

# Truxton Academy Charter School

## Regular Board Meeting

**February 14, 2021**

Notice was provided on our website, [www.truxtonacademy.org](http://www.truxtonacademy.org) on Monday, February 7, 2021.

A quorum of 7 trustees out of 8 total number of trustees was present as follows:

**Members Present:** Stuart Young in person. Krysta Austen, Cindy Denkenberger, Sarah Stevens, Korinne L'Hommedieu, and Beth Klein joined remotely. Dave Amberg joined remotely at 7:11 pm.

**Members Absent:** Tom Brown

**Others present:** Patty Dawson attended in person. Sara Petit-McClure, Leaf Carmer, Heather Boyden, Kay Reakes, Liz Blackburn, Courtney Harrington, Betsy Soshinsky joined remotely.

President Stuart Young called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes for the Regular Meeting January 10, 2022 were presented. Having no objections, minutes were accepted as presented. Approved.

### **Community Comments**

Betsy Soshinsky commented that her children were still not back in school as she feels the arrangements made to accommodate them are still not appropriate. She also commented that she has not been able to set up assessment dates. She is trying to arrange transportation and did not agree to the dates given. She is concerned about bringing her children in during the school day where they may see friends at recess and feel excluded. She is disappointed that teacher/parent communication is not more flexible. There is no weather-proof box to transmit paperwork. She is confused and thought from the previous meeting that assessments dates were tentative, workable dates. Stuart responded that comments have been heard and we will defer to teacher/admin to continue communication and work out this situation.

### **School Report**

Heather Boyden shared her report on PE and Maker Space; see attached. Highlights have been celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school, i.e., snowshoeing a 100-yard dash and discussing how long 100 yards was based on the upcoming super bowl, comparing 100 seconds and 100 jumping jacks, a snowflake challenge in Makerspace, to name a few. The students have also worked on a special project with the charter school's professional partner, engineer, Levi Sutton. It has been a fun month of learning.

Sara shared Running Record, a report to show reading growth; report attached. Students read level books aloud and answer questions about it. Kindergarten does this in January, not September. This sets benchmarks to hit expected growth. Growth targets are good, but difficult to see in "COVID times" as there have not been expectations set or tested for "COVID times." The Rural Life Lab Committee is highlighting Black History Month and George Washington Carver. A new bulletin board will be available for them to share projects with the school.

### **Leadership Council**

Report attached. Sara reported that the council consists of the Head of School, 2 teachers, and 2 board members, to communicate between staff and leadership. A survey goes out to teachers every month prior to the meeting asking for areas of concern, areas of strength. Concerns shared this month were printer

and copier problems. The council would like administration to look again at the cost of an industrial machine. Staff meetings were also discussed; the purpose of the meetings and streamlining meeting format. There was also a request for a review of the employee handbook. This has been tasked to Personnel and Financial committees. Teacher responsibility associated with upcoming additions to the school such as a High Tunnel were discussed. Planning time continues to be an issue to be worked on. The council also discussed the budget for next year, showing different staffing options, based on the number of enrolled students. The Accountability Plan was discussed and the narrative bullet pointed from our Mission.

## **Board Committee Reports**

### *Finance Committee*

Treasurer's Report attached. Korinne reported cash position remains strong. Earnings show we are within our budget. Underspending due to open positions. Fourth grade teacher has been hired. Will spend more inline what was budgeted for. SUNY CSI had shared a review of the Governor's proposed budget and how it affects charter schools. Korinne is looking into dashboards recommended for more efficient tracking. This would include regular reporting of things like Enrollment and Cash on hand.

### *Finance Committee*

Report attached. At the monthly meeting they discussed a change in policy for paid time off. Discussed commitment to make sure bank accounts are reconciled each month and reviewed for audit. Are holding weekly workshop budget meetings for reports due in June. They will discuss lighting proposal further, to bring forth to the Board at the next regular meeting.

### *Personnel Committee T*

Report attached. Cindy reported that Chelsy Lembo was hired as a fulltime grade 4 teacher.

Motion by Cindy Denkenberger, seconded by Korinne L'Hommedieu, to approve hiring Chelsy Lembo to fill the full-time grade 4 classroom teacher position. None opposed. Motion carried.

Motion by Cindy Denkenberger, to amend the Employee Handbook, to amend the Truxton Academy Employee Handbook, effective at the start of the 2022-2023 school year, to offer ten paid time off days with the following required criteria:

- when absent more than three days in a row, proof of illness is required
- days cannot be used to extend vacations or be used as vacation days
- exceeding these ten days will result in payroll deduction
- Covid absences protocol will be followed with required testing
  - Exceptions may be made only with approval of Head of School, President of Board and Chief of Operations

No second. Discussion called. Krysta asked why teachers are asking for 2 extra days if they are already getting 5 days in Feb, 5 days April, plus summer. Cindy answered that the committee was following suggestion of what other districts are using to address personal vs. sick time. Days are used as needed, not labeled sick or personal. Krysta asked how this might affect the bottom line and time management, etc. Cindy responded that in the committee's discussion, it seemed like a more attractive option. Korinne reported that the Finance Committee discussed this issue as well. She suggested that the committees should discuss together to find a solution. All agreed. They will set a joint meeting.

### *Facilities Committee*

Report attached.

### *Curriculum Committee*

Reports attached. Cindy reported that the board's approval is needed to make changes to our original proposal, adding additional assessments for ELA and Math to show progress. Also, to remove Spanish assessment at K-2 grade level as there is nothing to compare to at this time. Also, it has become apparent that 80% of parental participation is unrealistic at this point, still a goal to work toward, but we should consider lowering that to 75%. Sara reported that these proposed changes came from meetings with SUNY CSI. Please review so the board can vote at the next meeting. Dave asked about Spanish assessment, why remove if it was part of our mission? Cindy answered that after meeting with SUNY committee discussion, it was determined to be more appropriate for later grades. Dave said he imagines it is unprecedented. Sara said CSI's suggestion was since there is not one available, we should take time to create one, develop or find one for accountability plan for renewal period. Sara also shared that she has created a form on google drive for data to be displayed and shared with SUNY. She encourages all members to review and add "Themes to tell our narrative." Dave commented that we must make sure we deliver on our promises, and make sure Sara and her team have what they need.

#### *Marketing Committee*

Report attached. Patty reported that Substitute Teacher Campaign on Facebook through FinalSite started today. Open House Event is set for March 12.

### **Special Committee Reports**

#### *Nutrition Committee*

Report attached. Krysta reported no action needed, discussed food items that work and don't work for kiddos, Ashley and Taylor will work toward menu changes together. Discussing how parents might have more options for celebrations. Looking for staff input.

#### *Professional Advisory Committee*

No report submitted.

#### *Transportation Committee*

No Report submitted.

#### *Educational Excellence Committee (Fundraising Committee)*

Report attached. Dave thanked Lizzie and Courtney for coordinating with them on grants. Organic Valley Grant, still no answer, Credit East Grant was submitted Jan 31, assistance for art education. The American Heart Foundation, teaching gardens grant response was no. Looking for feedback if/when we should try again, Small Rural Achievement grant \$20k was just applied for. High Tunnel \$5k submitted by Kathie Arnold and Lizzie submitted \$5k request to NYS Ag in Classroom for High Tunnel.

#### *Rural Life Lab Committee (formerly Agriculture Committee)*

Report attached. Courtney reported that they are working on monthly Ag Rural Life themes – February focus on black agriculturists, March will be literacy and Maple production. Dave suggested looking into Heiberg Forrest with ESF students – they are trying. They are also looking for folks to come on site to identify trees and discuss methods or production. There is an Ag in the Classroom contest for schools to make syrup or maple products. Teachers have started seeds in Grow Towers. School Garden progress – soil test – met with Jenny Hull re: USDA grant to include ag curriculum with Cornell Coop Ext collaboration. Due Feb 21.

With no objection to reports as submitted, reports are all approved.

### **Old Business**

Motion by Cindy Denkenberger, seconded by Dave Amberg, to approve \$30 per day/\$15 per half day additional stipend for Teaching Assistants when covering a classroom as a substitute teacher. All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

### **New Business**

Patty will be sharing committee info including minute reports for consistency and requirements for meetings and when they will be due, etc.

Krysta Austen had asked about sending a letter to the Governor's office and NYSDOH regarding mask mandate and leaving decision to school districts. It was discussed and decided to see if mask mandates are extended past 2/21. Sara stated that she is sure staff will be relieved to not have to enforce, but they do worry about increased absences for students. Dave stated that in the meantime, a change to our policy for disposable masks only, at this point paper vs. cloth does not matter, we could make that change now. Courtney spoke as a parent, let parents choose. Dave wondered if there might be blowback from some parents. Sara reported that there are some parents still concerned, but they have the choice for what their child uses and know that N95 will provide better protection.

Motion by Dave Amberg, seconded by Krysta Austen, to allow either mask while the mandate is still in place. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

### **School Events**

FEB 21-25	Mid-Winter Recess - No School
MAR 12	Open House
MAR 18	Special Person Day – learning a dance in PE for hopes it will be in person
MAR 24	Family Math Night – fund activities with SUNY Practicum Students
MAR 31	SUNY CSI Pre-visit documents due
APR 1	Transportation Requests Due to Resident Districts
APR 4	Application Lottery

### **Adjournment**

Motion by Korinne L'Hommedieu, seconded by Krysta Austen, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 pm. None opposed. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Patty Dawson, Recording Secretary