



Minutes of the Legends Public Charter School Board of Directors

Date: January 29, 2025

Time 6:03 pm, Microsoft Teams

Attendance: 58

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Charlette Butler-Strickland at 6:00 pm. Roll call was conducted by the Chair, and the following members were present:

- Charlette Butler Strickland
- Rasheid Scarlett
- Makiese DeVose
- Adia Jordan
- Airen Washington
- Aminah Williams

The Chair announced that a quorum was present.

## **Department Reports**

### **CEO Report (Presented by CEO Atasha M. James)**

CEO James provided the CEO's update as we are in the Middle of the Year

Reminded the community that we are grounded in our 9 accountability goals.

### **Financial Update:**

- **Cash on Hand:** Projected to end SY24-25 with 231 days of cash (adjusted from 203).
- **Cash Balance:** Estimated at \$6.64M (down from \$6.1M).
- **Net Income and Gross Margin:** Projected net income of \$3.3M (revised from \$2.9M) and a gross margin of 24% (adjusted from 21%).
- Financial projections reflect recent staffing updates and the achievement of the enrollment goal of 897 students at \$14,124/student (flat funding).

Thanked our partners from EdOps for providing timely information to the Board and community. Is proud that we far exceed the bond covenants for days of cash on hand.

Budget Preparation for Upcoming School Year



The board discussed preparations for the upcoming budget season and is awaiting budget adoption by PGCPs and the county council.

#### LCS Partnership with PGCPs

Reviewed the 2% administrative fee and per-pupil funding allocation for LCS.

#### Maryland Charter Act vs. Blueprint for Maryland's Future

The Maryland Charter Act governs charter school operations and funding based on per-pupil allocations from local school districts.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is a statewide education reform initiative that increases per-pupil funding and provides additional resources for low-income, special education, and English learner students.

The Blueprint's funding formula aims to equally distribute funds across all schools, whereas charter schools still face funding disparities due to local district allocations.

#### Maryland State Board of Education Ruling on Charter School Funding

CEO James shared an announcement from the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools regarding a historic decision on December 3, 2024, in favor of four Frederick County charter schools.

The ruling mandates equitable funding practices, requiring Frederick County Public Schools to return withheld funds and comply with the Blueprint's funding formulas.

This decision ensures that maximum Blueprint funding follows the student and sets a precedent that could impact funding clarity for PGCPs charter schools.

The board recognized Frederick County's legal action as a significant step in reshaping charter school funding statewide.



The board will continue monitoring budget developments and advocacy efforts to ensure fair funding for LCS.

CEO James provided an update about the AmeriCorps sponsored MLK Day of Service.

### **Staffing Update (Presented by Portia Cameron)**

Mrs. Cameron announced that PGPCS recognized our recruitment and retention practices as outstanding. Mrs. Cameron reported that all **PGPCS Administrator Vacancies** have been filled.

Remaining vacancies include:

- **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science**
- **World Language**
- **CTE**
- **Elementary Special Education**

Currently Onboarding the following Teachers:

- **Kindergarten Butterfly (Math)**
- **First Grade Butterfly (Math)**
- **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math**

These roles are being actively recruited to support the school's academic programs.

PGPCS does not allow any new hires for the current school year after February 3.

### **SELAD/AmeriCorps Update (Presented by Ms. Ashari James)**

The fully staffed Legends Fellow / AmeriCorps Program 24 Fellows continues to provide support in grades K–3 and middle school, with Fellows facilitating academic assistance and small group sessions.

### **Program Highlights:**

- **Quarterly Evaluations:** Week of Jan 27 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter IMPACT evaluations.
- **Service Hours:** Fellows are on track to complete 1,700 hours by year-end and eligible for the Segal Education Award.
- **Community Engagement:** Fellows lead the MLK Day of Service; Planning Earth Day Service event.

- **After-School Support:** Fellows will lead afterschool intervention sessions, with training beginning next week.
- **Now Recruiting for Cohort Five** – Service Begins August 2025

### **Maryland Service Corps Event**

- In December, the **Governor’s Office of Maryland Volunteerism** invited our program to attend an event at Prince George’s Community College, hosted by **Governor Wes Moore**.
- Attendees had the opportunity to hear remarks from **Governor Moore, Vice President Harris, Senator Alsobrooks, and other distinguished guests**.
- One **Star Fellow from each grade level** was selected to participate, network, and meet other **AmeriCorps members**.
- Participants also had the opportunity to meet and engage with **AmeriCorps CEO Michael Smith**.

### **Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service**

- The board expressed appreciation for the contributions of **families, scholars, teachers, and board members** who participated in MLK Day of Service.
- Over **400 items**, including **non-perishable food and hygiene products**, were donated to the **Bowie Food Pantry**.
- The school is still seeking donations of **plants and soil** to complete a community project. A **wishlist is available on ParentSquare** for those interested in contributing.

### **Upcoming Service Events**

- **Peace Week (Starting February 10th):** A week-long celebration promoting kindness, positivity, and peace.
- **Earth Day Collaboration:** Partnership with **Howard University student organizations Halo and Chango** for Earth Day initiatives.
- **Mid-Year Donation Drive:** Continued support for the **Bowie Food Pantry** with an upcoming mid-year donation effort.

The board acknowledged the positive impact of these initiatives and encouraged continued participation and support.

### **Student Affairs Update (Presented by Ms. Anita Williams)**

The Student Affairs Team, consisting of Director Anita Williams, Dean Timothy Haley, and Student Success Coach Muhammad Raqib, continues to provide support across various initiatives.

**Class Equity Program:** This program integrates financial literacy and classroom economy, allowing students to earn "Equity dollars" for activities like school dances and lunch with teachers.

### **Discipline Incidents by Grade**

- Grade 5: 2
- Grade 6 4
- Grade 7: 3
- Grade 8: 2

### **Total Discipline Incidents by School Year**

- 2022: 21
- 2023: 20
- 2024: 39
- 2025: 11

Ms. Anita discussed Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation

- Adversely affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities;
- Is a result of repeated negative actions (intentional, aggressive behavior) by one or more other students over time; and
- Occurs in a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power.
- A student is bullied when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to intentional negative actions on the part of one or more students, and whose ability to participate in and benefit from the school's educational programs or activities is adversely affected. Bullying causes harm from repeated negative conduct in a relationship with an imbalance of power.
- How to Report [www.pgcps.org/offices/student-services/anti-bullying](http://www.pgcps.org/offices/student-services/anti-bullying)

Ms. Anita reviewed the **Communication Flow for Parent Concerns**, ensuring a structured process for addressing parent inquiries and support needs:

1. **Contact the Teacher** – Parents are encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher first for classroom-related concerns. Teachers have **up to 72 hours** to respond.
2. **Contact Student Affairs** – If a teacher does not respond within **72 hours**, parents may escalate concerns to **Student Affairs** via email at [studentaffairs@legendsschools.org](mailto:studentaffairs@legendsschools.org).

3. **Contact the Principal** – If concerns remain unresolved after contacting both the teacher and Student Affairs, parents may escalate the matter to the **Principal** for further assistance.

Ms Anita emphasized the importance of **clear and timely communication** and ensuring that all parent concerns are addressed efficiently to support scholars and families.

Ms. Anita provided an update on the Communication Journal (CJ) initiative, emphasizing its role in fostering strong academic habits and accountability at Legends Charter School.

#### Parent Expectations for Communication Journals

- Parents are expected to check their scholar's CJ daily to review homework assignments and ensure completion.
- The CJ serves as a tool to monitor the expected completion time for each homework assignment.
- Parents should also look for the teacher's stamp, which confirms that the scholar has accurately recorded their assignments.
- The board recognized the Communication Journal as a valuable tool for promoting accountability and enhancing parent involvement in scholar success.

#### **Operation Update (Presented by Mr. Antonio Barr)**

##### School Lottery and Enrollment Update

- The PGPCS Charter School Lottery for the 2025–26 school year opened on November 1, 2024, and will close on February 7, 2025.
- 554 students have applied through the lottery to date.
- Annual enrollment goal: Fill 100 kindergarten seats.
- Focus remains on student retention to maintain a strong, connected community.

##### Current Enrollment by Grade:

- Kindergarten: 81
- 1st Grade: 106
- 2nd Grade: 105
- 3rd Grade: 84
- 4th Grade: 109
- 5th Grade: 104
- 6th Grade: 102
- 7th Grade: 99



- 8th Grade: 98

#### Attendance Rates for 2024–25 School Year:

- State average for daily in-seat attendance: 93%.
- Legends' attendance rates:
  - September: 96.8%
  - October: 96.8%
  - November: 96.2%
  - December: 96.0%
  - January: 95.8%

#### Chronic Absenteeism by Grade (Defined as missing at least 10% of a quarter):

- Kindergarten: 13%
- 1st Grade: 15%
- 2nd Grade: 15%
- 3rd Grade: 22%
- 4th Grade: 10%
- 5th Grade: 10%
- 6th Grade: 4%
- 7th Grade: 2%
- 8th Grade: 1%

#### Arrival and Dismissal Reminders

- Arrival:
  - Doors open at 8:15 a.m.; scholars should be seated in classrooms by 8:45 a.m..
  - Tardies begin at 8:50 a.m., and parents must sign in scholars arriving after this time.
- Dismissal:
  - Dismissal begins promptly at 3:15 p.m. Scholars will not be released earlier unless in an emergency. Parents are reminded to honor this time to maintain academic responsibilities.
- Early Dismissal:
  - Early dismissals end at 1:30 p.m. Parents are asked to email [earlydismissal@legendsschools.org](mailto:earlydismissal@legendsschools.org) in advance for any early pickups.

#### PGCPS School Lunch Program Reminders:

- Parents are reminded to add funds to their scholar's My School Bucks account weekly.

- Payments can be made via cash, cashier's check, or money order payable to Food Services.
- For questions, contact Natalie McKisset, Cafeteria Lead, at [natalie.mckisset@pgcps.org](mailto:natalie.mckisset@pgcps.org).

#### Mr. Barr provided a Health and Safety Update

- An increase in illnesses among scholars was noted, prompting a deep cleaning of the school, including:
  - Disinfecting classrooms, hallways, and common areas.
  - Sanitizing frequently touched surfaces.
  - Thorough cleaning of restrooms and cafeteria spaces.

#### How Parents Can Help:

- Monitor scholar health: Keep scholars home if they show symptoms (fever, vomiting, diarrhea) until symptom-free for 24 hours without medication.
- Encourage healthy habits: Handwashing, sanitizer use, and covering coughs/sneezes.
- Communicate absences: Notify teachers or the office if scholars are ill.

The board acknowledged these efforts to support scholar success, health, and safety.

#### **Financial Education Update (Presented by Mr. Justin DeVose)**

##### **Program Goal:**

- Achieve a **25% increase** in funded custodial investment accounts for Legends Charter School students by the end of the fiscal year.

##### **Program Actions:**

- Host **monthly online/in-person workshops** for parents and students focusing on the importance of early investing.
- Provide "**OPEN! FUND! INVEST!**" tutorials to guide families toward independent wealth-building.

##### **Program Metrics:**

- **Total Students Tracked:** 800
  - **Custodial Accounts Opened:** 272 (34%)
  - **Custodial Accounts Funded:** 160 (20%)
  - **Custodial Accounts Invested:** 125 (15.62%)



### **Parent Engagement:**

- Mr. DeVose emphasized the importance of closing the wealth gap, noting the significant disparity between the median Black household wealth (**\$24,000**) and White household wealth (**\$189,000**).
- Early financial education and investment were identified as key strategies to address this disparity.

### **Call to Action:**

- Parents were encouraged to participate in a **Financial Education Survey** to provide input on program development and help equip scholars with wealth-building tools.
- A **QR code** was made available for parents to easily access the survey. Here is the link: <https://bit.ly/open-fund-invest>

The board commended the progress of the Financial Education Program and recognized its critical role in promoting long-term financial literacy and empowerment for scholars and families.

### **Academic Update (Presented by Principal Tanisha Dixon, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Ellegood, Ms. Towell)**

#### **Mid-Year Academic Progress:**

- **iReady Mid-Year (MOY) Completion Rates:**
  - **Math (Grades 3–8): 96%**
  - **Reading (Grades 3–8): 94%**
  - **DIBELS (Grades K–3): 76%**

#### **Key Takeaways for Parents:**

- **iReady is a growth tool, not a pass/fail test.** Results help adjust instruction to meet individual student needs.
- Parents are encouraged to engage with shared **at-home literacy and math resources** to support scholar growth.

#### **Growth Highlights and Comparisons:**

- **Reading Growth (iReady):**
  - Overall, Legends saw an **8% increase in students reading at grade level** compared to the beginning of the year (BOY).

- Specific grades demonstrated significant gains, with Kindergarten and 1st Grade showing the strongest improvements due to focused guided reading and phonics instruction.
- Students reading two or more grade levels below saw incremental progress, supported by small group interventions.
- Legends outperformed **PGCPS DIBELS benchmarks** in Kindergarten and 1st Grade, with higher percentages of students achieving "at benchmark" or "above benchmark."
- **Math Growth (iReady):**
  - Legends experienced a **4% overall growth** in students performing at grade level.
  - Areas of improvement included multi-digit arithmetic and fractions, particularly in Grades 4 and 5.
  - Students in Grades 6–8 are being targeted for additional support, where data showed some regression compared to BOY.

#### **Comparison with PGCPS:**

- Legends continues to exceed PGCPS averages for both **iReady Reading** and **DIBELS performance metrics**, reflecting the effectiveness of early intervention strategies.
- **Attendance and Engagement:** Legends' consistent attendance rate of **96%** surpasses the state average of 93%, contributing to better academic outcomes compared to PGCPS.

#### **Response to Data:**

- **Targeted Interventions:**
  - Small group sessions focus on literacy (e.g., Fry Sight Words, guided reading) and math (e.g., place value and fractions).
  - **Blended Learning:** Students receive personalized lessons via tools like **iReady** and **Accelerated Reader**.
- **Parent Engagement:** Shared tools for at-home support, including math activities like ABCya games and interactive charts.

#### **Upcoming Assessments:**

- **ACCESS Testing (ELD Students):** February 3–7
- **MISA (Grades 5 & 8):** March 11–12
- **Maryland School Survey (Grades 5–8):** March 25–28
- **MCAP (Grades 3–8):** April 7–May 15

#### **Special Initiatives:**



- **At-Home Science Activities:** Families are encouraged to engage in activities like tracking planetary alignment and moon phases, aligned with NGSS and MISA objectives.

The school administrative team recognized the positive growth trends and Legends' performance above PGCPs benchmarks, particularly in early literacy. The focus on targeted interventions and family engagement was praised as a strong strategy to address achievement gaps and sustain improvement.

### **Secretary's Report and Public Q&A (Presented by Secretary Aminah Williams)**

#### **Publicly Asked Questions and Responses**

Please use the link posted on Parent Square to ask your questions in advance. The link can be used throughout the month as questions come up.

#### **Upcoming Events**

February 3, 2025 - Spring Aux Clubs Start

February 4, 2025 - MCAP Intervention Starts

February 14, 2025 - Spread "Love" Dance for middle school

February 17, 2025 - President's Day – Schools and Offices are closed

February 21, 2025 - SGA Inauguration Day

February 26, 2025 - Poetry Recital

February 28, 2025 - Teacher Planning Day – 3-hour early dismissal

#### **Quarter 2 Awards**

February 13 – Grades K/1

February 18 – Grades 2/3

February 19 – Grades 4/5



February 20 – Grades 6/7

February 21 – Grades 8

**New Business**

None.

Chair Strickland expressed her gratitude for the building having been deep cleaned.

Chair Strickland asked the administration to share the inclement weather attendance code with families.

Chair Strickland expressed her gratitude for the academic growth and recognized the Academic Leadership team and the teachers for their contributions.

Chair Strickland asked if there were any further reports, new business, or questions. There were none.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 pm,

**Board Office Contact Information:**

Office: 240-455-5900