

**STEM Magnet Academy  
Local School Council  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

February 3, 2015

**I. Call to order**

Mrs. Langston called to order the regular meeting of the Local School Council for the STEM Magnet Academy at 5:45pm (delayed start due to inclement weather) on February 3, 2015, at the STEM Magnet Academy gymnasium.

**II. Roll call/Establish Quorum**

Mrs. Langston conducted a roll call. The following persons were present:

Jeremiah Abiade (not present)  
Maria Amoruso (arrived at 6:00pm)  
Deborah Bonner (not present)  
Deana Caccavale  
Deidra Harper (arrived at 5:50pm)  
Sadika Langston  
Jeff McCarter  
William O'Neill (left prior to roll call)  
Gretchen Brinza  
Lindsay McGrane  
Zakiya Libby-Williams  
Maria McManus

Quorum was established.

**III. Review and Approval of Agenda**

Mrs. Brinza moved to approve the agenda. Mrs. McGrane seconded the motion.

Vote: 7 in favor

**IV. Review and Approval of January 14, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

Mrs. McGrane presented LSC members with copies of minutes from the January 14, 2015 meeting. Mrs. Langston requested that the minutes reflect members who were absent rather than omitting their names. Ms. McManus moved that the minutes be approved with the stated changes. Mrs. Caccavale seconded the motion.

Vote: 8 in favor.

**V. Chairperson’s Report**

- Ski Trip – Mrs. Langston thanked Mrs. Marolda, Mrs. Harper, and Mrs. Amoruso for planning the STEM family ski trip this year and stated that a good time was had by all.
- Weebly Website – Mrs. Langston shared that the STEM LSC Weebly website is updated and ready to go. Ms. McManus stated that she would send out the link in her next update to parents.
- PARCC Test update – Mrs. Langston shared that CPS elected to not take part in the PARCC test, but rather to pilot the program to 10% of CPS schools. Mr. McCarter mentioned an email that LSC members received from a parent, Mrs. Delgado, explaining the rollout of the PARCC as a pilot program. Mr. McCarter asked what Ms. McManus thought about being part of the pilot group and whether any action should be taken by the LSC in regards to PARCC. Ms. McManus stated that she thought that it may be advantageous to see the test as a pilot school and that her perspective on being a PARCC pilot school may be different as a building administrator. Ms. McManus shared some of the concerns with the PARCC, including navigation and technical issues. Ms. McManus shared that she could send a link to a sample test out to parents.

**VI. Principal’s Report**

- Mrs. Taylor – Mrs. Taylor spoke with the LSC and parents about being the recipient of an email that she felt was damaging to her professional credibility. Mrs. Taylor shared that colleagues had forwarded an email to her in which a parent had reached out to other parents asking questions about Mrs. Taylor’s classroom. Mrs. Taylor stated that she is a teacher who has always been data-driven and seeks to move students academically. She was concerned that an issue was broached via email with a group of parents, but that she had not been given the chance to have a conversation about these issues prior to an email being sent to other parents. She felt that this type of email is damaging to her reputation as a professional.
- 5 Essentials data – Ms. McManus stated that she would like to see the STEM LSC members take the lead on building and improving relationships between parents and staff members. Mrs. Amoruso asked for specific data to support this suggestion. Ms. McManus shared data from 5 Essentials survey<sup>1</sup>. Mrs. Taylor shared that despite having had a negative example of a parent interaction, she could also share a very

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<sup>1</sup> 5 Essentials survey data:

Teachers feel that parents support the teacher’s teaching efforts:

-- 7% responded None; 7% responded Some; 37% responded About Half

Teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children:

-- 23% responded Disagree

Teachers feel good about parents supporting their work:

-- 36% responded About Half; 50% responded Some

Teachers feel respected by the parents of the students:

-- 7% responded Not at All; 36% responded A Little; 36% responded Some

positive experience she had in interacting with a parent. Mrs. Taylor stated that when a parent contacted her with concerns, the parent met with Ms. Taylor and her student to get on the same page and work together as partners. Mrs. Harper stated that she felt that one of the concerns is communication and emphasized that is important for us to learn to work with people of different personalities. Mrs. Harper feels that transparency is key and that it is important to go directly to a person if there is a conflict. It is important that our communications be solution-driven. Mr. McCarter asked what the practical next step would be in building staff-parent relationships. Mr. McCarter stated that he felt that there is a level of distrust or not giving people the benefit of the doubt in the parent-staff relationship conversation. Mrs. McGrane and Mrs. Brinza stated that they felt that 99% of their interactions with STEM parents have been positive. Mrs. Brinza shared that despite having mostly positive interactions with families, she feels as though a single negative interaction can affect the way that teachers respond to the 5 Essentials Survey. Mr. McCarter stated that he strives to be asset-driven and create a culture of mutual respect. Mr. McCarter asked what would be an appropriate forum for this conversation and whether teachers would feel comfortable participating. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she feels it would be important to talk to the teachers about building better relationships. Mrs. Brinza asked the LSC to consider how we can create a safe environment for both teachers and parents to communicate. Mrs. Harper stated that she remembered a conversation about teachers being point person for teacher concerns. Mrs. Langston also stressed that it is important for the LSC to push for a higher response rate to the survey. Mrs. Amoruso suggested that data be collected to help address the problem. Ms. McManus stated that she felt that if one teacher felt disrespected, that was one teacher too many. Mrs. Taylor suggested that parents and staff cognizant of our delivery and realize that it is hard to manage other people's perception. She also stressed how important it is to not make assumptions. Mr. McCarter made a motion that the LSC schedule an open meeting for teachers, staff, and the LSC to have a productive discussion about parent-staff trust, relationships, and communication. This meeting would strive to create a safe space where issues can be raised and proposed. Mr. McCarter stated that the goal would be to hold the meeting within the next two months. Mr. McCarter stated that he would work with Ms. McManus to schedule this meeting. McManus seconded the motion. Ms. Taylor suggested using the Critical Friend Protocol. Mr. Christians asked how parents as a whole could be involved in creating a better community when this may be a localized issue.

Vote: 9 in favor

-- NAEP – Ms. Anderson stated that fourth grade students would be participating in this national measure of academic progress. Schools were randomly selected. Students

will take reading, math, or science sessions. The sessions are a 90-minute paper and pencil test, with mostly multiple-choice items. STEM fourth graders will be part of a national sample population to create national report card. More information about the assessment is available at [www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov). Reports on student performance (as a group) will be available 6 months after administration in reading and math. Reports on student performance (as a group) will be available in 12 months for other subject areas. NAEP representatives administer the assessment and no individual reports are provided on student performance. Ms. Anderson is the STEM coordinator. Ms. Anderson stated that students were randomly assigned a subject area.

-- Internal accounts – Data on internal account for January is not yet available.

-- LSC training – Mr. Pittman extends apologies for missing scheduled training. Mrs. Amoruso asked about creating a doodle poll to determine best availability. Ms. McManus stated that she would email LSC members regarding availability.

-- Facilities Walk Through – Ms. McManus stated that a facilities walk through was conducted on Wednesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> with Mr. James Dispensa and Mr. Dawit Hadgu. The results of the walk through are as follows: 1. Though it may not be ideal, there are current classrooms that can be turned into homerooms. 2. Current classrooms may double as both labs and homerooms moving forward. 3 Principal will determine how classrooms will be used for the 2015-2016 school year. 4. Concerns remain regarding common areas, such as the lunchroom, gymnasium, playground, and parking.

-- Culture and Climate – Ms. McManus shared that during the last staff meeting, staff members were randomly split into 4 different teams to plan staff events to help build culture and climate among staff members from February-June.

## **VII. Public Participation**

-- Mrs. Valdivia thanked the LSC for having a discussion about parent-teacher relationships at STEM and stated that she feels the first step in addressing issues is talking about it. She stated that she feels it is really important to create safe space for parents and teachers.

-- Mrs. Amoruso asked about PARCC. Ms. McManus stated that she thought there would be advantages to being a pilot school. She also addressed her concerns about technical and navigation issues. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she felt like she's heard a lot of negatives, asked Ms. McManus about her perspective on the test. Ms. McManus stated that she felt like more information is needed to make a decision about whether being a part of the pilot program is advantageous. Mrs. Amoruso asked if it is

advantageous for parents or the LSC to request to not be part of the pilot program for the PARCC. Ms. McManus stated CPS would choose the 10% of schools to pilot the program. Mrs. Harper and Mrs. Amoruso asked if it would be possible to have a parent education night on PARCC.

#### **VIII. Old Business**

-- LSC Training Modules (Group Training) – Reschedule Principal Selection Module – Ms. McManus will send out an email about preferences for rescheduling the Principal Selection Module.

#### **IX. New Business**

-- Fundraising accountability (School vs. FOS) – Ms. McManus shared that according to the LSC training modules on Budget, school fundraisers that involve students or are continuous cannot be sponsored by an external organization. This specifically impacts Wear What You Want Wednesdays. Mrs. Harper stated that she thought that this regulation would also impact the Walkathon. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she is aware of Walkathons that occur at other schools and encouraged the LSC and the FOS to look into this further. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she didn't think it would benefit our school to take the ability to fundraise away from the FOS. She also felt that this would create community-building opportunities. Mrs. Amoruso stated that FOS can work effectively with the school and should work effectively with the school. Mrs. Amoruso suggested that FOS and STEM Magnet Academy could partner so that the financial mechanisms are housed within the school, but FOS could still promote fundraisers. Ms. McManus stated that she would reach out to the office of Local School Council relations for additional information and clarification regarding fundraisers and possibly have someone come to our next LSC meeting to address any concerns.

#### **X. Committee reports and updates**

-- Facilities – Mr. McCarter shared that he felt McManus's report reflected the results of the walk through. Mr. McCarter noted that there are still serious concerns about capacity in gym and other common areas. Conversations are continuing around how to continue to advocate for facility resources. These conversations include a potential k-12 STEM vision and a supplemental/replacement facility. Mr. McCarter announced that there would be a conference call to discuss Mr. Rosen preparing scenario document to get in front of decision makers at CPS. Mr. McCarter stated that the Facilities Committee would meet within next month.

-- Budget – No report. Mrs. Amoruso asked whether it would be possible to start looking at the budget. Mrs. Amoruso asked why budget meetings are typically held on a monthly basis if there is no data until CPS budgets are released in the spring. Mrs. Langston asked what other budget committees discuss at their meetings if they do not

have the budget for the upcoming school year available. Mrs. Amoruso stated that topics like the budget transfers discussed at the previous LSC meeting might be discussed in advance of the regular LSC meeting.

-- Bylaws – Bylaws are completed and just need to be signed by Mrs. Langston and Mrs. McGrane

-- Friends of STEM organization – Mr. Christians asked about the regulation regarding outside organizations fundraising for the school and asked if it was publicly available. Mrs. Langston shared that all LSC members recently received a copy of the newly updated Local School Council Reference Guide 2014-2016. The handbook outlines in detail the fundraising responsibilities in the “Budget” section of the handbook. Mrs. Langston also stated that the Reference Guide is available on line. Mr. Christians also asked if there was a desire to solve this problem and come up with creative solutions that would allow the FOS to continue to raise funds for STEM. Mrs. Harper stated that she feels that in light of the new information provided in the budget training module, that the roles for fundraising will need to change. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she feels it’s important for the parent population to continue to be engaged. Mrs. Amoruso suggested a meeting with the FOS board to discuss these budget issues.

-- CIWP – No report

## **XI. Public Participation**

-- Mr. Christians stated that he is interested in collaborative and creative ways to look at fundraising.

-- Mrs. Valdivia would like to see the FOS move forward creatively and be solutions-based to find a role that would allow them to raise money for the school. Mrs. Valdivia stated that there has to be partnership for the school to thrive. Ms. McManus stated that she doesn’t always feel like it is partnership and gave the example of the gala being planned without input from the school about the date.

-- Mrs. Amoruso feels that it seems like the school and FOS are two different organizations with agendas that are not completely aligned. Mrs. Amoruso feels that planning should be intertwined and there should be a united voice from the school and FOS.

-- Mr. Christians stated that the current discussion feels antagonistic and stressed the importance of focusing on solutions.

-- Mrs. Langston commented "In my experience serving as a chairperson with FOS for 2 years and organizing the walkathon, I felt that at times FOS operated separately from STEM's fundraising vision, which made it difficult for me to get things accomplished within the organization." Mrs. Amoruso and Mr. McCarter stated that they did not feel that this was the case when they were involved in FOS.

-- Mrs. Haviland stated that the goal of the gala is to raise as much money as possible and that a date was selected for when the venue was available to the school at no cost. Mrs. Haviland stated that the choice of date shouldn't be taken personally.

-- Mrs. Harper stated that based on her experience planning the gala, she can empathize with the struggles of planning the event, but feels like there is a problem planning a gala to benefit the school without consulting the school.

-- Mr. Christians stated that this back and forth is a no-win for anyone.

-- Mr. Abel stated that all on the FOS board care tremendously about Ms. McManus and the school and feels that there is cohesion. Mr. Abel stated that FOS wants to give STEM money to benefit the students' education and that FOS members are all sincere about helping the school because they care. Mr. Abel hopes there is no animosity towards FOS and hopes to be able to work together.

-- Mrs. Gulley stated that she found that she had to step back from her experience with FOS. Mrs. Gulley felt that some parents were thrown by passion and vigor of our leader. Mrs. Gulley stressed the importance of parents having respect for teachers and the principal and taking responsibility for our actions.

## **XII. CIWP/Budget Amendments (optional)**

## **XIII. Closed Session (optional)**

## **XIV. Announcements**

-- Mr. McCarter stated that he would be posting a notice regarding the Facilities Committee conference call. Mr. McCarter also commended parent patrol for their efforts with the amount of snow that remained on the street and sidewalks. Mr. McCarter asked how we could get better snow removal in front of the school and asked if Ms. McManus would recommend calling or writing to the alderman.

-- Next Regular Meeting date Tuesday, March 4, 2015 at 5:30pm in the STEM Gym.

## **XV. Adjournment**

Mrs. Langston moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:28pm. Mrs. Harper seconded the motion.

Vote: 9 in favor.

Minutes submitted by: Lindsay McGrane

Minutes approved: 12 in favor 3/4/15