



Board Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2023, 12:11 pm

ATTENDING:

Alan Buckland	Nikki Hart	Eric Semlear
Christian Chesnut	Amanda Kaiser	Dr. Jo Ann Simmons
Dr. Aimee Dennis	Jeffrey Kennemer, President	
Dr. Gina Doepker	Dr. Michael Odell	
Dr. Dominick Fazarro	Dr. Jaclyn Pedersen	

Guests logging in via the online stream, including Rachel Hawkins and Dr. Kelly Dyer.

1. Call to Order

The board meeting of the UT Tyler University Academy was called to order at 12:11 p.m. by Mr. Kennemer on Thursday, September 14, 2023, confirming that a quorum was present.

2. Pledge

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was said, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag.

3. Public Comment

Mr. Kennemer confirmed there were no registered requests for public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

4. Consent Agenda

The minutes of the previous meeting, Thursday, August 10, 2023, were presented for questions or discussion. There were none. Dr. Fazarro made a motion to accept the minutes, and Dr. Doepker seconded the motion, passing unanimously.

5. Request Approval of Policy Update PG 2.20: Instruction, Accelerated Instruction, Unsatisfactory Performance on Assessment Instruments.

Nikki Hart presented the updates to board policy 2.20, as affected by changes to HB4545, namely the required hours decreasing from 30 to 15, preferential focus will be on a student's math and reading accelerated instruction, the tutorial max group size increased, and parents can waive participation in accelerated instruction.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

6. Superintendent Report from Dr. Simmons

a. Financial Update

- i. **2022-2023 Budget Report:** Christian Chesnut presented the August 2023 financial report, as attached to the agenda.
- ii. **Intent to Apply: Safety and Facilities Enhancement (SAFE) Grant:** Dr. Dennis reported that the grant is available for schools not meeting minimum compliance requirements. We will review our compliance and submit a grant request if needed. Mr. Kennemer asked how the state decides who gets the money. Answer: The state reviews all requests and selects schools with the highest needs. Our needs assessment will be completed by September 21, 2023.

- b. **2023-2024 Gifted and Talented Handbook:** Nikki Hart presented the updates to the current Gifted and Talented Handbook, which were primarily contact information and current data. The percentage of students on each campus that are identified as G/T: Longview has 18.8%, Palestine has 9.6%, and Tyler has 5%. The district has 10.4% identified as G/T. The discussion that followed noted that the information about G/T could be found on our website, that all students receive an initial screening in KG, teachers/parents can recommend/request testing at any time, and that we already essentially teach all students as if they were qualified for G/T.

- c. **2023-2024 CTE Handbook:** Nikki Hart presented changes to the CTE Handbook, primarily the addition of Flight & Space and Energy & the Environment to the 7th/8th-grade students' programs of study.

- d. **Title III Annual Report/ESL Waiver:** Nikki Hart presented current information on our ESL program:

- i. At the time of the report, 38 students were identified across the district, with 11 students identified in Longview, 9 students identified in Palestine, and 18 students identified in Tyler.
- ii. A large majority of those students showed successful progress scores in STAAR/EOC testing, while only 42% advanced in TELPAS.
- iii. To address the limited advancement in TELPAS, the district will switch from the Summit K-12 program to Lexia English Language Development. It costs a bit more but has been shown to be superior.
- iv. Previously, a student needed to pass all 4 categories: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. TEA is changing the criteria to a composite score, allowing for a student to pass if the overall score is advanced high.
- v. There are waivers needing to be filed for teachers who have Emergent Bilingual students but are not ESL-certified. The waiver will include three teachers in Longview, two teachers in Palestine, and five teachers in Tyler.
- vi. Students and teachers will be supported with new programming, tutorials, and professional development.

- e. **District Enrollment and Attendance:** Dr. Simmons presented that our enrollment looks pretty good, with 394 students in Tyler, 393 students in Longview, and 235 students in Palestine. Attendance is at 96% for Longview and Tyler and 94% for Palestine. There has been an increase in reports of illness at the Palestine campus.
- f. **Campus Updates:** The campus updates were covered when reviewing the facilities under the administrative updates.
- g. **Administrative Updates**
 - i. **Facilities**
 1. Longview: Dr. Simmons and Mrs. Hawkins met with a planning team from UT Tyler about the 24-25 school year. Plans are in discussion to add 12 classrooms, and more offices, bathrooms, and labs, with the goal of staying ahead of schedule. Longview will also be receiving an expansion of its entryway, perhaps over the holidays, and talks are underway for a school zone to be added.
 2. Tyler: The fencing is complete, and work has begun on the gates. Simmons has met with Dr. Dass about the future of what a UTTUA/School of Education expansion might look like.
 3. Palestine- a shade covering is being evaluated for the Palestine campus.
 - h. **STAAR Data-** Dr. Simmons stated that the STAAR accountability has been pushed back yet again, now to October.

Mr. Semlear asked for an update on the TEA chaplain item: the state's requirement that we vote on allowing a chaplain to be available to students or not. Dr. Dennis stated that the due date was 6 months from September, and we would be consulting with the Texas Public Charter Schools Association for a model policy to present to the Board.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:09 p.m. with Mr. Semlear's motion and Dr. Fazarro's second. The motion passed unanimously.