

Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
Board Retreat/Study Session
July 13, 2015
1616 West Adams Street, Suite 170
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Meeting began at 9:27 a.m.

Members Present-

Janna Day- President (Joined during Item F)
Kathy Senseman - Vice President
Diane Douglas - Superintendent
Peter Bezanson - Charter School Operator
Aracely Espinoza - Charter School Teacher
Royce Jenkins - Reservation Resident Member
Jake Logan - Business Member (left for the day during Item G(3))
Matthew Mason - Business Member
Greta Mayans - Public Member
Freddy Mendoza - Public Member

Members Absent-

Carol Crockett - Public Member

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Moment of Silence

C. Roll Call - Bianca Ulibarri called the roll and confirmed a quorum.

D. Call to the Public – Stacey Morley addressed the Board during the call to the public. The following individual(s) addressed the Board after H (1). Anita Mendoza, Mary Berg, Kris Johnson, Jody Johnson, Roger Hall, Amy Schlessman, Stacey Morley, and Tamara Becker.

E. Explanation of the purpose and format of the retreat – Whitney Chapa provided an introduction to the day stating that staff will provide an overview to the Board of the Academic Performance Framework, the Academic Dashboards, and the specific purpose and function of the Demonstration of Sufficient Progress process and the Performance Management Plan process as required by the Academic Intervention Schedule. She stated that the presentation included recommendations and revisions for the Board to consider as well as opportunities for pertinent public comments.

F. Presentation and discussion – Introduction: Board’s mission, strategic plan, organizational structure and funding. Whitney Chapa provided an overview of the Board’s current mission, strategic plan, staffing, budget, and the Board’s caseload.

1. Board’s current mission is to improve public education in Arizona by sponsoring charter schools that provide quality educational choices.
2. The Board’s strategic plan goals include a) approving quality applications and granting charters to qualified applicants, b) increasing quality of the Board’s portfolio of charter schools by monitoring academic performance and fiscal and contractual compliance, and c) promoting the Board’s mission in providing quality educational choices.
 - a. The Board discussed timeframes for review and revision of the strategic goals. After discussion of timeframes, the Board members would individually provide feedback to the Executive Director on the mission and strategic plan by close of business on Friday, July 17th.
3. The Board case load has increased drastically in the past ten years, thus the Board has requested additional resources. In the FY14, the Board received 2 Full Time Equivalent Positions and for the FY15, they received 3 more Full Time Equivalent Positions.

4. In the last two months, the Board has restructured its staff. Currently there are four staff positions to be filled: an Education Program Manager, two Education Program Specialists, and a Constituent Services Specialist. The search for qualified candidates is still ongoing, and interviews are being conducted.
5. The Board has 421 separate contracts with charter holders that collectively operate 543 schools. For the FY15 there were about 163,373 students enrolled in charter schools. In the past ten years, the enrollment in charter schools has almost doubled whereas the state enrollment has not grown and has even declined. In addition, the number of charter contracts monitored has increased significantly. A detailed breakdown of student enrollment and overall ratings was provided and discussed by the Board and staff. Board asked staff to determine a comparison of ratings from previous fiscal years. The comparison was completed by staff and presented as part of agenda item H (1)..

G. Presentation and discussion

1. **Arizona Charter Schools Association – Dr. Ildi Laczko-Kerr**

Dr. Laczko-Kerr presented a slide documenting what types of support the ACA provides to its member schools. She stated that the mission of ACA is to lead and provide support for charter schools. She indicated that most of the feedback the Association receives is in relation to the concerns with the framework, and as a result, ACA believes it is important to better understand what is really expected of schools and how to implement those expectations.

2. **Alternative Education Consortium – Dr. Amy Schlessman**

Dr. Schlessman and Consortium President Karen Callahan presented slides detailing the vision, mission, goals, composition, and historical milestones of the AEC. They stated that they have held strategic planning sessions as a group of leaders in Alternative Education.

Dr. Bezanson asked what percentage of alternative schools sponsored by the Board were members of the consortium. Dr. Schlessman stated that the consortium is comprised of leaders in Alternative Education representing programs, not just schools, and includes some schools serving specific special needs categories, such as schools for the deaf. Dr. Schlessman estimated that 75-80% of alternative charters are members of the consortium. Dr. Bezanson and Mr. Mendoza agreed that the consortium should regularly present to the board.

3. **A for Arizona – Emily Gullickson**

Ms. Gullickson presented slides documenting the composition, history, and mission of A for Arizona. She stated that the organization serves to support efforts to improve failing schools by partnering leaders of A-rated low income schools with those that are struggling to help with mentorship and support. She noted that 86 out of 749 low-income model schools are A-rated schools, and 40% of the organization is made of leaders from A-rated low-income charter schools. She suggested several ways to expand the best low-income schools in Arizona including a) fast track expansion applications of highly performing low-income A models, b) incentivize the best charters to expand into rural and tribal areas, c) hold biannual roundtables with A school leaders, d) invite low income A charter schools to present at ASBCS board meetings, e) familiarize yourself with A-rated low-income schools at www.aforaz.org and f) tour an A-rated low-income school. Ms. Senseman asked how expansion of successful schools would be incentivized. Additionally, Superintendent Douglas questioned who A for Arizona represents and who drives the policy of the organization. Ms. Gullickson stated that the organization is a project of the Arizona Chamber Foundation in partnership with the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She clarified that the policy is driven by school leaders. Board members stated that this organization is changing the conversation because it is good to focus on the positive, and agreed that the organization should bring a leader from a successful school to each meeting to present. Board members Mendoza, Day, Mayans Bezanson and Senseman all expressed support for allowing A for Arizona to have a standing agenda item at ASBCS meetings.

4. **Senator Carlyle Begay**

Senator Begay presented concerns about the Native American student population having the lowest graduation rate and highest dropout rate when compared to other populations. He expressed concerns about the declining number of Native American charter schools in Arizona. He provided the Board with information regarding the remaining schools outlining the fact that many of these schools do not meet the Board's standards. He stated that challenges include recruitment and retention of high quality teachers, a lack of high quality models, the enormity of school bus routes, and a difficult time

understanding the framework. He expressed concerns about the growth model, the cohort group of graduates, the n-count statistical variable, and the perception that ASBCS is trying to close all low performing charter schools in the state. Senator Begay stated that he would like to see the formation of a Native American Charter School Association, as well as additional support with curriculum and professional development for these schools. Ms. Mayans asked about whether Teach For America has made a commitment to working in Native American areas. Senator Begay stated that a conversation is beginning now and referenced a charter started in New Mexico by a former Teach for America teacher. Senator Begay made several recommendations to the Board. His recommendations included: a) reviewing the formula for the 50% growth model, b) reviewing the virtual twin model for its implications on students who grow one point less and as a result get no credit for their respective growth, and c) that accountability should be modified to represent the differences in challenges between urban and rural schools.

H. Presentation and discussion – The Academic Framework: Measuring Improved Pupil Achievement. Background, Implementation, Lessons Learned and Moving Forward –

1. Academic Performance Dashboards

- a. Steve Sarmento presented a comparison of the percentage of schools in each Overall Rating category for FY12, FY13, and FY14. The Board requested that additional longitudinal analysis of the performance of charters be completed for the purpose of evaluating the impact of the Board’s intervention schedule on the academic performance of schools.
- b. Mr. Sarmento then provided an overview of statutes related to the Academic Framework, and that board staff is tasked with grounding its actions in evidence of the charter holder’s performance in accordance with the performance framework adopted by the sponsor. Historical context provided that the dashboards as currently used began in October of 2012 and have seen four revisions. Modifications to dashboard calculations are made for small and alternative schools.

Mr. Sarmento provided an overview of the indicators and measures in the Board’s Academic Performance Framework. The presentation addressed each of the measures used for calculating a school’s overall rating.

2. AZ Merit: data availability and timeline for FY 2015 and FY 2016 dashboards

- a. The data availability schedule indicates that ADE will report on the dashboard measures in a rolling manner beginning with graduation rate in August of 2015 and ending with SGP, NCSC pass rates and PILOT determinations in February of 2016.
- b. FY15 dashboard data would be available to ASBCS by April 2016
- c. FY16 dashboard data would be available to ASBCS by July 2016

3. A-F Letter Grade Accountability System: moratorium and the impact to the Academic Performance Framework

- a. Delayed availability of data and overlap in FY data collection and reporting
- b. Improvement scores will not be available with AzMerit

4. Call to the Public Items (related to agenda items H and I)

- a. **Anita Mendoza-** Ms. Mendoza indicated that this process will allow for feedback and conversation and should include stakeholders, and that setting high standards should lead to quality opportunities. Based on her background in Special Education, she stated that she supports an alternative to norm-referenced data being used which make cutoff scores too exact.
- b. **Mary Berg-** Ms. Berg stated that there are too many questions and that many things have changed over time. She appreciates the continued investigation.
- c. **Kris Johnson-** Ms. Johnson provided an overview of her experience working with several charter operators across the state. She pointed out that changing the type of data collected year-over-year prevents charters from meeting the data standard, and this should be revisited. She also suggested that the Board consider allowing schools within the same charter serving different populations to submit separate PMP and DSP reports
- d. **Jody Johnson-** Ms. Johnson stated that grades should not be a measure of whether or not learning is taking place, and that an “A” student isn’t necessarily measured by the same standards for success and personal growth. She recommended not using ambiguous words (successful, failing,

accountability and growth) that don't mean the same thing to all stakeholders. She hopes that considerable attention would be given to the inaccuracy of test takers versus test users. In the matter of a criterion referenced test as the measure used by the Board, she noted that the Board's framework is using it to measure growth and it doesn't.

- e. **Roger Hall-** Mr. Hall indicated that there is a need to reevaluate the goals and the purpose of achieving them. He commented that the board, when he was its legal counsel, was charged with the task of opening choice schools and allowing the free market at its best, driven by parental choice, to determine the viability of schools. He expressed concern that alternative schools are being placed on consent agreements which call for a growth expectation of 10% each year. He also noted that popular schools with high enrollment are being closed, and the board should not shoe horn all schools into one accountability model.
 - f. **Amy Schlessman-** In regards to the PMP and DSP evaluation process, Dr. Schlessman requested that the board consider an external peer review process similar to the process used for the new charter application review. She noted a concern that ADE uses the best of the 4-7 year graduation rate for alternative schools while the board uses a 5 year model. She identified herself as a statistician and asked that the board considers requesting her input on items of concern such as a 70 versus 100 point scale, the standard error of the mean, and that in general the numbers used are not statistically sound.
 - g. **Stacey Morley-** Ms. Morley provided the context that ADE just recently began running the dashboards, as it was previously computed by the Charter Association until it was realized that they would need to start charging for this service, and it could become a conflict of interest. She made recommendations including AOI models receiving credit for students within a credit recovery program and creating a persistence threshold measure to track students at alternative schools who have been there for more than one year.
 - h. **Tamara Becker-** Ms. Becker agreed that the DSP and PMP process is beneficial, but it creates an issue for charter holders when they are penalized for changing the type of data collected year-over-year. She also noted that while it is a helpful process, it is time consuming and takes all those involved in the process away from instructional hours. She provided the suggestion that if schools meet the requirements for a system on a DSP that they should not have to provide a narrative for the system in the subsequent year.
 - i. **Board members discussed public comments and came to following consensus and/or directives**
 - i. The framework should depend solely on state accountability, but include a higher level of standards.
 - ii. For groups of special population schools (high homeless population, rural, Native American) the framework should allow for other factors to supplement a measure of success without removing academic accountability as the forefront.
- I. Presentation and discussion – the Academic Intervention Schedule:** Johanna Medina presented an overview on the Academic Intervention Schedule, including the purpose, history, and how a charter holder moves through the schedule. Johanna presented recommended changes to the intervention schedule based on prior-year required information.
- 1. **Performance Management Plans: Review of the FY 2015 PMPs, lessons learned and moving forward.** – Johanna Medina presented an overview of the PMP process, graphs representing the evaluations of the PMPs for FY15, and recommended changes to the PMP process moving forward based on staff and stakeholder input.
 - 2. **Demonstrations of Sufficient Progress: Review of the FY 2015 DSPs, lessons learned and moving forward** - Johanna Medina presented an overview of the DSP process, graphs representing the evaluations of the DSPs for FY15, and recommended changes to the DSP process moving forward based on staff and stakeholder input.
 - 3. Board members expressed concern over the amount of “Does Not Meet” evaluations, and President Day directed staff to present data to the board at the August 2015 meeting regarding academic performance for the last three years for all schools involved in the DSP and PMP process.
 - 4. Board staff discussed the desire for stakeholder input into the revisions of the DSP/PMP process. President Day directed Board staff to hold working groups with stakeholders regarding the DSP and PMP

process, and attempt to get revisions ready for presentation to the board at the August 2015 meeting. President Day also directed Board staff to set up a subcommittee to review the Academic Performance Framework.

J. Discussion – Board packets

1. Board members discussed Board packets and decided the following:

- a. Meeting agendas should be posted as soon as possible
- b. Staff reports, for the bulk of the agenda as possible, should be sent 10 days previous to a Monday meeting to allow two weekends of review time.
- c. Last minute amendment and notification additions should be allowed, using staff discretion, as needed
 - i. However, maximize the amount of amendments and notifications that can go through the executive director instead of to the Board.
- d. Board packets are to be made available as hard copies for Board members upon request
- e. A single PDF document containing all staff reports for the month's agenda without supplemental materials will be provided to the Board.

K. Adjournment- Meeting ended at 3:18 p.m.

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