Governing Body Bennett Academy

Strength and Stability of the Governing Body

Twenty-First Century Charter Schools, Inc. is a 501(C) 3 non-profit corporation. Twenty-First Century Charter Schools, Inc. is the charter holder. It is governed by a four to six member Board of Directors elected by a majority vote of the members of the Board to serve three-year renewable terms. This single board serves as both the Corporate and School board. One of its strengths is that there is a core of members who have served continuously since the school's inception so school history is known and school climate maintained.

The Board is responsible for those functions required by Arizona law, including adopting and directing school policies and procedures, assuring that policies and procedures are implemented and maintaining compliance with its Charter Contract, applicable State and Federal laws and the organization's accounting requirements. The Board will designate one or more members as liaison/s to the school's sponsor. Currently, the charter holders fill that role.

Current Members

Member	**Expertise**	**Representation**
Dr. Nancy Bennett Alternating with Mr. Fred Bennett	The visionary of BA: leadership, curriculum development, special education Finance, facility management, and administrative experience	21st C co-founders
Mr. Jim Hyte	Education, marketing, and public relations, current board president	Teacher
Nancy Dillon	Classroom experience	Education
Jak Keyser	Community organization and civic engagement	Community

Dr. Nancy Bennett has 34 years of education experience. She worked in districts as a special education teacher prior to working as a teacher and program developer in adolescent behavior health facilities. She brought a treatment center school through the North Central Association process. She has been inducted into the ASU Department of Education Hall of Fame. A lifelong learner, her B.A. and M.Ed. degrees are from Arizona State University. Her Doctorate is from Capella University. She is the cofounder and visionary leader of Bennett Academy, and has been the director of the school since its inception and served as principal for several years.

Fred Bennett is a retired Air Force officer. He holds a B.A. in psychology and an M.S. in Biology. His Air Force experience included R.O.T.C. training and missile defense systems operations. His final assignment was as Squadron Commander at Luke Air Force Base. In the early years of Bennett Academy, Mr. Bennett served as teacher and administrator. He is now Principal and science teacher at Venture Academy. He oversees facility management at both schools.

Jim Hyte has had 35 years of experience in teaching and dealing with parents and students. His background in working with people of different social and ability levels, along with his experience of working psychiatrics at Ohio State University Hospital give him an edge in dealing with problems in communication between families and the school. His student theater program at Bennett Academy has won a Zonie Award and is acclaimed by the community.

Mr. Keyser retired from a career in graphic communications, with experience in sales, management and production in the printing industry. He is a founder and active board member of several non-profit organizations: Canyon Corridor Community Coalition (Vice President) and the Justice Department-funded Canyon Corridor Weed and Seed.

Mr. Keyser is Chair of the City of Phoenix Alhambra Village Planning Committee, Vice Chair of City of Phoenix West Phoenix Revitalization Community Advisory Board, a member of the City of Phoenix Census Complete Count Subcommittee on Schools and Community, a member of the LifeBridge Community Alliance, and a member of the International Rescue Committee Fostering Agricultural Refugee Micro-enterprise Advisory Board (F.A.R.M.).

As a Chair of a Village Planning Committee, Mr. Keyser is working with City staff on the update of the City of Phoenix 10 year General Plan. He is currently conducting the "Family Movie Nights in the Park" program with the Canyon Corridor Community Coalition, and watching progress of construction of a multi-use trail, a 5 year project he founded to transform a crime and blight-ridden irrigation ditch into a landscaped recreational and multi-use trail.

Nancy Dillon is a retired school teacher. She is a member of Heifer International helping small rural communities expand economic opportunities. In that capacity she is widely traveled. She brings the board an international perspective.

RECRUITING, SELECTION AND BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Any member of the public is eligible to submit an application for board service. However, more frequently, current Board members seek and invite prospective board members. Prospective board members are encouraged to attend board meetings prior to applying for service. They are informed about the school’s history, mission, philosophy, and curriculum and introduced to other board members and school administrators.

Current members of the Board of Directors review the application. At that point, the Board may decide to invite the prospective member to interview with the Board. If the prospective member is placed on the Board agenda, the board may vote in open meeting to invite the new member onto the Board.

Reference materials such as an Employee Manual and a Board Member Book containing: the charter with amendments; corporate documents including bylaws; open meeting laws; financial information; an organizational chart; job descriptions; the school calendar; the student/parent handbook; and important telephone numbers are available to all Board members.

Additional information available to board members: a synopsis of the curriculum at every grade level; AIMS results; the school calendar of events; the conflict of interest policy; assistance in interpreting financial reports; signs and symptoms of fraud; information regarding the fiduciary duty to public funds; a staff directory; meeting procedures; and the names and numbers of professionals who work with the school such as auditors, attorneys, and insurance representatives.

Board members serve three year terms, which are renewable with the approval of the Board by a majority vote of the board. Periodic board development opportunities are available to board members, including financial seminars and board training through the Arizona Charter Schools Association.

BOARD OPERATIONS

The Bennett Academy Board of Directors is responsible to the school's sponsor, Arizona State Board of Education, which has turned its oversight authority over to the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools. The charter makes it clear that the Board must supply a free public K-8 education and comply with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. In doing so, the Board approves policy, approves educational programs and textbook adoption, sets salaries and compensation and adopts a yearly budget. It supervises the C.E.O. and C.F.O. The Board is also the final step in the organization's due process for employees, students and their families, and other stakeholders.

The advice of the public (primarily client parents and guardians) and employees is given careful consideration before action is taken on any item. The Board's first concerns are for the educational program as it affects students, the charter, and compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations. Final decisions may depart from the advice of the public when, in the judgment of the Board, such advice is not consistent with the charter, school's focus and goals, or within reach of available financial resources.

A simple majority of the directors constitutes a quorum. When a quorum is present at a meeting, an affirmative vote of a majority of the directors present at the meeting constitutes an act of the Board. Each director is entitled to one vote.

Regular meetings of the Governing Board are scheduled to be held bi-monthly. However changes are made to avoid holidays and when a quorum is unavailable. Special meetings are called as needed, usually to meet compliance with applicable regulations or to facilitate efficient business operations. The board may occasionally adjourn into Executive Session, which is a private meeting closed to the public, and only allowed for one of seven purposes as prescribed by law. All meetings except Executive Sessions are open to the public, and everyone is encouraged to attend. Public notice is given of all meetings of the Board. The Board closely adheres to Arizona Open Meeting laws.

Monitoring Academic Progress

Of special concern to the Board is the academic progress of Bennett Academy students. AIMS scores are reviewed in light of the academic goals proposed annually by the Principal. The CEO reports on the progress of special education students. Academic projects and extra curricular activities are reviewed for their contribution to student academic and personal development.

Strength and Stability of the Charter Holder

Twenty-First Century Charter Schools, Inc. is an Arizona non-profit 501 (C) 3 corporation in good standing. The founding and ongoing operators are Mr. Fred and Dr. Nancy Bennett. The corporation operates two charter schools. The boards, of the corporation and both schools, work together to share resources because small schools lack the opportunity for economies of size. The corporate board is very stable having had few changes in membership over the past 15 years.

The purpose of 21st Century Charter Schools, Inc. is to offer every student the chance to be the best they can be for themselves and for the communities in which they live. Guiding principles are: academic excellence; balance of learning and fun; community service; safety, cleanliness and orderliness; and student empowerment, all provided in a safe, nurturing environment that fosters respect for self and others.

The most pronounced strength is the strong partnership of the charter holders (the Bennetts) with the Bennett Academy principal and the teachers. A major competitive strength is the academic and parent rating on Greatschools.com. The CEO and CFO, co-founders, together bring the strength of a Ph.D. in educational leadership; a B.S. in biology with a minor in business; experience in developing two charters schools; and 15 years of charter school operations.

Bennett Academy provides a three-pronged educational service to any K-8 child whose family chooses our school: basic skills, a content rich curriculum, and opportunities to become involved in activities that might be out of their reach in a large school.

- Every student, regardless of individual circumstances, receives a challenging course of study in the four basic areas: Literature/Grammar/Writing, Science, Math and Social Studies.

- Students are taught—at each grade level—the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, preparing them for easy acquisition of challenging content and delivery.

- Students in a small, nurturing environment encounter opportunities to become the best that they can be.

The education children receive at Bennett Academy is characterized by these expectations and activities:

- Every graduate completes a 3,500 word, illustrated and researched 50-page book about a topic of their choice.

- Every able-bodied student will participate in physical development activities.

- Students have an opportunity for community service.

- Every student receives sufficient assistance to complete the curricula. Only insufficient work and effort by the student can prevent successful matriculation.

- The School provides instruction in resource conservation, foreign languages and/or American Sign, theater, and a variety of life skills.

- Sufficient academic effort in 21st C operated schools will position students to move at least one category higher on State standard examinations, if the appropriate interventions and instructional activities are used by the teaching staff.

- Length of enrollment in 21st C schools correlates to both likelihood to increase scores on the state standardized tests and to initiate post high school education and succeed in that endeavor.