

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Nelson Flores, Ph.D., Vice Chair  
Joseph DuCette, Ph.D., Member  
Donna Nuccio, Treasurer  
Caroline Gorman, Esq. Member  
Hector Guzman, Member  
Ashley Feuer-Edwards, Member  
VACANCY, Member

**PARENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Dana Espinosa, Secretary  
Jessica Garcia, Member

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**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Location:** Zoom.us – Meeting ID: [81118946736](#)

**Monday, September 18, 2023**

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**Board Members Present:** Dr. Nelson Flores, Dr. Joseph DuCette, Hector Guzman, Donna Nuccio, Dana Espinosa, Caroline Gorman, Ashley Feuer-Edwards

**Board Members Absent:** Jessika Garcia

**Quorum Established:** Yes

**Others Present:** Dr. Darcy Russotto, CEO; Mercedes Walton-Mason, Principal; Wendy Jackson, Assistant Principal; Robin Eglin, President, Omnivest, LLC; Evaleen DeMarco, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Dr. Joshua Fineberg, Director of Student Services; Karen Keppel, Teacher Representative; Renee Burgos, Teacher Representative

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**Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 4:32pm.

**Public Testimony**

No Public Comment

**School Connection**

Karen Keppel and Renee Burgos will be joining the school board meetings as the school’s teacher representative. Keppel joined Pan American Academy last year, teaching Middle School Math and will be providing perspective for the upper school grades. Burgos is a new staff member, joining Pan American Academy in August as an English Language Support teacher for first grade. Burgos will be providing perspective for the lower school grades.

**Governance**

On September 29th, the school board will be hosting a meet and greet and provide the staff an introduction to its members. Flores will be onsite and would like other board members if their schedule permits to be onsite as well. Otherwise, the presentation with the template Mason provided will suffice.

MOTION to APPROVE meeting minutes for 8/7/23 by DuCette, seconded by Gorman.

Flores is looking to streamline board processes with board management software and is currently vetting vendors. He has met with BoardonTrack, which has a focus on Charter School Board Management. Flores also hopes to have a solid CEO evaluation tool. Board members are asked to recommend any board management software they may have knowledge of or experience with in order to have options and for price comparison. BoardonTrack is currently quoting at \$12K.

Unfortunately, Christina Barker can no longer commit to the School Board. She has submitted her resignation. The School Board now has a vacancy. The Board needs to become proactive in bringing in prospective candidates. PAACS’s board has school and Congreso appointments. This new vacancy is a school-appointed position. Board members brainstorm and provide general thoughts on what kind of competencies and attributes they would like to see in a new member. Flores would like the board members to send him at least one referral with a few short sentences describing the candidate and why they would be a good fit. These emails would in turn create a list and in the event of a sudden vacancy, the Board has a list to defer to in order to fill the vacancy sooner than later.

Board committees and board member assignments are reviewed, using the bylaws as a reference as well. Bylaws can be amended if necessary to reflect updated committees. As of now, the confirmed assignments are as follows:

- Staff Engagement Ad-hoc Committee with Espinosa. Espinosa will be working with the teacher reps.
- Academic Success Committee with DuCette. This committee will potentially start next year as Jackson will be working on having data to guide the conversations and collaborating with DuCette.
- Audit and Finance Committee with Nuccio. Nuccio would like to see the key takeaways the Board needs to know and conversations on how funds need to be spent. Nuccio likes the idea of quarterly reviews for strategic planning because it allows for a deeper dive.
- Fundraising Committee with Gorman and Feuer-Edwards. Gorman and Feuer-Edwards will be supporting DeMarco in fundraising efforts.

Russotto updates the Board on the Latino Charter School Coalition. Usual coalition members attending meetings are representatives from Eugenio Maria de Hostos, Antonia Pantoja Charter School and Pan American Academy Charter School. Russotto is working on an MOU to safeguard the school's participation. At this time, SDP's charter renewal and monitoring practices are under investigation for racial bias.

### **Finance**

*Review of the August financials provided by Robin Eglin.* Current Ratio: 5.49; Cash on Hand: 129.13(PASS) Debt Ratio: 0.73; Total Margin: 18.69%; Lease Coverage Ratio: 3.54 – PASS.

### **Development**

DeMarco provides an update on grants, partnerships and developments. She's currently working on grant proposals to support the school garden and the playground. The school is looking for funding to support maintenance of the garden and funding to upgrade the playground equipment so that it is more inclusive. The school has met the first criteria for the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) Grant. This grant is potentially awarding \$750K to support safer and healthier learning environments.

School fundraising events held in August total \$4,892.

The school in partnership with the Philadelphia Police Department have participated in the Peace Day March. Middle School students and staff members marched to 4th and Lehigh to promote peace.

Teach for America is hosting a Reading Promise Week celebration on Friday, October 13th. This event promotes literacy and a promise for families to read together.

The GATE trips in November are scheduled for students to visit Harrisburg and take a tour in Historic Philadelphia.

### **School Report**

Mason provides a schoolwide data comparison for school years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, including student cohorts and each grade's performance in STAR and F&P assessments. This year, students in grades 3-8 will be assessed using the LinkIt platform. LinkIt will support preparation for the PSSA exams.

Nuccio inquires about strategic planning regarding reading proficiency for students entering 3rd grades. The students use Heggerty, guided reading materials and other sources, such as Foundations to support phonemic awareness. Students will also have a 1:1 focus by coteachers, and teachers will focus on sound walls not word walls. Las Links used to assess Spanish Language acquisition will be conducted in 4th and 8th grades only (end of primary and end of middle years). The school is also working on a data deep dive into students with EL and SPED servicing because these groups usually underperform. While the school has seen some academic growth, it is strongly evident that virtual education during the pandemic has impacted student learning.

As a parent, Espinosa has noticed classes not being taught in Spanish and asks for clarification. Mason shares that the lack of classes being taught in Spanish is largely due to lack of staffing that can provide instruction in Spanish.

Flores adds while the data does not define the student or the educate, it is important to move the data in the right direction. Further adding – what role does the Board have in conversations of academic improvement?

**Entered into EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 6:18 PM to review and discuss personnel, compensation matters, special education litigation updates and charter school agreement. Returned to REGULAR SESSION at 6:36 PM.**

### **Action Items**

- MOTION to APPROVE New Hires (Graciela Hernandez-Ramos, Evelin Santana de Cueto, Ryan Farrell, Samuel Carrasquillo, Solimar Gonzalez) by DuCette, seconded by Flores. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE Personnel Salaries by Flores, seconded by Gorman. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE Salary Adjustments by Flores, seconded by Guzman. Motion passed.
- MOTION to RATIFY Cultured Enuf Contract by Flores, seconded by Feuer-Edwards. Motion passed.
- MOTION to RATIFY JR Special Education Settlement by DuCette, seconded by Flores. Motion passed.

- MOTION to APPROVE Updated Conflict of Interest Policy by Flores seconded by Espinosa. Motion passed.
- MOTION to APPROVE Kidsability Speech Services Contract contingent on approval of legal counsel by Flores, seconded by Garcia. Motion passed.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:48 PM.**

**Minutes recorded by: Lisandra Kelly**