

Journey School

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Memo

Date: February 27, 2024

To: Journey School Council

From: Gavin Keller

Re: Item 5B – Amended Minutes

Council Minutes from the meeting on December 18, 2023 were determined to be inaccurate and an amendment to the approved December 18, 2023 minutes is presented herein as item 5B for Council consideration and review.

The minutes attached have been amended to capture the detail of the discussion that occurred towards the end of agenda item 8C SELPA, namely that Journey School will continue to provide special education programming or equivalent for students with IEPs who are admitted through our lottery process. In becoming our own LEA as it relates to special education services, this may need to include development of specialized programming intended to meet needs for moderate to severe disabilities, whereas currently we do not have the freedom to develop specialized solutions to meet the needs of these students, rather we refer students to specialized programs operating in CUSD (as a current member of the CUSD SELPA). Students with IEPs who are not admitted into the program through our lottery process will be waitlisted.

This discussion was not accurately captured and helps to clarify the current approved minutes which states “...the school would have more freedom to create specialized solutions to meet the needs of students. If students apply to the school in need of those specialized services, we could create a wait list for students instead of automatically admitting them”.

Journey School
A California Public Charter School

Monday, December 18, 2023
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Approved January 25, 2024
Revision Approved February 27, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Held at Journey School, 27102 Foxborough, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656
(949) 448-7232 www.journeyschool.net

	AGENDA ITEM
1	<p>Call to Order and Roll Call - The meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m.</p> <p><i>Amy Capelle, Council President - Present</i> <i>Melissa Dahlin, Board Vice President - Present</i> <i>Margaret Moodian, Council Secretary - Present</i> <i>Jeannie Lee, Board Member - Present</i> <i>Michael Allbee, Board Treasurer - Present</i> <i>Parent Cabinet Advisor - Cassie Kawling</i></p>
2	<p>Inspirational Passage: <i>Melissa shared two inspirational passages. "closing the chapter of this year with reflection..." – each year teaches us something new.... recognizing challenges – moments of growth....</i></p>
3	<p>Approval of Agenda*: <i>Margaret made a motion to approve the agenda. Melissa seconded and it was unanimously approved.</i></p>
4	<p>PUBLIC COMMENT: <i>There were no members of the public present.</i></p>
5	<p>CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: <i>Amy pulled the October minutes from the consent agenda. — made a motion to items B and C on the consent agenda. — seconded and items B and C were approved.</i></p> <p>A. PULLED FROM CONSENT - Approval of Minutes*: <i>Minutes from regular meeting, October 26, 2023. Amy stated that "30 days of cash on hand" should be changed to "130 days".</i></p> <p>B. First Interim Financial Report*: <i>Approval of First Interim Report, based on financial information including budget on actuals.</i></p> <p>C. 2023-2024 Staffing Plan*: <i>Approval of updates to the staffing plan.</i></p> <p><i>Margaret made a motion to approve the October 26, 2023 minutes with the change noted above. Mike seconded the motion and it was approved by all.</i></p>
6.	<p>BOARD DEVELOPMENT and OVERSIGHT (Discussion/Action):</p>

A. **Board Strategic Planning***: Update on work with Alliance for Public Waldorf, self-study and peer review. Jeannie shared about the self-study process, which started back in June. Staff members started the process, PEDCO reviewed their work, and sent it back to the staff for further development. At this time the self-study is nearly complete. Gavin noted that it has been a healthy process to have the entire staff working together. The next step is for the Alliance to visit the school this spring to spend several days observing our program to make sure that our self-study is accurate compared to what is actually happening on campus. Following that visit, the Alliance will determine if we have met all requirements to be awarded accredited status.

Jeannie shared that one of the discussions that arose out of the self-study process is the need to work towards better communication and cooperation between main class teachers and specialty teachers. One of the issues has been main class teachers and the special ed team pulling students out of specialty classes. Discussions around these issues have been productive.

7 **INFORMATION ITEMS: Reports**

A. **Financial Update***: Larry reported on October financials and first interim report. Our attendance has been higher than expected, and we have more students enrolled than what was projected, which will result in additional funding. In spite of this, Larry maintains the more conservative projections for the remainder of the year. The school is now receiving state mental health funds directly, instead of those funds being paid to our SELPA as they were in the past. We're on target with spending as projected this year. Invoices for housekeeping and some other items are coming in higher than expected. Net income is projected to be \$170k this year, which is higher than expected. The school currently has little under \$3 million. Amy asked if there's a penalty for taking money out of the investments before maturity. Mike stated that there's no penalty, but the school wouldn't get the full interest earned if funds are withdrawn early.

State Budget: The State is projecting a large budget deficit. As of October 27, the Franchise Tax Board (FTB) reported monthly tax collections of only \$14.9 billion—a shortfall from projections of more than \$27 billion. This shortfall and the one-month extension of the 2022 tax filing deadline caused the LAO to postpone the publication of its Fiscal Outlook to early December as multi-billion dollar discrepancies can have significant impacts on the overall State Budget and Proposition 98. The LAO is now projecting the 2024-25 statutory COLA to be approximately 1.00%—a significant decrease from the Newsom Administration's June 2023 estimates. We expect that the DOF, which has significantly more data now than in June 2023, will downgrade its projection when Governor Gavin Newsom presents his State Budget proposal on January 10, 2024. While the final statutory COLA won't be known until April 2024, the likelihood of it being 3.94% appears to be slim to none.

Fortunately, Journey School has some 'one-time funds' that we have not spent yet, while many schools have already spent those funds. Amy asked if Larry has seen other schools create endowment funds. Larry will look into it to see how they structured their endowment funds.

B. **Faculty Update**: Paul Breazeale did not attend the meeting, but shared the following written update on faculty activities:

Hello members of the Board,

I am sorry I couldn't be here in person tonight because I was looking forward to chatting with all of

you. If you saw me on campus today you saw I was wearing a mask. I think I got whatever sickness has been going around Journey, and I got no sleep last night because of it. Gavin and Jeannie said it would be ok for me to do a write up for my "faculty share out". If you have any further questions I'm happy to talk to you, and feel free to email me.

We as a faculty are currently in the busiest time of the year. The rush to the holidays is always filled with class parties, school assemblies, kids getting sick, kids getting excited, etc. So, to be completely honest the overwhelm is very real this time of year. From my perspective, despite the overwhelm, the morale among the staff remains fairly high.

In my current class we just finished our second block of the Ancient Hebrew Stories. We used Thinking Maps to plan our brainstorm, create a rough draft, edit it, and put the finished product in our Main Lesson Books. We also drew pictures of these stories.

In my math practice periods we are working our times tables in earnest. In ELA we are continuing to learn spelling rules and the proper way to make sentences. My weekly "Celebrations of Information" (Spelling tests) reinforce the skills we are learning.

I just wanted to share out a few personal observations and changes that I have really appreciated this year at school:

1.) The addition of Mary Luhrs has been nice. It has been great to have Gavin and Shelley more available for discipline and curriculum questions instead of hearing that "they're in an IEP".

2.) I know this isn't popular among all staff but I have personally loved the additions of the security fences. It's unfortunate to say, but in this day and age having a secure campus is important. I am hoping the key fob system will be ready asap. I hope that we continue to extend the fence heights around campus for the safety of all.

Thank you!

Paul Breazeale

C. Parent Cabinet Update: *Cassie shared an update on Parent Cabinet activities. Harvest Faire was a huge success, in spite of some volunteer gaps. PC is training new volunteers to take over the event for those parents who are stepping down. Fairy Market was also a successful event with lots of joy from students and parent volunteers. Gavin attended the most recent PC meeting to share an overview of the school's LCAP. Cassie shared a comment that PC members should be invited to provide input every year. Cassie also mentioned that she received a request for notes from a recent Coffee Talk. She replied that notes are not taken or shared, and referred the parent to reach out to Gavin or Shelley with any questions. Cassie noted that the lack of staffing at the front desk makes the space less welcoming and challenging for parents who need assistance. Finally, Cassie inquired about having field trips planned out for each grade by PEDCO. Gavin clarified that the recommendations to be made by PEDCO will make sure that field trips are aligned with our curriculum. The plan will also take into consideration the financial costs that field trips impose on the school and on families. Administration and PEDCO are striving to ensure that trips are equitable for each grade level regardless of various factors.*

D. **Administrative Update:** Gavin shared a report from administration including update as follows: Classes have participated in their lantern walks. Spiral Walks are happening now. Santa Lucia day happened last week. Amy suggested looking into purchasing fire blankets for safety. Gavin thanked Melissa for the alumni survey data, which has been shared with the community in our newsletter. Mike suggested making the next newsletter shorter.

Parent Education is going well, studying Conscious Discipline. The Zoom sessions have been fairly well attended. Lou Harvey Zahra provided a talk offering guidance on creative and conscious parenting. Admin has been having discussions about the possibility of offering our Waldorf Foundations program to parents.

The school opened an investment account per the board's direction, investing \$1.5 million in treasury bills. \$450k was invested in a 12 month treasury bill. The remaining funds were invested in 3, 6, and 9 month treasuries bills which will mature at these intervals. Mike stated that the average yield is 5.4% which could make the return around \$70k.

Our application for the Green Ribbon Award was declined since we already received the award previously, which has made us ineligible to win again. Mike suggested creating a flier highlighting our "green" practices that are implemented on a daily basis.

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SCHOOL OPERATIONS: Discussion/Action

A. **2022-23 Audit Report*:** Larry shared the review of the school's annual audit report for the previous fiscal year. He noted that there were no findings in the audit. There were a couple of adjustments. CLA recommends recognizing the Employee Retention Credit funds since they are subject to IRS review to determine eligibility. ERC for nonprofits is recognized as a grant. This changes the net income that was originally reported.

B. **Achievement Data Presentation*:** Gavin reviewed the results of CAASPP testing, IlluminateEd achievement data and the California Dashboard. The school also participated in ELPAC for English Learners. There are no students who are eligible for alternative assessments. On the science test for 5th and 8th graders, the number of students exceeding standards increased, and the number of students who did not meet the standards decreased, although our science test scores were lower overall. School closures due to COVID in recent years may have negatively impacted these scores. We are now piloting a standardized science curriculum for 5th graders. Multiple Measures is very helpful to interpret this data. Through their software, we can see very detailed results for each student. Gavin has asked teachers to provide differentiated support for students based on the results of this testing. Margaret asked if students can opt out. Gavin clarified that yes, students can opt out, and he outlined how opting out negatively affects our school. All students are encouraged to participate in the testing process.

Our scores in math and language arts also declined. Testing cohorts were very different from 2022 to 2023. This year 311 students tested, while only 220 tested in 2022. We were growing enrollment when testing took place in 2022 resulting in 91 students less. Also this year our younger students have had less exposure to academic technology than our students did during the pandemic years. Mike proposed that computer skills could be taught in the younger grades to help correct this,

recognizing that there would be pros and cons to this solution. The other factor that affected test scores was attendance. Amy pointed out that our support staff has been reduced each year since the end of the pandemic. Gavin noted that the demographics of the school have changed in recent years which also affects test scores. Jeannie noted that since the recent inception of our honors program, many students are opting into more difficult math classes.

Special Education Local Plan Agency (SELPA)*: Gavin reviewed the possibility of using El Dorado Charter SELPA as a potential option for future provision of special education services at Journey School. One of the conditions that CUSD has placed on Journey includes a significant increase in SPED encroachment to account for additional staffing to meet the needs of the school. The district seems to be supportive of Journey seeking SPED services elsewhere. All other charter schools in Orange County have left CUSD. At El Dorado, they are focused on SPED services. El Dorado SELPA would have the opportunity to review our school and determine if they are willing to provide us with services. L.A. County is another option. CCSA has recommended El Dorado. This would be similar to what CUSD is providing now, in terms of staffing. The Director of Student Support would be the administrator serving the SPED services division. The plan includes additional para-professionals. The cost is similar to what we are paying CUSD for their encroachment fees. Hiring and creating a program will be challenging, but Gavin feels that this is a better option than staying with CUSD. Jeannie asked if potential legal fees associated with this change are included. Gavin stated that yes, we have allotted funding to cover legal fees in case any lawsuits arise in the course of running our own special education program, however he expects that the number of lawsuits would decrease if we run our own program. ~~since the school would have more freedom to create specialized solutions to meet the needs of students. In becoming our own LEA as it relates to special education services, this may need to include development of specialized programming intended to meet needs for moderate to severe disabilities, whereas currently we do not have the freedom to develop specialized solutions to meet the needs of these students, rather we refer students to specialized programs operating in CUSD (as a current member of the CUSD SELPA). Students with IEPs who are not admitted into the program through our lottery process will be waitlisted. If students apply to the school in need of those specialized services, we could create a wait list for students instead of automatically admitting them.~~

The application process for El Dorado opens up in January. We would know by April if we are approved to join their SELPA. Gavin noted that if we change to another SELPA, this would be a material change and would require a revision of our charter. Margaret made a motion to authorize Gavin to apply to join El Dorado SELPA, and to notify CUSD that we are applying to another SELPA. Melissa seconded the motion and it was approved by all.

C. Universal Transitional Kindergarten Programming*: Gavin shared an update of plans for transitional kindergarten (UTK) programs for the 2024-2025 school year. With this change to the program, we will be required to reduce the student to teacher ratio from 12:1 to 10:1. The proposal for our UTK program is to offer a one year program taking place from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There would be a maximum of 16 students per UTK. This would bring an additional \$100k of ADA funding.

D. Purchase of Laptop Computers for Faculty Use*: Gavin reviewed the request to purchase laptop computers using approved government funding. The school will order and pay for the laptops, and then be reimbursed by the funding program. Margaret made a motion to approve the purchase of 34 laptop computers and other technology for faculty use, not to exceed the cost of the grant funding. Melissa seconded the motion and it was approved by all.

	<p><i>Jeannie made a motion to conclude the public session and enter closed session. Melissa seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.</i></p>
9	<p>CLOSED SESSION - <i>The board entered closed session at 9:07 p.m.</i></p> <p>A. <i>Pursuant to Government Code § 54956.9: Conference with legal counsel regarding existing or anticipated litigation</i></p> <p>B. <i>Pursuant to Government Code § 54957: Public Employee Compensation, Executive Director</i></p> <p><i>The board exited the closed session at 9:20 p.m. The following actions were taken by the board:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The board approved bringing the MOU proposal to CUSD.</i> - <i>The board approved a specific COLA bonus for the Executive Director and administrative staff at his discretion.</i>
11	<p>Adjournment - <i>Jeannie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.</i></p>

Agenda publicly posted at Journey School on Thursday, December 13, 2023

And on the school website at www.journeyschool.net

**Items that are expected to have back up materials provided prior to or at the meeting are indicated with an asterisk. Other items may also have back up materials provided.*