

Board Meeting Minutes

Organization: Pride Academy Charter School Board Meeting
President: Mr. Mitchell
Time: **6:44pm**
Place: Virtual Platform
Date: November 4, 2024
Minute Taker: Mrs. Wilson
Board Members Present: **Mr. Mitchell, Ms. M. Brown, Ms. A. Taylor, Mr. Moore, Ms. D. Taylor**

Others Present: Dr. Jones, Mr. Ofstad, Ms. Dumenigo, Mrs. Dockery, Mrs. Persaud

Absent: **Mrs. Spence, Mr. Rosado**

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, November 20, 2024 at 6:30 pm.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:44 pm and Roll Call was taken.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PUBLICATIONS: The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act, The Pride Academy Charter School Board of Trustees has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time, and place thereof posted in the Star-Ledger and on NJ.COM under Legal Notices and posted on the school website.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA FOR THE BOARD MEETING: Resolution to Accept Agenda for November 4, 2024, Emergency Meeting - Attachment 1

Motion to approve: Ms. M. Brown

Seconded: Mr. Moore

Vote:

Ms. Brown- in favor

Mr. Mitchell- in favor

Ms. A. Taylor- in favor

Mr. Moore- in favor

Motion Carried

BOARD VOTED: To Accept Agenda for November 4, 2024, Emergency Meeting - Attachment 1

Principal Update:

R1. Resolution to approve the annual submission School Self-Assessment for Determining Grades under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Active, for the 2023-2024 school year – Attachment R1

School Climate and Safety Initiatives

Our focus is on fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment. This includes evaluating current efforts and identifying ways to enhance safety and inclusivity for all students. These efforts align with the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (ABR), enacted in New Jersey in 2011 and amended most recently to strengthen protections for transgender students.

Protected Categories under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights

The ABR outlines a broad range of protected categories, ensuring comprehensive protections against harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB). These include:

- Race, color, religion, ancestry, and national origin
- Gender, sexual orientation, transgender identity, and expression
- Mental, physical, or sensory disabilities
- Other distinguishing characteristics, such as height, weight, and complexion

These expansive protections make New Jersey's anti-bullying laws some of the strictest in the nation.

School Safety Team and Parent Engagement

The School Safety Team, a requirement of the ABR, meets four times annually—exceeding the state's minimum requirement of two meetings per year. This team collaborates to:

1. Foster a positive school climate.
2. Identify patterns of HIB.
3. Address safety concerns and recommend improvements.

A key initiative includes the successful implementation of Ubuntu Family Parent Parties, coordinated by Ms. Dumenigo. These gatherings provide an opportunity to engage parents in meaningful discussions about school climate and safety.

At Risk Reduction Task Force

In response to the nationwide increase in school violence, the school is establishing a At Risk Reduction Task Force. This team will work to:

- Identify students who may be at risk.
- Provide targeted support to address underlying pressures.
- Proactively reduce risks of school violence.

This initiative reflects our commitment to early intervention and comprehensive student support.

Anti-Bullying Education and Training

Every year, the school conducts anti-bullying education sessions tailored to each grade level. This year's sessions addressed:

- Understanding what constitutes bullying.
- Teaching students how to respond to bullying and report incidents.

- Encouraging students to recognize behaviors that may unintentionally contribute to bullying.

These sessions ensure students are equipped with the knowledge and tools to contribute to a positive school environment.

The Nurtured Heart Approach

In collaboration with Ms. Thomas, the school introduced the Nurtured Heart Approach through a parent workshop. The workshop was well-received, with parents requesting additional sessions. We hope to increase parent participation, as there were about 12 families in attendance. This approach focuses on building strong relationships and fostering a culture of positivity, which will continue to be a cornerstone of our school climate strategy.

Anti-Bullying Efforts and Training

The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, passed in New Jersey in 2011, mandates specific actions to combat harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB). The categories protected under this law include race, gender, religion, disability, and other distinguishing characteristics. Each year, new staff undergo suicide prevention training, while veteran staff repeat this training every five years. Additionally, we integrate suicide prevention into risk-reduction initiatives to address potential links between suicidal ideation and violent tendencies.

This year, we will also focus on abuse awareness training for staff and students, particularly addressing issues such as vaping and the availability of nicotine-based and marijuana products among minors. These sessions will emphasize education about substance misuse and its legal and health implications.

Reporting and Self-Assessment on Incidents

Here is a summary of incidents reported over the past two years:

2022-2023 School Year:

- 41 incidents of violence (includes various behaviors categorized under state definitions).
- 2 confirmed substance use cases (nicotine vaping) and 2 distribution incidents.
- 14 fights, 1 HIB allegation, and 8 confirmed HIB cases.
- No violent criminal offenses or serious physical injuries.

2023-2024 School Year:

- 33 incidents of violence (decrease from the previous year).
- 1 substance possession case and 1 confirmed use of nicotine.
- 2 incidents of inappropriate sexual contact (e.g., unwanted touching).
- 5 fights, 24 HIB investigations, and 16 confirmed HIB cases.
- No violent criminal offenses or gang-related incidents.

The data shows progress in some areas but highlights areas for continued improvement, particularly in reducing HIB incidents.

Addressing Vandalism

We are experiencing an increase in vandalism, particularly in bathrooms, which poses financial and operational challenges. Efforts include:

- Identifying and repairing damages.
- Engaging students in taking responsibility through silent recess and cleanup activities.
- Exploring structural reinforcements for high-vandalism areas.

Enhancing Community Involvement

- We will expand communication with parents through newsletters, emphasizing behavioral expectations and concerns like vandalism.
- Forms and reporting mechanisms for HIB will be translated into additional languages, starting with Spanish and Creole, to better support our diverse community.

Self-Assessment and Ratings

The HIB self-assessment yielded a score of 74 out of 78. Areas needing improvement include:

1. Evidence of professional development opportunities provided to safety team members.
2. Documentation of substantial improvement in school climate due to implemented measures.
3. Expanding translation of HIB-related documents to additional prevalent community languages.

Motion to approve: Ms. M. Brown

Seconded: Mr. Moore

Vote:

Ms. Brown- in favor

Mr. Mitchell- in favor

Ms. A. Taylor- in favor

Mr. Moore- in favor

Motion Carried

BOARD VOTED: To approve the annual submission School Self-Assessment for Determining Grades under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Active, for the 2023-2024 school year – Attachment R1

R2. Resolution to Approve Consultant Agreement for Fiona Thomas providing the Nurtured Heart approach for student discipline and related support utilizing the ESEA Title IIA grant funding for the 2024-2025 school year – Attachment R2

→ Mrs. Thomas will come in for two days. During that time, she will observe classes, meet with teachers and debrief about the Nurtured Heart Approach practices.

→ The goal is for her to come once each trimester (6 days total) in the 2024-2025 School Year

Motion to approve:

Seconded:

Vote:

Ms. Brown- in favor

Mr. Mitchell- in favor

Ms. A. Taylor- in favor

Motion Carried

BOARD VOTED: To Approve the Consultant Agreement for Fiona Thomas providing the Nurtured Heart approach for student discipline and related support utilizing

6. New Business

Robert Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell thanked the members for attending the strategic planning meeting On October 26, 2024.

7. Old Business

Robert Mitchell

8. Comments from the Public

Robert Mitchell

Mrs. Persaud, a parent raised the concern of school safety and continued her request for a Parent Meeting.

9. Adjournment

Robert Mitchell

Motion to close the meeting at 8:03pm

Motion to approve: Ms. M. Brown

Seconded: Mr. Moore

Vote:

Ms. Brown- in favor

Mr. Mitchell- in favor

Ms. A. Taylor- in favor

Mr. Moore- in favor

Motion Carried

BOARD VOTED: To approve the adjournment of the meeting.