

# La Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School

Board Meeting  
Latin American Community Center  
September 3, 2014

Attending: Veronica Vasko, Gary Ferguson, Maria Alonso, Maria Matos, Bill Hutchinson, Brian Fahey, Shawn Stevens, Alexis Simms, Nora Gonzalez, Melissa Browne, Jesús Urdiales, Kathy Laskowski, Teresa Gerchman (IS), Deborah Doordan (IS)

Caridad Alonso attended as a member of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 pm.

## I **Review and Approval of Agenda**

i. Motion to approve was made and seconded. Agenda was approved.

## II **Approval of August Minutes**

i. Motion was made to approve and was seconded.

## III **Public Comment**

i. Ms. Caridad Alonso reported that many parents are frustrated about the transportation issues. She believes that we will lose many students if we can not solve the transportation issues.

ii. Ms. Alonso noted that we need a better developed disciplinary system.

iii. Ms. Alonso noted that there is insufficient IT support right now, making it difficult to work efficiently.

## IV **Action Items**

i. Board Policy Manual-There was a brief discussion of the manual, highlighting some changes that need to be made.

ii. The preferential treatment clause was amended when we adopted the draft at a previous Board meeting. It is necessary to have that change reflected in the current policy manual.

iii. The five mile radius preference also needs to be removed.

iv. The building agreement with the CEB needs to be added to the policy manual.

v. Motion was made to approve the policy manual, with the above corrections. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

## V **Executive Director Report**

### i. Personnel

- a. A teacher resigned in the first week. There is a full-time paraprofessional who has been filling in in that classroom. She may be taking on the classroom on a full-time basis.
- b. Having one full-time teacher in the classroom has proved to be challenging. The school has hired some part-time personnel to come in to support the teachers, which has been very successful.
- c. The school has acquired the services of a mental health specialist, who is helping with some of the students who are presenting mental health challenges.
- d. We are currently paying for outside support, which we will not be able to do for the long term.
- e. Asking for volunteers and recruiting from college students might be possible. Volunteers would help us address our challenges with student transitions, and other daily tasks in the building.
- f. Shawn will look into finding some solutions through Wilmington University.
- g. Alexis will post the position at local colleges.

### ii. Facility

- a. The facility was not very well designed for younger children. Getting children around the building is very challenging.
- b. Transitions are taking a very long time. Some changes have been made, such as having breakfast on the fourth floor. This has helped both teachers and students. Also, all specials other than PE have been moved to the fourth floor, which eliminates another transition.
- c. The bathrooms are not outfitted for small children. The sinks and soap dispensers are too high. Step-ups have been employed, but they are not adequate. We will ask for physical modifications to the building in the near future, particularly in regard to the bathrooms.
- d. Water fountains are too high, resulting in water puddles on the floor.

### iii. Instructional Update

- a. Kids appear to be happy at school, are grasping words in their second language, teachers are invested in the philosophy and model. Teachers are being challenged by the Responsive Classroom model because it differs from many traditional models that are practiced in other schools, but the teachers are doing very well with the implementation of the model.

### iv. Marketing and Student Enrollment

- a. Current enrollment is 264, 175 in K and 89 in First Grade. Chartered enrollment is 300. The school is calling families on the waiting list in order to enroll more students.
- b. The school will send enrollment numbers to DOE today.
- c. We began the year at 302 students.

d. Kids appear to be happy at school, are grasping words in their second language, teachers are invested in the philosophy and model. Teachers are being challenged by the Responsive Classroom model because it differs from many traditional models that are practiced in other schools, but the teachers are doing very well.

v. Transportation

a. The school is facing significant transportation issues. Melissa has requested

a

meeting with the bus contractor, First Student.

b. Melissa will address the routes and timing of buses with the Bus Company.

c. There appear to be no other bus companies who are willing to take on the contract.

d. Kuumba has adjusted their bus routes, but La Academia students are still arriving late to school.

e. The transportation issues are affecting most of our students. Many families have figured out alternative means of getting their children to school.

f. We will investigate leasing school buses to see what our options are in that regard.

g. There is some thought to having the charter schools work together to get better service from First Student.

h. Melissa will approach Kuumba Academy about possibly sharing a bus with the La Academia students on some routes. If we share a bus with older children we need to have a bus aide on the buses.

i. It is important to let parents know the different ways that we are trying to solve our transportation issues.

j. Letters have been going home to parents to address dismissal and bus procedures. Contact with parents has been almost daily.

k. Alexis suggested that we have a gathering for parents to explain our challenges and ask for their utmost cooperation in adhering to their assigned stops and routes. Our back to school night is September 11, so this might be a good opportunity to address the transportation issues with parents.

vi. Safety

a. There are new procedures that the school is following for addressing dismissal.

Parents are picking up on the fourth floor and teachers are better equipped to handle the challenges of dismissal. New procedures have also been put in place

for parents regarding changes to their established dismissal plan.

b. Parents have responded well to the establishment of new parameters established by the school.

c. The school is no longer using Stairwell #7 because it was not appropriate for our population. This has worked well.

VI **Nominating Committee**

- i. There are no new nominees for the Board
- ii. The annual meeting is next month and we will vote on terms at that time.
- iii. The school needs to nominate a teacher to serve on the Board.

VII **Finance Committee**

- i. Committee was scheduled to meet last week, but it had to be cancelled. That meeting is back on schedule, to be held soon.
- ii. The Committee will bring a revised budget to the next board meeting.
- iii. Right now our budget is based on a lower enrollment than we opened the year with. We will need to base our revenue assumptions based on new enrollment numbers.
- iv. The Board will have to make recommendations to the Budget and Finance Committee if we have a lower enrollment in our September count.
- v. We need to find volunteers for a Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee. Our Finance Committee could function as a CBOC for the time being.
- vi. Nora will work with Maria Matos to identify some personnel at the LACC who can help with the work at the school.

VIII **CMO Report**

- i. Teresa presented a report on the overall functioning of the CMO during the past month.
- ii. The CMO is providing daily reports to the Board concerning their work at the school.
- iii. The CMO Corrective Action Plan will be sent to Maria Matos on September 4th.

IX **New Business**

- i. Bill supplied the Board with information concerning FOIA regulations.
- ii. It is important for us to post our meetings seven days in advance and to post notices publicly.
- iii. We can hold emergency meetings, which require only twenty four hours notice, in very specific circumstances.
- iv. We need to post our meeting schedule on our website.
- v. We may meet at the school in the future. Jesús will check to see if the CEB will be available to us for our meetings. We may also change the time of the meetings to 6 pm.
- vi. We also need to make sure that we post our intention to hold an executive session at board meetings.

X **Old Business**

- i. Veronica asked questions about our facebook page. We need to make sure that we are responding to parents on our social media sites.

XI **Announcements and Additional Items for Discussion**

- i. The next board meeting will be on October 1, 2014.

The Board moved to executive session at 8:21 pm.