



Board of Directors Meeting

Time: October 23, 2021 @ 9:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) at Gates School

Join on Zoom: Meeting ID: 810 7782 7678 Passcode: 573216

Roll Call by Secretary

Confirm attendance of Board & Admin:

Board Attendees: Eric Bentson, Ashley Goverman, Rob Harrahill, Alison Hynd, George Hynd, Stephanie Sams, Wayne Wright, Trey Zimmerman

Administration Attendees: Ashley Brooks and Summer Brown

Gates School Mission Statement: To provide an exceptional, evidence-based, multi-sensory education for students with dyslexia to open the gates to their academic potential in an environment that empowers students to develop a positive and socially conscious self-image.

Minutes

1. Call to Order at 9:36am by Stephanie Sams
2. Adoption of Minutes from September 25, 2021 Meeting; motioned by George Hynd; second by Trey Zimmerman
3. Adoption of Minutes from October 1, 2021 Emergency Meeting: motioned by Alison Hynd; second by George Hynd
4. Adoption of Agenda for October 23, 2021 Meeting; motioned by Alison Hynd; second by Rob Harrahill
5. Public Comments (2 minutes per speaker; please state your name and address)

a. Tes Boyette - A parent of a 4th grader as well as a sub at Gates. "There is a great thing happening here. Don't be discouraged." She was very encouraging and an appreciative parent.

b. Laura Standridge - A parent of a 2nd grader at Gates. Stated she was on the Zoom call that discussed the transfer of authorizers. She is concerned about transferring to a brand-new authorizer for the state from one that has experience. She thinks Gates would benefit from staying with the current authorizer. She feels that the Board is focusing and using resources to move authorizers rather than focusing efforts elsewhere. "Is Erskine not an invaluable asset to hold us accountable for our special education needs?" She questioned if Limestone has submitted their local policies and procedures to the SCDE, as well as how they will stay compliant with the ADA and IDEA.

6. Executive Director Report

a. Received our ESSER funding- \$203k from COVID federal funding. Eric and Ashley B. are meeting with our accountant on Monday to talk about the budget. Budget will be submitted on 11/5.

b. SRO issue - Submitted an application to get a security officer at school. One caveat was needing a memo from North Charleston PD for need. They can't provide an officer. General Wright will work on an alternative strategy. General Wright stated in talking with Major Perry from North Charleston PD, they are very short staffed. Money that flows from the state is a grant. That grant money from the state won't cover everything that's needed. Working on a possibility of having a contract with an off-duty police officer. They mentioned we do have a substation less than a ¼ mile (behind Paul Mitchell building) and wanted to ensure we let the station know the layout of the building, cameras, etc. Gen. Wright has invited both Major Perry and her replacement to visit school. Fire Department is included in those plans. A lengthy discussion with fire dept before fire drill has occurred and want to partner with them for fire safety program.

c. Enrollment: 105 students currently enrolled. 7-8 applications pending, but due to the enrollment freeze by Erskine, those students are waiting. Gates continues to receive more and more calls of interest. It's likely once the freeze is lifted, Gates will reach the 125 capacity.

d. COVID: 3 staff members positive; 4 students positive since beginning of year.

e. 45TH DAY OF SCHOOL: October 20, 2021. Rachel Jones and Janice Nichols got PowerSchool data cleaned up under hard circumstances with Erskine shutting down PowerSchool access.

f. Upcoming: Aflac is coming in on Monday to meet with staff on supplemental insurance policies. Rep from 501(3)b retirement will be meeting with staff. No matching available.

g. Thank you, Alison & George,: Provided Gates Griffin logo. After students voted for a Griffin as our mascot, Alison reached out to a Wando teacher for graphic design. Kids

will have a contest to name our Gates Griffin. The final decision of design will be added to the agenda to vote on by the Board at next scheduled meeting.

7. Principal Report:

- a. Just completed CoGAT IOWA testing for 2nd graders. Makeups will be complete next week.
- b. Report cards will go out next week.
- c. Progress Reports for students with IEPs have been emailed out.
- d. Parent/teacher conferences start next week. Must have a conference before a report card is issued.
- e. A teaching assistant has been hired. Very helpful, great personality, experience with afterschool programs. Duties will be to help as needed, floating around. Provide coverage for Gates University.

8. Board Chair Report:

- a. At the beginning of October, June Thomas resigned effective immediately. Potential candidate met with Stephanie. Extensive education background and grandmother of child at Gates. Experience at Orange Grove. Great feedback from another parent from Orange Grove regarding the candidate. Will meet with her next meeting if she is still interested. If anyone else comes up between now and then, we can include them as well in the discussion.

10. Marketing Update:

- a. Tuesday/Thursday Dyslexia Awareness Month tips continuing.
- b. Would like to start getting staff and parent input on website to make it transition a current school vs. pre-opening
- c. 2022/23 Open Enrollment - will be able to upload documents through the website at the same time as application. Look into software for paying fees through website. Trey mentioned checking into QuickBooks.

11. Fundraising Update:

- a. Alison will follow up with Trey about QuickBooks. Alison will follow up with Rob on website for donations.
- b. Held Zoom meeting and it was well attended by interested committee members. Enthusiasm about ways to help the school. 2 focuses: Development & Advancement; Fundraising/Community Building
- i. Ideas include Fun Run for kids in Feb and Golf tournament for parents in April. We need an infrastructure at the school to make fundraising successful including room parents. We

don't have a Family Association yet. Another meeting once infrastructure is a little better will be set up and donations set up through the website. Donations for specific items i.e. picnic tables. Need to build community among parents/guardians.

ii. Discussion about opening the school on a Saturday to see the school. Tours/questions, etc.

iii. Cici's Pizza (Ashley Brooks shared) They are eager to partner with us for spirit night (20% of proceeds 3pm - 10pm.) They want to offer a discount/pricing structure for large orders for events. 2nd part of the year consideration: every Tuesday for example, pizza day for a fee.

12. Facility Update:

a. Pieces for playground door fully equipped with safety monitoring.

b. Spinning net playground piece is broken but under warranty. Working on getting fixed, but the pieces come from Denmark. It is not a hazard, but currently does not spin as intended.

c. Bathrooms - Urinal issue - due to the building sitting with no one in it prior to Gates, there are pieces in plumbing that dried out, cracked, and failed.

d. Brand new bathroom sink fell off the wall this week. No injuries as no one was around at the time. Contacted Wayne Sheridan. The plumber fixed the sink the following day and reinforced all of the other sinks to avoid a similar situation.

e. Service Master buffed the tile floors. Thank you to all the parents that came in and helped move furniture in and out.

f. Admin sink faucet needs to be replaced. Faulty faucet.

g. Water fountains: Will talk to construction supervisor about how to make water "higher" to fill water bottles.

9. Authorizer Discussion/Corrective Action Plan:

Dr. Brown gave the Correction Action Update:

Ms. Flake, Ms. Tobin, and Dr. Brown are all SPED certified. Gates has posted the position for a SPED certified teacher on Indeed. Have had some applications, but no one fully SPED qualified. SPED team is going through all the IEPs and providing Erskine with the requested information.

George Hynd recommended reaching out to various colleges if there is trouble filling the position.

Home Language Surveys: 47 already acquired. Process is ongoing and continuing. Working diligently to collect the remaining.

Terms of Enrollment & policy procedures: Minor clarifications will be submitted to Erskine once complete.

Trey Zimmerman commented that Erskine would go on camera with Live 5 News, but won't communicate with us, as proven by cancelling their attendance to this board meeting and stating in an email that they would no longer communicate via email regarding the issues at hand. (**Erskine did clarify their statement regarding communicating via email when tensions were high.**) They seem to have no spirit in actually trying to fix the problem and partner with us when they immediately freeze enrollment.

Alison Hynd makes a motion to invite Erskine again to an emergency board meeting held before the November 1st deadline to meet the Corrective Action Plan. Seconded by George Hynd. Meeting can be held via Zoom given the short notice.

Erskine has made one visit to Gates with 3 representatives and the purpose of this meeting was for MTSS.

General Wright mentioned Erskine must address their concept of AEC. He asked questions during charter board training with the SCDE. Got non-answers on any questions about AEC. Erskine is painting us with a broad brush even though our charter is specific.

Eric Bentson - "Our family is here because my daughter failed in the pull-out method." She is thriving inside the classroom because of it being an AEC and designated as a dyslexia school. "It's a great model for our dyslexic children."

Gates attorney, Scott Winburn, stated student records must be transferred if we do transfer to Limestone. Erskine cannot withhold them. AEC designation is a novel issue and will continue to be regarding enrollment.

Gates was issued their non-compliance letter on October 1, 2021. On October 6, 2021, Erskine asked to be added to the agenda for the board meeting being held today. Three days ago, they informed Gates they would not be attending, but provided no explanation as to why they refused to attend the meeting.

Trey Zimmerman asked a question to Mr. Winburn. "Have you ever seen an authorizer freeze enrollment in a new school?" Mr. Winburn has never seen it happen and it's unprecedented, especially with freezing PowerSchool stating it was a dramatic step for Erskine. PowerSchool is how federal and state dollars are allocated. Gates went for 24 hours without access to *any* PowerSchool functions, including attendance.

Dealing with the issues of non-compliance are an act of good faith from Gates, as there has been no concession of wrongdoing. Gates families are aware of the school's model and the methods being used for dyslexic learners.

Trey Zimmerman mentioned that Gates has only had one communication with the Erskine Superintendent, Cameron Runyon. In this communication, dated 10/11/21, Mr. Runyon

acknowledged receipt of an email sent by Gates which included a board resolution to transfer to Limestone as well as an initial response to the Letter of Non-Compliance.

George Hynd commented that the Gates Board, administration, and staff have the best interest of our students in mind with every decision. "To whom do we appeal if we aren't getting support from Erskine?" Mr. Winburn stated the first steps would be the Erskine board, followed by the Erskine Institute of Higher Education. Mr. Hynd mentioned we are a young organization, only 46 days into the school year. "We want this school to be successful."

Stephanie Sams commented that Erskine was asked by Gates if she could serve as LEA during IEP meetings. It is documented that Erskine responded that the LEA must be someone with knowledge of the school's curriculum and knowledge of the school's budget, both of which Ms. Sams has. Ms. Sams completed the training required to be an LEA. She sat in on 2 meetings at the LEA and Erskine has now stated that was not allowed, even though documentation shows they granted her that ability. Ms. Sams was only sitting in as LEA on IEP meetings when the school needed a back-up person.

With families changing to our brand-new school, Erskine has attempted to frame the first 30 days as not following previous IEPs from students' past schools. There is no reasonable expectation from the Department of Education that IEPs be done over summer, especially when families opted for the Gates model upon enrollment.

Freezing enrollment within the first 45 days is unprecedented. Health & safety would be the only reason that could be deemed reasonable.

While the official notice from Gates to Erskine with our transfer request was sent on October 11, 2021, the Board voted to transfer on September 25, 2021. An employee from Erskine spoke with a Gates parent between October 13-14 and stated Gates had made the decision to transfer before Limestone's Superintendent was announced. The Superintendent was actually announced on September 8, 2021. It appears this employee from Erskine also told the parent that Gates is running from accountability, that Gates cannot transfer to Limestone and a host of other disparaging comments. The Erskine employee also encouraged the parent to "tell other families what is really going on." The parent withdrew her child and notified the media. In email correspondence with Gates on 10/20/21, Erskine's Director, Mr. Rudrapati, stated that Erskine has been reviewing "a lot of phone calls and emails from your parents." When Gates asked for more information about these emails and phone calls, Mr. Rudrapati ultimately refused to provide details and declared Erskine would no longer communicate with Gates via email. The generalized complaints Erskine referenced in their communication with Gates prompted Gates to make a formal (FOIA) request for those communications on 10/22/21.

13. Adjourned at 11:05am with no objections. Motion George Hynd; Eric Bentson 2nd.

Minutes submitted by Ashley Goverman