



**Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 4pm  
339 North 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19139**

*The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m.*

Board Members in Attendance: Andrew Addis, Joseph Conwell, Rebecca Davis, James Diehl, William Kontes, Sally Randolph, Patrick South, Noah Tennant, William Thorkelson, Elaine Wells, Wesley Wyatt

Board Members Excused: Eric Dobson, Isaac Ewell, Steven Kempf, Albert Oehrle, Matthew Schuh, Stephen Smith, Walter Zimolong

Board Members Joined by Phone: Steven Ujifusa

Staff in Attendance: Ian Doreian, Ruth Gonzalez, Colleen Smith, Joel Witter, Kerry Woodward

Guests: Jenna Smalley (Kleinbard LLC)

I. Call to Order: *William Thorkelson*

Mr. Thorkelson calls the meeting to order, and wishes the board a happy new year. Mr. Thorkelson distributes the adopted key elements of Boys' Latin's strategic plan for reference throughout today's meeting. Mr. Thorkelson then gives the board a preview of topics to be discussed today, including funding /constructing a proposed chemistry lab and summary results of Boys' Latin's standardized test scores.

There is a motion to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2018 board meeting, which is moved by Mr. Conwell and seconded by Dr. Randolph. The motion passes unanimously.

II. CEO Report: *Noah Tennant*

Dr. Tennant begins by thanking Joel Witter, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Boys' Latin, for being here today to discuss academic progress and state testing.

Dr. Tennant then gives the board an update on Act 55—a new state mandate that requires trustees on a board to receive specific training. For new board members, four hours of training are required and for sitting board members, two hours of training are

required. Dr. Tennant states that Boys' Latin is in the midst of applying to be an official provider of such training, and is confident the school will be approved. Over the next few months, the administration team will reach out to board members about opportunities to receive this training. Dr. Tennant advises that this training will be an annual requirement.

There is a discussion on what the training would consist of, and who facilitates the training.

Continuing, Dr. Tennant updates the board on Boys' Latin's charter agreement. Boys' Latin was approved last year for a new charter, but with conditions. Boys' Latin has been working with the Charter School Office (CSO) on framing these conditions and is making progress on a new charter agreement. Boys' Latin's staff met with the CSO last week to work on the language of the charter, and issues such as transparency surrounding how Boys' Latin is compared to other schools. Ms. Woodward adds that out of 81 total charter schools in Philadelphia, Boys' Latin stands with 70 others who have not yet signed their charter. Ms. Woodward assures the board that Boys' Latin has not run into any issues with securing debt financing. Dr. Tennant notes that significant progress has been made with new leadership in the CSO.

Dr. Tennant announces that Boys' Latin's annual career day will be held on Friday, March 1 at the high school, with State Senator Anthony Williams as the keynote speaker. Ms. Woodward adds that the event will be held from 8:30 to 11:30 am for 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. So far 24 panelists are committed, and Ms. Woodward is seeking additional presenters, both men and women, in the fields of athletics, education, engineering, and the arts.

Mr. Witter then begins a presentation on Boys' Latin's academic progress. Mr. Witter explains that his role is to consult with teachers about teacher practice and crunch the numbers of student performance data.

Mr. Witter then dives into standardized test scores. Mr. Witter explains that traditionally, 6<sup>th</sup> graders entering Boys' Latin are already two years behind in math and reading, as students were disserved either by prior schools or not finding success in former schools. Boys' Latin receives a large range of student capacity. Then Mr. Witter helps determine how to work best with the students, and explains the importance of talking about scores as comparisons or personal bests—students need to unlearn the idea that academic improvement is impossible beyond a certain age.

Mr. Witter then addresses the various ways to look at test scores in terms of achievement (how well the student is doing now) and growth (charting progress)—Boys' Latin focuses on growth. Boys' Latin uses an internal benchmark MAP Test which was developed to track student progress by comparing Boys' Latin students to the national population, as opposed to only local institutions. For state benchmarks, middle school students take the PSSAs, whereas high school students take the Keystone Exams.

Mr. Witter displays the recent PSSA scores, which shows 32 percent proficiency in English, 6 percent proficiency in math, and 27 percent proficiency in science. However when the middle schoolers took the growth test, significant growth was charted for the class of 2020 in both English (growth from the 36<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup> percentile) and math (growth from the 30<sup>th</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup> percentile) from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Boys' Latin's School Progress Report from the District shows low scores for achievement, but the middle school is named a model school for progress.

A discussion follows as to what these results mean, the impacts of poverty on student achievement, and student motivation surrounding the state benchmarks. Mr. Witter explains that when students arrive to Boys' Latin in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they are in the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile—Boys' Latin does a lot of work to get as many students out of that percentile as possible. Mr. Witter confirms that Boys' Latin's PSSA scores are behind the school district average.

Continuing, Mr. Witter address Boys' Latin's Keystone scores which are stronger than PSSA scores, despite a slight dip in proficiency for the class of 2019. Mr. Witter explains that the state average is 60 percent proficiency, and Boys' Latin is not far off from that state average and beats the city average quite consistently. Mr. Witter states that the class of 2020 is the first class to advance from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to high school from Boys' Latin middle school, and the strong results demonstrate the impact of Boys' Latin's curriculum from early on.

In terms of future steps towards improvement and growth, Mr. Witter details how Boys' Latin purchased the Eureka Math program to help align critical skills. Boys' Latin intends to build English skills by investing in ThinkCERCA, an online writing program. Mr. Witter adds that Boys' Latin's curriculum has also been revised to include vigorous SAT preparation.

A discussion follows on student retention, and what makes the class of 2019 different. Dr. Tennant notes that one aim of constructing a new science lab is to keep students who may be apt to leave to attend schools with strong science reputations.

Dr. Tennant and Mr. Witter conclude their presentations.

### III. Board Committee Reports

#### a. Parent Liaison Report: Elaine Wells

Ms. Wells begins by reporting on how Boys' Latin students received the Black Boy Experience seminar, which was held at the high school on January 28. Ms. Wells describes that the students were highly receptive to the experience, as it provides a safe space for boys of color to talk about trauma, lack of support, and emotional and mental challenges faced. Some students shared experiences about not having a support system, or not being able to express emotion over trauma throughout their

lives—other answers ranged from violence, abuse, parental incarceration, going hungry, and how to express sexuality. Ms. Wells describes one exercise wherein the students stood in a line, put their hand on the shoulder of the boy in front of them, and shared one thing they were struggling with—one boy shared that his father was recently sentenced to 22 years in prison. Ms. Wells notes that students were comfortable enough to share that their parents are sometimes perpetrators of toxic masculinity, which takes a toll on young men. Dr. Tennant adds that 18 students participated, and Boys’ Latin is talking about making the Black Boy Experience part of the freshman summer academy so all incoming students can benefit.

Continuing, Ms. Wells reports that Mr. McDaniel held a principal dessert and semi-EFN meeting on January 24 where parents were invited to share food and give feedback on how students were performing. Ms. Wells described the event as a positive opportunity to dialog with the principal, and one topic that was brought up was offering better school lunches. Ms. Wells announces that there will be a community meal after Saturday School for both parents and students at the end of this month, where parents can get together to network and older students can serve as mentors for younger students.

Ms. Wells concludes her presentation.

b. Facilities: *Joseph Conwell*

Mr. Conwell begins by summarizing the recent facilities projects undertaken at Boys’ Latin, primarily deferred maintenance and minimizing risk of liability. Mr. Conwell discusses upcoming projects for the board to consider, including roof, ceiling and pointing work on various buildings, and improving the middle school’s parking lot and concrete. Mr. Conwell states that the facilities committee met recently to discuss future objectives such as a proposed environmental audit of the school (to test air and water quality, along with asbestos) and a physical security audit of the school.

Mr. Conwell explains how the facilities committee wants to give the Boys’ Latin administration ownership of future facilities projects, and work with the administration to help make these projects happen.

Continuing, Mr. Conwell updates the board on the proposed science labs. The science labs are designed, Boys’ Latin paid an architect, and now the committee is putting the labs out to bid. Mr. Conwell states that the early indication is that the chemistry lab would cost approximately \$250,000. Mr. Conwell states the facilities committee is confident that the lab would fall within this estimate, and hopes to receive three bids. Boys’ Latin is on track time-wise for the project to start in May and be completed in August.

A discussion follows on the need for science labs, and how many labs are anticipated. Mr. Conwell clarifies that two labs are currently designed, a chemistry lab and a biology lab, with the chemistry lab being the top priority. Dr. Tennant adds that he

feels strongly about moving forward with a chemistry lab, as one would add to the standard of excellence provided to students. Dr. Tennant explains the value of hands-on learning, and the invaluable soft skills that are acquired from group work in a real lab. Dr. Tennant states that students who have had beakers and burners in their hands in high school are more successful when they embrace these materials in college. In terms of student retention, Dr. Tennant notes that having a chemistry lab would help keep students who may be apt to leave to attend another school with a more robust science program.

A discussion follows on financing the chemistry lab. Mr. Kontes explains that the finance committee wants to make sure the school has cash on hand to pay for such projects—though Boys’ Latin has adequate cash on hand now, the school is still waiting on a possible tuition claw-back from the school district. Once those numbers are finalized, the school will have a better sense of its cash on hand in order to green light the chemistry lab. In sum, Mr. Kontes states that the finance committee wants to wait on tuition reimbursement numbers before committing to the chemistry lab. Ms. Woodward adds that these numbers are usually published by the end of February.

Mr. Conwell reiterates that the facilities committee believes the science labs are an immediate need, and concludes his presentation.

c. Finance: *William Kontes*

Mr. Kontes begins by summarizing Boys’ Latin’s 2018 Audit Report for the board. Mr. Kontes explains that the audit came back clean and sound, the only mark against Boys’ Latin was that the audit date was missed. Despite this, Mr. Kontes assures the board that the missed date will not affect the CSO’s opinion of Boys’ Latin.

Continuing, Mr. Kontes states that Boys’ Latin’s financials are sound, in both development and attrition. Mr. Kontes then addresses the issue of modifying school lunches, which is not easy because Boys’ Latin could lose a \$300,000 federal subsidy if certain changes are made.

There is a motion to accept the 2018 Audit Report as submitted, which is moved by Mr. Kontes and seconded by Mr. South. The motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Kontes concludes his presentation.

d. Development: *Patrick South*

Mr. South begins by thanking Ms. Smith and Ms. Woodward for their hard work, as development is in good shape for the school year. The committee has raised more than its budgeted \$1 million, thanks to the great success of the annual appeal, which was distributed to approximately 1,000 donors and potential donors. Mr. South thanks Ms. Smith for her excellent work on organizing Boys’ Latin’s first ever alumni annual appeal.

Continuing, Mr. South announces that the annual event has been planned and will take place on April 26 at the Merion Golf Club with Katie and Bill McNabb as honorees. Sponsorship information has already been sent out, and invitations are expected to be sent out in March. Mr. South states that the development committee anticipates raising \$200,000 from the annual event.

Mr. South explains how the committee is looking for a notable athlete to be the keynote speaker at the annual event to keep in line with the theme, and asks the board if they have any connections to please share. Ms. Smith mentions that the McNabbs founded Boys' Latin's crew team.

A discussion follows on potential athletes to invite, ranging from former Phillies, former NBA players, and former NCAA Basketball players.

Mr. South concludes his presentation.

Mr. Thorkelson thanks everyone for attending, and states that the next meeting will host a critical vote on approving the science labs.

*With there being no need for Executive Session, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Sally Randolph, Secretary