



**The Laboratory Charter School
of Communication and Languages**

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

October 18, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Zoom Video Conference Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:09pm.

Board Member Role Call

- A. Present: Dr. Veronica Florence-McPherson, President; Norris Bennis, Esq.- Vice President, Tiffany Ferrell, Secretary, Pinkey Lucas, Member, Elbert Sampson, Treasurer, Karen Slade, Member
- B. Non-Board Members: Dr. Andréa Coleman-Hill, CEO; Alan Epstein, Attorney, Joan Belynda Brown, Director of Human Resources, Jesse Bean, Charter Choices
- C. Absent: Dr. Linda Cliatt-Wayman, Member

Announcement of Executive Session

An executive session was held on October 18, 2023 to discuss legal and personnel matters.

Nomination Committee Recommendation

None

Approval of Minutes:

Motion duly made, seconded and carried to approve the September 2023 meeting minutes.

Motion: Pinkey Lucas, Member, Elbert Sampson, Treasurer

Each member voted as follows:

Dr. Veronica Florence- McPherson, President - Yes

Norris Bennis Esq., Vice President – Abstained

Pinkey Lucas, Member - Yes

Tiffany Ferrell, Secretary - Yes

Elbert Sampson, Treasurer - Yes

Karen Slade, Member - Yes

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

Finance Report

- Cash has decreased to \$792K since June 30 as short-term liabilities are reduced.
- FY24 Net Income at SEP 30 = -\$133K (Deficit), projecting a \$2.6M deficit barring enrollment growth and/or significant cost reductions.
- School currently meets or approaches standard in 3/5 CSO-tracked metrics.

Motion duly made, seconded and carried to approve the finance report.

Motion: Norris Benns, Esq., Vice-President, Karen Slade, Member

Each member voted as follows:

Dr. Veronica Florence- McPherson, President - Yes

Norris Benns Esq., Vice President – Abstained

Pinkey Lucas, Member - Yes

Tiffany Ferrell, Secretary - Yes

Elbert Sampson, Treasurer - Yes

Karen Slade, Member - Yes

CEO Report

On October 7, 2023 the National Coalition of 100 Black Women hosted LAB families for Author Shadra Strickland's presentation of her children's book "Jump In." The program was excellent. Ms. Strickland not only provided an interactive reading of the book, but she walked the audience through the electronic illustration of the book.

The African American Charter Schools Coalition is hosting an Advocacy Day in Harrisburg on October, 17, 2023. A press conference will be held where Dr. Coleman-Hill and multiple legislators (Democrat and Republican) will speak. Governor Shapiro has stated that he is a supporter of Charter Schools and may send the Secretary of Education to the event. Dr. Coleman-Hill's speech is included in the packet.

CHARTER RENEWAL

Summary

The Laboratory Charter School (LAB) has been subject to what appears to be a systematic and unjustified campaign by the Charter School Office (CSO) leadership to target and discriminate against the school. The CSO has repeatedly issued false findings and noncompliance claims, creating unnecessary challenges for LAB. These claims have been consistently refuted with evidence, but the CSO leadership has displayed a troubling pattern of disregarding the evidence and maintaining their stance. This report examines the key issues surrounding the CSO's actions and their implications for LAB Charter School.

Introduction

Since 2019, LAB Charter School has faced a series of unwarranted challenges and nonrenewal attempts orchestrated by the leadership of the Charter School Office (CSO). This report aims to analyze and evaluate the CSO's actions, highlighting the most egregious

problem: the CSO's leadership absurdly creates problems where none exist by falsely assigning noncompliant unsatisfactory ratings to LAB Charter School. Even after LAB refutes these claims with substantial evidence, the CSO either ignores or denies having received the evidence. When all attempts to provide evidence are exhausted, the CSO leadership claims it is too late to reverse their decision, citing LAB's failure to submit evidence earlier.

Analysis of Key Issues

Inconsistent Framework: LAB Charter School has raised concerns about the inconsistency in the CSO's evaluation framework. This inconsistency appears to be driven by a lack of solid evidence to support the CSO's antagonistic approach toward LAB. The CSO's actions lack a clear foundation, and the school argues that the CSO is targeting them without adequate justification.

Manipulation of Data: LAB contends that the CSO has manipulated their data to portray the school negatively, thereby justifying nonrenewal decisions. The school asserts that the findings are inaccurate and that they have consistently adhered to charter school laws and regulations.

History of Disputed Findings: LAB Charter School's history of disputing CSO's findings suggests a pattern of inconsistencies between CSO's findings and the evidence presented by the school. This history reinforces LAB's claim that the CSO's findings are false and potentially part of an ongoing pattern.

Systemic Bias Allegation: LAB alleges systemic bias within the evaluation process, indicating disproportionate targeting of Black and Latino charter leaders for nonrenewal recommendations. This perception further contributes to the perceived inconsistency in CSO's actions.

Academic Performance: LAB emphasizes its strong academic performance, especially among English language learners (ELL), as evidence that they are meeting their educational objectives successfully. This raises questions about the basis for nonrenewal decisions.

Fair Application of Charter School Law: LAB Charter School expects fair and impartial treatment based on charter school law and the CSO's framework. Their challenge to nonrenewal is rooted in their desire for equitable evaluation.

Pattern of Deceit and Misconduct

The actions of the CSO's leadership against LAB Charter School over several years reveal a disturbing pattern of misconduct and deceit. The CSO has consistently created obstacles for LAB, even when the school has made extensive efforts to comply with their demands. Specific instances, such as rewriting the Parent/Student Handbook multiple times, only to have the CSO continue to find fault, demonstrate the CSO's unwarranted and targeted approach.

Unnecessary Administrative Burdens

LAB Charter School has faced unnecessary administrative challenges due to the excessive length of critical documents, including the Enrollment Packet, Parent/Family Handbook, and Code of Conduct. These lengthy documents present barriers for parents and families, discouraging engagement with the school and raising questions about the CSO's intentions and the burden imposed on LAB.

Abuse of Power

The CSO's leadership has been accused of abusing its power against LAB Charter School. This abuse involves using their authority to unjustly target and disadvantage the school, leading to a hostile regulatory environment. The CSO has directed LAB to make changes to documents that give a false impression of noncompliance, adding to the regulatory burden on the school.

Conclusion

In conclusion, LAB Charter School's experience with the CSO's leadership has been marked by unwarranted challenges, false findings, and a troubling pattern of deceit. The CSO's actions appear to be driven by a personal vendetta. This is illustrated by the CSO's insistence on creating problems where none exist. This abuse of power is detrimental to LAB and diverts valuable time and resources from more pressing educational issues. The school's compliance with legal regulations is evident, and the CSO's actions seem unjustified and excessive. LAB Charter School remains committed to providing quality education and seeks fair and unbiased evaluation, as outlined in Charter School Law.

ACE REPORT

After awaiting a response to the Charter School Office (CSO) into the false information on the ACE reported, planted in order to make the school look as if there are issues where issues do not exist, the CSO investigated itself and ruled in favor of itself. A prime example is the Board Governance section, where the CSO outright lied, stating that Board information that has historically been on the LAB website was not there although the information is in several places on the website. This is just one example of the lies and deception of the CSO.

After the CSO investigated itself, they decided not to correct the ACE Report.

Of note is a comment made by a lead CSO staff member at a renewal Zoom meeting that the CSO reserves the right to refuse to investigate or change claims of inaccurate findings even when evidence is presented because it bogs them down in work.

Motion duly made, seconded and carried to approve the CEO report.

Motion: Norris Benns, Esq., Second: Elbert Sampson, Treasurer

Each member voted as follows:

Dr. Veronica Florence- McPherson, President - Yes

Norris Benns Esq., Vice President – Yes

Pinkey Lucas, Member - Yes

Tiffany Ferrell, Secretary -Yes
Elbert Sampson, Treasurer Yes
Karen Slade, Member - Yes

Board Resolutions

Common Consent Agenda

None

Public Participation: None

Adjournment

Motion duly made, seconded and carried to adjourn.

Motion: Pinkey Lucas, Member, Second: Karen Slade, Member

Each member voted as follows:

Dr. Veronica Florence- McPherson, President - Yes

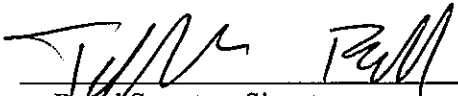
Norris Bennis Esq., Vice President – Yes

Pinkey Lucas, Member - Yes

Tiffany Ferrell, Secretary - Yes

Elbert Sampson, Treasurer - Yes

Karen Slade, Member – Yes



Board Secretary Signature

11/16/23

Date