



**APPROVED 02/21/2019**

**Georgia Connections Academy (GACA)  
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

Thursday, January 9, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. ET

**Held at the following location:**  
Georgia Connections Academy  
2763 Meadow Church Road, Suite 208  
Duluth, GA 30097

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**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 3:17 p.m. when all participants were present. The meeting location was open for the public to attend.

**II. Roll Call**

Board Members Present at Roll Call: Rich Thompson, Steve Julal, JoAnn Brown, Susanne Watts and Tiarra Felix (all in person);

Guests Present: Heather Robinson, School Leader; Brazilla Page, School staff; Karen Duquette, Allison Solesby, Heather Woodward and Megann Arthur, Pearson Online & Blended Learning (POBL) staff (in person); and Tanya Lee, POBL staff (via phone).

**III. Mission Statement**

At Mr. Thompson's request, Ms. Felix read the school's Mission Statement to begin the meeting.

**IV. Public Comment**

There were no comments at this time.

**V. Routine Business**

a. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Thompson asked the Board to review the Agenda distributed prior to the meeting. There being no changes noted, a motion was made by Mr. Julal and seconded by Dr. Brown as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Agenda for the January 9, 2019 Board Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Georgia Connections Academy, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

**VI. Board Strategic Development**

a. Review and Discussion of Current Strategic Plan

Ms. Robinson highlighted a brief state of the school report, and reviewed the objectives for the strategic development portion of the meeting.

Ms. Robinson continued to present on progress to date on the current Strategic Plan. She advised that the focus of most initiatives at the school is the CCRPI score; she reviewed how the score is calculated, and that it is an average of elementary, middle and high schools. Ms. Robinson reviewed materials handed out at the meeting showing the school's most recent assessment by the district, broken down into specific areas of focus within the CCRPI.

b. Strategic Plan Update

Board members had discussion regarding the state averages, and need to identify best focus areas for resources. Ms. Robinson reviewed in detail the current efforts to maximize points, the many pathways available to students, as well as the activities that best serve students in various subjects.

All in attendance had discussion on partnerships within the community, including those with technical colleges, and outreach efforts for the school.

Ms. Robinson reviewed with the Board considerations in potentially adding 5<sup>th</sup> grade back, pointing out areas where the last testing results beat the state averages and the funding impacts to the additional grade offering. All participants had discussion on the funding model, the certified teachers available at the school currently, and the potential positive impact to the school's district score. Board members had discussion regarding the climate for virtual charter schools in the state.

All participants had extensive discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of requesting a charter amendment to allow offering 5<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as future framework to potentially include expanding CTE pathways. There being no additional discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Julal and seconded by Dr. Brown as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Authorization for the School Executive Director to Request a Charter Amendment allowing for the additional offering of 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, beginning in the 2019-2020 School Year, and for the Board President to act as Board Designee for Associated Documentation, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

[The Board took a brief recess at 4:35 p.m.]

[The Board re-convened at 4:47 p.m. and Ms. Lee joined the meeting via phone.]

**VII. Oral Reports**

a. School Leader's Report

i. Data Dashboard

Ms. Robinson reviewed the school data dashboard information as included in the Board materials with the Board.

Board members discussed with Ms. Robinson the option of adding a winter graduation ceremony.

ii. Beating the Odds Results

Ms. Robinson discussed with the Board details of the Beating the Odds results.

Ms. Page reviewed the EOC Score Comparison for winter 2017 versus 2018. She advised of the school's policies regarding certain testing prior to and following instruction.

b. Financial Report

Ms. Lee reviewed the financial materials included in the Board materials in detail, highlighting the budget and forecasting areas of the financial statements. She reviewed the changes in the financials and forecasted expenses since the last meeting's statements, including the balance sheet and school's revenue and expense statements.

**VIII. Board Strategic Development**

a. EMO Evaluation Update

Mr. Julal advised that the EMO evaluation had been recently completed, and that the results would be included in the February Board materials for discussion.

b. SCSC Annual Mandatory Training Update

Ms. Arthur reminded the Board of the upcoming State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) training opportunities in February. The Board discussed their ongoing commitment to governance training and professional development. Ms. Arthur had discussion with the Board regarding options for completing the compliance requirement for those unavailable for the two annual sessions.

**IX. Consent Items**

Mr. Thompson asked the Board members whether there were any items from the Consent Items that they wished to have moved to Action Items for discussion, or tabled. There being no changes noted, a motion was made by Mr. Julal and seconded by Ms. Watts as follows:

RESOLVED, the Consent Items:

- a. Approval of Minutes from the November 15, 2018 Board Meeting;
- b. Approval of Staffing Report;
- c. Approval of Connections Academy of Georgia, LLC Invoices for November and December;
- d. Approval of the 2019-2020 School Year General School Handbook; and
- e. Approval of the 2019-2020 School Year State Specific School Handbook; are hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

**X. Action Items**

a. Approval of Funded Enrollment Target for the 2019-2020 School Year

Ms. Robinson reminded the Board of discussion held during Strategic Development earlier in the meeting in regards to grade level offerings and preferred enrollment targets. She reviewed her recommendation of a proposed enrollment target for the 2019-2020 school year of 5,000 students and sought Board input in regards to the number. The Board had discussion and agreed that this was a good target to set for the upcoming school year based on staffing and budget. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Dr. Brown and seconded by Mr. Julal as follows:

RESOLVED, that the funded enrollment target of 5,000 students for the 2019-2020 school year, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **XI. Information Items**

### **a. State and Strategic Client Relations (SCCR) Update**

Ms. Duquette provided the Board with an update on legislative activities which may impact the school.

### **b. School Leadership Team (PSLT) Update**

Ms. Solesby presented to the Board on behalf of Pearson Online & Blended Learning's (POBL) Partner School Leadership Team.

#### **i. School Operations Metrics**

Ms. Solesby reviewed the quarterly School Operations Metrics to the Board. She reviewed the data included in the Board materials, highlighting the school's performance as compared with other POBL partnering schools of similar size and years in operation.

### **c. Budget Development Update**

Ms. Duquette reviewed the proposed 2019-2020 budget development process with the Board, as well as anticipated revenue sources. She reminded the Board that the process, while ongoing, is significantly aided by the Board's approval of a funded enrollment target, as completed earlier in the meeting. Ms. Lee reminded the Board of the approximate timeline and those involved heavily in the process, including the Board Treasurer, School Leader and POBL. Ms. Duquette and Mr. Julal further discussed areas for specific focus in the development process.

### **d. SCSC Communication Regarding GA Dept. of Law Interpretation of OML for GACA**

Ms. Arthur reviewed with the Board the recent State Charter School Commission (SCSC) communication outlining their interpretation of the open meeting laws. The Board had extensive discussion with Ms. Arthur and Ms. Robinson regarding the timing of the communication, the background and source of the review, and the implications to the Board. Board members expressed an interest in responding to the interpretation, specifically that the GA Dept. of Law does not believe the school has "statewide jurisdiction" and "statewide powers," and thus the SCSC is now enforcing a requirement for Board members to have a quorum present in person for every meeting. The Board had additional discussion about the limitations for the school with a diverse, statewide student body and the ability to recruit future board members outside a small geographic area in the state under this newly enforced requirement. Lastly, Board members discussed potential locations in the Atlanta metro area to hold meetings for the remainder of the school year, to allow for the Board to meet the requirements.

**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Pursuant to O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-3 – to discuss the employment, compensation or periodic evaluation of an employee**

The Board entered into Executive Session at 6:45 p.m. upon a motion made by Mr. Julal, seconded by Ms. Watts and confirmed via a roll call vote of the Board pursuant to O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-3 – to discuss the employment, compensation or periodic evaluation of an employee. Board members in attendance were: Rich Thompson, Steve Julal, JoAnn Brown, Tiarra Felix and Susanne Watts. Guests in attendance were: Allison Reaves and Megann Arthur. All others left the meeting at this time.

After the Board concluded their discussion, the Board resumed their open session via roll call vote motioned by Mr. Julal and seconded by Dr. Brown at 7:13 p.m. and confirmed via roll call of all Board members present. No action was taken during Executive Session.

**XIII. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date – Thursday, February 21, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. ET**

Mr. Thompson noted that the Board was at the end of its agenda. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m. The next regular meeting is to be held on Thursday, February 21, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.