



# Charter School of Inquiry

## Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes

**December 1, 2020**

### **1. Call to Order:**

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of the Charter School of Inquiry (the “School”) was called to order by Helene Kramer, the presiding officer, a lawful quorum being present, on Tuesday, December 1 at 4:49 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference (Meeting ID 84155761354), in accordance with Executive Orders by the Governor of the State of New York,

Trustees Present: Melvin “Trey” Bankhead III  
Peter Dow  
Nichelle Gray  
Richard “Bruce” Haydon  
Anne Henry  
Latise Hairston  
Helene Kramer  
Janet Peters  
Mary Jo Pfeiffer

Excused: Deborah Porter

CSI Staff: John Sheffield, Head of School

Board Counsel: Steven Polowitz

### **2. Proof of Public Notice:**

Pursuant to the Open Meetings Law, Helene Kramer shared a notarized affidavit listing the places where the Notice of Meeting held on December 1, 2020 were posted and a list of media outlets which were asked to publicize the meeting on their community calendars, in their print notices or broadcasts. This notarized affidavit will be kept on file.

### **3. Conflict of Interest.** Ms. Kramer reminded board members that anyone with a potential conflict of interest concerning a subject under discussion by the Board has an obligation to disclose the potential conflict and, if deemed a conflict, recuse themselves and leave the room during any discussion and vote on the subject. No such declarations were made at this time.

### **4. Approve Minutes:**

#### a. Minutes of Business Meeting – November 10, 2020

A motion to approve minutes of the business meeting on November 10, 2020 was made by Peter Dow, seconded by Mary Jo Pfeiffer and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed.



- b. Committee Meeting Minutes – Governance, Academic and Finance. Ms. Kramer noted that meeting minutes of the Academic, Finance and Governance Committees were included with the Board packet and will be posted on the CSI website along with regular meeting minutes.
  - Academic Committee Monthly Meeting – November 20, 2020
  - Finance Committee Monthly Meeting – November 24, 2020
  - Governance Committee Monthly Meeting – November 24, 2020

## 5. Announcements / Updates

- a. Welcome Anne Henry. Ms. Henry was approved as a new at-large trustee by the New York State Education Department. Ms. Kramer congratulated her and welcomed her to the CSI team.
- b. Throw drive for CSI students. Ms. Kramer reminded trustees that the School is collecting throw blankets for children for the holidays. They can be dropped off inside the school near the front door.

## 6. Academic Committee Report – Peter Dow, Chair

- a. Summary of Early Literacy Benchmark Data for ELA and Math. David Hetherly, Response to Intervention / Data Coordinator, presented a summary of RtI Early Literacy Benchmark Data. In the discussion, it is noted that the STAR Assessment is better than AIMSweb; it is more geared toward intervention, rather than remediation. The STAR Assessment is also more flexible, as well as more easily used by teachers, particularly in showing student academic growth to parents.

Ms. Kramer noted that many 2<sup>nd</sup> graders needed urgent interventions. Mr. Sheffield explained that the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, who were 1<sup>st</sup> graders last year, were most adversely affected by the shift to remote learning. Teachers and RtI specialists are working aggressively with them.

Following up on Ms. Gray's report, Mr. Dow noted that finding ways to ameliorate stress for parents is vitally important.

Mr. Dow notes that Mr. Sheffield needs to be commended for his efforts to maximize the efficiency of remote learning while attempting to minimize stress levels for teachers.

## 7. Parent Association Report: Nichelle Gray, Parent Representative

- a. Ms. Gray noted that parents are saying they are “really stressed out.” One parent specified that the stress came from working and trying to be there for her child, and that balancing the timing is extremely difficult. She said the School has been very supportive of parents when they call seeking help. Another parent noted that adding more rest periods, particularly for the younger students would be useful.

## 8. Board Professional Development: Presentation: Responsive Classroom (RC), Dr. Andy Steck.

- a. Dr. Steck gave a presentation on the Responsive Classroom model, one of CSI's key design elements. He reported that the research demonstrates benefits of the RC model in improving student achievement in math and reading, and equally so for low-income children. Classrooms are more emotionally supportive. Teachers and student together create rules for the classroom and parents can help. RC strengthens family-school partnerships. Children learn responsibility for their behavior and self-control. Children develop a sense of belonging and empowerment as they are valued in the classroom. RC is consistent with Restorative Justice and the philosophy of Ubuntu, both of which CSI practices.
- b. In follow-up discussion, a question was asked about how the Responsive Classroom Model supports the process of inquiry. Dr. Steck said that the model encourages children to be



curious, to want to come to school, to want their curiosity to be satisfied, and to be involved in their own learning. Ms. Pfeiffer noted that the Responsive Classroom model provides a safe, comfortable environment in which children can take risks, and risk failure without fear of being punished for taking risks.

#### **9. Head of School Report – John Sheffield**

- a. Consolidated Dashboard Report – November. Mr. Sheffield reported that enrollment is up to 296 and staying pretty steady. ENL/SPED numbers are stable. Diversity of staff is stable. He noted that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are delays with BPS Committee on Special Ed assessing students for special education needs. Once they do, we expect the number of special ed students at CSI to increase.
- b. Status of virtual teaching/learning. Original plans were to go hybrid on January 19. However, Mr. Sheffield reported that as COVID-19 numbers rise, “we’re losing buy-in” for hybrid learning from parents and teachers. He noted that staff can work from the school building even if we are declared in a red zone. He will wait until after holidays to see if there is a spike in infections.
- c. Strategic Plan. Mr. Sheffield has been working with the Academic Committee to create a data dashboard showing aggregated data on student proficiency which can be shared with the board monthly. A committee of teachers is working on a process for student-led investigations.

#### **10. Finance/Audit Committee Report – Bruce Haydon, Treasurer**

- a. Financial Statements for period ending October 31, 2020. Mr. Haydon reviewed some of the line items on the financial statement, noting that some expenses increased because of COVID (nurse supplies, PPE) and some decreased (field trips, extended day) and reported that the financials overall look strong.

A motion to accept the financial statements for period ending 31, 2020 was made by Ms. Pfeiffer, seconded by Ms. Peters and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed.

#### **11. Governance Committee – Jan Peters, Chair**

- a. Succession Planning. Succession planning is a high priority. The Committee invited Shereen Williams of Education Board Partners to attend their meeting on November 24 to help with best practices. She shared data on succession planning and term limits. The Committee is seeking more specifics about job responsibilities of Board members and updating them.
- b. Board Trustee Recruitment. The Committee has been looking at ways to increase Board competence through more diversity of Board members.

#### **12. Ad hoc committee – Media and Community Engagement – Melvin Bankhead III, Chair**

- a. Website Request for Proposals. Mr. Bankhead shared text of draft RFP with Board members, with specific areas highlighted for easy updating. Board members gave recommendations for changes to RFP content, which Mr. Bankhead acted upon during the meeting. Ms. Henry noted that a rubric should be created with which to “score” bidders’ responses.

**13. Old Business.** None

**14. New Business.** None

**15. Other / Open Discussion.** None

**16. Next Meeting:** Tuesday, January 5, 2020, 4:45 pm



**17. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Henry, seconded by Ms. Pfeiffer, and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Melvin Bankhead III, Board Secretary

17 January 2021

Date