



Board Meeting Minutes

May 18, 2020 - 6:00pm

The mission of Grand Peak Academy is to develop students of great character, who are culturally aware, accepting of diversity, appreciators of history, arts, mathematics, and sciences, and are prepared to meet the challenges of the world today. We value parental partnership through direct involvement in classroom and school activities and community stewardship through our support of local charities and hosting of community events.

The Board shall use the Mission and the Plan for Success (Academic Success, Economic Sustainability and Character Growth) as the filter for all decision making.

1. **Call to Order** (6:00pm) –
2. **Roll Call** (6:00pm) – Chris Dempsey (President), Brandon Henry (Communications), Steven Teague (Secretary), Mike Philipich (Vice President) (arrived at 6:10pm) Scott Hunter (Middle School Principal), Serena Brizic (Elementary Principal), Melissa Maldonado (Assistant Principal) Valerie O'Brien (Business Manager) Jen Reishus (Treasurer) joined at 7:28pm
3. **Approval of May 18, 2020 Board Agenda** (6:01pm) – Brandon Henry motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Teague seconded the motion. Motion passes 3-0
4. **Approval of April 27, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes** (6:02pm) – Brandon Henry motioned to approve the board meeting minutes as presented, Teague seconded the motion. No discussion was needed. Motion passes 3-0
5. **Comments from the public** (6:03pm) - None
6. **Board Dashboard/Principals Report** (6:04pm) – Serena noted that we are expecting to hear in the next week or so what the stipulations will be for the fall plans. We are hoping to be able to start to solidify different scenarios. We have had a lot of conversations with the iConnect Zone and in Principals Meetings. We will need to be prepared for changes as we move through the summer. Thank you to everybody in the middle school, Brandon and Scott. The virtual graduation will be happening tomorrow night. Teachers have completed their videos for the website. The teachers did a really great job. We have all of our new hires set. Valerie has been working with me on curriculum orders. Emilia has been researching the new Spanish curriculum for the fall. Making some clarifications on dress code to share with the parents over the summer. We are discussing tweaking report cards and how we grade for elementary school. Scott highlighted that coursework ended on the 15th. Grades are completed. In middle school we decided to announce the grading policy late, so the grading policy now is whichever is higher, the grade from 3rd quarter or the grade you earned in 4th quarter. We did that to have some equity for students that were not able to engage as much. The middle school team asked that we not announce that right away to try to motivate the students. The graduation parade started today, we visited students west of Powers, in Monument and right around GPA in the immediate neighborhood. Tomorrow we will be near the old building and some other areas as well. Brandon mentioned that there are middle schools in the area that are not doing anything for their 8th graders, so this sets up apart. Serena noted that the kindergarten drive thru graduation went really well as well. Parents have been very gracious on the whole process. Even the transfer day where kids brought things back we have returned items, that has felt like a big celebration as well. Its been really good for the kids, regardless of the grade level. All the parents have been really happy to have the interaction. Finally, Scott has been tracking some law changes with Title 9 and there are some new responsibilities the school will have with reporting sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. He is working with Lou at the District to get up to speed with

that and will have some training over the summer. Serena is following up on Champions and whether they can hold camp in the summer at the building. Chris is really happy with how we have handled the end of year process and virtual graduations. Brandon commented that the signs are a great idea going forward, they are fairly inexpensive and could use it for marking going forward. Chris commented that we have a lot to consider but we really do not have much information in any direction. There will be a lot of contingency planning over the summer. The ultimate goal is not to layoff, furlough, reduce salaries etc. Chris asked if staff had been notified about funding cuts that are pending. Valerie shared that the district is expecting 5-15% cuts. Mike suggested we communicate with our staff at a minimum so they are not shocked by the finding cuts at the very last minute. Newsletter to all new/returning families...what to expect, why we are different. Brandon commented that we have talked about doing a virtual tour and have staff do videos. Mike said it might be a great idea to keep in touch with the families over the summer with videos and catchy jingles from the principal. If we do have to reduce by as much as 15%, how does the teacher handle in person and online and how do we accomplish all of it. Teague asked if the office keeps a signed copy of the Parent Handbook so that we can hold parents

7. **Treasurer/Business Manager Report on Trend (6:16pm)** – We have kept our expenses low during the closure. Although we are not going to end the school with quite as much additional money as we originally budgeted we have done very good with replenishing our bank account and should be on track to meet the of days of cash on hand goals outlined in the bond requirements. The biggest concern at this point is the amount of funding that will be cut for the 20-21 school year. Its looking like it will be a 10-15% cut, which will be difficult to manage. Mike will reach out to DA Davidson concerning our bond requirements to reduce the required 90 days cash on hand and to see if we can reduce payments at all.
8. **Marketing Update (6:37pm)** – Brandon commented that we have an ad going into the military relocation guide. We highlighted the book vending machine, sports activities, etc. Goes to print the last week of May and will hit the racks. We are part of the Colorado Springs Independent Education Guide earlier this month. Scott, Serena and Brandon have been having discussions about virtual tours with a walk thru and discussion about the school. We want to highlight why you would choose GPA and why our teachers love being part of the organization. We have contracted a videographer but have not been able to get any video because of Covid. It is currently on hold. We will need to re-evaluate going into the fall. Brandon said the unknowns are difficult and frustrating with marketing. We are working on updating the homepage of the website and moving some things around. We are working over the summer to put together a “how to use our resources” information for parents. Chris commented that we should have the conversation of “who we are” since we are not as classical education centric as we once were. Are we working on something to make it clear to the staff and families? There are 7-ish classical schools in the Colorado Springs area, in addition there are 5 or 6 schools that focus on core knowledge. Most of the classical schools are also core knowledge. IT holds an incredible breath, covering science, art, language arts. We there are a number of classical elements within our school. Part of that is the environment is a little bit like a museum instead of a hospital institution for instance. Such as art work on the walls and music playing etc. When we moved further north we found ourselves to be in a good spot to be a core knowledge school compared to neighboring schools. We are currently providing a classical education with the content that we are providing. Chris commented that we need to make sure our messaging matches that as well. Scott said it is not mentioned in our mission or vision. Angie Ragsdale (3rd grade teacher) commented that she saw an ad with a big banner that says “classical education”, she commented that those that have been there a long time know what that is, but a lot of the newer staff and parents would not know what that is. She commented that staff might not know how to answer the question what is classical education if asked. Serena explained the philosophy of classical education and commented that it’s a good idea to message that to families and staff in the fall. Brandon

commented that we should create a branding guide for teachers that discusses “this is what GPA is, this is how you talk about GPA and reinforce what makes us GPA.” Angie is concerned that we are advertising ourselves as a classical school but our main focus is not some of the classical principals with the little kids. We need to look at exactly what parts of our school are classical and what makes us that. Angie said we do have some classical aspects but she does not feel we are 100% a classical school. Scott commented that he talks in depth about classical and core knowledge when he is giving tours to prospective parents. He commented that Denver does not have as many classical schools but it is very popular in Colorado Springs, though he has not heard anybody say they came to our school and expected classical and it is not. He does not think we should let it go because it associates ourselves with other classical charter schools’ vs just being a neighborhood school. Mike commented that if classical is that important to who we are, then it needs to be brought back into our mission statement. We need to message the big items that we do that relate back to the mission statement including classical. Angie commented that CKLA is not necessarily core knowledge Marcia commented that new families do ask often about classical education and what that is. Brandon asked for an updated enrolment count. Marcia commented that we are at 737 right now, we were as high as 747 last week, but it is very fluid from week to week. There is not a whole lot coming in, but there are some out of state moves and some families wanting to home school. She is seeing more families pulling for homeschool than she has in the past. Mike commented that he believes our eLearning went fairly well, but has heard other schools were dismal. Chris commented that all in all it worked out. Brandon commented that eLearning vs homeschooling is a very different animal and said that parents might not be set up to really succeed at that, so we might want to add some fluidity into our enrollment policy going into next year. Scott commented that in August we should create some consistent accountability for teachers across the board, how much zoom and face to face instruction, coordinating schedules with families that have multiple students. We need to increase instruction and accountability for the fall.

9. Discussion Items

- a. **Contingency Plan for 20-21 SY (7:06pm)** – Chris commented that we all know we have planning to do, we just do not know what that planning is yet. We have to figure out how to handle a budget cut up to 15% as well as provide quality education. Chris would like to have a discussion about this in the next month or 3 weeks. Scott commented that we are expecting to hear from the governor and CDE this week about more guidance and structures. Once Scott and Serena have something more solid, check in with the board to discuss it further.
- b. **Preschool Discussion (7:09pm)** – Chris commented that the preschool is okay to open since they are licensed as a childcare and not on the charter with the district. Michele Lucero commented that she has done a lot of work on possible scenarios for a possible summer camp etc. Right now the rule is 10 children per one teacher, must be same children at all times. Therefore, parents cannot pick and choose different weeks/days. She has to take temps as they come in, no parents inside, daily screenings. Kids cannot play together and must be 3-6ft apart. There are a lot of guidelines around disinfecting toys as well as all staff and children will have to wear masks. She has sent an email to the 40 families she has currently to see if anybody is interested in June 1-June 26. Her staff is being paid thru June 30th, she has asked if any of them are willing to come back for a June family. She is waiting to hear if families and staff are interested to see if it is even feasible. She is way more concerned about moving into August. If she can only have 20 kids, she will need 3 staff members and is not sure how she can pay them with the tuition for 20 kids. Mike is hopeful that the state will have better guidelines to loosen up some of the restrictions going into fall.
- c. **D49 Site Visit Review (7:23pm)** – Chris reviewed the D49 Site Visit, some of the

opportunities include more professional development and leadership engaging in observations and feedback. Scott said they have started to implement suggestions from the report as soon as it was received and he feels like many of the items are outdated at this point. He does feel it is important for all the staff to see the report but has not shared it at this point. Serena feels the walk thru form that we utilize is very helpful for staff. Brandon commented that this would be a good framework for the start of the new year. Mike would like to understand how the administration would rather see guidance from the board going forward. Chris said anytime staff and admin has a topic that should be discussed in the meeting to please let the board know. Chris will email the report to the leadership team to be distributed to staff further.

- d. **First Reading of the Uniform Policy for SY20-21 (7:34pm)** – Serena outlined that the dress code needs to be streamlined. She has met with staff and there were a lot of opinions that were shared in the discussions. The whole purpose behind the dress code is to create school pride and unity. We want the kids to look good and look professional and be ready to work. The four items that came up during the discussion with staff and comments from parents when we were enforcing the uniform earlier in the school year. Pants, Belts, Socks, Tights and Leggings. Pants will stay the same with colors. Uniform pull on joggers are allowed but removed the part about covering the shoe. Skirts are the same. Still do not want any denim fabric. Belts should be worn if pants are loose around the waist. Pants and shorts must not be too baggy. Clarified yoga pants and sweatpants. Belts are no longer required but should be worn if pants are loose. Shirts will be tucked in for 2nd-8th grade except for recess and PE. Funky tights and socks are not part of the uniform; they should be solid in color. Sweatshirts will be allowed in solid school colors and GPA spirit wear hoodies. Serena stressed no logos on the sweatshirts (such as Nike etc) Chris asked that Serena email the necessary parties the Uniform Policy so that they can review it prior to a second reading. Scott mentioned that he is still waiting on guidance from the League on hair issues. Chris recommended adding pictures to the uniform policy to try to make it clearer for parents. Possibly another uniform fashion show.
- e. **Discuss BOCES program for teachers not certified (8:02pm)** – Serena commented that in terms of retention and supporting teachers, that it would be nice if there was a way the school could help fund that program for the staff that is not certified. She commented that all our teachers are highly qualified but it would be a nice extra once the budget will allow. Chris commented that we will put it on the wish list when the discretionary funds are available. Brandon commented that staff that are really interested in pursuing something like that could do a formal request that could be looked at on a case by case basis.
- f. **Discuss changing letter grades to standard based grading for K-5 (8:06pm)** – Serena said all the team leads and staff are interested in changing the grading format. With eLearning and Eureka Math it would make sense to switch to a standards based grading. We want grades to be based on mastery not a letter grade similar to how the district handles grades for elementary levels. A letter grade does not show that a child understands fractions etc. With Eureka Math it's a great time to make this change. Mike asked a lot of questions concerning validity and whether changing will make a big enough change to resonate with families. He feels we should make operational changes to reach these goals since we do not teach to standards. If we are going to teach to standards we might as well be a district school. Changing and A to a 4 isn't that easy on a surface level, it flows more to an operational level. Mike feels we could get the same data right now with a Zearn fact sheet without making this change. Brandon said if we are not accessing these things today, and we are just changing from letters to numbers for grading than its not really a worthwhile

change. Serena commented that a 4 is not the same as an A. Chris asked what kind of training and involvement will be required for the staff? Abby Blouin commented that this change will really clear up exactly what kids are learning and understanding. It does not give an overall B for writing, but it shows where the strengths and developments actual are. Mike asked what is the difference between giving the 6 different categories but using letter grades. Marcia commented that standards and letter grades cannot be combined. Stephen asked if that will change honor roll and Serena commented that we should award elementary students differently. Chris asked if district schools are doing standards grades. Brandon asked more importantly what are other charters doing. Serena said she would have to ask. Brandon commented that parents get concerned with the terms common core and standards based. Does this differentiate ourselves from other schools. Brandon commented that we just changed our math curriculum and now we are faced with unknowns for the fall, this might be just another change that is tough at this time. Serena said in order to make the changes to get test scores up this step needs to happen. She said there is not a time line in her mind, but this gets us towards the ultimate end goal. Brandon can see the value but he has other reservations, it requires the staff a new way to understand the deeper level of accessing the kids. It seems like there is a lot more involved in how to access the students deeper. Mike asked the frequency of the timeline for the new grading feedback. Serena commented that teachers cannot grade everything every day, but she is hopeful that there will be daily feedback. With CKLA she is trying to get teachers to look for one thing each day. Feedback needs to be consistent but it does not need to be a large amount. Brandon asked if we could pilot this with one grade level and Marcia commented that is not possible with Powerschool.

10. Action Items

a. Approve Uniform Policy Updates for SY20-21 (8:53pm) – Removed

11. **Board Member Communication** (8:53pm) – Mike asked if we have enough meetings scheduled to meet our regulatory minimum. Steven said we are at 10 now so we have met that requirement. Mike is leaving June 5th so this will be his last meeting. Chris thanked Mike for everything he has done for the school and for Chris personally in regards to moving the school forward. Mike has become high best friend and like a brother and wants to thank him and his family for everything he has done for the school. Mike said thank you for the kind words. Mike has found this to be a tremendous growth experience and its been a privilege to work with everybody involved. Mike said to keep up the great work and will try to keep in touch and try to help if possible.
12. **Other Business** (8:56pm) – None
13. **Adjournment** (8:56pm) – Chris said thank you again for all that we have done. It has been a wild year with starting at the old school, moving, eLearning and quarantine. Its all been par for the course but the staff has handled it well. He looks forward to getting back into the swing of things for real next year. Have a great summer! Brandon reminded us that 8th grade graduation is tomorrow night!