

**Journey School**  
**A California Public Charter School**

**Thursday, September 23, 2021**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**Approved October 28, 2021**

**6:00 p.m.**  
Via Zoom Webinar

*This meeting was noticed and held in accordance with the guidelines and flexibility from the Governor's Executive Orders N-25-20 and N-29-20, due to a statewide public health emergency and in accordance with the rules for public Meetings.*

***NOTE: Board members conducted the meeting via Zoom using the Webinar format. Members of the public wishing to observe and/or contribute participated in the Zoom meeting by accessing the webinar.***

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

*Amy Capelle, Council President: Present*  
*Richard Martin, Council Secretary: Present*  
*Jeannie Lee, Board Member: Present*  
*Melissa Dahlin, Board Vice President: Present*  
*Margaret Moodian, Board Member: Present*

**ADVISORY POSITIONS:**

*Alanna Hayde, Faculty Advisor: Present*  
*Vivienne Benjamin, Parent Cabinet Advisor: Present*

*Administrators Gavin Keller, Shelley Kelley and Amanda Simmons were present. Consultants Franci Sassin and Larry Tamayo (for his items) were present.*

	<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Call to Order and Roll Call and review of Webinar processes</b>

	The meeting was called to order at 6:07 pm. All board members were present. The Webinar rules were reviewed.
2	<p><b><i>Inspirational Passage</i></b></p> <p>Richard Martin read a passage in Rhythms of Learning. It was about how quickly knowledge becomes obsolete and that developing capacity is more important.</p>
3	<p><b><i>Approval of Agenda*</i></b></p> <p><b><i>NOTE: The order of the agenda may be changed without prior notice to the public.</i></b></p> <p>There was a motion to approve the agenda which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.</p>
4	<p><b><i>PUBLIC COMMENT: Members of the public may contribute public comment via Zoom teleconference. Reminder: See policy above for time guidelines.</i></b></p> <p>There were no members of the public who asked to make public comment.</p>
5	<p><b><i>CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Items on Consent Agenda may be approved with one motion and vote for all but without discussion. If an item is to be discussed, it is removed from the Consent Agenda and moved to an Action Item immediately following the Consent Items.</i></b></p> <p>A. <b><i>Approval of Minutes*</i></b>: Minutes from regular meeting of August 30, 2021</p> <p>B. <b><i>Staffing Plan 2021-22*</i></b>: Updates to Staffing Plan needed for the start of school.</p> <p>There was a motion to approve the consent agenda items, which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.</p>
6	<p><b><i>INFORMATION ITEMS: Reports</i></b></p> <p>A. <b><i>Faculty Update</i></b>: Update on Faculty activities.</p> <p>Alanna Hayde reported on the start of the school year. She reported on some of the activities that her 6<sup>th</sup> grade class is doing in the block on Rome and the social dynamics of the class. She also relayed a report from one of the second grade teachers, Mr. K. Since those students were doing distance learning last year, they need to learn some of the habits of being in school. It has been challenging not having parent volunteers. She reported that generally there is a positive and enthusiastic return to campus for both staff and students.</p> <p>B. <b><i>Parent Cabinet Update</i></b>: Update on Parent Cabinet activities</p>

Viviene Benjamin reported that the first big Parent Cabinet meeting was held. It was a challenge to decide where to hold the meeting, which was held at the park outdoors next to the school. There was a lot of excitement from new families. Jamie Lloyd is the new Treasurer. Karen Pan is the new President and this was her first meeting in that role. The Pumpkin City event will take place; it is a fundraiser for the school. Fairy Market will also be held, there is a chair for the event, and they will work through the logistics. They heard feedback that the outdoor classrooms are working very well across grade levels. The grade matching “buddies” are also back this year and it is so much more effective now this year, back in person. There will also be class plays live this year. The “Little Theatre” is back, and the first production was cast already. The parents are happy that the COVID case rate at the school has been zero so far.

C. **Administrative Update:** *Report from School Director, including update on school re-opening, after school care, Back to School Night, field trips, DEI update, enrichment classes, Strategic Kids update, etc.*

Gavin Keller reported that the school year has gotten off to a great start. The programming is very much like a ‘normal’ year. Student supervision is going well at recess, lunch, drop off and pick up. There are extra staff members available. The Strategic Kids (SK) partnership is going well, and any concerns are being addressed. It has helped that some of the SK staff are returning with the same class and teacher as last year. The Rose Ceremony was held on the first day. He reported that the outdoor class areas are working well, although with the heat some activities needed to be moved indoors. There are additional distractions when learning outdoors, but overall staff are effectively using that strategy. He confirmed there have been no COVID cases so far. All prevention strategies are in place. Some of the behavioral and social-emotional challenges are starting to arise. The school wants to fill the school counselor/school psychologist position. In the meantime, they are using other types of staff to fill in for these needs. The school office staff are working through the new rules around required immunizations, there is more activity in this area due to changes to the law.

The afterschool program Little Acorns for Kindergarten students has been expanded this year and this has been well received. Strategic Kids offers afterschool care for the other grades. There are also enrichment classes offered, such as “Little Theatre” as well as other options such as sports, music, handwork, chess, Lego engineering, cartooning, etc. Amy Capelle asked if there are any funding sources to supplement these opportunities for low income students.

The Back to School Night and Town Hall meeting was held virtually this year. The school policies and values were highlighted, as well as opportunities such as Parent Cabinet and donations through Annual Giving. After the general presentation, each class held a Zoom for their families. There are benefits to this format such as being able to record all the sessions for families who have multiple students.

Discussions are underway to plan the overnight trips for grades 3-8, including the longer 8<sup>th</sup> grade class trip. Grades 5 and 6 will both be going to the Catalina science trip. Some venues are requiring negative test results

before attendance. In addition, the school will offer day long field trips, but will hire school busses for transportation in lieu of carpooling. The number of trips will be capped for each class.

Shelley Kelley reported on the DEI work. There has not been an official meeting of the committee this month but a survey is out. The school has already implemented the purchase of multi-cultural skin tone crayons for the younger grades. Skin tone bandages are also available. At the faculty meetings, teachers are comparing student work, and are reflecting on the “windows and mirrors” concept in their lessons. Amy Capelle provided a resource to find reading books that support diverse curricula. She also asked about collecting data from students on DEI topics. Shelley reported that Illuminate will be providing regular check ins about social emotional topics.

Amanda Simmons reported on the start to the Independent Study (IS) program. There are a lot more families who were only interested in IS and not more interested in the classroom options. This is also reflected in the fact that there is much higher level of homebased students vs. hybrid students.

D. ***Financial Update\****: Report on July and August financials.

Larry Tamayo presented the August financial update, the first for this year. He alerted the board that ADA and enrollment will be tracked closely this year as the funding will be based on actual ADA again this year. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of school there were 517 students, which is 72 students below the original budget. There are also fewer students attending each day, so ADA rates were reduced as well. This leads to a dramatically lower ADA projection which is what the LCFF funds are based on, leading to over \$800K reduced funding. The In Person Instruction Grant /Expanded Learning Opportunities received last spring will be able to be used for 21-22, so that will be a new source of revenue. There are also ESSER III funds and there will be a plan presented at the October board meeting for how those funds will be spent. The funds will be distributed over two years. He also reviewed the decreases in expenditures. The overall net is still almost \$400K in the red. The school historically has ended more positively than projections. The school may need to rely on some of its cash reserves. The state deferrals have been eliminated so that helps with cash flow.

There was a request to review some of the fiscal data from the past 5 years. Larry commented that there have been a lot of “one time” revenue sources in recent years so some comparisons may be difficult.

Gavin Keller reported that the administrative team decided that Independent Study will be implemented for COVID reasons, such as illness, quarantine, etc. and for a 7 day or more planned absence.

Larry alerted the Board that the recent legislation allows Journey to go over the 20% threshold for IS without being converted to a non-classroom based charter school. Amy Capelle asked about the Pre K grant. There are limited funds for that, and very limited information about what is required. There was a discussion about the breakfast and lunch program and how many students are accessing it. The school is offering free breakfast, snack and lunch to all students and is tracking it by student ID. It is a popular option but the demand so far is not too much higher than last year. There was a discussion about the cultural aspects of the food provided, and that Journey students are actually excited about taking advantage of it and it is culturally acceptable. The

school faculty is working to help prevent waste when students bring food and then also take advantage of the free offerings. If a student wants the meal they must take the whole meal.

7 **SCHOOL OPERATIONS: Discussion/Action**

A. **Enrollment Update: Update on enrollment projections and fiscal impact.**

Gavin Keller reported on the enrollment trends. As previously reported, the total enrollment is about 517 and they are currently using the lower ADA rate of 92%. Gavin reported that the original budget with 582 students was based on the enrollment last spring of over 600 students. However, due mostly to COVID reasons, many families decided not to return. The school provided an exit survey and the responses show a wide range of reason, such as relocation, not a good fit, and indoor mask requirements. Families have left commenting both that the school has COVID rules that are either too strict or too loose. Families who are not willing to return to in person due to medical reasons can do IS in grades K-5, but some middle school students did leave for that reason. The immunization laws also caused some families to leave. More than 50 students were affected and most of those families left because of that. Kindergarten enrollment is much lower than in the past. This is one area where enrollment is down and this is a statewide trend. First through sixth are pretty full, but the other grades are lower than normal. A former Journey teacher has started a Waldorf enrichment program and some students have left to attend there.

Gavin reported that while there will be fiscal impact this year, the administrative decision is to keep all programs and staffing intact for this year, and revisit for next year's budget. If necessary, this may mean using reserves this year to make up the gap.

There was a question about whether the hybrid and/or IS program will be expanded into middle school. Amanda Simmons reported that there has not been much of an interest in the past and that it is harder to implement the Waldorf program in this format for these grades. There are also administrative challenges and the curriculum is more difficult for families. There are also staffing challenges at that level. So at the current time, there are no plans to expand IS into grades 6-8.

There was a brief discussion about whether COVID vaccines for younger students will lead to some students returning and other students leaving.

Gavin reported on some of the potential solutions to help increase enrollment going forward. Advertising and social media and grassroots networking options are underway. They are planning to host monthly open house tours for the public when students are not on campus. If anyone is applying for a seat for 2021-22, the school is recommending the family consider taking a spot now if there is space. The online parent education offerings and speakers may be opened up to the public to create interest and inform about the program.

There was a discussion about how best to use alumni stories, which historically has been used to help with middle school retention.

There was a discussion about the perceptions in the community about the Journey program, especially for middle school grades.

None of the proposed outreach solutions have a significant cost. Word of mouth is one of the most effective strategies so everyone was encouraged to spread information and share social media.

**B. *School Re-opening\**: Update on school reopening**

Gavin Keller reported that school reopening has gone well. One challenge will be using the independent study offering for those in quarantine. Some families have been difficult to reach. The updated plan includes the parameters for when IS can be offered. There are otherwise not many changes now because so many elements of the plan were worked out last year and are working effectively.

There was a question about the resources for COVID testing. Families can order a test through OC Health Care agency for free, and Kaiser offers testing as well. There will be on campus testing offered for free as well. -

There was a motion to approve the updates to the School Re-opening plan which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.

**C. *Safe Return to In Person Instruction Plan\**: (Formerly known as COVID-19 Safety Plan) Review and approval of required plan.**

Gavin Keller reported on the plan and its updates. The school has begun to implement the state's 'vaccine or test' mandate for all staff. Gavin reported that over 90% of the employed staff and contracted staff are fully vaccinated.

City Health will provide on- campus testing weekly. Results come back within 24-48 hours. The first round will go out next week. One option is for staff to collect the test sample on Sunday and bring the test to campus Monday, which is then mailed and the results are back no later than Wednesday. Students going on field trips can use this method to provide tests prior to the events. The tests order can be adjusted weekly. The test must be PCR and is a nasal swab collection. If done at home the person must work with a nurse on video chat to monitor collection. Students would only be tested with parent consent. Staff and students can use their own tests and provide test results, if desired. Most of the changes in the plan are related to the weekly testing.

Gavin commented that it is possible that using the testing may be a way to bring back volunteers to campus in the future. This would require a change to the plan and there would need to be alignment with state and local health guidelines.

Larissa Chiara-Kite provided a public comment following the presentation, and asked the Board about the type of COVID tests that are allowed.

There was a motion to approve the Safe Return to In Person Instruction Plan/COVID Safety Plan, which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.

**D. COVID 19 Response:** *Discussion and any necessary Actions related to response to COVID 19 public health situation, including relevant updates and/or purchases.*

There were no updates needed at this time, so this item was tabled.

**E. School Handbook\*:** *Review and approval of updates to School Handbook and associated policies.*

Gavin Keller reviewed the changes and updates to the School Handbook. There is a general disclaimer added that some of the policies and procedures may not apply during COVID. He noted that the 'no show' policy has been updated and reminded the board that there is a legally required notice for the school to disenroll a student unilaterally. The attorneys recommend that the same process be used for expulsion as well as for non-disciplinary removals from the school, which involves the opportunity for a hearing.

There was a motion to approve the updates to the School Handbook which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.

**F. Extension of Charter Term\*:** *Resolution of Board to ratify extension of Journey School Charter for two additional years.*

Gavin Keller reported on the section of the recently passed legislation of AB 130 which extends the charter term by two years. CUSD sent an acknowledgement letter to be used to document the extension. He commented that several other agreements with CUSD have a similar term, so those will be addressed in the coming months.

There was a motion to approve the two year extension of the charter term, which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.

**G. Independent Study Policy\*:** *Review of updates to Independent Study Policy based on AB 167.*

	<p>Gavin Keller, Franci Sassin and Amanda Simmons reported on the changes made to the policy as a result of the passage of AB 167. The policy will undergo another legal review since these changes to the law were very recent.</p> <p>There was a motion to approve the Independent Study Policy updates, which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.</p>
8	<p><b>BOARD DEVELOPMENT and OVERSIGHT (Discussion/Action):</b></p> <p>A. <b>Board Retreat Planning*:</b> <i>Confirmation of dates for fall Board Retreat and review of draft agenda.</i></p> <p>After reviewing the board member schedules, October 28 was set for the retreat, with a 4:30 pm start time, then a 7 pm start for the regular board meeting, with a break for dinner for an hour. The second part would be held November 5 from 3 to 6 at an off campus location.</p> <p>The proposed agenda for the retreat was presented for board input. Board members can let Amy Capelle know ahead of the week of the meeting.</p> <p>There was a motion to approve the board retreat dates and times, which was seconded and approved unanimously with a roll call vote.</p> <p>B. <b>Council Nominating Committee:</b> <i>Review of upcoming vacancy and potential candidates and search activities</i></p> <p>There has been contact with one potential candidate who has fiscal background, who will be talking with school representatives, and possibly then will progress to the next step of the Nominating Committee. An update will be provided at the next board meeting. There was a discussion about continuing to look for candidates that have Waldorf background.</p>
9	<p><b>CLOSED SESSION:</b> <i>The meeting will now convene to closed session to discuss the matters described below:</i></p> <p>The board entered closed session at 9:05 pm. Gavin Keller and Franci Sassin were invited into closed session based on their work in the matter.</p> <p>1. <b>Pursuant to Government Code §54956.9 (1)(d): Potential Litigation: 1 case</b></p> <p><b>RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION:</b> <i>The meeting was reconvened to open session at: <u>  9:40  </u> p.m.</i></p> <p><b>PUBLIC REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION</b> <i>(includes the vote or abstention of every member present)</i></p> <p>There was no action taken during closed session.</p>



10 | **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 pm.

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