

MINUTES OF CALLED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF AUSTIN DISCOVERY SCHOOL

9303 FM 969
Austin, Texas 78724
April 16, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

- 1 Call to order and establish quorum of the Board of Directors of Austin Discovery School Meeting called to order at 6:33 p.m. with a quorum of the Board. S. Ogle, Board Chair presiding. The following roll call was taken: ADSI Board of Directors:
S. Ogle, Chair; A. Wolf, Vice Chair; E. O'Connor, Secretary; A. Benton; L. Green
Absent: N/A
Ex-Officio Teacher Representatives: A. Bersoux
ADS Faculty: L. Anderson, Head of School
- 2 [Public comment according to Austin Discovery School Board Policy §500.020 Texas Open Meetings Act following Public comment policy](#) Caitlin Macklin, parent and PTO board member, made a public comment suggesting waiting to vote on the school calendar for next year, gathering more robust community feedback including student surveys.
- 3 Parent-teacher Organization (PTO) update on finances, events, and community connection Amber Quisenberry provided an update from the PTO. Alec Bersoux, teacher ex officio director, inquired about PTO meeting coffee chat minutes, and will follow up with Amber. Amy's Ice Cream and Phil's Ice House fundraiser generated \$846. OneFest planning volunteers are needed. Alec Bersoux inquired about volunteer hours and will follow up with Amber.
- 4 Teacher ex-officio Board Director report Alec Bersoux, teacher ex officio director, provided information from the staff asking about responses to the Board email address. Staff also asked about Board recruitment and having the Board attend a Wednesday afternoon. Unfortunately the Wednesday meetings are fully booked with the Leader in me training, but if there's another day for this, the staff would appreciate meet and greet time with the Board. Also the staff has requested a weekly newsletter from the Head of School to increase communication, as well as increased visibility on campus with the Head of School.
S. Ogle provided information about responses to the Board email address potentially violating open meetings act. The Board does see the emails and the Board takes action if necessary in the public meeting. If there's a particular question, the administration is generally better equipped to answer questions.
Alec reiterated that people might consult with admin on questions to ensure they are addressed in the Board meetings.
E.O'Connor noted that some emails might get filtered by junk mail filters. Please rensed if no response received, and copy the head of school if appropriate.
S. Ogle noted that we would be open to another day for meeting. Alec to check on the availability of dates.
S. Ogle noted that Board member recruitment is done by the Policy and Governance Committee, also discussed in that agenda item.
Alec asked if there's a recommended candidate, how does someone make the connection. A. Wolf recommended the potential candidate should send their resume to that board email address. Part of the requirement includes attending 1-2 board meetings, so that is a good first step for interested candidates for the Board of Directors. Please invite interested candidates!
- 5 Board vote to approve previous Board meeting minutes A. Benton moved to approve the minutes. A. Wolf seconded. All voted in favor. Minutes are approved. Previous meeting minutes are available on the ADS website under Governance.
- 6 Head of School finance update from to the Board Yesterday, the Executive and Finance committee met to review current financial statements. Currently ADS has a shortfall of about \$45k of revenues to expenses, which is better than budgeted.
L. Anderson provided the financial reports. Overall revenues are slightly under budget to date. Expected 58% of revenue at this time of the year. State revenues are lower than budgeted due to lower than budgeted enrollment. Overall expenses are also under budget to date. Admin is looking into the difference in spending from the budget on contracted services. By tightening on expenses, ADS has performed better than budgeted on the shortfall, however, the model is not sustainable when there is a bond payment. L. Anderson to present a plan to the Board in the May meeting to improve the long-term financial trajectory.
A. Wolf added that the bond covenants require a debt:service ratio and average days of cash on hand, in addition to other governance requirements.
- 8 Head of School staffing and enrollment updates to the Board Enrollment is currently 258, with no staffing changes.
- 9 Board consideration and vote to approve changes to 2023-2024 school year calendar The 2023-2024 calendar was adjusted due to the eclipse day April 8, 2024, swapped with April 19, 2024. A. Benton moved to approve the calendar change. A. Wolf seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carries.
- 10 Head of School status report to the Board about Safety and Security Committee C. Ford, operations manager, provided an update on the committee. The meeting has been rescheduled 3 times and is waiting on a new date. S. Ogle asked how the board can support the committee. C. Ford noted that continuing to advocate for the meeting is the request of the Board. S. Ogle noted that this meeting is legally required and it's imperative to conduct the meeting. Thursday of next week is on the calendar.

11 Staff presentations regarding 2024-2025 school year calendar

Alec, Michelle, and Stephanie of the staff have prepared comments for the Board. Stephanie Seymour, Registrar, shared that there are 7:30 am to 3:45 p.m. changed to one day per month to be on campus, which makes 169 contracted days for teachers. Changed Labor Day, MLK day, and memorial days, which are holidays and allows a 4-day weekend for those holidays. 87% of parents who responded in favor of the 4-day school week. Parent concerns are what Fridays would look like. The number one concern is the cost of care and the quality of the experience. A \$15 per day charge is recommended. Fridays and regular aftercare should be more structured, with more training for aftercare teachers. Students should spend time in the gardens, playing indoors, doing enrichment activities and tutoring. This would be an opportunity to build community. Some parents were concerned about the length of the day, so the day was shortened to 3:45. Parents asked about hikes, and hikes are in the school charter and would still happen. People would like to have morning hikes for the weather and potentially more parent participation. The majority of families prefer one week of break in the fall and one in the spring. Student service schedules will be adjusted to provide accommodations for all students. There were 128 family responses from current families and families with students in the lottery, out of a total of 259 enrollment. It's possible that multiple answers from families responded. Multiple answers from one household were consolidated. Michelle Hanlon, Assistant Principal, explained the process followed. The "Why" was teacher retention. 60% of teachers aren't certified. 46% of staff don't intend to return. No certified applicants have applied to teach at ADS this year. Cost for certification is increasing from \$500 to \$4000 next year. Teacher certification and experience is the top question asked by families. New teachers make it difficult for existing staff to provide the quality experience that ADS strives for. The lack of knowledge of the teaching methods for academic progress for students impacts student academics and culture. Starting pay at ADS is lower than other districts in the area. Offering the 4-day week is a creative way to incentivize teachers to stay at ADS and draw quality teachers for the program. Michelle shared a case study of Athens ISD, where the model was successful. Another example is Terrell ISD.

Alec shared the teacher survey results about the 4-day week. 19 out of 30 staff members responded. Alec has also asked people in person with anecdotal responses. Alec didn't include survey responses from admin or other staff, only classroom teachers, essentials, restore, etc. On a scale of 1-5, 79% chose 4 or 5 out of 5. 22% were in the middle range. Zero people said 1 out of 5. 60% of teachers rated the idea a 5 out of 5, beneficial for students and teachers. 74% of staff were interested in breaking up the breaks, which resulted in the adjusted calendar proposed. 58% said one monthly Friday on campus is enough, but 22% thought it might be enough. Only 5% thought one day on campus was not enough. 21% wanted a weekly building / cohort meeting. Also asked about intent to return, whether you would plan to return and still will, not planning to return and still won't, etc. 79% said they would likely return with this model. 11% said they would consider staying with this model. 0% said they were planning to return and the 4-day week would dissuade them from returning. Teachers recommended adding more recess for the longer day. Teachers are looking forward to the more planning time. Having the flexibility to work remotely on some Fridays is a benefit to work/life balance, being able to schedule doctor appointments and professional development. Teachers requested increased communication, especially more from administration and clear planned out expectations for those Friday. More clarification for the schedule for those Fridays. Teachers would like more training for new hires and substitute teachers on those days. Some teachers would like to host enrichment activities and clubs on those Fridays. Teachers would also like to have an onsite Human Resources person.

12 Head of School presentation of parent survey responses about the 2024-2025 school year calendar

L. Anderson reiterated the admin team and teachers did a lot of research, and believes this change would truly benefit the community. While it seems like a radical proposal, it would jumpstart ADS in the right direction. Retaining and recruiting quality teachers will make a difference for the entire community.

13 Board consideration and vote to approve preliminary 2024-2025 school year calendar

E. O'Connor noted that the information and research gathered is helpful to inform decision making and is much appreciated. S. Ogle noted that the current financial model of ADS isn't sustainable. E. O'Connor asked if the Board could see the impact to the budget. S. Ogle put it to the board to ask if this is the right move for the community. The expenditures and revenues might not change. A. Benton believes a calendar change won't fix all of the problems, but would be a positive change. L. Green asked if the \$15 per Friday aftercare cost is supported by families. S. Seymour answered that the cost is a concern for families. Fridays used to be "free," and now it will cost money. Some people misinterpreted the cost as \$15 per hour. The cost would be \$15 per DAY. The intention is to break even for the cost of staff, food, etc for those Fridays, not to increase revenue. A. Wolf noted that everyone in education is struggling to find qualified teachers. For families who might feel impacted by the aftercare cost, ADS doesn't want any changes to be inequitable. The reason that people attend ADS is the mission of the school. It's becoming challenging for staff to remain at the school for the sake of the mission is difficult without compensating them. S. Ogle noted that exit surveys have indicated that pay is a critical factor, as well as the cultural impact of teacher retention issue. With half the staff leaving annually, it takes a huge demand to the teachers who stay. One concern is the budget. ADS is losing money this year and next year could be out of compliance with the bond financing. ADS needs to take steps to stabilize the staffing. Teachers leaving and classroom shifts have been a challenge for everyone. A. Wolf asked about the schools that admin has been in contact with about the success of this type of structure. Are those schools all public schools? Are any of them charter schools? The attendance increase is promising, but with a public school it might have a different impact. Daily attendance makes an impact to funding. Has enrollment increased for those schools, or are those neighborhood schools? [not answered] E. O'Connor moved to approve, with communication and support for stakeholders ongoing, including a communication plan. A. Benton seconded. All voted in favor with those conditions. Motion carries. Item with potential action on communication requirements at the May meeting, moving the next meeting to April 30th. L. Green requested sharing the presentation from staff with the community and the Board.

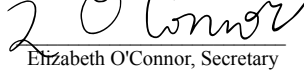
14 Board consideration and vote to approve the Emergency Operating Procedure

Item tabled until after the safety and security meeting. Add to April 30th meeting.

- 15 Board director training requirements status update See report in the Board Google Drive folder. Texas Charter School Association includes training in the membership fee.
- 16 Public comment according to Austin Discovery School Board Policy §500.020 Texas Open Meetings Act following [Public comment policy](#) Shea Trummeter, parent, made a public comment about the board meeting minutes, asking about the school website posting. L. Anderson answered that after the minutes are adopted, they should be posted. L. Anderson to confirm and provide the link. Regarding the financials, Shea Trummeter asked about restricted funds and how those are represented in financials. Those are notated separately to show the remaining amounts to spend. Caitlin Macklin, parent and PTO board member, noted appreciation of the information about the 4-day schedule, and proposed improving the wording of communications to invoke more collaboration. Alec, ex-officio teacher representative, proposed a town hall as a quick way to talk about the changes, perhaps a virtual and in/person option. Kelly Piwonka, parent, noted they were not aware of the funding issues. Proposed involving the community to solving the funding challenges. S. Ogle noted that funding has been an issue for many years and discussed at every board meeting since joining the board in 2017 when the school almost closed due to financing issue. The end of the school year is typically when parents are impacted by the decisions, and the input is more actionable earlier in the school year. All community participation is invited and encouraged with school leadership and the Parent Teacher Organization, to help on a long-term basis.
- 17 Executive and Finance Committee update Next meeting April 30th.
- 18 Policy and Governance Committee update The Board is recruiting for two open positions, and ADS has posted the openings on the recruiting board of Mission Capital, a nonprofit organization that helps nonprofit organizations.
- 19 Grants and Development Committee update Max Bonilla provided an update about two more sponsors, Donn's BBQ and Maripuku? who will have new banners soon. Max is working on the yearbook at the moment.
- 20 Meeting adjournment A. Benton moved to adjourn and A. Wolf seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Certification Statement:

I hereby certify that the above is true and accurate



Elizabeth O'Connor, Secretary