

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

March 17, 2015

**I. Call to order**

Mrs. Langston called to order the special meeting of the Local School Council for the STEM Magnet Academy at 5:07pm on March 17, 2015, in the STEM Magnet Academy gymnasium.

**II. Roll call/Establish Quorum**

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

Jeremiah Abiade  
Maria Amoruso  
Deborah Bonner  
Deana Caccavale  
Deidra Harper  
Sadika Langston  
Jeff McCarter  
William O'Neill (left at 6:40pm)  
Gretchen Brinza (left at 7:00pm)  
Lindsay McGrane  
Zakiya Libby-Williams  
Maria McManus

Quorum was established.

**III. Review and Approval of Agenda**

Mrs. Langston moved to approve the agenda. Mr. McCarter asked that there be an overview of the principal selection process and Mrs. Langston stated that she would provide an overview of the process. Mrs. Amoruso seconded the motion.

Vote: 12 in favor

**IV. Principal Selection – Feedback from STEM Staff/Teachers**

-- Mrs. Langston stated that this meeting was requested by teachers and that she feels that it is important to get feedback from teachers. Mrs. Langston shared that the LSC just completed training on Principal Selection and that the training was conducted online and in person. Mrs. Langston shared the following information about the Principal Selection process: STEM opened in 2011 at that time, because STEM was a

new school, there was no LSC in place. At that time, the CEO of CPS appointed Ms. McManus as the interim principal. Now that there is an LSC in place, the STEM LSC is required to go through the formal process to select a contract principal. The LSC voted 6-8 weeks ago to start this process. The first steps of this process are to assess the needs of school and get feedback from teachers, families, and community members. The LSC is required to post the position through the CPS Talent Office for 10 days. During that time, resumes are submitted directly to the Talent Office. The LSC chairperson receives resumes submitted to the Talent Office. The LSC is required to review resumes. After reviewing and ranking resumes, the LSC votes whether or not to interview candidates. Interviews are not required. The LSC determines what the interview process would look like, including potentially holding a candidate forum. Mrs. Langston stated that during this process, the LSC needs input from parents, teachers, and the chief of Network 6. Mrs. Langston stated that the Network Chief for Area 6 could provide information on the school's strengths.

-- Mr. McCarter asked to elaborate and outlined the 11 step process covered in the LSC training module.

-- Mrs. Bomar asked if the current principal is required to submit a resume if she is interested in the position and what the timeline is for this process. Mrs. Langston stated that there is no deadline for this process, as Ms. McManus is not a contract principal. The selection process is conducted differently for schools that already have a contract principal in place. Mrs. Langston shared that to award a contract, there need to be 7 affirmative votes from LSC members and that Ms. McManus is not a voting member of the LSC in matters relating to principal selection. Mrs. Langston shared that if we are not able to select a principal as a council, then the network chief or CEO would select an interim principal. Dr. Bonner clarified that that there are 11 possible steps, but after reviewing resumes, if a contract is offered to the current principal, you do not go through the entire process.

-- Ms. Anderson asked about Dr. Bonner's comment about 11 potential steps and whether the LSC anticipated going through all 11 steps of the process. Mr. Abiade stated that it is too early for the LSC to be making decisions on whether or not to conduct interviews, as we have not yet conducted the required resume review process. Dr. Bonner stated that we are not yet at the point where we would be discussing that matter, but that we do not necessarily have to move beyond reviewing resumes.

-- Mrs. McLaurin asked, when considering the success of the school under the current administration, what is the point of reviewing resumes? Mr. Abiade stated that Ms. McManus would be a candidate in the process, if she so chooses, and that based on her leadership of STEM, she will be a strong candidate, but at this point, the LSC cannot abdicate their responsibility to identify the best possible candidate for the school. Mrs. Langston clarified that moving beyond the resume review process requires a vote and Mrs. Harper stated that reviewing resumes is a legal requirement of the LSC.

-- Ms. Heveran asked what the process is if the LSC fails to offer a contract to a candidate. Mr. McCarter clarified that the LSC training indicates that the CEO or Network Chief would appoint an interim principal.

-- Ms. Chan asked if it is still mandatory by law that we accept and review resumes if a poll of teachers indicates that they are in favor of offering Ms. McManus a contract. Mrs. Taylor clarified that the LSC is required to collect and review resumes, but will vote on whether or not to proceed with interviews.

-- Ms. Wagonhiem asked if the LSC would be viewing the School Needs Questionnaires completed by teachers. Mrs. McGrane stated that the staff LSC representatives would be sharing staff feedback with the LSC at the upcoming meeting on Wednesday. Mrs. Brinza clarified that the School Needs Questionnaire came from the LSC Reference Guide.

-- Mrs. Haddad asked if the LSC was planning on solicit information from parents.

-- Mrs. Amoruso stated that she reached out to around 50 people in 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades in order to solicit feedback as a parent representative. She clarified that she did this on her own, and not on behalf of the LSC.

-- Mrs. Brinza suggested that feedback be sought from both parents and community members for this process.

-- Mrs. Taylor asked if a decision had been reached on including non-LSC members. on the Principal Selection committee. Mrs. Langston stated that the LSC voted to have only the LSC members on the Principal Selection committee, but that we have maintained the option of soliciting feedback from interested parties outside of the LSC.

-- Ms. Hall stated her concern that this process is not transparent and that all parents be given the opportunity to provide feedback. Dr. Bonner agreed.

-- Mrs. Amoruso stated that she had sent out the School Needs Questionnaire to parents that she had contact information for in order to try to get a broader perspective and expressed concern that the LSC has not yet established an opportunity to get varying perspectives. Mrs. Langston asked if Mrs. Amoruso would be sharing the feedback she received and expressed concern that to the public, it may appear that LSC only sought feedback from certain people.

-- Mr. McCarter stated that he feels the entire process needs to be transparent and clear and that tonight's meeting is out of order in the sequence of the process.

-- Ms. Heveran said that she understood that the advertisement for the principal position would be posted for 10 days and asked if the LSC could decide to post for a longer period of time and whether that was something that the LSC was considering doing. Mr. McCarter stated that the LSC has the option to post for a longer period of time and to re-post the position if there is a need to do so.

-- Ms. Chan asked if staff could access the questions sent to parents. Mrs. Langston clarified that the School Needs Questionnaire that was sent to staff members contained the same questions sent to parents.

-- Mr. Christians thanked Mrs. Amoruso for reaching out to parents and stated that he feels that it is important that the LSC do its due diligence in seeking feedback from interested parties.

-- Mrs. Harper clarified that although one member of the LSC reached out to parents already, that does not indicate that the LSC would not seek additional feedback from parents. Mrs. Harper clarified that the School Needs Questionnaire was sent out to the LSC as a way to start generating thoughts to help create the advertisement for the principal position. Mrs. Harper's expectation is that these surveys be discussed as the advertisement is being created.

-- Mrs. McGrane clarified that Mrs. McGrane, Mrs. Brinza, and Mrs. Libby had distributed the School Needs Questionnaire to all staff members and that the staff representatives had sought permission from Ms. McManus prior to distributing the questionnaire. Mrs. McGrane stated that the purpose of sending the questionnaire out to the staff was to solicit feedback from varying perspectives to be shared at the next Principal Selection meeting.

-- Mrs. Caccavale asked how the LSC would be distributing these questions to the entire parent community.

-- Mrs. Bomar asked about the content of the School Needs Questionnaire and Mrs. Langston clarified the questions contained in the survey.

-- Mrs. Gulley stated that according to her research, to select a new contract principal, the LSC must learn the best practices of the principal selection process and work closely with network chief. Mrs. Gulley stated that, in light of the plan to draft the advertisement for the principal position tomorrow, the LSC should have gone through all of the steps identified as best practices for principal selection. Mrs. Gulley stated that she wants to see the LSC follow best practices for the principal selection process. Mrs. Gulley asked for the principal selection process at STEM to be thorough as recommended by the Office of LSC Relations.

-- Ms. Demaray stated that she was concerned about talking about staff concerns and making sure that many teachers' voices are heard. Ms. Demaray would like to know how the LSC could allow for more feedback from teachers to provide a balanced approach. Mrs. Brinza asked for clarification of the question, as in her experience, many teachers have come to her to talk about LSC business and she has also maintained the STEM LSC Weebly website containing the minutes from each meeting since September. Mrs. Brinza stated that she hasn't heard from people that she's not doing what they would like her to do as a teacher representative and hopes that people would approach her with concerns. Ms. Demaray asked what parent and staff concerns with current principal have been verbalized and what has been done to remedy these concerns.

-- Mrs. Harper clarified that staff members are looking for a very specific survey asking for feedback and whether the staff wants to retain current principal or not.

-- Ms. Chan asked how data from teachers' responses to the School Needs Questionnaire might be used to make adjustments and address some of the culture issues at the school. Ms. Demaray clarified that she would like for that data to be used to help improve staff relationships. Mr. Abiade stated that he felt that those kinds of concerns may be best shared later in the principal selection process. Ms. McManus clarified that this principal selection process may look different than other principal selection processes teachers may have seen in the past, as STEM is seeking to offer a principal an initial contract rather than renewing the contract of a principal.

-- Mrs. Caccavale clarified that, in Ms. Demaray's opinion, staff-staff problems would continue to exist regardless of who the principal is. Ms. Demaray agreed that she felt like there would be issues that needed to be solved amongst staff members regardless of who receives a contract to be the principal at STEM.

-- Mrs. Taylor asked how the LSC plans to look at performance data and what specific data will be discussed at step 1 of the principal selection process. Mrs. Langston stated that at this point, it would behoove the LSC to involve network chief. Ms. McManus shared that some of the data that would be considered could be found in the school's SQRP, including NWEA data; attendance data; subgroup data; ELL data; and school ranking.

-- Mr. Rosen clarified that the data from the 5 Essentials Survey is part of a school's SQRP data as well. Ms. McManus stated that the 5 Essentials Survey data comprises 2% of a school's SQRP score and shared that the staff had been working on some ways to build staff positive staff relationships.

-- Ms. Demaray shared that the staff had recently begun planning staff events to address some of the concerns presented in the 5 Essentials data from last year.

-- Mrs. Delgado stated that in her experience with principal selection, the network office gives you information that can be accessed through a school's SQRP data. Mrs. Delgado felt that the ISBE state report card could also be used to provide more data points. Mrs. Delgado shared that the ISBE website allows you to track a cohort of students across time. Mrs. Gulley asked what process that Skinner North went through and what data was considered prior to offering a contract to the interim principal. Mrs. Delgado stated that their LSC understood that their school scores very well and wanted to look at areas where they could improve their performance and how their principal's leadership could impact those areas of growth. Mrs. Delgado shared that the school did look at the 7 competencies for a principal prior to offering a contract to the interim principal at Skinner North.

-- Ms. Shade asked if it would be possible for teacher representatives to schedule times to meet with teachers to keep the staff informed of what is happening at LSC meetings and gather teacher feedback. Mrs. McGrane stated that she would be open to meeting with teachers to talk about LSC business and stated that she hoped that teachers would approach her with questions or concerns.

-- Mrs. Brinza suggested that maybe the LSC publish draft minutes on the website in order to allow teachers and community members to access information from LSC meetings more quickly.

-- Ms. Carroll asked if the LSC had gotten any indication from the meeting about where the staff stands in terms of offering our current principal a contract. Mr. Abiade acknowledged that the LSC had gotten feedback based on what was said at today's meeting, but stated that the comments from today's meeting may not be encompassing of all of the feedback teachers have to offer. Mr. Abiade stated that the LSC needs to come up with reliable mechanism to get honest teacher feedback but stated that we are not yet at that point in the process. Mrs. Harper clarified that teachers want a survey that is specific about principal retention.

-- Ms. Carroll clarified that there are 3 staff members on the LSC that get a vote and asked if the staff LSC representatives are going to vote the way the teachers want them to vote. Mr. Abiade stated that that was not necessarily a fair question to ask, as the LSC constitutes a representative form of government and that representatives are responsible for listening to the voice of their constituency, but are not required to be directed by that feedback.

-- Mrs. Taylor asked when teacher feedback would be appropriate. Mr. Abiade stated that, in his opinion, teacher, parent, and community feedback would be valuable beyond the review of resumes.

-- Ms. Heveran thanked members of the LSC for listening to teacher feedback. Ms. Heveran suggested that we aim to treat each other with more respect and suggested that we work on setting expectations for treating one another respectfully.

-- Mrs. Melyon stated that there are several new teachers and not everyone got to have their voice be heard when voting for LSC representation. Mrs. Melyon stated that she felt that the culture issues at STEM would not necessarily be addressed by a new administration and that she has experienced several changes in administration that were disruptive to the school climate at her previous school.

-- Ms. Chan urged the LSC to use credible and valid data in making a decision in the principal selection process.

-- Ms. Kraemer asked what would spur the LSC to go past the third stage in the principal selection process. Mr. Abiade stated that he felt that the reasoning shared about the principal selection process at Skinner North would be a good example of when an LSC would decide to not continue the process to candidate interviews. The parent representative from Skinner North had previously shared that when their LSC reviewed resumes, they did not see any candidates, other than their interim principal, whose skill sets matched the needs of the school.

-- Ms. Howard stated that she felt that the perception that staff feedback may or may not be used in decision-making during the principal selection process led to the current staff concerns. Mrs. McGrane stated that the trajectory of this meeting is very

discouraging because it highlights the assumptions that are being made within the staff as well as the lack of trust that is a documented concern at the school.

-- Mrs. Wagonheim expressed her concern that the staff members are not being transparent with one another, sharing an example of a meeting that was held from which some staff members had been excluded.

-- Ms. Carroll clarified that her question about voting was merely a question about the process by which teacher and staff representatives cast their votes during the principal selection process. Mrs. McGrane stated that she would be more than willing to hear feedback from teachers who would like to share their feedback.

-- Ms. Taylor stated that there were many teachers were not aware that not everyone was invited to the informational meeting held prior to the LSC meeting. Ms. Taylor expressed a need for STEM to create a Professional Problems Committee.

-- Mrs. McLaurin clarified that a group of teachers who requested the meeting have vocally expressed their support of Ms. McManus.

## **V. Public Participation**

-- Ms. McManus stated that she is discouraged and disheartened by the conversation that took place at tonight's meeting and what she sees happening among staff members. She stated that the issues with changing the climate and culture go beyond her ability to control as a principal and require the staff to take on some of the responsibility.

-- Mr. Rosen asked what Ms. McManus is going to do as the leader of the school to address the culture and climate issues of the school. Ms. McManus stated that teachers are going to have to take responsibility for fixing some of the issues. Mr. Rosen agreed and asked what Ms. McManus what part she would take on in addressing the issues of culture and climate. Ms. Shade stated that she felt that it was beyond the ability of any principal to force adults to get along.

-- Mrs. Taylor expressed concern about how these issues are impacting teachers' performance with students.

-- Ms. Lohitsa expressed her concern and frustration with the current issues with the climate and culture at STEM.

-- Mrs. Gulley stated that the teacher group who requested the LSC meeting was a group of staff members who wanted to express their feelings and support of Ms. McManus and who were concerned that the teacher representatives on the LSC were not required to vote as directed by teachers. She shared that teachers decided that they needed to be more active in the principal selection process.

-- Mr. Norris stated his concern that when asking teachers to give feedback, it is important that Ms. McManus not be present if the LSC is seeking to solicit honest feedback from the staff. Mrs. Langston stated that the LSC couldn't exclude Ms. McManus, as LSC meetings are required to be open to the public.

-- Mrs. Bomar asked if there would be a report-out from the LSC of findings after

resume review. Mrs. Langston shared that resume review has to be a closed process. Mrs. Bomar asked if the vote to move forward with the interview process would be taken in an open meeting and Mrs. Langston confirmed that all votes are taken in an open meeting.

-- Mrs. Haddad stated that moving forward, data needs to be collected from teachers and parents and that the data needs to be concrete so principal selection decisions won't come down to personal bias or personal decisions. Mrs. Haddad suggested that the LSC needs to identify action items from every meeting.

-- Mrs. McCarter stated that she felt that a lot of the discussion at this LSC meeting could have been avoided if staff had communication had occurred. Mrs. McGrane stated that the staff representatives would work with the staff to establish communication regarding LSC business.

-- Mrs. Bomar echoed the need for surveys to contain a mechanism for anonymity in order to solicit honest feedback.

-- Mrs. Amoruso thanked the STEM staff and teachers for sharing their feedback. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she looks forward to everyone having comfort to come to LSC meetings. Mrs. Amoruso shared that when she was elected to the LSC, she took this job to do what's best for STEM and is committed to going through the process to deliver what is best for STEM Magnet Academy. Mrs. Amoruso stated that she feels in order to be fair, we need to go through the process to see what is best for STEM.

-- Mrs. Bomar respectfully disagreed with Mrs. Amoruso and stated that she felt that it is possible to compare candidates on paper and make a decision whether or not to proceed.

## **VI. Announcements**

-- LSC Meeting Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 5:30pm.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Mrs. Langston moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:05pm. Mr. Abiade seconded the motion.

Vote: 10 in favor.

Minutes submitted by: Lindsay McGrane