

# APPROVED

## Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes Math & Science Academy Monday, June 1, 2020 Great Hall / Electronically

8430 Woodbury Crossing, Woodbury, MN 55125

**1. Call to Order** by Lisa Anderson at 5:02 pm

Vision and Mission read by Emily Wong.

**2. Roll Call of Members**

**Present:**

Voting:

Lisa Anderson, Chair & Teacher Member  
Jeff Eng, Vice Chair & Parent Member  
Noah Langseth, Treasurer & Teacher Member  
Judy Seeberger, Secretary & Teacher Member  
Ramesh Aki, Parent Member  
Cody Schniepp, Community Member  
Dan Ellingson, Parent Member  
Michelle Kurkoski, Teacher Member  
Adam Bartz, Community Member

Non-voting:

John Gawarecki, Director (ex officio)  
Emily Wong, Student Member

**Absent:**

Voting:

Non-Voting:

Steve Wuick, BKDA, Contracted Financial Manager (ex officio)

**3. Approval of Agenda:**

Discussion:

None.

**Motion to approve the agenda.**

Moved by: Michelle Kurkoski                      Second: Cody Schniepp

A roll-call vote was taken.

Vote: 9 -yes                      0-no                      0-abstain

The motion carries.

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## 4. Agenda Items

### a. Graduation Update

Mr. Garecki gave an update. Graduation is this Friday and will begin at 8:30 p.m. We will be meeting at the Hero Center in Cottage Grove. It is by invitation only. An email went out to parents of seniors for them to email John if they wanted to attend. Invitations are going out tomorrow. We have 81 spots. We have 7 staff members who have volunteered to work the parking lot. There will be a few select spots for staff members. Board members should have gotten an email from John inviting them - let him know by tomorrow yes or no if BOD members wish to be included. There are two situations which lead to the cancelling of the event and proceeding with a virtual ceremony: (1) if there is a change in plans for the Hero Center (due to protests, safety concerns etc.), or (2) if the weather does not cooperate. The decision would be made by 6pm the day of graduation should anything change. Many senior parents have stepped up to help make this happen, so thank you to them. Jeff Eng wondered whether we have described to the BOD how we're running graduation. Mr. Gawarecki explained it will be a drive-in event, come in your car, and stay in your car the whole time. There are no facilities available. When you show up, you will be directed to a parking spot based on what kind of car you are driving - smaller cars up front. There will be a screen up front as well as a stage where live speakers will be giving their speech. The program will last around an hour. You will be given a time to arrive in order to keep it efficient and keep cars off the street as much as possible. You will be directed where to park. Stay in your car, you can roll down your windows, but keep body parts inside the car. Stay in your vehicle until it's over. Once it's over, you will be directed how to leave. It is one way in and one way out. There will be 2 officers on site to help with enforcement and any issues. Ms. Kurkoski wondered whether families will be notified there are no facilities. Mr. Gawarecki stated that yes, that's been sent out and will be sent out again.

### b. Fall Planning Update

Mr. Gawarecki stated that not a whole lot has changed since the last meeting. There are 7 different options that exist nationwide as far as what school could look like in the fall. The question is will we see a spike in the virus in the next 2 weeks given the protests, etc. No one really knows. Depending on what happens will hopefully provide a lot of guidance as to what is likely to happen in the fall. There are two likely scenarios - we will either be in person (at MSA) or we will be distance learning. More planning meetings to come once we receive more guidance from MDE and MDH.

Mr. Eng wondered how dependent are we on what 833 decides? Mr. Gawarecki stated that a lot of that is based on issues of transportation. It would be hard to do in-person learning if we don't have bussing from 833. If 833 does distance learning, we will be doing distance learning. We don't have anything in the budget to do our own transportation. Ms. Kurkoski wanted to emphasize we can revise our current distance learning plan right now. What we have right now will not work for the fall. It is an emergency plan. We can start renovating that plan before July 1 so we have something actionable for the fall. Mr. Gawarecki agrees. Our distance learning plan we have now will change and won't be what we start with in the fall. He would anticipate we would need to use distance learning in some way next fall. Ms. Kurkoski stated we could have something ready in July and posted so people could comment on it and know what the plan was. Now we have time to really think about it and put together a plan.

The Chair noted that there is a disconnect between a couple of elements. Yes, teachers need to know if there's distance learning, but what is that going to look like? There is a certain amount of planning that needs to take place by the school to filter down to the teachers so teachers can plan for different possibilities. We need to figure out what rigor looks like, how many days we are meeting each week, how many hours, etc. Those

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conversations need to be started before July 1 so teachers can start to plan. We are also doing a disservice to the community because parents are going to start hearing on July 2 what other schools are doing. And when they hear that MSA doesn't know what they're doing, they will get apprehensive and perhaps shop around for other schools. If there are teachers who are willing to continue working on this, why are we not using those people to start working on the plan? She does not understand why we would wait. Mr. Eng offered one thought - ask ourselves how tied are we to 833? He wants to better understand - if 833 says they are going back, regardless of what they say, we may not be able to do that. Do we have the ability and gumption to not go back if 833 does? The other piece is the part where parents will be asking, and we have to have an understanding whether our school will be viewed as having a positive edge because we are smaller, or does that work against us because we are smaller and have fewer resources? Some of these things can be calculated before we get the July 1 update. Gov. Waltz will not say we have to open our classrooms - he will say we can if we want. By then we need an understanding of how many of our staff will even feel comfortable coming back. How many students are comfortable coming back? There is a risk of parents asking and if we don't have an answer, we may risk losing a substantial percentage of students that we cannot fill.

Mr. Ellingson likes Ms. Kurkoski's idea - what would we change? We probably need to understand what the students are needing or missing. Do we have enough information from the students about what worked well/didn't work? The Chair noted her husband's school has already done surveys of parents and students about distance learning and what worked and what didn't. She feels that by not doing anything right now and just waiting, we are going to be way behind. Mr. Eng thinks 833 has also done that and has had focus groups to discuss issues for the fall. Mr. Eng believes another thing that might be tricky is scheduling students and the pressure that might cause Joell. We have to account for that, if she needs more help, or other things need to be done to help that all run smoothly. The Chair noted that they spent half an hour at the Academics Committee talking about what classes need to be changed if we go to distance learning. Why would we wait if we can start discussing it now? We need 4 weeks to come up with a good plan. If we don't start until July 1, she doesn't see how we can get it all done. Ms. Kurkoski noted AP teachers are planning things now. AP testing will be different. Teachers need to be able to adjust their summer assignments if needed.

Mr. Bartz asked, at this point what are the actions that we as a Board need to take? He is hearing a lot of concern, but not hearing anything that is actionable by the Board itself. Mr. Eng stated we are trying to get a better sense of what administration is planning to do and how they plan to do it. At a minimum, the Board needs to become a little better educated on some of the options. Mr. Gawarecki stated a survey will happen at the end of the school year, so we will have a bunch of data from the staff, the students, and the parents. That information will help inform the discussion and gives us valuable information to consider. Having discussions with staff over the summer will happen. He is not opposed to pushing the timeline forward, but does need to make sure everyone gets a break, including administrative staff. If you take a week off to reflect, you will have a different outlook and new ideas. He is not saying we need to take the entire month of June, but some time to reflect would be beneficial. No doubt it's going to be stressful - no one knows what next year is going to look like. However, a break is needed after the school year is over for people to decompress and reflect. Mr. Eng agrees with that, but noted the end of school is in 4 days. He does not see any time in the next 4 days to get the surveys out.

The Chair thinks there are teachers who are willing to begin working next week to do this, so why not utilize those people. She would be willing to help out. Mr. Lanseth stated his concern with jumping in next week is that there might be some teachers not ready to go, but they jump in and participate because that's what others are doing. He likes the idea of having a break so some aren't pressured to jump in when they're really not ready. We do need a break, how long is the question. Mr. Eng stated that would be fine, but he wants a suggestion of how to set the deadlines so that it all comes together in the amount of time that we have. Mr. Langseth noted the biggest things teachers can start doing is plan on distance learning week one since it's

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easier to move to in-person from distance learning, than moving from in-person to distance learning. The bigger question is what is distance learning going to look like. Ms. Kurkoski noted there are questions she needs answers to before she can start planning distance learning. Yes, we need a break, but during the last 2 weeks in June we can meet. Plus, Justin will have information about technology that might be available. Once July 1 happens, we'll still be planning.

Mr. Eng wondered whether we have a liaison or some way to connect directly with 833. The idea would be to find out where they are headed, and what their current thinking is right now. Knowing where they are going may help streamline our planning. Mr. Ellingson wondered if 833 has done surveys and done focus groups, would they be willing to share that information with us? Mr. Gawarecki indicated we can check in with 833 to see what they'd be willing to share.

The Chair wondered whether there are some timelines we can put in place. Or should the Board form a committee to help get some of these things completed? Mr. Eng noted a committee would be useful, but he is not sure what their charge would be or the outcome. Would it provide information? Specific to choices we make? Specific to building curriculum? The Chair noted it would include all of those things, and also narrowing down what things are important to MSA and how do we make those things work for MSA. Mr. Lanseth stated he is not sure he likes the idea of setting up a committee due to open meeting requirements, etc. He is wondering what Mr. Gawarecki's plan/thought is on where we are in the process so teachers can start planning. Where will he start meeting with teachers to start getting that figured out. Mr. Gawarecki stated he is not opposed to getting this started before July 1. He also needs a break, and won't get one till the 3rd or 4th week of June. The timeline he's looking at is we have in place the survey results by 3rd or 4th week in June. Then by July 1 or July 2, be able to tell the teachers what they need to plan for. He will tell teachers at the staff meeting on Wednesday of this week that they need to start planning on doing some sort of distance learning this fall. There is nothing penned out as far as a timeline, but this is the skeletal framework he's thinking of. Mr. Langseth suggested a meeting before Mr. Gawarecki goes on a break then we can talk about different things teachers wanted from their surveys (and parents and students), discuss the feedback, then can make a plan to move forward. Mr. Gawarecki has no problem with that, and could even have a couple of meetings in there to go over data, brainstorm, then come back in July and hit the ground running. Ms. Kurkoski suggested the week of June 15-19 for a meeting. Mr. Gawarecki would want to do the meeting on June 15, he will likely start taking comp time on June 16. Ms. Kurkoski would also like Mr. Gawarecki to invite Justin because his input re tech would be valuable. Mr. Schneipp also wondered whether we have sufficient tech support, and will we need more. Mr. Gawarecki will create a task force for this rather than a formal BOD committee.

### **c. Approve Staff Handbook**

The Chair opened discussion. Ms. Kurkoski noted that one of the last things to figure out is the conflict resolution form and its process, there were concerns expressed by administration that the language that she and Jeana had favored had an avenue - if someone had a conflict and sought resolution and it wasn't resolved, they could move up the chain of communication up to the BOD. The concern was if we include language about escalation, then the person may view that the conflict should be resolved in their favor. If you have language about escalation, they can keep going up the chain of communication to try to get their way, and this would promote that mentality. So they tried to rework it so that a resolution could occur that might not be to their satisfaction. Mr. Eng wondered whether anyone was saying there shouldn't be an option to escalate. Ms. Kurkoski noted that the other language for the form made it seem so. Mr. Gawarecki stated the biggest perception difference is the way the form that Ms. Kurkoski has shared gives the employee the perception that if they don't like what is decided by the Director, that they can appeal that to the BOD for a different separate investigation. Fundamentally, this is an administrative role not a governance role, so you

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would be opening the BOD to a lot of administrative work. Unless the Director made an error in applying the law or procedure, the decision of the Director is final. If you give the BOD the power to override that of the Director, you are now opening the BOD to administrative functions, and that is an overstep of the BOD function. MACS would agree with that. Mr. Eng stated as part of our governance, we need to ensure that things are working correctly. He doesn't agree that this stops because we are given governance and only governance tasks. Mr. Gawarecki noted that the BOD has administrative duties over the Director, so it's true that the BOD does not do strictly governance. Mr. Aki stated the BOD always oversees the process, so it is not necessary to put this into the process since it could be seen as some sort of entitlement. We would still have the option as a Board to review the process. Ms. Kurkoski questioned then how are we as a BOD going to know that - the person would have to come to us with concerns about the process. The reason why this language was put in was so that the person could have some sort of recourse if dispute resolution took place but the problem were to persist. Mr. Eng stated they have the option; it just would not be specifically written into the handbook. We don't want people misusing the process either. How do we strike a good balance between the two? The Chair noted there are issues with how to do that, but our policy (103) does say that they can take any complaints to the BOD. Maybe we just need simple language saying to follow the chain of communication since that is outlined in other places. Mr. Eng wondered whether we have that problem now. Are people making a complaint then seeking to drag it out to make everyone's life miserable? Ms. Kurkoski stated this came about because we couldn't put this language in allowing someone to file a complaint on the grounds of harassment, nor could we use bullying. Legal counsel advised we make this an HR policy. Mr. Gawarecki stated that legal counsel opined we could put in a conflict resolution section, though this is not typically what is done in schools. It does raise the level the school has for potential litigation against it because it now potentially has a policy or procedure that could be very difficult to enforce. There was some inaccurate information about this - students and staff have the option to raise an issue to the school so we can address it. Mr. Eng wondered did this language come from our attorneys, or at least the structure in terms of conflict reporting? Ms. Kurkoski stated the attorney recommended making this a procedure rather than a policy. There were a couple of other schools who had conflict resolution policies, then she was looking at generically what the goals of conflict resolution are. So she was using language that started out a little more corporate, but drafted it to fit MSA. Mr. Eng stated he is willing to give this a try, but it sounds a little odd. If we have an interaction that speaks to bullying and microaggression, the solution is not conflict resolution, that is someone taking advantage of someone else. That's not something to mediate. Ms. Kurkoski stated we can't call it harassment if you're not a part of a protected class. These are for those other situations that create a hostile work environment. Mr. Eng noted that's still not a conflict between two people, that's someone misbehaving. This is an odd way to do this. Mr. Langseth stated part of having a form and referring to it in the handbook, rather than including it in the handbook, is that we can revise it later without having to change the handbook. Mr. Gawarecki stated that, because it's in the handbook that brings up a question - you would have to go back and change that through the Board since it becomes part of the contract. If you just refer to it in the handbook and you do not include the form in the handbook, then you can change the form as needed. Ms. Kurkoski is ok removing form from the handbook, but wants to have the form available for teachers to reference - maybe it goes on the teacher drive. Mr. Eng wants there to be complete and accurate information. Mr. Langseth suggested putting an approval date on the form so you know you have the most current version.

Mr. Eng wondered about the vision reimbursement provision. The vision reimbursement was discussed and clarified.

Additional duties / PTO provisions were discussed. Provisions regarding background checks were discussed and clarified.

**Motion to Approve the Amended Staff Handbook**

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Moved by: Michelle Kurkoski      Second: Adam Bartz

Discussion:  
Nothing further.

A roll-call vote was taken.  
Vote: 9-yes      0-no      0-abstain  
The motion carries.

## d. Approve Contracts

### i. Teacher Contracts

#### Motion to Approve the Teacher Contracts

Moved by: Cody Schneipp      Second: Noah Langseth

Discussion:

Mr. Gawarecki stated the salary amount is based on FTE, years of teaching, and education. It's spelled out in the handbook. There will be 3 adjustments in the Special Ed Dept. We have a student with high needs coming in, so we will need to post for a new Special Ed teacher because this student will be receiving 1 on 1 instruction. Also, we will change 2 other positions to include a special ed coordinator and student service coordination. They will also have caseloads, and this brings us in line with MDE issues. We have 35 teachers and we will be adding one more, which is the Special Ed teacher. Pay increase for teachers overall is about 4.6%.

A roll-call vote was taken.  
Vote: 9-yes      0-no      0-abstain  
The motion carries.

### ii. Counselor contracts

#### Motion to Approve Counselor's Contracts

Moved by: Judy Seeberger      Second: Cody Schneipp

Discussion:

Mr. Gawarecki stated that early discussions were of these contracts going to teacher's scale. However, after looking at PTO, the counselors would be giving up the freedom to take this whenever they wanted, so they decided they wanted to stay on the salary they were on, but would get a 2% increase in their salary. Mr. Gawarecki also stressed he wanted them available this summer because of everything that's been going on, and they agreed to be available as much as they can over the summer. They will continue on this year with a salary contract. Ms. Kurkoski wondered about the part of the discussion for the teacher salary since they legitimately didn't have much to do over the summer. Aside from being available during the summer for staff, what would they be working on? Mr. Gawarecki noted they will be taking a lot of their PTO and using Work Days in the month of June. In July, they will also be taking some time. There are some things they will be working on, but not the big in-depth projects that had been discussed.

A roll-call vote was taken.  
Vote: 9-yes      0-no      0-abstain  
The motion carries.

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## **iii. Administrators and administrative staff contracts**

### **Motion to approve contracts for administrators and administrative staff.**

Moved by: Judy Seeberger                      Second: Adam Bartz

#### Discussion:

2% increase across the board for everyone. According to the MACS compensation report, some of our administrators are among the lowest paid. Last year the Board was not able to give a pay increase, but gave them 10 additional PTO days. Teachers fall just slightly above average across all MACS schools that replied to the survey. The administrators - one of them is the lowest paid. They are on the bottom end. He is recommending 2% across the board just due to uncertainty over what is going to happen in the future.

A roll-call vote was taken.

Vote: 9-yes                      0-no      0-abstain

The motion carries.

John Gawarecki left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Ramesh Aki left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Board went into recess at 7:15 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 7:22 p.m.

## **e. Finalize the Director's Goals**

#### Discussion:

The Chair indicated that we will talk about it and finalize things as much as possible, but will vote on it at the June regular meeting so that Mr. Gawarecki has a chance to comment on them. Mr. Gawarecki asked us to make sure that we wanted this Board to make the goals because it is the next Board that will have to evaluate the goals. Ms. Kurkoski stated what she tried to do was if there was an organizational or professional goal, to separate those and also include the end result. She also used the survey language and added some in there as well. She did her best to include goals that are measurable.

The draft goals document was discussed and changes were made. We will bring this back to the June regular meeting, and will be during the first part of the discussion before the Board membership changes.

## **5. Dates and Times of Upcoming BOD Workshops and Meetings:**

- a. BOD Workshop on Monday, June 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. in the Great Hall and remotely.**
- b. BOD Meeting on Monday, June 15, 2020 at 6:15 p.m. in the Great Hall and remotely.**

## **6. Motion to Adjourn at 8:07 p.m.**

Moved by: Adam Bartz                      Second: Michelle Kurkoski

A roll-call vote was taken.

Vote:              8 -yes                      0-no      0-abstain

The motion carries.

## **Submitted and Approved:**

Judy Seeberger, Secretary