the sport. He praised the cheerleading squad, under the direction of registrar, Esmeralda Delgado. He also acknowledged the \$5,000 grant from Women in Sports Foundation that enabled SLA to buy new volleyball and cheerleading uniforms.

Dr. Fowler announced that there will be a family open house on the 40<sup>th</sup> day of school, September 30, 2019 starting with a student talent show at 11:00 AM followed by a family

barbeque in the back of the school, as well as a field day and games for students and their younger siblings. Teachers will also conduct parent teacher meetings that day, with the event running from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM at no charge to parents, students and their families. Dr. Fowler said he is hoping for 400 people to attend.

Dr. Fowler informed the Board that the ADE was conducting an on-site audit on Thursday, September 19, 2019. He advised the Board that the ADE has changed the AZ Merit test to AZM2, which will be administered only to the class of 2022 this year (sophomores). He also stated that he and Ms. Vensel had completed their first round of teacher evaluations for FY20. Dr. Fowler was pleased to announce that 95 students could possibly graduate this year.

While indicating that 36 students were taking the ASVAB test at the same time as the board meeting, several Board members commented on their interest in SLA offering Jr. ROTC. Dr. Geiger indicated that the school pursued this last year, but no funding was available from the Army and the cost to the school would exceed \$100,000. However, there was a lot of interest by both boys and girls at the school, as indicated by a recent student survey.

Dr. Fowler also commented on the outstanding support that Manuel Gomez provided teachers in order for them to safely visit homes as part of the school's family outreach program. Mr. Gomez is an expert on at-risk youth and was recommended to SLA by Board member Mark Hendershot. Mr. Heath congratulated the Board on the contribution it made to this effort by securing the assistance of Mr. Gomez. Dr. Fowler said that this training will be offered annually. Mr. Heath closed the conversation by congratulating Dr. Fowler on the improvement in student attendance.

10. **Public Comment** – No members of the public were present.

11. **Adjournment:** President Gantt adjourned the meeting at 11:49 AM (MST).

**Next regular meeting: December 17, 2019 @ 10:30 AM (MST) @ Southwest Leadership Academy (telephonic attendance is acceptable).**