

University Prep Board Meeting – 1/27/25

Minutes

7:04 AM – 8:25 AM

Board Attendance: Nicholas Hernandez, Brenna Copeland, Jean De La Mata, Recardo Brooks, David Braemer, Bev Sloan and Veronica Lockett

Board Absence(s): Emily Eikelberner and Cuneyt Akay

Staff Attendance: David Singer (ED), Alastair Dawe (COO), and Liz Suarez (CAO)

Call to Order: Jean De La Mata (Treasurer, Executive Comm. Member) called the meeting to order

Minutes Approval: Minutes from the December board meeting along with the November board retreat were unanimously approved with Recardo Brooks motioning for approval and Bev Sloan providing the second.

Meeting Launch: The meeting launched with a brief opportunity for personal connections between board members.

Mid-Year Academic Achievement:

Chief Academic Officer, Liz Suarez, led the board in reviewing key performance outcome through the midpoint of the school year – Math in 3rd – 5th grade, ELA in 3rd – 5th grade and Foundational Reading Skills in K – 2nd grade. Her analysis included comparisons to the 2023-24 school year. After highlighting strengths from the data shared along with areas of challenge, Ms. Suarez led a discussion on the continued efforts of the team to transform the ELA programming in the upper grades. As part of that conversation, she highlighted three key areas tied to future programming – significant additional daily minutes, small group instruction and a simplification of curriculum.

Following the review of the key anticipated shifts to ELA programming, the board asked core questions such as “How will you simplify curriculum?” “Where do the additional minutes come from?” and “How do any of these changes impact FTE needs?” The discussion centered around the research and evidence supporting the changes along with pragmatic approaches to address the core questions at hand. Ms. Suarez assured the board that the team would continue to keep them abreast of the efforts in motion for both short and long-term improvements. The board shared continued gratitude for the team’s commitment to leaning in and making changes as needed in the best interest of scholar learning.

Mid-year Finances:

Chief Operating Officer, Alastair Dawe, led the board in reviewing key financial information through the midpoint of the school year. Starting with a review of YTD expenses and revenues across the network and implications for ending fund balance, Mr. Dawe then transitioned to a set of key ‘headlines’ illustrating any area of meaningful variance (both on the revenue and expense side). The board then shifted into a brief examination of fundraising efforts tied to FY25. After sharing the full set of financial data and qualitative analysis, board members discussed the importance of operating positive margins at each U Prep entity (school). Mr. Dawe led a discussion centered around FTE and efforts in motion to work with campus-based leadership to ensure a trajectory to more financial resilient budgeting with greater operating margins. Board members voiced both the critical nature that school leaders should play, with some degree of autonomy, in staffing decisions, and also the fundamental importance of maximizing spending on children sitting in seats while being financially resilient.

Following the full financial discussion, two resolutions were presented, voted on and approved.

The first resolution, to appropriate an increase in funds in FY25 for U Prep's DPS schools was motioned by Brenna Copeland and seconded by Bev Sloan. The resolution was approved unanimously.

The second resolution, to increase appropriations and the budget for U Prep's CSI school for the current fiscal year was motioned by Brenna Copeland and seconded by Nicholas Hernandez. The resolution was approved unanimously.

Finalize ED Evaluation:

Board members reviewed a summary memo provided by Executive Director (ED), David Singer, synthesizing all aspects of the evaluation process. Given the volume of time and attention focused on student outcomes at the center of the evaluation process, board members recommended elevating that component with greater clarity in the summative memo (in alignment with SB191). Mr. Singer agreed to amend the document as described.

David Braemer motioned to approve the ED's evaluation with Bev Sloan providing a second. The motion was passed unanimously.

Updates:

David Singer, Executive Director, provided the board with several updates, including information tied to the conclusion of the lawsuit with A14 (ruled in favor of the State BOE and U Prep), preparation of K classrooms for U Prep's new campus in Commerce City, a snapshot on R1 enrollment efforts in DPS and fundraising endeavors connected to U Prep's expansion. Mr. Singer also shared attendance oversight efforts and family supports in alignment with current realities being experienced by the communities served by U Prep.

The meeting concluded at 8:25 AM