



APPROVED 4/20/2017

Georgia Connections Academy (GACA)  
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION  
Wednesday, April 5, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. ET

Held at the following location:  
Atlanta Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort  
4021 Lakeview Drive  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

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**I. Call to Order & Roll Call**

Ms. Hug called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. when all participants were present in person.

Board Members Present at Roll Call: Alisa Hug, Steve Julal, JoAnn Brown and Rich Thompson;

Board Members Joined During Meeting: Charlotte Collins;

Guests Present: Heather Robinson, School Principal; Gregg Stevens, Deputy Director and General Counsel, and Katie Manthey, Academic Accountability Manager, State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC); Mardi Krenek, Board Consultant, APOC; Allison Reaves, Karen Duquette, Heather Woodward and Megann Arthur, Connections staff (all via phone).

**II. Mission Statement**

At the request of the Board, Ms. Reaves read the school's Mission Statement to begin the meeting.

**III. Strategic Planning Session**

a. GACA Meeting with Georgia Charter School Commission

At the request of the Board, Mr. Stevens and Ms. Manthey reviewed a prepared presentation regarding the State Charter Schools Commission's (SCSC) Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) evaluation tool for schools. Mr. Stevens outlined the three focus areas of the CPF: Academic Performance, Financial Performance and Organizational Performance, as well as the standards required for the SCSC to recommend renewal of a school's charter. He further discussed the additional latitude for recommendation that is offered to schools in their first charter term, and that the SCSC views GACA in that category.

[Ms. Collins joined the meeting at 9:20 a.m.]

Ms. Manthey reviewed academic metric requirements within the CPF with the Board. Board members discussed specific standards with the SCSC representatives. Ms. Manthey further reviewed in detail the state and federal accountability systems, including the specific scoring standards and some background to the academic standards. All participants discussed the CCRPI scoring under the CPF and GACA's academic results for the 2015-16 school year.

Mr. Stevens presented to the Board next regarding the Financial Metrics within the CPF. He reviewed the areas assessed and points available for each metric, as well as the positive results in this area for previous school years' assessments of GACA. Board members discussed the Statement of Net Position and Debt to

Asset Ratio sections of the CPF and GACA's previous three school years' results with the SCSC representatives, and asked for recommendations from the SCSC of ways to continue to improve the school's results. The Board discussed the invoices, fees and payments to Connections as their services provider, and potential strategies for achieving a higher score from the SCSC within the financial section of the CPF.

Mr. Stevens then began reviewing the Organizational Performance areas within the CPF, covering many areas of operations and governance standards. He highlighted educational program compliance, data reporting, board governance and additional standards where GACA has been earning consistently higher assessments. Board members discussed employee qualifications standards with their school leader and the SCSC members, and the federal title requirements that the school must achieve to earn points in this area. All participants had a detailed discussion on student retention, including the policies and procedures which affect the metrics. Mr. Stevens confirmed when completing his review of this section that operational standards is not an area of the SCSC's concerns for GACA.

All participants discussed the performance trends overall for GACA for the previous three school years, and the expectations for the current school year. There was discussion regarding the timing, and the requirements the school must hit in this current year four (4) to meet standards for charter renewal. The Board discussed academic progress and state testing with Mr. Robinson.

The SCSC representatives completed their presentation and opened the discussion to any questions from participants. There was discussion between the SCSC and all participants about the school, the framework and the school's upcoming charter renewal. Board members thanked Mr. Stevens and Ms. Manthey for their time and participation.

[Mr. Stevens and Ms. Manthey left the meeting at 11:05 a.m.]

The Board took a break at 11:10 a.m. and resumed the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

b. Working Lunch

Board Members continued discussion about the school's upcoming charter renewal process.

c. Strategic Planning Session

Ms. Krenek, Vice President, Education at APQC lead the group during the strategic planning session. She introduced herself to the Board members, and provided her background and her company's focus and services. She provided participants with an overview of the previously polled and submitted responses by members of the Board to the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for the school. Ms. Krenek and Board members discussed priorities for the day's planning session, and Connections staff members reviewed documentation and research performed to date to assist the Board in their strategic planning process.

Board members had extensive discussion with Ms. Robinson about the needs of the school to meet the CPF, and specific areas viewed as weaknesses for the school to achieve the state-mandated goals. The Board had discussion on staff retention and challenges to the staff in this environment, as well as strategies to increase and improve parent involvement and participation in the charter renewal process.

d. Brainstorming of Potential/Confirm Goals (SWOT)

Ms. Krenek and Ms. Woodward facilitated the Board's discussion of SWOT suggestions, and documented all areas of SWOT on lists viewable to all participating in the meeting. Board members discussed all contributions to the analysis and identified potential goals for the school's strategic plan's narrowing focus to successfully obtain charter renewal under the CPF. Board members and Ms. Robinson brainstormed goals focused on the CPF, and created some draft goals for the school. All participants discussed and agreed that the school's primary overall focus was academic performance, and areas of the CPF that should be targeted short-term for specific improvement.

e. Action Planning for Goals

Board members established goals pertaining to: (1) Increase Academic Performance, (2) Ensure Staff Retention, (3) Improve Financial Position, and (4) Ensure Longevity of School. Board members narrowed their priorities and established their final goals for the strategic plan. Following the establishment of the specific goals, the Board worked with Ms. Krenek and Connections support staff to brainstorm action items and plans to support completion of each goal. Board members discussed data available to them from the school and Connections, as well as expectations that have been communicated to the school by their authorizer, and how to incorporate all into the plans.

**IV. Adjournment**

Ms. Hug noted that the Board was at the end of its agenda and concluding their work session at 3:15 p.m.