

WACO CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2020
REMOTE
5:30 P.M.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Ben Perry – *In Person*
Dr. Cassy Burlison – *Remote*
Dr. Howard Childs – *Remote*
Susan Copeland – *Remote*
Carolyn Cotton – *Remote*
Charles Eaton – *Remote*
Betsy Gilchrist – *Remote*
Steve Hernandez – *Remote*
Robert Brock-Jones – *Remote*
Gary Luft – *Remote*
Billie Myers – *Remote*
Elizabeth Nelson – *Remote*
Dytrun Thirkill – *Remote*
Renee Turner – *Remote*

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Judith Benton

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Dorothy Marstaller – *In Person*
Heather Shelton-Faulk – *In Person*
Cassie Bianchi – *In Person*
Brenda Sanchez – *In Person*
Robert Kunze – *In Person*
Kanisha Johnson – *In Person*
Nancy Cross – *In Person*
Amber Snider – *In Person*
Carl Ritter – *In Person*
Amber Crocker – *In Person*
Susan Wilson – *Remote*

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY (TEA)

Jeff Cook – *Remote*
Nina Gonzalez – *Remote*

ESC REGION 12

Stephanie Kucera – *Remote*
Glenn Pittman – *Remote*
Charlene Simpson – *Remote*

The meeting was called to order by President Ben Perry at 5:42 p.m.

ESTABLISH QUORUM

A quorum was established.

ORDER OF AGENDA

The agenda remained the same.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement was read by Dorothy Marstaller.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Ben Perry.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Executive Committee recommends approval of the following Consent Agenda Items: October 26, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes and October 26, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes, all in favor, motion carries unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORT – OCTOBER 2020

Cassie Bianchi presented the Financial Report as of October 31, 2020. Ms. Bianchi stated the Waco Charter School expenditures for the month of October 2020 are \$256,220.46. Ms. Bianchi stated that the Waco Charter School is in good financial condition and there are currently no concerns. Ms. Bianchi stated that fund balances from federal programs for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 are currently being reviewed to ensure that expenses are coded based on award notices.

The Executive Committee recommends approval of the Financial Report for October 2020, all in favor, motion carries unanimously.

WACO CHARTER SCHOOL RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Nancy Cross presented the Waco Charter School Results Driven Accountability Report provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Ms. Cross stated because student assessments were waived during the pandemic closure, data was not available for students for the 2019-2020 academic year. Ms. Cross stated the report indicates no finding or criticism for 2019-2020.

Ms. Cross stated only summary data is provided to prevent identifying students, as long as the number of students served in any metric is fewer than 25. Ms. Cross stated that review of confidential data made available to district administration indicates no disproportionality in the population served in special education which approximates the enrollment demographics of Waco Charter School.

TEA ACCEPTANCE OF WACO CHARTER SCHOOL ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING PLAN

Ms. Cross stated that campuses offering remote learning to students during the 2020-2021 academic year were required to provide TEA with a detailed plan for remote instruction. During the September 2020 meeting, the Board reviewed and approved the Waco Charter School Asynchronous Learning Plan. Ms. Cross stated with the submission of the Board's approved plan, TEA staff reviewed the asynchronous learning plan and determined that the plan was approved.

WACO CHARTER SCHOOL 2021 RENEWAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Ms. Cross stated in preparation of the pending Waco Charter School renewal application process, TEA provided a comprehensive performance report covering the previous five academic years. The reports will provide the Board with the mitigation responses, beginning with the changes in administrative leadership that took place in 2018. Challenges facing the new campus leader included late year staff turnover linked to the changes to employee insurance coverage. With only three teachers returning for the 2018-2019 school year, only half those positions were filled by experienced teachers. Additionally, other teacher position changes occurred during the course of the 2018-2019 year. While fifth grade students posted strong results on the STAAR in 2019, noticeable lags were observed in third and fourth grade results as well as end-of-year test results for kindergarten through grade 2. The EOAC Board and Executive Director negotiated a new employee insurance plan, as well as increasing the teacher salary scale to be more competitive with nearby districts. Multiple interventions have been implemented in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years to correct deficiencies recorded in the 2021 Renewal Performance Report. The Board added the position of Assistant Principal for Instruction and made the Special Education Coordinator position full-time. The rollout of new English Language Arts and Reading standards coincided with the adoption of new curriculum across the state. Waco Charter School selected a product that would enhance the emerging blended learning instructional model.

Ms. Cross stated by the very population that it appeals to, seeks to serve and committed to in its Charter application, is among the highest need is enrolled. The students enrolled at Waco Charter School come primarily from zip codes 76704 and 76707 which is recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau as having the highest poverty level in Waco, Texas. Ms. Cross stated when EOAC decided to charter a Generation One Charter School it was no surprise that they focused on an area with the greatest need.

Ms. Cross stated that the majority of students enrolled at Waco Charter School falls into one or more of the following accountability groups:

- Economically Disadvantaged
- At-Risk
- Special Education
- English as a Second Language (ESL) / English skills are Limited (LEP)

Mr. Carl Ritter stated he was the Assistant Principal for Instruction and was hired during the 2019-2020 school year. Mr. Ritter stated that there were a few changes already taking place when he started with the Waco Charter School. Mr. Ritter indicated that after meeting with Ms. Cross, they identified several key areas that needed some improvement. One of the key areas identified was curriculum. Mr. Ritter stated they started the purchase of new curriculum for core subjects. Mr. Ritter stated that the curriculum for Science was already in place and Ms. Cross had previously purchased the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curriculum and it was set in place at the start of the 2019 school year. Mr. Ritter stated that Social Studies curriculum was implemented during the 2019-2020 school year and the Math curriculum was implemented at the start of 2020 for grades Kindergarten to 5th grade. All four curriculums implemented have both an online version and a textbook version so the teachers can implement a blended learning platform for students. The ability to have both the online and textbook version has helped teachers and students continue learning while addressing issues related to COVID-19 virus.

Mr. Ritter stated that last year they started implementing vertical alignment planning for teachers. The implementation of vertical alignment helps teachers by seeing what they are teaching and how it's going to impact the student's future success and, in the grades, immediately after them and beyond.

Mr. Ritter indicated that they have increased the number of assessments and increased benchmark testing to two times a year, that way teachers could see what the students have learned in previous years. The assessments and benchmark testing are tracked in software so that it can be stored, and teachers can view how the student is progressing in their classroom and then compare it to previous school years.

Mr. Ritter stated that more online resources have been added in addition to the core curriculum. These systems include the new Learning Management System, Nearpod, Seesaw for Kindergarten students, and many more online resources that provided lessons, activities, and tests for students. Mr. Ritter stated that this was done in mind to vertically align the resources, so they are used from grade to grade so that as the child goes from Kindergarten through 5th grade utilizing the same programs.

Mr. Ritter indicated that the Fountas and Pinell Reading Literacy folders and information are in the system and move with the student through each grade level. This allows teachers to know what reading level their student is at and how they are growing in their current classroom and compare that to previous years.

Mr. Ritter indicated several new positions have been created and filled at Waco Charter School. Mr. Ritter indicated that a full time Special Education Coordinator in charge of Response to Intervention (RTI), Special Education, 504 Accommodations, Dyslexia, Education and Gifted and Talented has been hired. Mr. Ritter indicated that a Reading Specialist position and a Math Specialist position were created and filled with current campus personnel.

Mr. Ritter stated that before Spring Break 2019 teachers and staff were taking benchmark data and creating remediation plans for students in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade. Mr. Ritter stated that they were ready to implement tutoring and remediation plans after the students returned from Spring Break. However, COVID-19 put a strain on the remediation plans for last year, but they are still focusing on the needs of the students.

Mr. Ritter stated that they have increased professional development focusing on the needs of teachers. Mr. Ritter indicated that they have increased the use of Instructional Coaches from Region 12 for professional development. Mr. Ritter stated that new software was purchased for staff that will allow them to do training online. This software includes required safety training that each employee must complete as well as professional development that includes class situations, class management, etc.

Mr. Ritter stated that they applied for and received funds from a Grant that supplied 25 new laptops for teachers. This allowed them to upgrade every teacher's laptop on campus.

Mr. Ritter stated they have purchased a new PA/Speaker System. The new PA System has been implemented in each classroom. The new system has the ability to broadcast safety alerts which includes inclement weather. Mr. Ritter stated that the speakers also have a lesson capture feature where the teacher wears a microphone and the system records the lesson and then the teacher can upload the recording into different software platforms for students. The system also allows the teacher to upload a copy of what is being shown on the teacher's computer screen, PowerPoint, etc. in the classroom. This feature can be used by students participating in the online/remote instruction environment as well as students who are absent in the normal teaching setting.

Mr. Ritter stated that through Operation Connectivity they were able to purchase at cost iPad's and Chromebook's for students. Mr. Ritter stated this allowed them to become a fully one to one campus. The iPads are used in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. The new Chromebooks purchased will replace broken Chromebooks.

Mr. Ritter stated that in the near future they will be replacing classroom projectors and document cameras. The majority of projectors and document cameras are five years old or older.

Amber Crocker, Coordinator for Special Education and Special Populations, was hired during the 2019-2020 school year. Ms. Crocker discussed the steps taken to improve the Response to Intervention (RTI) program. Ms. Crocker stated that there are currently 24 students receiving RTI services, of those students, 18% are in Tier 1, 73% are in Tier 2 and 9% are in Tier 3. Ms. Crocker stated that all students receive Tier 1 instruction, but the 18% of students listed in the RTI Tier 1 are being monitored a little closer. The 73% of students listed in Tier 2 are receiving instruction from the reading interventionist, math interventionist or both twice a week. The 9% of students in Tier 3 are receiving instruction from the reading interventionist, math interventionist or both three to four times a week.

Ms. Crocker discussed the 504 Accommodation Process. 504 Accommodations are based on the needs of each individual student. Ms. Crocker stated the accommodations can include extended time to take a test, having a test read to them, shortened spelling lists, etc. Ms. Crocker stated that parent participation has increased over the last year and more parents are requesting that their child be tested. Please reference report as it includes information regarding the number of students and referrals in each of the Special Programs.

Ms. Crocker discussed the Special Education Process. Ms. Crocker stated that parent referrals for Special Education evaluations are accepted. Ms. Crocker stated that referrals from school staff are taken to the RTI Committee to determine the need for further interventions and/or evaluation. Special Education evaluations must be completed within 45 school days. After the evaluation is completed, an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee meets to review the evaluation within 30 calendar days. The ARD Committee is responsible for determining eligibility if the evaluation indicates the student meets the criteria as a student with a disability. The ARD Committee meets annually to review the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Ms. Crocker stated the evaluation is considered current for three years.

Ms. Crocker discussed the Dyslexia Process. Ms. Crocker stated that a Dyslexia Specialist is on campus that teaches the Take Flight curriculum from Scottish Rite. There are currently eight children in the dyslexia program. In 2019 the program consisted of four children, in 2020 the program consisted of eight children and they are currently completing an evaluation.

Ms. Crocker discussed the Gifted and Talented (GT) Program. The GT Committee meets monthly to review GT evaluations. Ms. Crocker stated, currently, teachers have made referrals for GT, but the committee is working to increase parent awareness to obtain parent referrals. Ms. Crocker stated that four students are currently identified as GT. GT services are provided in the inclusion environment.

STATE OF TEXAS GOVERNOR RECOGNITION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dorothy Marstaller stated that Governor Greg Abbott proclaimed October 2020 as Principals Month. Governor Abbot has recognized all school principals for their efforts to educate the children of the great State of Texas. Ms. Marstaller recognized Ms. Nancy Cross, Mr. Carl Ritter, and Ms. Amber Crocker for all their hard work and dedication.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Nancy Cross stated that on November 9, 2020, the remote learning option became available only for students having a medical need (with physician directive) due to a chronic or acute condition or quarantine due to the diagnosis of or close-contact exposure to COVID-19. Ms. Cross stated that only eight students participating in voluntary remote learners did not return on November 9, 2020. After school personnel contacted parents concerning students returning to the on-campus learning, two students returned on 11/10/2020, one parent had reservations and is considering withdrawing, and three parents could not be reached and were left a voice message. Two families have decided to withdraw and seek other options. The campus could be required to close without warning due to COVID-19. Ms. Cross stated that teachers also use the Schoology Learning Management System with on-campus learners to simplify the transition if a switch to full remote learning becomes necessary.

Ms. Cross stated that to date, only three cases of COVID-19 have occurred among staff and students. Two cases were positive test results following a four-day absence from campus with no close contact exposure. Personal hygiene, continuous disinfecting in classrooms and common areas, face covers with either a shield or mask, plus the marine plastic dividers between student seating and maintaining safe distance are in place to reduce the potential exposure among campus occupants.

Ms. Cross stated that 224 students are currently enrolled at Waco Charter School with an attendance rate of 95%.

Ms. Cross stated the campus is involved in multiple monitoring reviews. Those include Special Education, Child Nutrition, Charter Renewal, the compliance inspection of the Asbestos Management Plans for public, private, and charter schools in Texas and a TEA student attendance compliance review.

Ms. Cross stated the Waco Charter School's application to TEA for the Resilient Schools Support Program was approved and the first virtual observations of on-campus and remote instruction is scheduled for November 19, 2020. This opportunity pairs Instructional Partners with Waco Charter School to strengthen the remote program by building teacher capacity and evaluating the supports teachers need to create the best academic outcomes for students.

Ms. Cross stated through CARES Act funding from the ESSER Grant, Waco Charter School was able to make multiple upgrades to the instructional technology tools and infrastructure. New technology platforms have been implemented as follows:

- The Skyward student information system is fully operational with ongoing assistance from Skyward support team.
- With TEA making the Schoology Learning Management system available to any school district or charter school, Waco Charter School is unifying both on-campus and remote instruction through the system. Schoology interfaces with other systems, including child nutrition, Skyward, Eduphoria, and Blackboard Connect. This expands the internal and external communication systems.

- The utilization of FrontRow Juno system of speakers and recording capability will allow teachers to make audio and/or video recordings of live lessons for posting in the Schoology learning management system. This benefits both on-campus and remote learners by delivering the same lesson to both and giving both the ability to replay the video lesson for reteach and review. When the video is played by the remote learners, parents benefit by hearing / watching the lesson and allowing them more opportunities to be learning partners with their children. Internet and phone service have been extended to the prekindergarten area of the building.
- Student data collections, curriculum, lesson plans and evaluations are now housed in the Eduphoria data system.

Ms. Cross stated that the vestibule door and frame are in place and have added a valuable layer of safety to the campus. The public address feature of the FrontRow system allows direct communication with all classroom areas. The access monitoring system for doors has been extended to include the exterior doors in the prekindergarten area.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Dorothy Marstaller had no information to report this month.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session is a standard agenda item and will appear on all governing board agendas.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Perry thanked the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and ESC Region 12 staff for joining the Waco Charter School Board Meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

_____ **Board Chair**

_____ **Date**