

MEETING MINUTES

Name of Foundations: Southwest Charter Foundation, Inc.

Board Meeting: **February 7, 2024**

Schools and Principals:

Bonita Springs Charter School - Carroll	Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy -Cendan
Collier Charter Academy - Thompson	Manatee Charter School - Morris
Gateway Charter School – Wade/Jenson	Mid-Cape Global Academy – Lemos
Six Mile Charter Academy - Fields	

The minutes of Sunshine Law meetings need not be verbatim transcripts of the meeting. These minutes are a brief summary of the events of the meeting.

Date:	Start	End	Next Meeting:	Next time:	Prepared by:
February 7, 2024	12:37PM	2:06PM	March 5, 2024	12:30PM	R. Weaver/ L. Peake

Meeting Location: At Each School Above

Attended by:

Board Members:

Ken Haiko, Chairman
 Tom Wheeler, Treasurer
 Billie Miller, Director
 Pat Smith, Director
 Dennis Clark, Vice-Chairman and Secretary
 Paul Sallarulo, Director

Absent: None

Other Attendees:

Principals and Parent Facilitators at above listed schools (or their designees)
 Levi Williams, Esq. - Board Attorney
 Dr. Eddie Ruiz, State Superintendent of Florida
 Rachel Windler-Freitag, Area 2 Deputy Director
 Lianne Morton, Finance Director
 Rita Weaver, Sr. Director of Board Governance, CSUSA
 Leah Peake, Board Governance Manager

CALL TO ORDER

- Pursuant to public notice, the meeting commenced at 12:37pm with a Call to Order by Chairman Ken Haiko. Roll call was taken, and quorum established.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Board Chair Ken Haiko called for public comments. The following spoke for public comment:
 - Arun Rad – Would like to see healthier options for students. No sugary treats or processed items for rewards. The school needs to pivot to practices that embody health and educational values; end the partnership with Kona Ice and other vendors for healthier options. Keep the farm to table promise, adjust bathroom policy, and offer physical breaks.
 - Katie Becker – parent of 1st, 2nd, and 5th grader. Would like more transparency with teacher turnover. Dr. Cendan inherited these issues, and she is doing her best to fix it. Behavioral crisis in upper grades with the use of foul language. Stop feeding Kona Ice and expecting my child to sit still after. The overall issue is teacher turn over, the village model is chaotic in lower grades, the student teacher ratio is concerning.
 - Luis Hernandez – 5th and 9th grade boys. The school is not providing information on the changes that are occurring with staff. Students are given reminders of the 3-strike rule then items are being take away, and trip are being canceled due to behavior. Communication is the key to successful change. We receive too many emails, and they are not clear. Imagine going to work one day and your company has changed ownership, the boss has changed, and you have a new position; would this not cause stress and confusion within the organization and with the employees. Young minds don't know

how to process these changes. I look forward to hearing more on the changes and open communication with the school.

- Andrea Stephenson – 5th grader, first year parent. The school has challenges with teacher turnover including entire teams leaving. 5th grade has had lots of students leaving. Can we get a commitment to fix the problem before we add in new students. Change is expected, can we (parents) have more information about the changes in-order to assist in preparing the students for the change. The board meeting is virtual, and the meeting is not open to parents who cannot attend on a workday. We need a more open dialogue to hear what is being discussed. We don't have a syllabus and the portal has teacher names that are no longer at the school; we cannot communicate with teachers. We do not know if the student is on pace or keeping up with the goals.
- Toma Millbank – 5th grade parent, Sad to hear that another family is leaving the school and Dr. Cendan needs the resources to run the school and keep the schools reputation. The number of teachers that have left is unprecedented; more teachers have left than ever before. He doesn't even know who his child's homeroom teacher is. Class size is too large, and we have substitutes and other unqualified people in the classroom. Why should we stay here when the situation at the district school is much better. The village model is not working with the large number of students. Not enough teacher to teach the students. Punishing all the students for behavior issues is not acceptable. How do we recruit qualified teachers mid-year? How many teachers are returning next year. What is the board doing to help Dr. Cendan?
- Rebecca Millbank – Both my husband and I took time off to be at the board meeting. This shows the importance of the issues at hand. More of her friends have left the school and she understands why. Students are behind academic standards. When this many people are weighing in on the school there is an issue. "Where there is smoke there is fire." The school is a business and reputation matters, especial in a tightknit community. The district is "A" rated and many are considering a return to the district schools. Teacher turnover is unprecedented. We don't want to point fingers we want results for the issues at hand. It starts with CSUSA and ends with CSUSA; provide Dr. Cendan with the needed resources to be successful. She thanked Dr. Cendan for her dedication to the school and commitment to make the school successful. She (Dr. Cendan) needs the resources from CSUSA to do so.
- Lisa Cambra – 7th and 5th grade parent. Student in the upper grades are doing great and the student in the lower grades are struggling. Three big issues: class size, teacher recruitment and retention, and the village model. We were told class size was going to be lower. Class size was increased, and teachers left. What are the data points on teacher retention? It appears to be near 50%. The effect of the situation on our students is no stability, emotion wellbeing is impacted, and the loss of peers. FAST scores are horrendous and external tutoring is now needed. What are the next steps to fix this situation? Dr. Cendan always meets with me but what will CSUSA be doing to fix this.
- Jennifer Spiteri – 3rd and 5th grade parent. Thank you Dr. Cendan for everything. Have been a parent at LRPA since the beginning. She left her "A" rated public school to attend LRPA because it is a long-term solution to her children's education. At open house she thought it was too good to be true. Here we are with that now a reality. She has been very happy with the 3rd grade village, but 5th grade is awful. She spent \$5000 on tutoring because her daughter is two grade levels behind in math. She is a lunchroom volunteer and a group of boys in the lunchroom are causing issue. Discipline the ones causing the problem and not the entire village. As a parent "I am very upset and at a loss for words. I want change and I want it now."
- Nikki Olarsch – 5th grade parent. She gave her talking points to the 5th grade teachers and they all agree with her. She runs the largest after school program at the school. Why can we not retain teachers, why is there a lack of communication and why do we get communication that does not apply to the student. Why have there been so many changes to the 5th grade village? Why do we not have protein options at each meal when we are a healthy school. Children are confused and parents cannot

help the children if they do not have communication. We should not have 30 children in one classroom. This must be fixed now!

- Lindy Turner – 4th grade parent. Last year was a great year; this year there is a mass exodus of families with money, well behaved children, smart kids and getting students with behavior issues and students who are not doing well at the district school. Her daughter has her chair kicked by a boy all day long, the noise level in the school is too loud. She has 35 students in her math class. Ms. Turner is a substitute with a law degree who saw the frustration in the classroom and wanted to help the teacher out. She was afraid the teacher was going to leave so she became a substitute teacher. The kids are banging on the desk just to be loud. Students are hitting teachers, and nothing is being done to fix this. She wants to stay for Middle and High School, but she is worried the students with issues will also stay and be in Middle and High School with her student. We have a toxic culture. Her student is a smart child who scores 4's and 5's on the FAST Test and you will not be an "A" school if all the good students are leaving. The only saving grace this year is my daughter's teacher has stayed. Her daughter is not doing well, and her spirit is being crushed. She is embarrassed to tell people where her student attends school. Our school is the only school speaking and you (the board) need to focus on this school.
- Chairman Haiko, thank you for the concerns. We are sorry and we will be working with our leadership team to come up with solutions.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of the December 5, 2024, Southwest Charter Foundation, Inc. Board Meeting Minutes

- The board reviewed the meeting minutes from December 5, 2024, Southwest Charter Foundation, Inc. Board Meeting.

MOTION: Motion was made by Paul Sallarulo and seconded by Dennis Clark to approve the meeting minutes from the December 5, 2024, Southwest Charter Foundation, Inc., board meeting. The motion was approved unanimously. (6-0, 0 absent)

III. CSUSA REPORTS

State Director Update

- Dr. Ruiz thanked the parents for attending and sharing the issues at hand. When a leader leaves mid-year there is trickle-down effect, and we will work to get these issues resolved.
- The board reviewed the graduation rate for Gateway Charter School.
- Accountability changes and the new scales for school grades which include the buckets for combination schools. Now there are four areas for grades.
- Dr. Ruiz reviewed the school dashboards for the Tier 3 schools in the Southwest Charter Foundation portfolio of schools.
- The board requested an update on schools that have been flagged for ESSER grant reimbursement balances pending.
- The board reviewed FY25 Enrollment targets for all the Southwest Charter Foundation, Inc. of schools.

- Dr. Ruiz provided the Principal and Assistant Principal Salary Increases, previously requested by the board and outlined the two-phase approach.
- The board reviewed the salary brackets for each position by county and noted some were still lower than the districts. CSUSA will always try to keep pace with the district from a salary perspective but sometimes it is difficult to do so as each school has their own unique budget whereas a district school does not. He noted these are two phase increases and the presentation included phase one of the increase.
- Dr. Ruiz, we will meet individually with each leader and discuss the increase. In April or May, we will provide a final increase to the principals.
- Lee County District Schools are closed on February 16, 2024.

MOTION: Motion was made by Billie Miller and seconded by Dennis Clark to approve the State Superintendent Report and amend the FY24 Calendar for Lee County Schools. The motion was approved unanimously.

IV. FINANCIALS

CSP Grant Application Update

- The board reviewed CSP Grant Application for Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy.

MOTION: Motion was made by Pat Smith and seconded by Tom Wheeler to ratify CPS Grant Application for Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy. The motion was approved unanimously.

ESSER Update

- Rita Weaver provided the board an update on the steps being taken by CSUSA to cut expenses and allocate current funds, technology, and staff prior to the final installment of the ESSER funding this September. The CSUSA managed schools have an internal deadline of June 30, 2024 to align with the schools' fiscal year.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- The board reviewed an update on closing of the Lee County Industrial Development Series Bonds

V. NEW BUSINESS

Classical Model Review

- The board reviewed the CSUSA Classical School Model

A+ Recognition Money Allocation Distribution Vote FY23

- The board reviewed the A+ Recognition Money Allocation Distribution Vote FY23 for the following schools:
 - Collier Charter Academy
 - Gateway Charter School
 - Gateway Intermediate Charter School
 - Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy
 - Mid-Cape Global Academy

MOTION: A motion was made by Billie Miller and seconded by Tom Wheeler to ratify and approve the A+ Recognition Money Allocation Distribution Vote FY23 Motion was approved unanimously.

Teacher Certification Changes

- Mrs. Weaver provided the board an update on the new policies and procedures for Teacher Certifications and Exam Waiver requirements and the CSUSA process for bringing waivers to the board.

Out of Field Waivers

- The board reviewed the out of field waivers for the following schools:
 - Bonita Springs Charter School
 - Cerame, Morgan
 - Chandler, Jamie
 - Crane, Kayla
 - Dahlbeck, Jessica
 - DeFrancesco, Alison
 - Dever, Marissa
 - Elliott, Kelly
 - Eustache, Benethy
 - Florek, Jennifer
 - Fontaine, Haroldo
 - Glinecke, Emily
 - Gose, Helen
 - Hall, Madison
 - Herendeen, Julie
 - Johnson, Hannah
 - Katzman, Kenneth
 - Kaufman, Nancy
 - Kollmer, Douglas
 - Leiper, Mallory
 - Lucas, Beth Ann
 - Lyle, Katie
 - Monroe, Amber
 - Morgan, Vanessa
 - Petersen, Austin
 - Rahall, Andrea
 - Rogers, Lauren
 - Schultz, Alexandra
 - Vezza, Julia
 - Welch, Sari
 - Gateway Charter School
 - Adel, Monika
 - Alayo, Alina
 - Angelus, Jonathan
 - Avery, Sarah
 - Capo, Melanie
 - Carmichael, James
 - Chorzepa, Michele
 - Colon, Jason
 - Dupree, Amy
 - Gaskin, Rabiah

- Goetterman, Nicole
- Grenzy, Janelle
- Guenther, Jill
- Holzinger, Sarah
- Hudson, Elizabeth
- Jimenez, Kimberly
- Johnson, Anna
- King, Heidi
- Komlo, Kendall
- Kondratowski, Shirley
- Kresevich, LuAnn
- Lozeau, Mandy
- Maldonado, Francisco
- Medina, Yaili
- Paschal, Karen
- Schoenewald, Patricia
- Stevens, Melissa
- Strickland, Dora
- Tan, Huey
- Tobin, Christian
- Vilfranchie, Myrcie
- Scott, Betty
- Lydia, Dejesus
- McElya, Julie
- Schell, Ashley
- Michael, Martin
- Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy
 - Martin, Juliana
 - Kelley, Dulce
 - Reyes, Virginia
- Six Mile Charter Academy
 - Baldwin, Shawna
 - Sombolinggi, Erika
 - Effenberg, Anna
 - Immediato, Eugene
 - Hethcox, Jennifer
 - Wolbach, Bonny
 - Morales, Martiza
 - Williams, Latara
 - Carter, Chloe
 - Mick, Laurie
 - Lytle, Ashlynn

MOTION: A motion was made by Paul Sallarulo and seconded by Billie Miller to approve the Out of Field Waivers for the above-mentioned Southwest Charter Foundation Schools. Motion was approved unanimously.

Test Waivers

- The board reviewed the General Knowledge test waivers for the following schools:

- Bonita Springs Charter School
 - Dunn, Donald

MOTION: A motion was made by Billie Miller and seconded by Dennis Clark to approve the Test Waivers for the above-mentioned Southwest Charter Foundation Schools. Motion was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

- Hearing no objections, Board Chair Ken Haiko adjourned the February 7, 2024, Southwest Charter Foundation, Inc. Board Meeting at 2:06p.m.



Ken Haiko, Board Chair

Date: 4.11.24