



Essence Preparatory Public School
Board of Directors Meeting
February 15, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Board Member Attendance

The following board members were in attendance:

Brian Dillard	Mike Frisbie
Kanwal Sumnani Lopez	Marques Mitchell
George Pedraza	Henrietta Muñoz

The following board members were not in attendance:

Kim Abernethy	Jackie Gorman
Mary Gradney	

Staff Attendance

Akeem Brown, CEO & Superintendent
Jennipha Ricks, Chief Learning Officer
Deja Derry, Office Manager

Guests (via Zoom)

Stephanie Rodriguez, Charter School Success
Denise Pierce, Attorney
Jennifer Barbeau, High Mark
Jackie Hernandez, Charter School Success

1. The meeting was **called to order** by Chairman Brian Dillard at 5:02 PM with a quorum.
2. Superintendent Akeem Brown introduced the **Mission Moment**, which entailed details of Black History Month:
 - a. The BHM theme is “Black Resistance.” The programmatic components include scholars singing words of affirmations, and a focus on the mission. There will be a livestream event on February 16th: City Council Event (San Antonio African American Archive and Museum). Beauty Ricks performed “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”
3. Superintendent Brown provided the **Superintendent’s Report** entailing the following topics:
 - a. **Summary of the Essence Gala:** Mr. Brown summarized the events at the gala and the funding raised for Essence Prep.
 - b. **Pending Fund Applications:** Mr. Brown discussed the following application in progress:

TEA’s Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities (LASO) Grant
Similar to the TCLAS Grant
Continuation: how can we ensure that students are supported, implementing a potential Saturday school program, summer school, technology funds (currently 1:1; however, also considering how we support scholars in the future)

TEA's Storm Foundation Grant

Build curriculum frameworks (can apply for either math or literacy support frameworks) - Essence chose to focus on math support.

TEA was supposed to notify by 2/12; however, notification should come by 2/27.

We will utilize PO system to draw down funds instead of expensing account.

- c. **Student Recruitment:** Mr. Brown reviewed various recruitment efforts are consistently underway. At the next board meeting on 3/15, we will have a recruitment team representative present to speak to efforts at length.
- d. **Upcoming Trips to Represent Essence Prep:** Mr. Brown reviewed the various events team members will be attending in the coming weeks.

Texas Association of Black Educators: Jae Ricks and Dameon Lutz will be present to present Essence Prep is being recognized as the "Best New School On The Block."

Highmark Summit (Phoenix): The summit brings leaders across the country to discuss how they work with schools, what they've done. Jennifer Barbeau invited Akeem Brown to join her there, being funded by Highmark Schools.

Leaders of Color Retreat: CSGF invited Mr. Brown to be part of this retreat in Virginia, bringing African American and LatinX leaders together to be in affinity and collaborate. Essence Prep is one of four "stories" that will be shared at this retreat; everyone is now seeing Essence Prep as a north start for first-year charters.

Raise Your Hand Texas Press Conference: Mr. Brown was invited to be a part of their press conference on 2/16 to discuss A-F Accountability Standards. Our stance is having the state legislature consider things beyond just the STAAR test. It cannot be the only rating, as there is a whole lot more that goes into preparing students to be the great citizens that they need to be.

Distinguished Young Alumnus of the Year (South Carolina State University): Mr. Brown is receiving this award and it goes back to Essence Prep— this opportunity will open future support contributions for Essence Prep. Mr. Dillard noted that so much of the work that Mr. Brown does is as a fundraiser and developer: this is key.

- e. **Consent Agenda:** Mr. Brown stated that the items will be approved at the meeting in March.
4. The **Finance Report** was presented by Jackie Hernandez. These reports were from January 31, 2023. Ms. Hernandez explained that a budget amendment is needed and it will be presented at the March board meeting. Stephanie Rodriguez will meet with Mr. Brown soon to correct the yellow fields.
- a. Debt Service and Bonds have been funded and will appear in the next budget amendment.

- b. Currently 58% complete, as we have received 56% of the expected revenue. Local funds have exceeded the initial projection due to gala funds. Expenses are 54% complete, as expected.
 - c. Overall net assets is positive, which is hard to do in first year.
 - d. Line 36 (Extra Curricular Activities) is a current placemaker (some may live in other line items such as 11, etc.), include after school programs which will come with a reimbursement, SA Ballet, AM Project, and Gardopia expenses.
 - e. Revenues entail a change in 5744, biggest increase here due to gala and additional funds coming in. Local Funds are currently the largest revenue contributor, which is great, but not common. Mr. Brown stated that he does not want to rely solely on state funds.
 - f. 420 funds (\$30K) are currently being utilized to pay for school lunches, and we're still waiting on NSLP.
 - g. There is conversation happening regarding transportation. Currently, 33% of students take the bus to campus, and next year's anticipation is 40%.
 - h. The RFP will be presented at the March board meeting.
 - i. Liabilities & Net Assets include updates for bonds and land purchases.
 - j. Ms. Hernandez presented the Representation of PICS (Program Intent Code).
5. Mr. Brown presented the **Cost Proposal for Audit Services**. He explained that he interviewed three potential service providers. Christopher Carmona works with several clients and all of their clients have an A-rating on their Charter FIRST rating. He will carry out Audit of Financial Statements (Federal Compliance) and Preparation of 990. Mr. Mitchell asked about cost comparisons. Mr. Brown stated that one of the three potentials was over \$9K more expensive. Mr. Pedraza offered his personal insight and stated that this amount is "on par for the course" of this service and endorsed Chris and the staff. Mr. Pedraza made a motion to approve the hiring. Mr. Mitchell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
6. Ms. Barbeau presented the **Facilities Briefing**.
- a. She confirmed that things are progressing well with Butler Cohen. The onsite work is on track, there are no budget issues, and no schedule issues.
 - b. Regarding TxDOT: The traffic impact analysis conclusion involved a mitigation project for turnaround. Contractor Williams Brothers will not allow another contractor to be in their space at all.
7. Mr. Brown provided the **Current Enrollment** at 142 students. 36 families were recruited through two PreK4SA engagement events.
- a. March 3rd (2:30-5:30): Explore Essence Open House Event

8. Mr. Brown updated members about **New Staff**. There is a new Math Specialist/5th Math Teacher, Counselor, ELAR Coach/KG Teacher, and 3rd Grade ELAR Teacher. Members discussed academic data and rigorous curriculum details with Ms. Ricks, as well as the CRIMSI Pilot participation.
9. There was no need for legal briefing.
10. The meeting was **adjourned** at 6:26 PM by Chairman Mr. Dillard.