

Charter School of Inquiry

Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes



March 2, 2021

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, March 2, 2021 at 4:50 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference (Meeting ID 859 0775 6585), in accordance with Executive Orders by the Governor of the State of New York,

Trustees Present:	Melvin “Trey” Bankhead III Peter Dow Richard “Bruce” Haydon Anne Nguyen Henry Helene Kramer Valerie Nolan Janet Peters Mary Jo Pfeiffer Deborah Porter
Excused:	Nichelle Gray Latise Hairston
CSI Staff:	John Sheffield, Head of School Marie Giancarlo, Director, Curriculum and Instruction David Hetherly, RtI-Data Coordinator
Board Counsel:	Steve Polowitz

2. **Proof of Public Notice:**

Pursuant to the Open Meetings Law, Ms. Kramer announced that she had a notarized affidavit listing the places where the Notice of Meeting held on March 2, 2021, were posted and a list of media outlets 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 – February 2, 2021

A motion to approve minutes of the business meeting on February 2, 2021, was made by Mr. Dow, seconded by Mr. Bankhead and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed.



Ms. Kramer reminded the trustees that minutes of the Academic Committee (January 22, 2021), Audit and Finance Committee (January 26, 2021), and Governance Committee (January 26, 2021) were included with the board packet and will be posted on the website.

5. Announcements / Updates

- a. Welcome, Valerie Nolan: The board welcomed new member Ms. Nolan.
- b. Happy Birthday, Lynn Monin (March 13), Courtney Eaton (March 17), Helene Kramer (March 26): The board offered birthday wishes to Ms. Monin, Ms. Eaton, and Ms. Kramer.
- c. Satisfaction Surveys – Teachers, Parents, Students 2021: CSI’s annual satisfaction surveys of teachers, parents and students will be conducted around mid-May.
- d. Admissions Policy – Weighted Lottery: Ms. Kramer reminded the Board that, at the January 5 meeting, the Board approved a change to CSI’s admissions policy to accommodate a weighted lottery. She submitted the required documents to NYS Dept. of Education, Charter School Office, for a non-material revision. Susan Gibbons, CSI’s liaison at the Charter School Office, responded with a list of questions and concerns that she asked CSI to address. A small task force is currently working on addressing those concerns. When it completes its work, Ms. Kramer will submit the revised changes to the Board for approval.
- e. CSO Benchmark Reports for Remote Monitoring: Ms. Pfeiffer reviewed the Charter School Performance Framework’s (CSPF) 10 benchmarks. These benchmarks are used by the Charter School Office (CSO) to assess charter school performance when determining renewal decisions. The CSO asked charter schools to conduct a self-evaluation on each of the 10 benchmarks, with particular attention in areas where the school’s performance falls short of state standards. The state, at its next site visit, will assess CSI’s progress meeting those strategies, will issue a report, and then ask us to complete a CSO Post Report Action Plan. They will be looking for outcomes and evidence that the strategies have been effective.

6. Academic Committee Report– Peter Dow, Chair

- a. Presentation: David Hetherly, 2nd STAR Benchmark Results for ELA and Math
Mr. Hetherly presented the results of the 2nd (mid-year) STAR Renaissance assessments for ELA and Math in grades 1 through 6 through several reports. STAR Renaissance assessments are considered to be good predictors of results on State assessments There were a number of questions and considerable discussion about the reports.

Ms. Giancarlo emphasized a renewed and enhanced push toward mini-lessons, leading into small-group instruction.

Mr. Sheffield noted that “we did a little personnel juggling” of third grade staff in order to improve pacing of instruction. This was done in consultation with BOCES.

Ms. Kramer expressed a concern that CSI doesn’t have any literacy coaches. Mr. Sheffield explained that BOCES’ consultants have been filling that role. He also noted that he’s hoping to hire a literacy coach but asked for that discussion to be tabled until a later meeting.

Ms. Kramer expressed concern regarding the number of children in grades three through six who are falling below state standards. Mr. Hetherly referred to form *Consolidated Assessment Proficiency Report*. Mr. Sheffield noted that the report doesn’t show how close the children are to meeting the target. Ms. Pfeiffer recommends that next report show both the state standard, as well as the current status of the students’ proficiency, and how close they are to



proficiency, rather than just saying that they're below the target. Mr. Sheffield noted that he actually has such a report, but he'll need to have the students' identifying info removed before sharing it with the Board.

The Board encouraged Mr. Sheffield to tap into whatever financial resources he needs to help students achieve greater academic growth and proficiency.

b. Report out: Academic Committee Meeting February 26, 2021

Mr. Dow noted that the Academic Committee discussed the weighted lottery for admissions. He believes that it will take more than a weighted lottery to increase CSI's enrollment of ELL and Special Education children. Ms. Pfeiffer countered that recruitment strategies to increase these student populations will be discussed by the Academic Committee as it works through Benchmark 9 (Student Enrollment, Recruitment and Retention).

Mr. Dow noted that, in the Academic Committee's last meeting, Ms. Pfeiffer raised questions about how CSI tracks performance toward its Strategic Goals. That discussion will be prioritized at the next committee meeting.

Mr. Dow also noted that CSI needs to demonstrate how it is implementing its African American cultural infusion program, particularly the creation of a task force as outlined in the strategic plan. At a previous meeting, the Academic committee discussed getting outside support. Mr. Dow reported that he had spoken with Dr. Marcus Watson, professor at SUNY Buffalo State. Watson, who specializes in Africana studies is "very enthusiastic about working with us to (further) develop this task force" to fulfill CSI's infusion goals. They discussed the possibility of organizing a task force, and gaining Board backing for financial support. Ms. Kramer noted that CSI's Strategic Plan calls for such a task force, with parental involvement, to be created by May 2021.

Mr. Sheffield reported that he has organized a Community Partnership Task Force. Its charge includes strengthening CSI's relationship with the wider community, engaging CSI in activities important to the Black community, and addressing social-emotional and academic supports for CSI children and families. There was discussion about the need to blend the Community Partnership Task Force with activities of the Africana infusion task force.

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

No report, as Ms. Gray was absent.

8. **Head of School Report – John Sheffield**

a. Community Partnership Task Force wants to expand CSI's Gentlemen's Club and the Etiquette Club and potentially name the overall programs after the late Russell Bell, CSI's Student Support Coordinator. The goal is to expand the academic resources provided to the two groups. Ms. Pfeiffer suggests that she and Mr. Dow discuss the matter at the next Academic Committee.

b. Consolidated Dashboard Report – February:

- Mr. Sheffield updated the Board on the number of teachers, number of students, and related demographics; student attendance; student discipline.



- He notes that he established a new position to act as a liaison to Buffalo's Bengali community. After the position was announced, CSI received three inquiries from members of the Bengali community. He also received an application from a Bengali teaching assistant.
 - Mr. Sheffield reported that February was "a very robust month" for professional development for teachers. Among other things, teachers attended a docent-led virtual tour of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor.
 - There was more professional development on restorative practices, and on returning students to the building. There was more training on health and safety protocols.
 - Sixteen kindergarten students will be returning to the building for in-person instruction five days each week during March. Plans are underway to expand in-person learning to students in first and second grades.
- c. Enrollment: In response to a question by Ms. Pfeiffer about enrollment, Mr. Sheffield reported that Courtney Eaton sent out applications and flyers to every pre-school in Buffalo, and personally called each one. CSI is still reaching out via social media, as in-person recruitment remains suspended. CSI is also running more ads on 93.7 WBLK-FM, as well as in the Challenger newspaper. Mr. Sheffield is mulling restarting ads on WGRZ-TV Channel 2. He's happy to report that he's already receiving large numbers of inquiries related to kindergarten. He believes that, next fall, kindergarten, and grades 2 through 5, will be full.
- d. Strategic Plan. On track with timeline.

9. Finance/Audit Committee Report – Bruce Haydon, Treasurer

- a. Financial News
- *Tuition*: Mr. Haydon reports that charter school tuition rates may hold flat this fall because of proposed federal spending plans.
 - *Clawbacks*: A successful lawsuit by a charter school against Buffalo Public Schools has resulted in BPS paying the charter the state funds it had been withholding. Because of that precedent, Haydon says it's possible that the move might be replicated with other charter schools, including CSI.
 - *PPP Loan*. Mr. Haydon believes that we should evaluate how to earn income from the CSI's cash balance and begin spreading the cash out among different institutions with regard to FDIC guarantees.
 - *Purchasing Building*. Mr. Haydon will discuss with Board Counsel the merits of purchasing CSI's building to give the school more flexibility for future expansion.
 - *Audit*. Audit services went out to bid for a three-year contract. Bids have been received and are being reviewed.
- b. Financial Statement & Narrative for period ending December 31, 2020. Ms. Kramer explained that the Financial Statements for the period ending December 31, 2020 were reviewed at February's board meeting, but she neglected to ask for a vote to accept them. She asked for a motion to accept.

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



- c. Financial Statement & Narrative for period ending January 31, 2021. Mr. Haydon reports that financial position remains positive, without any evident concerns.

A motion to accept the financial statements for period ending January 31, 2021 was made by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Haydon and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed.

11. Governance Committee – Jan Peters, Chair

- a. Head of School Evaluation for 2020-2021: Committee discussed progress working with Dr. Andy Steck using the Danielson rubric, CSI's strategic plan and academic goals as the basis of the 2020-21 Head of School evaluation. One action item: The committee wants a Board member to oversee process, along with Dr. Steck. Ms. Peters asked interested board members to reach out to her.
- b. HOS Succession Planning: Assistant Principal. Some members of the committee met with Joan Graci of APA Solutions to gauge her interest in assisting with the search for an Assistant Principal, as well as an Operations Administrative Assistant. Mr. Sheffield reported that Ms. Graci will submit proposals to give us alternatives for her help in the search for an Assistant Principal, as well as some ideas for the Operations Administrative Assistant.
- c. Board Succession Planning: Committee reviewed job descriptions from Education Board Partners for Board Chair and Vice-Chair and made minor edits. Committee will assess and edit all other Board job descriptions and submit recommendations to the Board when the work is completed.

12. Old Business.

- a. Outreach Committee - Website RFP. Mr. Bankhead reported that he's been receiving responses from the RFP from web developers. Typeworks Studio, Otherwiz Creative, and Wayward Creative have responded thus far. His attempt to hold a February meeting of the committee was complicated by his hospitalization from Feb. 17 to Feb. 22, and his beginning recovery from his surgery and extended stay. He plans to conduct a committee meeting prior to the Board's April meeting.

13. New Business.

- a. None reported

14. Other / Open Discussion. None

15. **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, April 6, 2021, 4:45 p.m.

16. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Porter, seconded by Ms. Peters, and approved unanimously by the trustees. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Melvin Bankhead III, Board Secretary

7 April 2021

Date