



Endeavor Board Meeting Agenda: April 18, 2011

Lisa Springle called the regular meeting of the Endeavor Charter School Board of Directors to order at 7:04 pm in the Endeavor multi-purpose room. She provided a brief review of the new organization of the agenda and the guidelines for public comments.

Present:

Lisa Springle, Steve McAdams, Helen Harris, Christian Nechyba, Margaret Holder, Christine Northrup, Larry Woolard

Brief Updates:

(1) Treasurer's Report

**Margaret Holder
Larry Woolard**

The finance committee had begun discussions about the budget for the 2011-12 school year. The Regions Money Market account had a balance of \$225,587.53. The Bank of America CD account had a balance of \$202,660.21. The First Citizens operating account had a balance of \$838,123.09. The finance committee was considering moving \$200,000 from the operating account into a new CD.

(2) Director's Update

Steve McAdams

The handbook and website were being revised and updated for next year. The administration was working on several policy papers on academic differentiation and K-8 organization. Also, the administration had interviewed for every vacant position and filled two with very strong candidates. The recent computerized EOG trial had been a helpful experience.

(3) Leadership Team Update

Anna Helgevold

An update on kindergarten curriculum was provided. In reading, center routines had been revised, and teachers met with every guided reading group four times weekly. Writing and math curriculum were briefly reviewed. In social studies, students "travelled" to different world regions and in science, students were learning to differentiate animals from various parts of the world.

(4) PAWS Update

Kris Stauffer

Candidates for every board position except president-elect had been selected for next year thanks to the PAWS nominating committee. The end of year picnic was being organized with the outgoing and incoming board. The new family orientation was coming up on April 28, and PAWS would be represented along with other stakeholder groups. The next PAWS board meeting would be held on May 23 at 6 pm and would be followed by a general membership meeting at 7 pm. PAWS was not certain whether there would be a significant surplus in the PAWS budget at the end of this school year.

(5) Enrichment Update

Tamara Santana

In the third quarter, 183 students participated in 10 after school classes, 74 students participated in music ensembles, 13 students participated in before school enrichment, 32 parents participated in parent education programs, and 6 students participated in the academic mentoring program. 12 parents from outside ECS participated in parenting workshops.

(6) Surveys Update

Margaret Holder

Surveys would be electronically distributed in the next two days. The board would need to consider how numerical data and comments would be organized.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of Minutes

Christian Nechyba

Christian Nechyba moved for the approval of the minutes from the March board meeting. Lisa Springle seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Big Picture Topics:

(1) Grade-level Structure

**Christi Whiteside
Melissa Dougherty
Board Contact:
Christian Nechyba**

Christi Whiteside presented the administration's vision for the organizational framework of the K-8 ECS community. This had developed out of ideas from the communications task force to clarify continuity in structure and organization within grade level clusters. The school functions as a grade K-3 cluster, a grade 4-6 cluster, and a grade 7-8 cluster. The background behind this organization of grade-level clusters, the progression from one cluster to the next, and the progression of students within each cluster were reviewed. [The draft of this presentation is attached as Appendix A.] Electives and service would be considered as future presentation topics.

(2) Academic Differentiation

Steve McAdams

**Christi Whiteside
Melissa Dougherty
Board Contact:
Larry Woolard**

Melissa Dougherty and Christi Whiteside reviewed the topic of academic differentiation at Endeavor. The school was committed to providing both enrichment and remediation, and to meeting all students at their level of readiness. The pre- and post-testing process, as well as leveled reading with ongoing lexile adaptive assessment was reviewed. In mathematics, assignment depth, content and difficulty vary depending on student readiness in all grades. To address the question of serving academically gifted students, Steve McAdams stated that only a small minority of North Carolina charter schools offer traditional AG programs. Endeavor preferred an approach of differentiated instruction of all students throughout the curriculum, as opposed to the labeling of some students as AG in a such a small academic community. The typical process of AG assessment and services in public schools was reviewed. Only a brief period of AG instruction was usually provided to a small group of identified students in the traditional public school approach. However, at Endeavor, half of students are significantly advanced in reading. Double literature/composition blocks would give all students an advantage going to high school. Double math blocks would hopefully help all students in retention of math skills. [The draft of this presentation is attached as Appendix B.]

Public Comments:

Mrs. Bass brought up concerns about academic difficulty level for some students in the upper grades. She would meet with the administration to further discuss her concerns. Mrs. Stephenson inquired about the purpose of closed session meetings. Mrs. Siar inquired about staff retention.

Closed Session:

Lisa Springle moved that the board go into closed session to discuss personnel topics, in accordance with statute 143.318.11 (a) (6). Christian Nechyba seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The board went into closed session at 9:04 pm. The board returned to open session at 9:10 pm.

Adjournment:

Lisa Springle adjourned the meeting at 9:10 pm.

Appendix A: (DRAFT Document Presented)

This document is intended to clarify the inner workings of the school to allow parents, staff, and Board members a deeper understanding of the organizational patterns within the school and better prepare our students and families for times of significant transition. It does not reflect change to the workings of the school, nor to the original charter, but does reflect more clarity. The final version of this document will be posted on the newly reorganized website due at the opening of next year and will be a tool used as families consider their application to Endeavor.

ECS: A K-8 Community

Since Endeavor Charter School opened in 2008, it has been a mammoth, yet rewarding task to create, nurture, and grow a new program. One fact we have realized is that Endeavor is a unified K-8 entity that has three distinct stages of independence. We are working toward creating more continuity in our grade level policies. We realize that, while the expectations for grade 8 and for grade 1 will not be the same, it is helpful for there to be grade level “clusters” where policies are similar if not the same. Such similarities make the transition to a new grade easier for our students and their families. There are many advantages to this streamlining, such as decreasing the time devoted at the beginning of each year to explanation of policies and procedures. This organization also supports research on child development (from such experts as Piaget) in which a gradual increase in independence is viewed as best supporting a child’s growth and ability to be successful. We originally followed the typical grade level groupings of K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. However, as we dug deeper, we have determined that the school functions a bit differently: the most similarities are among grades K-3, grades 4-6, and grades 7-8.

In grades K-3, students remain in predominantly self-contained classes: in grades K and 1, they are completely self-contained; in grade 2, students change classes for math only; in grade 3,

students change classes for math and reading, but remain with their homeroom groups for science, social studies, and writing. These years will offer a smooth transition from self-contained, one teacher, classes with little homework to class changes among several teachers and the beginnings of homework routines. In addition, each grade has its own in-school community service focus. As a lower grades cluster, these grades focus on collecting pop tops for the Ronald McDonald House. While all students in these grades will focus on this service topic, their approach will vary by grade. Our youngest students might make welcome cards for the Ronald McDonald House staff to deliver to new families. In subsequent grades, students in this cluster will take on the responsibility for collecting the tabs from other classes, counting the tabs, and compiling the data about our collections. All three grades will contribute to one collective service, thus furthering the sense of community.

In grades 4, 5, and 6, students work with all three teachers on their grade level each day. Starting in the 2011-2012 school year, one teacher at each of these grades will provide a double block of math instruction, another will teach classes in science and social studies; the third teacher will teach classes in writing and reading. Students will be assessed in these five separate courses. Fourth grade will clearly be a transitional year. During these years, expectations for independence, academic rigor, and good decision making will increase. Homework will be assigned more frequently. Students in these grades are also subject to detention for consistently failing to meet such expectations. As an additional step in the transition process, during fourth quarter of the sixth grade year, students will select two “pre-elective” courses rather than take the three traditional fine arts courses. This choice will prepare them for the electives available in the seventh and eighth grades. These intermediate grades focus on the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation “Coins for a Cure” as the community service project for these years. Students might begin this

focus by collecting and compiling data about the types of Diabetes and Diabetic nutrition in fourth grade; in fifth grade they might progress to study the effects of Diabetes on the body; and by sixth grade they might research innovations in treating diabetes as part of a non-fiction research unit of study. All these grades will work together to organize and manage the school-wide coin collection.

We realize that at the end of the fifth grade many students are excited about moving on to what they envision to be the typical middle school. However, at Endeavor, we do not really have a traditional middle school. In the sixth grade, the daily schedule is not significantly different; there are no electives, and by law as now defined, students in the sixth grade may not play on public school sports teams. In our current building, with our current number of staff and students, the sixth grade will be operationally similar to the fourth and fifth grades. One of the highlights of these years is the sixth grade trip to Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama. This is the farthest trip from Endeavor at any grade level, and it marks a significant milestone for our students. Another sixth grade milestone is the introduction of dances with the seventh and eighth grade students.

In grades 7 and 8, big differences are easily seen from sixth grade. Students follow an A day-B day schedule. In addition to the previous five courses, Spanish is also a core course. Students attend three classes each day, so a student might attend Spanish, literature, and math on all A days and attend science, composition, and social studies on all B days. Students in grades 7 and 8 participate in a self-selected elective each quarter, as a step in preparing them for the many course choices they will have in high school and college. Previous elective choices have included musical theatre, technology, physical fitness, 3D art, chorus, and scholastic empowerment. These students are also eligible to play on competitive sports teams through

Endeavor Pride Boosters, following the no cut policy. The Endeavor Pride is proud to offer teams in boys' and girls' soccer, boys' and girls' basketball, boys' and girls' cross country, boys' and girls' tennis, and boys' baseball. Students in these grades are eligible to serve detention for rule infraction. They manage our school's recycling program and serve the NC Food Bank, through a food drive and volunteering at their site, as their community service focus. In seventh grade, students focus on hunger as a world issue. In the eighth grade, students might read Fast Food Nation and continue their focus on food and its role in health. An overriding theme for the seventh grade will be "Need"; and in eighth grade, "How Can One Person Make a Difference?" These service opportunities prepare them to be future leaders in the wider community around us.

As our students grow and mature, they are able to handle and excel in different schedules. We are thrilled to see them manage their materials and their time as they move through Endeavor taking these gradual steps toward the independence and self-sufficiency they will need to excel in high school. We feel confident that the gradual increase in expectations from kindergarten to eighth grade is an important aspect of our responsibility to prepare our students the challenge of life outside our walls.

Appendix B: (DRAFT document presented)

Academic Differentiation

As with all public schools, Endeavor Charter School serves students with a variety of academic strengths and needs. We feel strongly that students should be given the opportunity to work at their level of readiness whenever possible. To support this, teachers seek opportunities to engage all students within the regular classroom setting every day. Students are organized for reading instruction based on achievement in reading skills beginning in kindergarten. By third grade, students begin switching to leveled reading classes. In math, students are supported in the whole class setting in kindergarten and first grade through whole class instruction and skill-based math centers targeting specific learners with specific strengths and needs. By second grade, students switch to leveled math classes. In grades 2-6, students take a math pre-test prior to each unit of study. Students and teachers are sorted into groups with similar needs. These groups may vary significantly as new units are assessed. Beginning in grade 7, students are enrolled in different math courses, so there is less transition between classes. At this level, students may be enrolled in Pre-Algebra or Algebra I. In grade 8, our students enroll in Algebra I or Geometry.

Our students with identified academic needs are served through our Exceptional Children's program working in conjunction with the classroom teachers. Our EC teachers follow a primarily push-in model, working with the classroom teacher in the regular classroom setting. The regular classroom teacher is responsible for meeting all IEP goals and differentiating the academic expectations from the standard course of study at the grade level.

We have many students with a wide array of academic gifts. We appreciate and applaud those gifts. However, we do not identify our students as "AG" or "academically gifted." This is key to our program. However, because our teachers do this differentiation flawlessly, parents may not realize the amount of specific ability-based instruction and support their students are receiving.

For example...

- Students are grouped primarily according to readiness in math by their performance on pretests.
- Students are grouped primarily according to readiness in reading based on their lexile score.
- Classroom reading material is arranged by lexile and fits a wide range of reading abilities allowing all students to have books appropriate for their level.
- Small group instruction for reading and writing to meet the needs of each student
- Flexible pacing to meet student readiness.
- Enrichment math menus to allow students that are mastering basic content quickly to expand their knowledge through various higher level thinking skills.
- Extension projects

- Book clubs that stress high level skills and promote an active discussion among students
- Individual student conferencing
- Curriculum Coordinators support differentiation through various push in and pullout activities.
- Differentiated learning centers for reading and math (various grade levels)
- Pushing students to make connections across curriculum to see how the pieces fit together
- Assignment depth, content, and difficulty vary depending on student readiness in all grades

For students to be identified according to traditional models as “academically gifted” they must demonstrate ability in either math or reading. In many local school systems, 3rd grade students can be identified as AG by taking 2 standardized tests – the COGAT and if the COGAT score is high enough, the Iowa; also there are other less formal factors such as work samples that may be taken into consideration. Based on their scores from these assessments, students are categorized as not gifted, having moderate gifts, strong gifts, or very strong gifts. These assessments identify strengths in reading and math only.

Individual schools determine how best to serve these students. Often only those students identified with strong or very strong gifts are served through a pull-out program. All others are served within their classroom through differentiated assignments. Those who qualify are served by a resource teacher in math and/or reading. Individual schools create a plan for this resource teacher to serve these students, often once a week in a pull-out environment.

Our students do not wait until the third grade to have their strengths recognized and receive differentiated instruction on a daily basis. Their strengths may be recognized in any area, not only in reading or math. Endeavor Charter School firmly believes that consistent, meaningful differentiation through the regular classroom best supports our students of all needs. We truly believe that immersing students in a differentiated environment serves them in a far superior way compared to an isolated pullout program.

Traditional public schools in North Carolina are required to identify and serve AG students. As a charter school, we are not required to identify students, although we value, recognize, and serve our students’ gifts on a daily basis through the regular classroom environment. Students previously identified as AG are still identified, but are considered currently inactive by the state. However, our students whether previously identified as gifted or not, are anything but inactive.

They are, in fact, participating in a program which seeks to recognize and expand strengths in any academic area at any age.

The Charter School Act citation, 115c-238.29E(f):

“Except as otherwise provided in this part and pursuant to the provisions of its charter, a charter school is exempt from statutes and rules applicable to a local board of education or local school administrative unit.”