

Journey School
A California Public Charter School

Thursday, August 31, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Approved September 28, 2023

BOARD MEMBERS:

Amy Capelle, Council President - Present
Melissa Dahlin, Council Vice President - Present
Margaret Moodian, Council Secretary - Present
Michael Allbee, Board Treasurer - Present
Jeannie Lee, Board Member - Present

ADVISORY POSITIONS:

Cassie Kauwling, Parent Cabinet Advisor - Present

	AGENDA ITEM	SPONSOR	EST. TIME
1	Call to Order at 6:05 pm		
2	Inspirational Passage - Margaret shared a passage by Paulo Freiri: "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."		
3	Approval of Agenda* : Jeannie made a motion to approve the agenda. Melissa seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.		
4	PUBLIC COMMENT: There were no members of the public present.		
5	<p>CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Item F was pulled from consent. Jeannie made a motion to approve all items except for Item F on the Consent Agenda. Melissa seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.</p> <p>A. Approval of Minutes*: Minutes from regular meeting of June 15, 2023 and the Board Retreat of June 15, 2023</p> <p>B. Staffing Plan 2023-24*: Updates to Staffing Plan needed for the start of school</p> <p>C. Earthroots Contract*: Renewal of contract with Earthroots for 23-24 school year for EcoLiteracy program</p> <p>D. Recurring Expenses*: Approval of list of recurring vendors for payment in 2023-24 in accordance with fiscal policies.</p> <p>E. CUSD Food Services Contract*: Renewal of contract with CUSD for 2023-24 school year.</p>		

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	<p>F. Limited Use Agreement with AVCA for park space*: Renewal of agreement to use Aliso Viejo community spaces</p> <p>G. Consolidated Application*: Ratification of Con App and application for Title funding for 23-24</p>
6	<p>INFORMATION ITEMS: Reports</p> <p>A. Faculty Update: Gavin shared that Andrew Goetz will be leading one of the 8th grade classes this year in place of Jennifer Tarr. Stacy Kinney will be his mentor. Jeannie shared that the staff feels comfortable and prepared. The administrators have done a good job of unifying the staff and preparing them for the year. Faculty has been studying Conscious Discipline. Jeannie noted that this year is the least turnover of staff that she has seen in 9 years and that is a good indication of a positive environment. Parents are starting to come onto campus to volunteer. 8th graders will be going on a field trip to see a performance of Les Miserables next week.</p> <p>B. Parent Cabinet Update: Cassie provided an update on Parent Cabinet activities. PC is ready for the year with great volunteers in the key roles. Their goals include reinvigorating the community. Feedback from Gavin's email outlining the Student Handbook highlights was very positive. PC was disappointed to not have the traditional all-school work day since that is an event that brings parents together. Gavin noted that it's challenging for admin to lead the work days, so perhaps another staff member or volunteer could lead the event. Varying teacher participation is also a challenge. Shelley suggested having a work day prior to Harvest Faire. PC is hosting a social on the first day of school. The first PC meeting is the following week. Nicola is leading the Harvest Faire. The annual auction will be held at Aliso Viejo Ranch. Cassie shared that it would be nice to have a board member attend the first PC meeting.</p> <p>C. Administrative Update: Gavin provided an update as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The positive energy on campus from all of our returning teachers and staff is exceptional, including newly hired staff members. He shared an overview of the staff and faculty meetings held this week. One of the goals for this year is to return to being a "green" school and applying for the US Dept. of Education's Green Ribbon Award. Additional topics shared included: - Upcoming events - Our charter term has been extended to June 30, 2028. - We received the Employee Retention Credit funds of approximately \$450,000. - All main class teachers attended professional development training over summer. - Summer facilities projects: New lunch tables, perimeter fence extension, shade sails, office improvements and changes. - Enrollment is around 600. We are expecting some attrition. - ELOP summer programming was very successful with an average of 85 students per day in Strategic Kids, and 20 in the Little Acorns kindergarten program. Providers will send a survey to participants to

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help shape next year's program. Amy noted it would be helpful to determine if students who participated in the summer ELOP were better prepared in the fall.

- Specialty program overview: We are happy to have a Spanish teacher this year.

- The Saddleback adult ESL program started last week using Jeannie's classroom. This is a good community service to offer on campus.

- CUSD site walkthrough is scheduled for September 14th

- We received a reply from CUSD this week regarding their Notice of Concern. They have requested a response from Journey School by September 6th. Gavin will seek an extension since that is the first day of school.

- We have an all new SPED team from CUSD on campus, with the exception of Quirine Blessing who was here last year. We now have three full-time ed specialists on campus and a speech therapist who is on campus four days per week.

- Test scores are not available yet. We will be able to present an analysis in November.

- Shelley shared that the faculty started studying Conscious Discipline and the program aligns well with Rudolf Steiner's teachings about the importance of play. This study will continue throughout the year with main class and specialty teachers. The information will also be shared as part of our Parent Education outreach.

- Shelley shared that we will be using a middle school curriculum called Amplify Science for weekly science classes in various grades. This aligns with California's Next Generation Science Standards.

- The Spanish teacher will be meeting weekly with each 1st through 3rd grade class, and more often with older grades. Señora Caballero has a Waldorf background.

D. Financial Update*: Larry provided a report on the 2022-2023 year end close of financial statements, plus budget updates for 2023-2024 school year.

Net Income: Journey School had a net income of \$936,419 in FY22-23 compared to \$59,260 in the board-approved budget. This is \$877,160 more than the board-approved budget. *Balance Sheet:* As of June 30, 2023, the school's cash balance was \$2.35M. As of June 30, 2023, the Accounts Receivable Balance was \$942,045. The balance primarily consists of the following revenue: In Lieu of Property Taxes - \$332,375, ERC - \$451,565, EPA - \$26,571, Lottery - \$47,164. As of June 30, 2023, the Accounts Payable balance, including payroll liabilities, totaled \$805,226.

Total revenue for FY22-23 was \$7.46M, which is \$1,179,525 more than the budgeted amount. LCFF was \$388,892 over budget per the current ADA. All Other Federal Revenue was \$447,911 over budget due to the Employee Retention Credit. Mandate Block Grant was \$287,697 under budget as the state reallocated the discretionary funds to the Learning Recovery Block Grant and Arts and Music Instructional Materials Block Grant. Lottery was \$71,099 over budget due to prior year funds and a higher funding rate from the state. Expanded Learning Opportunities Program was \$153,948 under budget as the school chose to defer funds to future years. Other State Revenue was \$670,301 over budget primarily due to the Declining Enrollment Relief funds in the amount of \$623,432. Interest was \$31,388 as treasury earnings were much higher. Contributions & Events were \$59,629 under budget.

Total expenses for FY22-23 were \$6.53M, which is \$302,365 more than the budgeted amount. Classified Salaries were \$148,437 over budget as additional staff was hired and hours were increased. CalPERS was \$41,175 under budget. Note-Forecast variances of \$25,000 and 10% of budget will be discussed in this report.

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Workers' Compensation was \$38,135 under budget due to a refund from the prior year and lower costs for the year. Other Benefits were \$73,157 over budget due to high accrued vacation time. Student Materials were \$34,175 over budget as the school stocked up on supplies in June.

Non Capitalized Equipment was \$110,433 over budget due to purchases of additional chromebooks, lunch tables, and benches. Vendor Repairs were \$28,214 over budget as a portion of expenditures has been reallocated from all other consultants, and there has been an increase in facility improvements. Other Student Instructional Services were \$53,857 under budget due to less services from Strategic Kids.

ADA: The budgeted P2 ADA is 516.15 based on an enrollment of 555 and a 93.0% attendance rate.

Amy asked what our cash reserves were prior to COVID affecting the budget. Larry will gather that information for the next meeting.

2023-24 Budget Update:

- Provides the statutory 8.22% Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)
- Reduces the Arts, Music, and Instructional Materials Discretionary Block Grant from \$3.6 billion to \$3.4 billion
- Reduces the Learning Recovery Emergency Block Grant funds by \$1.6 billion and includes intent language to restore \$378.6 million from the 2025-26 fiscal year to the 2027-28 fiscal year
- Proposition 28 estimated funding is \$938 million; a slight increase from the May Revision
- ELOP Funding lower than the prior year for schools under 75% Unduplicated Pupil Percentage; loss of \$21,427 for Journey School.
- LCAP - Midyear update: Must present an update on implementation of the current-year LCAP on or before February 28 at a regularly scheduled governing board meeting
- Extends the term of all charter schools whose petitions expire between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2027, by one additional year
- Larry stated the best policy is to save now since we don't know for sure what California's budget will look like for 2024-25.
- Some funds are being clawed back by the state, but Journey has not spent those funds anyway.
- Amy asked Larry if there are restrictions on how the ERC funds are used. Gavin said there are no restrictions, but we have been advised not to spend them for several years because there's a chance that they may need to be returned to the state if it's deemed that charter schools are not eligible for ERC.

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SCHOOL OPERATIONS: Discussion/Action

- A. **Independent Study Policy and Master Agreement:** Amanda Simmons reviewed the minor changes and updates to wording of the Independent Study Policy and Master Agreement. Amy asked how absenteeism is being addressed in regards to Independent Study. Amanda explained that short term Independent Study may be allowed in certain situations for planned absences of more than five days. Kelli Garcia would be the teacher who would oversee that part of the program.

Amanda explained that I.S. has a lower percentage of IEP students due to the fact that if a student has an IEP it has to be written into their IEP that I.S. is the best placement for that student in order to participate in the program. The program has fewer ESL and economically challenged students.

Michael made a motion to approve the IS Policy and Master Agreement. Melissa seconded and it was unanimously approved.

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	<p>B. Legal Counsel: <i>The board discussed various options available for legal counsel for charter schools. The response time from our current counsel has become very slow. Gavin has researched and had discussions with the firm YM&C. Their rates are lower than our former counsel. He recommends that we move over to YM&C before the end of the calendar year.</i></p> <p><i>Margaret made a motion to approve changing Journey School's counsel from Procopio to YM&C. Melissa seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.</i></p> <p>C. Investment Policy: <i>Discussion regarding investment policy and ramifications a policy may have regarding form 700 filers. Counsel has advised that if the school adopts an investment policy, then all board members would become 87200 Filers, in addition to Form 700 filers. In addition to disclosing financial interests, business relationships of board members, their spouses and dependent children would need to be disclosed. Counsel cautioned against having the entire board become Form 87200 filers because the process of filing is very complicated.</i></p> <p><i>Mike asked if the board could form an investment committee. Gavin answered yes, the board may appoint an individual or committee to invest funds. In that case, only the individual or committee members would be required to file Form 87200. Board members not on the committee would not have input on how funds are invested. The board will revisit this topic at September's meeting.</i></p> <p>D. Executive Director Review Cycle: <i>Gavin presented his goals for the 2023-2024 school year.</i></p> <p><i>Jeannie suggested further training by Illuminate Ed for how to use the Fastbridge data.</i></p> <p>E. 2022-23 Unaudited Actuals: <i>Larry reviewed the year-end financials in his presentation.</i></p>
8	<p>BOARD DEVELOPMENT and OVERSIGHT (Discussion/Action):</p> <p>A. Board Strategic Planning*: <i>Melissa shared data collected from the Alumni Survey. 74 parents responded. 109 individual students. Themes from student and parent responses reflect how special and unique Journey School is. 86% of students responded said they are more empathetic. Sense of self and confidence was repeated by many respondents. Lack of technology dependence was a positive outcome for many graduates. Sense of belonging and community was positive, but also made the transition to a larger school more difficult. The skills learned at Journey helped to buffer alumni from academic and other challenges. Alumni are pursuing many different careers. Many mentioned well-roundedness, humanity, compassion, and the feeling of really having a childhood. Rough points noted included homework, time management and test taking. Specific suggestions were offered to help prep students for high school. Journey students do excel in high school and beyond with many in AP classes with high GPA's. Most felt they were doing the same or better than their peers in high school. Family comments included being worried about kids being prepared for high school. They noted varying preparedness depending on the teacher. They expressed concern about not having enough discipline on campus. Other concerns included middle school and bullying.</i></p>

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	<p><i>Gavin suggested an early survey be sent to current freshmen would be very helpful as it would reflect feedback of our current program.</i></p> <p><i>The board discussed collecting specific quotes from respondents who consent to having their names published, as well as using anonymous quotes from the survey.</i></p> <p><i>Strategic Plan: The board plans to wait to draft the Strategic Plan until the school meets with the Alliance for Public Waldorf. Gavin shared that the staff is working on summarizing how Journey supports the Core Principles of Waldorf Education.</i></p> <p><i>Schedule of Meetings: Melissa made a motion to approve the meeting schedule as adjusted. Mike seconded the motion and it was approved by all.</i></p> <p>B. Council Nominating Committee: <i>Review of upcoming vacancies and search activities. We have three potential upcoming vacancies. We could wait until their terms expire to bring in replacements, or expand the board now in anticipation of the vacancies. Jeannie will seek a faculty adviser.</i></p> <p><i>Margaret made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting at 8:43 p.m.. Mike seconded and all approved.</i></p>
9	<p>CLOSED SESSION: <i>The meeting convened to closed session at 8:44 p.m. to discuss the matter described below:</i></p> <p>1. Pursuant to Government Code §54957: Public Employee Performance Evaluation, Title: School Executive Director</p> <p><i>The board discussed Gavin's Performance Review. The board did not take action in Closed Session. Melissa made a motion to adjourn to Public Session at 9:18 p.m. Mike seconded and it was unanimously approved.</i></p>
10	<p>Adjournment: <i>Melissa made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Margaret seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Adjourned at 9:18 pm.</i></p>

Agenda publicly posted on the school website at www.journeyschool.net on August 28, 2023.

**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.*