August GCCS Board Meeting

Meeting Information

- Date & Time: 2025-09-03 18:30:29
- Location: Remote
- Attendees: Luke Copley, Martha Zornow, Nana Osei, Joe Sparr, Kristan Norgrove

Meeting Notes

1. Board governance, safety plan approval, cybersecurity practices, and technical meeting logistics

- **Board Meeting Minutes Approval**
  The board discussed and approved the minutes from the July 2025 board meeting, confirming the accuracy of recorded actions and recommendations.
- **Board Membership Recommendation and Voting Process** The board discussed the process for recommending Doug Wirth to join the board,
- **Safety Plan Annual Update and Approval**
  Kristan presented the annual safety plan update, noting minor changes and the addition of a cybersecurity paragraph. The board discussed the adequacy of current cybersecurity measures and approved the plan.
- **Cybersecurity Measures and Audit Discussion**
  The board discussed current cybersecurity practices, risks, and the possibility of conducting an independent, cost-efficient audit to identify blind spots. Staff training and system security were reviewed.
- **State Cybersecurity Review**
  The board discussed the state's intention to review school cybersecurity procedures.

Conclusion

1. The July 2025 board meeting minutes were approved.
2. The safety plan, including the new cybersecurity paragraph, was approved.

2. School Year Launch, Partnerships, Facilities, Student Support, and Academic Performance

- **School Opening and Student Adjustment**
  Discussion of the start of the school year, student and staff adjustment, new elementary school leadership, staff training on responsive classroom, and behavioral improvements compared to last year.
- **Facilities Challenges**
  Issues with elementary school construction (half of school returned only the weekend before opening, dust, cleaning required) and middle school air conditioning failure, leading to temporary relocation of students.
- **Children's Village Partnership**
  New partnership with Children's Village, offering free after-school programming for grades K-5, serving up to 120 kids, open for 13 days when school is closed, 7 weeks of summer programming, daily hours until 6 p.m., and enrichment activities.
- **Bloomberg Summer Grant**
  Discussion about the Bloomberg grant for summer programming, with possible reduced funding due to overlap with Children's Village summer program.
- **Scope for Expansion of Children's Village Program** Question about increasing capacity or expanding to middle school; currently capped at 120 for elementary, future middle school contract depends on elementary program success.
- Clarification that on holidays and school closure days, Children's Village program operates full day, not just after-school hours.
- Only 20 schools in New York City received the Children's Village partnership, bringing positive attention and awareness to the school.
- **Davis Polk Collaboration for Hispanic Heritage**
  Annie Flores (former board member, now at Davis Polk) initiated partnership for Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15th - October 15th), including uniform support (donations in multiples of 30 for vouchers), recess equipment collection, and possible sensory room.
- **Uniform Support and Recruitment Competition**
  Discussion of uniform support as a recruitment tool, referencing Success Academy's practice of sending uniforms to families; need for both short-sleeve and long-sleeve uniforms.
- **Sensory Room Initiative**
  Proposal for Davis Polk to help create a sensory room in available space, following progressive school practices.
- **Board Relations and Thank You Notes**
  Plan to send personalized thank you notes to Annie Flores and Davis Polk for their support, with hope for future collaboration.
- **ABT Collaboration**
  Thanks to Doug for introduction to ABT; students from dance elective will attend practices in late September and early October.

- **Financial Beginnings Program**
  Financial Beginnings initiative transferred to middle school principal for further progress.
- **Urban Advantage Pre-Science Program**
  Mention of annual application to Urban Advantage pre-science program.
- **State Test Scores**
  Preliminary discussion of state test scores for grades 3-8, focusing on students scoring threes and fours out of four; longitudinal data referenced, noting gaps due to pandemic and transition to computer-based testing.

Conclusion

1. School opening was smooth with positive adjustment from students and staff; no extreme behaviors experienced as last year.
2. Executive leadership team is working on addressing facilities so operations do not impact academics and culture.
3. Potential for significant support due to Davis Polk's 2,000 attorneys; positive PR for the school.

3. School performance, enrollment trends, financial sustainability, and strategic planning in response to declining enrollment and changing educational landscape.

- **Student Assessment and Performance Metrics**
  Discussion on assessment scoring: passing requires a score of three or four, with four exceeding standards. Review of third through eighth grade performance, noting improvement in ELA and decline in math.
- **Teacher Observation and Support**
  Exploration of support and monitoring for new teachers, emphasizing observation early in the year and providing clarity before accountability.
- **Enrollment Trends and Challenges**
  Review of current enrollment numbers: budgeted at 445, actual at 407, with a difference of 38. Noted nationwide decline in enrollment, especially in early grades due to birth rate declines and alternative education options. Pre-K and K are hardest to fill, with two classes of 13 each. Loss of families to HVA due to after-school program gaps.
- **Budget and Financial Impact of Enrollment**
  Discussion of budgeted vs. actual enrollment, impact of ICT (special education) numbers, and per pupil funding. Budgeted ICT was 56, actual is 77, with 10-12 more in pipeline. Per pupil funding increased to 1904. Open positions may not be filled to offset reduced enrollment.
- **Facilities and Cost-Saving Strategies**
  Consideration of consolidating buildings to save costs, with calculations showing potential savings of almost $2 million per year. Exploring DOE

space options, specifically School 200, which could save $3.5 million annually. Legal action being considered for rent credit due to lack of full space use.

- **Enrollment Decline Analysis and Strategic Response**
  Concern over 13% year-over-year enrollment decline. Discussion on macro factors affecting enrollment, especially in early grades. Emphasis on analyzing historical data and trends
- **Marketing and Recruitment Efforts**
  Efforts to increase enrollment include targeted outreach in three major zip codes, evening recruitment events, hiring a social media marketing consultant, and engaging a part-time consultant with family perspective.
- **Data Analysis and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**
  Need for deeper data analysis on enrollment trends, historical benchmarks, and reasons for student attrition. Discussion on establishing KPIs for enrollment and performance.

4. School sustainability, enrollment management, board effectiveness, expansion planning, and performance metrics.

- **Enrollment Decline and Data Analysis**
  The board discussed a 13% year-over-year enrollment decline, its impact on school operations, and the need to distinguish between macro factors and controllable elements.
- **Budget Adjustments and Timeline**
  Discussion on the timing for recutting the budget due to fluctuating enrollment. Options considered were October, or November 2025, with the decision pending further clarity on enrollment numbers.
- **Board Effectiveness and Administrative Protocols**
  The board aims to improve effectiveness by sending agendas a week in advance, providing follow-ups within 48 hours, and ensuring clear minutes and annual calendars. Nana will send minutes and maintain records.
- **Board Recruitment and Community Engagement**
  Each board member is to introduce one potential candidate, ideally with real estate or local community background. The board seeks better data on community opinion and considers forming a community advisory board.
- **Success Outside and Beyond School**
  Focus on preparing students for success beyond school, with board input on metrics and community engagement. The board discussed tracking alumni outcomes and gathering data on community perceptions.
- **Expansion Advisory Committee**
  Commitment to forming an expansion advisory committee, primarily focused on exploring high school feasibility. Doug and Nick are identified

as key contributors, with Kristan considering leading the effort.

- **Finance Committee Remit Expansion**

The finance committee will allocate more time to facilities and real estate oversight, with plans to recruit members with real estate experience.

- **Key Performance Metrics**

The board seeks to identify three key metrics: academic performance, family recommendation rate (e.g., net promoter score), and alumni outcomes. These will be used for strategic communication and evaluation.

- **Fundraising and Leadership Development**

Kristan is to provide a wish list for fundraising. The board will support leadership development and succession planning for Kristan and her team.

Check with the Charter Center and other sources for a cost-efficient, independent cybersecurity audit for the school. If a suitable audit provider is found and it is cost-efficient, address any identified blind spots.Consider scheduling a cybersecurity assessment during a slower period in the 2025-2026 school year.

Send personalized thank you notes to Annie Flores and Davis Polk.

Finance committee to review demand letter for rent credit before sending. Further data analysis on enrollment trends to be conducted in October Social media marketing consultant to be finalized by next board meeting. Explore consolidation of buildings and DOE space options, including School 200.

Review updated enrollment data and recut budget in October or November 2025.

Kristan to consider leading the expansion advisory committee and coordinate with Doug and Nick

Board and Leadership team to manage three KPis for school

Expand finance committee remit to include facilities and real estate oversight.

Kristan to provide a fundraising wish list.

Board to work with Kristan on leadership development and succession planning