Democracy Prep Baton Rouge

Minutes
Board Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday December 10th, 2019 at 6:00 PM

Location
4055 Prescott Rd. Baton Rouge, LA 70805

Directors Present
E. Martin, A. Goodart, E. Campbell, C. Lamond, M. Walters

Directors Absent
J. Richey

Guests Present
N. Trivers, L. Jones Easton*, M. Gieg, A. Ntem, C. Raymond, J. Goodwin

*Guests present remotely

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests
B. Call the Meeting to Order

Eddrick Martin, Board Chairperson for Democracy Prep Baton Rouge, called the meeting of the Board of Directors of Democracy Prep Baton Rouge to order on
C. Approve Minutes

Ms. Lamond made motion to approve the minutes from the November 15th, 2019 Board Meeting.

The board VOTED unanimously to approve the motion.

D. Public Comments:

None Applicable

II. Finance Committee Update

A. Review Audit

John Goodwin, Certified Public Accountant at Daigrepoint & Brian, reviewed the Democracy Prep Baton Rouge audit with the board. While reviewing the financial statements, Mr. Goodwin highlighted that DPBR is in a solid financial position. He stated that there is a healthy final balance for the year of 2019, there has been an increase in accounts receivable as well as an overall increase in revenue. Mr. Goodwin also specifically noted that DPBR assets had doubled in the year of 2019 compared to the year of 2018 and that the forgiveness of debt amounting to $783,122.49 in revenue is a significant shift that pushed DPBR to have a positive change in net assets.

When examining the functional expenses for the year ended June 30th, 2018, the board had clarifying questions pertaining to what is tagged as ‘legal and professional services’ under program services and under management and general. The board reinforced the importance of having consistent and clear tagging of items that is comprehensible from year-to-year. Moreover, Mr. Goodwin clarified that the program services are not connected to Applicable Federal Rates (AFR), however Collin Raymond, Senior Financial Manager with Charter School Business Management (CSBM), added that when working with Fourth Sector, they also reviewed and confirmed that DPBR would be in compliance with the 70% funding requirement. On pg. 11 of the financial statements, Allyson Goodart, DPBR board member, inquired about the total balance reflected on the Financial Assets available for General Expenditures listed as $2.1 million. Mr. Goodwin clarified that those figures need to be updated to reflect an accurate figure of close to $900,000, and he reassured the board.
that DPBR is in good condition and does not reflect a material weakness in internal control.

Lastly, Mr. Goodwin confirmed that DPBR is also in good condition regarding their compliance to the written policies and procedures. He stated that the frequency of board meetings can also be amended as long as they are in accordance to the board’s bylaws. Therefore, when it is time to review the audit for Board compliance, DPBR will always be meeting standard protocols and procedures. Additionally, Ms. Goodart suggested that the specificity of language under the Management Company section on pg. 11 should accurately reflect the fee range for the management services, which should reflect a decrease half a percent a year as low as 12%.

The Board confirmed they will vote on the approval of the audit during the Governance and Material agenda items.

B. Updated Financials

Mr. Raymond reviewed the budget versus actuals documents through the first quarter of October. He noted that the end of the year bottom line, net income and deficit, is not finalized and would need to reflect additional factors such as, but not limited to, updated enrollment and additional grants and services. The Board inquired about the cost of medical insurance and Linda Jones Easton, Executive Vice President of DPPS, acknowledged that the cost of benefits increased this school year and that there is also a high usage of the medical insurance next year as well, so she is meeting with the insurance brokers to get more details on the best strategy to use next year. Ms. Gieg also added that her next steps is to work with Jon Harsch, Director of Operations, in ensuring there is a match when coding for appropriate expenditures such as Textbooks and Other curricula. She also noted that there needs to be clarification on how the state awards Minimum Foundation Program dollars to accurately forecast that revenue stream.

III. School Update

A. School Update

When sharing the school update, Ms. Gieg discussed the Interim Assessment dashboard results in ELA and Math. Ms. Gieg stated that mastery is projected as scoring a 70% or higher which is noted as the state’s standard threshold. Ms. Gieg also noted that scholars who score 50% are noted as meeting basic standards. Specifically, Ms. Gieg highlighted some bright spots for 8th grade ELA, 6th grade Math and 3rd grade ELA.
Ms. Gieg noted that during their data reflection day, instructional staff used the data to strategize which targeted standards need to be addressed or retaught. Thus, she noted that the standard growth demonstrated is credited to how teachers prioritize their time when reflecting and reviewing their data. Additionally, grades K, 1, 2 and 8 have outperformed the national average on the Interim Assessments in ELA. On the other hand, Ms. Gieg acknowledges that the math scores are low and that their next action steps are to increase the frequency of inputs to determine the gap in scholar performance as well as strategically plan out the execution of remedial plans for their scholars. Ms. Gieg also highlighted a few scholars who struggled and needed the additional support and services, but have now demonstrated substantial growth in their academic performance. Ms. Trivers noted the importance of setting the year-to-year benchmarks and that the Office of the Superintendent and Academics team will continue to push for an aggressive, yet realistic, benchmark every year.

Lastly, Ms. Gieg also stated that enrollment is currently at 548 scholars and that from those 548 scholars, 46 scholars are noted to have at least one day of out of school suspension. Thus, 8.4% of the scholar population has been suspended at least one day out of school which, given the timing of the school year, is on track to reach their goal of decreasing suspension rates by half. Ms. Gieg adds that will continue to work with Ashley Livingston, School Leader of DPBR, to continuously think through remedial preparations, support and more.

IV. Network Update

A. Network Update

Ms. Trivers shared the network’s civics program as a highlight and competitive advantage that makes Democracy Prep stand out. She stated that the civics program allows scholars to not only understand how our democracy functions but to also be engaged in what that process looks like. She mentioned the formal assessments of how scholars progress towards their civic disposition is executed at the high school level. Ms. Trivers shares that for the high school scholars, every student needs to meet all 10 civic dispositions, Change the World Project and take an Advanced Seminar in Civics. Thus, Ms. Trivers notes that even though formal dispositions are assessed at the high school level, there are elements of the civics program that Ms. Gieg can utilize in executing civic elements at the elementary and middle school level. Moreover, Ms. Trivers shared the civics one-pager with the board and noted a few initiatives that have been fulfilled under the civics program such as the Get-out-the-Vote drive and Advocacy Days. Then, Ms. Trivers reflected and stated that an improvement to
look forward to is thinking about the school as a microcosm of a democracy and having strong student government and class representatives. Ms. Trivers added that this line of thinking affords scholars the opportunity to have a voice and contribute to the school’s growth. Lastly, Ms. Trivers highlighted that the network and the schools participate in an annual day of service, thus there are various platforms in which Democracy Prep aims to engage in civic duty.

V. Governance and Material Items

A. Approve Financial Audit

The Board reflected on the need to approve Democracy Prep Baton Rouge Charter School Financial Statements.

Ms. Campbell motioned to approve the Democracy Prep Baton Rouge Charter School Financial Statements.

Ms. Lamond seconded the motion.

The board VOTED unanimously to approve the DPBR’s Financial Statements.

B. Handbook Update to Discipline Policy

Ms. Gieg reviewed the proposed discipline policy shift in the 2019-2020 Scholar and Family Handbook. She noted that the two additional items that are reflected in the handbook are core beliefs and restorative practices, which is reflected in the Code of Conduct and Restorative Practices section of the handbook. Moreover, Ms. Gieg noted that one of the core beliefs that signifies a significant shift is in regard to ‘non-egregious, non-violent first offenses, scholars will not receive an out-of-school suspension’ and that with this shift, they need to make sure that restorative practices are robustly implemented in the school. Some of these practices include: written reflections, restorative conferences, problem-solving conferences and restorative circles. Ms. Gieg highlighted how suspension re-entry meetings have been helpful to shifting long-term choices of scholars and investing families as well.

Ms. Walters motioned to approve the proposed discipline policy shift in the 2019-2020 Scholar and Family Handbook, and that it be applied to both Elementary and Middle handbooks.

Ms. Goodart seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the proposed discipline policy shift in the 2019-2020 Scholar and Family Handbook.

**VI. Closing Items**

**A. Ethics Training Mandate by Year End**

Mr. Martin noted that the Ethics Training needs to be completed before the end of the year. Ms. Gieg advised that board members send her their Ethics Training completion certificate so that she can provide the documents to the auditors, if requested.

**B. Adjourn Meeting**

Before adjourning, the board celebrated the renewal of the charter for three years, which was approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) earlier that day.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36pm.

Respectfully Submitted, E. Martin