SIDE BY SIDE
CHARTER SCHOOL

Board of Directors Meeting
August 22, 2023
Final Minutes

Present: Britnee Henderson, Larry Cafero, Stephanie Cecio, Amanda Gormley, Sally Davids, Nell Conroy, Matt Nittoly, Deb Whelan, Chiara Askew-Oliver

Absent: Adam Norris, Kim Grimm, Ewa Derlukiewicz

Meeting called to order at 5:16 PM.

June minutes approved by Stephanie and Amanda.

Public Session

No members of the public were in attendance at this meeting.

Director Update:

I. **Introduction new Board Members:**
   - Deb Whalen (Community)
   - Chiara Askew-Oliver (Community)

II. **BOD Schedule:** 4th Tuesday of each month (8/22, 9/26, 10/24, 11/28, 1/23, 2/27, 3/26, 4/23, 5/28… December and June meeting dates TBD)

III. **2023-24 new faculty/:** The parent Community Coordinator is the only existing staff vacancy. New staff includes:

Kris Curtis: (MUSIC Teacher): F/T M-F

Nelly Gonzalez: (PreK Teacher) F/T M-F

Brenna VanSteenbergen: (ART teacher) P/T M-W

Sophie Kritemeyer: (SRBI Teacher) F/T M-F

Quinnipiac Resident Intern: We will have 1 QU intern in grade 2 this year.

Sacred Heart University: Internships/Student teaching: We have renewed our relationship with SHU and have accepted 3 student teachers for grades 1, 3 and 4

IV. Summer update

- **K-8:** Full-day Summer school was in session at SBS for 6 weeks for approximately 70 students grades K-8. The daily schedule consisted of academics in the morning and enrichment in the afternoons.

V. PD, Planning and Innovation for 2023-24 School Year

Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, teachers, staff and school leaders were busy working to close the loss of learning gap created by complications related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Key elements of this gap included lost instruction in basic skills and grade level standards, limited opportunities for socialization, and an increased reliance on technology for learning and socializing. As a result, we designed a three-prong approach through which to filter decisions and strategies over the next several years. These 3 focus areas include:

- ***Social-emotional learning (SEL)***
  - Explicit SEL instruction
  - Student (SEL) screenings
  - Integrated with academics (not an add-on)
- ***Differentiation***
  - Purposeful grouping to fill learning gaps
  - Enhanced access to core instruction
  - Strategic use of instructional support staff
- ***Student engagement***
  - Emotional and relational connections
  - Cognitive and behavioral involvement in tasks
  - Diversity in modality and duration of learning tasks (i.e. lesson format, independent practice, guided instruction, project based learning, assessment product choice

For the 2023-2024 school year, we continue this work. Specifically, we have 3 new initiatives to share with you that both target these focus areas as well as promise to help us achieve our school mission which states that every child succeeds and has a voice.

- ***Initiative 1: Increasing students' access to differentiated curriculum and instruction***
    - **Strategy 1: Eureka^2 middle school math curriculum pilot:** Over the last 7 years we have been using the Eureka math curriculum here at Side by Side. This scientifically researched based program has been largely successful, however as with all curricula, revisions become necessary. This year we will be piloting the newest version in the middle school, with plans to transition to this version in the elementary school next year. Key updates include:
        - unit pre-assessments which let teachers know what required skills are missing BEFORE they start a new unit
        - an enhanced digital platform
        - student workbooks
        - more complex application problems that involve multiple skills and steps to arrive at correct solutions, providing practice with real-world problem-solving skills
    - **Strategy 2: Expeditionary Learning language Arts All Block in grades 3-5**
        - Reading, writing, listening and speaking skills focus in upper elementary grades in addition to core instruction in reading, understanding and responding to complex grade level texts
        - Mini-lessons in: word study and vocabulary, reading and speaking fluency, and writing practice
- ***Initiative 2: A deeper dive into Social Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies***
    - **Strategy 1**: Targeted professional development for teachers in each of the learning strategies that are assessed in Aperture's student SEL screening. This professional development includes a focus on teacher well-being as a key component in successful SEL implementation
    - **Strategy 2**: In consultation with Jim Martinez, recently retired Education Administrator for Counseling & Social Service for Norwalk Public Schools, Side by Side's student services team will be working to build a more comprehensive and targeted support system for students in need of more significant behavioral and/or mental health interventions as evidenced by our Aperture screenings. This tiered support system will largely mirror what is currently in place for academic interventions.
- **Initiative 3: Project-based Learning**
    - **Strategy 1:** Since Side by Side's inception, project-based learning has been a key component of our beliefs and practices about how students stay engaged with and remain curious about the world when learning. In

recent years, a focus on academic skills recovery has reduced the amount of time our students have spent on more hands-on, project-based learning. This year, Side by Side has partnered with CSDE and curriculum developer Defined Learning in order to adopt and implement high quality, project-based learning, curriculum supplements across our K-8 classrooms. Rooted in universal design for learning principles, projects include everything from creating a spacesuit in first grade to designing a net zero school in 7th grade. We are excited to integrate these projects into our students' learning as a way to increase both engagement and students' high school readiness.

- **Strategy 2:** In middle school, students are being offered more and more options for high school, including specialized charter, magnet and private programs with emphases on languages, STEM and the arts. Oftentimes, students are not really sure at such a young age where their interests lie. To help them with these decisions, this year we will also be utilizing the "Careers" component of Defined Learning in our middle school advisories in order to expose our students to different future careers that might align with their interests and skills. Students can explore jobs like "Wind turbine technician" or 'Set and exhibit designers" in order to get a sense of what different fields look like. This will support them not only in making more informed choices about where they want to go to high school, but it will help them get excited about the opportunities they will have in their future in high school and beyond.

Finance Committee:

No finance meeting report this month. Updates starting in September.

Fundraising:

Summer social – this is not really a fundraising event and its main purpose is to foster community engagement. Sadly we were rained out this year and need to plan a rain date for next year.

We applied for a grant from the Cashelon foundation after introductions were made last spring. The grant has not been approved and we may try again in the future but are not expecting this opportunity to impact fundraising this year.

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The fundraising committee will meet before the next meeting to plan dates for fundraising this year. The Playground Committee also needs to gather information for budgeting the playground renovations. Progress has been slow because our primary contact for a proposal is unresponsive. Todd will follow up again to try to get in contact.

Action Items:

- The Fundraising Committee will meet and return with three proposed dates for events
- The Playground Committee will return with updates on the playscape plan

Meeting adjourned: motion to adjourn at 6:20 PM. Sally and Amanda approved the motion.