



BOARD MEETING NOTES: Zoom Video Call

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Apologies for absence: Dr. Carson

1. Welcome (Bishop Ed Stephens, Jr.)

Bishop Stephens thanked everyone for sharing their time and skillsets, and for the spirit of excellence that this Board embodies. He recognizes that everyone's time is precious, that the caliber of people on these calls is high, and that each person has other demands on them all the time from all directions. Each Board Member is making an impact in so many different ways and he expressed huge appreciation for everyone.

2. Academic Report (Mr. James Johnson)

2.1 School start/end dates

Mr. Johnson confirmed that this school year ended on June 17th and the next school year will begin on August 9th. Here is an overview of the weeks between now and the start of the fall semester:

Calendar



June 17	Thursday	Last day of school (20-21SY)
July 12 July 21	Monday Wednesday	Office Staff Returns School Leadership Team Returns
July 26- July 27	Monday- Tuesday	New Teacher/Staff Orientation
July 28- July 30 July 30	Wednesday-Friday Friday	Professional Development Day (.5) - (9:00 am - 1:00 pm) - 12 hours Administrative Day (1)- (8:00 am -4:00 pm)- 8 hours
July 30- July 31	Friday- Saturday	Registration (Returning (7/30); New Families (7/31)
August 2- August 5 August 6	Monday-Thursday Friday	Professional Development Days (8:00 am - 4:00 pm) - 32 hours Administrative Day (1)
August 6	Friday	Kindergarten Rising STAR Day (8:00 am- 12:00 pm) Rising STARs Academy (New Families) (12:00 pm- 1:00 pm)
August 9	Monday	1st Semester Begins First Day of School for Students 1st Quarter Begins

2.2 Academic Progress (20-21)

Here is a summary of the reading progress:

School Diagnostic Results: Reading (20-21)			
	Diagnostic I 279/292	Diagnostic II 290/292	Diagnostic III 253/290
Tier 3	23% 63	30% 87	31% 78
Tier 2	45% 125	36% 103	33% 84
Tier 1	33% 91	34% 100	36% 91

As mentioned earlier this year, Mr. Johnson included some additional categories to better serve those students who need extra support:

School Diagnostic Results: Reading (20-21)			
	Diagnostic I 279/292	Diagnostic II 290/292	Diagnostic III 253/290
Tier 3 (three or more grade levels below)	7% 19	12% 32	12% 31
Tier 3 (two grade levels below)	16% 44	18% 51	19% 47
Tier 2 (one grade level below)	45% 125	36% 99	33% 84
Tier 1 (early on grade level)	16% 46	17% 46	14% 35
Tier 1 (mid or above grade level)	16% 45	18% 50	22% 56

The discrepancy in numbers counted for Diagnostic III reflects end-of-year absenteeism. The percentages shown may not be accurate due to the lack of students assessed.

2.3 Retention and Recruitment

2.3.1 Retention: Staff

Retention

Staffing Type	Totals
Instructional (Teacher of Record)	14/17 = 82% KK (<i>new</i>) KK, G2, G6
Support + Office Staff	5/5 = 100%
Admin Staff	5/5 = 100%
Total	24/27 = 89%

These percentages are based on offer letters received prior to June 17th. We are retaining 82% of the teaching staff, which Mr. Johnson noted was quite remarkable given the circumstances of this past year and the current economy.

2.3.2 Retention: Students

Mr. Johnson explained that this form is still populating until June 25th, but current numbers are as follows:

Intent to Return



Intent to Return Forms					
Goals	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
PRE-K					
KINDER					
1st GRADE			51	46	32
2nd GRADE			41	63	37
3rd GRADE			44	49	43
4th GRADE			25	40	41
5th GRADE			18	29	28
6th GRADE			15	18	17
TOTALS	0	0	194	245	198

It shows that 198 scholars have signed up to return to STAR next year. This doesn't include those students who don't complete the form.

2.3.3 Recruitment: Staff

In terms of recruiting new teaching staff, Mr. Johnson is performing zoom interviews early on in the process before pulling in other team members for in-person interviews. Here is a summary of the recruitment process:

Recruitment



Hiring Process Map	
Step 1	Resume Review + Certification Verification - Indeed - Teach901 - Referrals
Step 2	Email Correspondence + Phone Screening
Step 3	Phone/Video Conference Interview
Step 4	In-Person Interview: Mock Lesson + Sample Data Analysis/Action Plan + Evidence of Academic Achievement/Student Growth Evidence + Evaluation Data
Step 5	Reference Checks

2.3.4 Recruitment: Students

In addition to returning students, 48 new scholars have currently been accepted.

Rising STARS



Rising STARS (New Scholars)					
Goals	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
PRE-K					
KINDER			65	42	36
1st GRADE			17	4	5
2nd GRADE			18	3	2
3rd GRADE			8	0	0
4th GRADE			6	2	4
5th GRADE			7	4	1
6th GRADE			11	3	
TOTALS	0	0	132	58	48

Dr. Stephens gave a huge, end-of-year shout out to Mr. Johnson. He talked about the trauma of leading through this time of the pandemic, which brought with it challenges such as teacher fatigue, communal sadness, general exhaustion, etc. But Mr. Johnson never wavered. He continued to lead with integrity and a high level of problem solving. Dr. Stephens expressed immense pride at having Mr. Johnson on the STAR Academy team.

Other Board Members also wanted to express their appreciation for Mr. Johnson...

Mr. Yates: Congratulations on a successful year! I want to commend you for such academic excellence and for being able to operate in this challenging environment, both physically and virtually, for both staff and students alike.

Mr. Arrindell: The past 16 months have been challenging, particularly for those in education. We see that you've made an enormous advancement in the future of our kids. Thank you – you've done a fantastic job.

Dr. Tharp: Kudos! Thank you and congrats!

Mr. Fanion: The word that comes to mind is *excellence*. Thank you for constantly striving toward excellence, not perfection. That's extremely important. Thanks, too, for being very thorough in data reporting and telling the story of STAR's successes.

Mr. Henderson: I commend you on your professionalism and high level of presentation. The numbers are superior. The performance of the entire staff is tremendous. I'm proud to be associated with STAR. We are impacting the lives of those children and their communities and Mr. Johnson is a shining example of what a young professional should be.

Mr. Stephens: Congratulations for getting through this crazy year. The best is yet to come and we're excited!

Mr. Johnson responded with immense gratitude. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be in his seat, saying it's his joy to be able to represent the student population in these meetings and to bring real data to the table. He's grateful for the ongoing support throughout the school year and hopes the staff is making each of the Board Members proud.

3. Operations Update (Dr. Ed Stephens III)

3.1 Marketing / Advertising

3.1.1 TeNita Freeman (Director of Enrollment)

Dr. Stephens reminded the Board that STAR has always had aggressive recruitment goals but hasn't always had the tools and strategy in place to meet those goals. He introduced TeNita Freeman, STAR's Director of Recruitment, who is effectively our first line of defense with new families.

Ms. Freeman said she was grateful to be part of this morning's meeting and she's excited about what's happening at STAR. This is her 5th academic year at the Academy.

Ms. Freeman updated the Board by letting everyone know that, on June 6th, STAR launched an accelerated marketing campaign. This includes:

- collaborating with our Pre-K partners;
- distributing electronic communications and physical flyers;
- having a presence at transitional meetings with families;
- collaborating with prospective parents and answering questions;
- distributing yard signs (“every day is a campaign day!”);
- sending out 17,000+ mailers to residents and businesses in the area;
- launching a 30-day advertising campaign on Spotify and Pandora, beginning on June 28th.

Our data currently shows that interested parties increased to 162 families. Of those, 48 have been fully accepted and 27 are progressing and have additional documents coming in. Ms. Freeman confirmed that we are heavily courting the other 39 kindergartners’ families who are interested.

Dr. Stephens commented that, when it comes to recruitment, we don’t just want to check the box of accepting 350 students. Rather, we need to make sure we can meet the needs of each of those students. For example, if a student needs a nurse 3 times per day, we need to provide an on-site nurse for that child. If we can’t, we’ll say that we can’t best serve that child and give them what they need in order to thrive. We will always put the needs of our scholars – actual or prospective – above everything else.

3.2 Pre-K Pipeline Update

We desire to be a premier Pre-K through 8th Grade institution and Dr. Stephens confirmed that our partner in Texas is ready to make all this happen. We are partnering with a local organization that has an existing school and we are in the process of that hand off. There is a meeting scheduled for next week with that Bartlett campus regarding acquisition and co-existing. By the fall, we should have direction and contracts firmed up and we hope to break ground this time next year.

3.3 Capital Projects

3.3.1 *STAR Academy Park*

There is nothing in our vicinity that even comes close to this playground. It will serve as a strong visual presence in the community, piquing interest in families, and giving kids a desire to come to STAR Academy.

Thanks to Mr. Middleton’s help and hard work, this is 100% funded through a 5-year loan which we aim to pay off ahead of the 5-year term.

The contract has been awarded to Mid-South Creation. Not only did they come in at the lowest of all the bids, but they are also long-term friends of STAR, they are a locally-owned company, and they are responsible for some of the other industrial playgrounds in the area.

There is a 15-week lead time on this project, so it will be happening after the new semester begins. Although this may cause minor inconveniences, Dr. Stephens is looking forward to the students seeing it come together and to foster increasing excitement for it to be finished.

(The current playground in the rear of STAR's campus will remain. This new playground will be located in the front.)

3.3.2 *Between buildings*

The adopted home for pigeons no longer exists! Work has already begun on the sidewalk that connects the two buildings, and a new structure will be built to protect our scholars from the elements. We will be managing the project over the summer.

3.3.3 *Teachers' lounge*

This is ongoing, adding a sink, beanbags, a USB station, and coffee area. Progress will be made over the summer.

3.3.4 *Food Authority*

This has now materialized: We are now our own food authority and have on-boarded a Nutritional Supervisor. Mr. Middleton explained that this means we will now be able to pick our own menu and give students food they'll actually enjoy eating. Food will be prepared on-site, it will include warm dishes, and will cover breakfast, lunch, and snacks where applicable.

Dr. Stephens added that, once we become more familiar with the program, we can recruit other schools to come under our authority.

3.3.5 *Steel storage building*

We are still waiting for steel to come in, as well as other supplies. We are hoping to start everything by the fall.

4. Closing Remarks (Bishop Ed Stephens, Jr.)

Bishops Stephens noted that this is the final Board Meeting of this academic year and that everyone at STAR is looking forward to the next school year where great things are going to happen!

Bishop Stephens motioned to adjourn the meeting.
The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderson.
The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: TBD