

**MINUTES OF THE  
OF THE SOUTH BEND EMPOWERMENT ZONE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
2/16/23**

**MINUTES**

- Meeting Time Start: 6:08pm
- Meeting Called to Order: Ryan Matthys, Treasurer, Chair Pro-tem
- [Meeting video is available on Youtube](#)
- [Meeting presentation will be available on the Zone website](#)

**LOCATION**

- SBCSC Boardroom

**QUORUM**

- Attendees:
  - Stephanie Ball
  - Rosa Hiestand, Secretary
  - Ryan Matthys, Treasurer, Chair Pro-tem
  - Ashley Northern
  - Jeff Rea
  - Sonya Watkins
  - Duane Wilson
  - Davion Lewis, SBEZ Chief
- Absent:
  - Sam Centellas, Chair
  - Kareemah Fowler
  - Leslie Wesley
- Quorum Established (Y/N): Yes

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**SUMMARY**

The February board meeting focused on the Zone's progress in supporting our students' academic achievement and well-being, and plans to increase instructional support and enrichment opportunities for students.

These plans include targeted professional development for teachers, a structured intervention for students not on track for the next grade level, and a vision for innovating the school year. The board held a robust discussion about the proposal for the Zone transitioning to a balanced calendar, with emphasis on the benefits for students, families, and teachers.

The open question remains on the timing of parallel decisions by SBCSC and formal communication between the two boards about the balanced calendar proposal. The board

also discussed the report from the Finance Committee, and a schedule for information to be shared in March, April, and May.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **I. PUBLIC COMMENT**

A Navarre parent requested an additional bus stop that is closer to her home.

### **II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

- Motion to approve: Jeff Rea
- Seconded: Duane Wilson
- Discussion: none
- Approved unanimously

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. December 13, 2022: Motion passed with six yeses (Ball, Hiestand, Matthys, Northern, Watkins, and Wilson), and one no (Rea)
- B. January 18, 2023: Motion to approve (Stephanie Ball), seconded (Ashley Northern), and passed with six yeses (Ball, Hiestand, Matthys, Northern, Watkins, and Wilson), and one no (Rea)

### **IV. BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT**

Given by Ryan Matthys, Treasurer and Chair Pro-tem, on behalf of the Board Chair: Spoke to the progress Zone students have made since the Q2 reset, and thanking families for their support of the changes like school uniforms.

### **V. FOCUS TOPICS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Black History Month Showcase**

The Director of Student Experience previewed the upcoming student performance at the Morris Center for the Performing Arts. The showcase will be preceded by a college-fest for Zone students attended by several local colleges and universities to inspire and encourage their educational aspirations.

The showcase has received widespread support from the community, including sponsorship by more than a dozen businesses, educational institutions, and more.

#### **Q2 Survey**

The Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Director of Data and Accountability shared findings from the Q2 survey of students, families, and teachers. The survey results affirm that the Zone has focused on the right issues following the

Q2 reset. While some progress has been made, the Zone and its board recognize the importance of data for continuous improvement in its support for the Zone community.

Key themes remain consistent from prior surveys, including the differences between elementary school and middle school students' responses. (As discussed in a prior board meeting, entering adolescence has a strong impact on students' experiences at school.) For example, while trust in adults has increased among elementary school students, it continues to decrease in middle school. Bullying and feelings about classmates follow a similar pattern. Lastly, many students are eager for more challenging assignments, suggesting that improvements in attendance and behavior following the Q2 reset have created more learning opportunities in the classroom.

Although parents' participation rate in the survey has increased, it remains relatively low. However, parents report a desire for increased communication about their children's academic progress and school events.

For teachers, trends continued in their commitment to the Zone's mission and their work. However, they also report challenges with the cultural and interpersonal dynamics within their teams.

In response to the data, the Teaching & Learning team has continued its ongoing work to improve students' academic supports, including:

- Action planning for individual students based on identifying the root cause of their challenges, and building on their strengths
- Targeted professional development for teachers in professional learning communities, paired with K12 Lift data about individual students' progress relative to their peers
- More rigorous use of MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) for students with behavioral challenges

Board questions:

- *How do we reconcile students not feeling safe from bullying with being proud of their schools?*
  - This is not necessarily contradictory; other data in the survey can help interpret students' overall experience at school.
  - All teachers may not administer the surveys in the same way (the Zone is working to change this)
  - This survey was taken right before winter break when festivities may influence students' feelings about school in general
- *What are we doing to increase students' feelings of safety and trust in adults at school?*

- Student support roles like peacebuilders and social workers are becoming more proactive vs reactive
- Creating more opportunities for students and adults to interact outside the classroom and build stronger relationships (e.g., extracurriculars)
- Professional development for teachers about social-emotional learning and building community
- Student mindfulness activities, quiet corners for meditation
- *What would parents and students propose to improve trust at school?*
  - The Zone will start doing a deep dive protocol with parents and students about survey results (e.g., via student leadership groups)

### Promotion-in-Doubt

Promotion-in-Doubt is an intervention process for students who are not on track to be promoted to the next grade level. Schools make this assessment in February to allow time for action planning in collaboration with students and their families for the rest of the school year. Action plans have SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). A key part of the process is for students to take the lead in what they are learning and what they struggle with.

If necessary to make progress, students are required to participate in summer school. The summer school structure is different depending on why a student is on track to being retained—e.g., academics versus behavior. Teachers, social workers, and psychologists work with students during summer school.

Students who successfully complete summer school are promoted to the next grade. If not, students will be retained in their current grade. Families may appeal a retention, which will be heard by a committee of the principal, the relevant teachers, among others. A unanimous vote is required to overturn retention; the student will be placed in the next grade. “Placement” students have an action plan to support their progress,

Board questions:

- Is the action plan similar to what they have done in summer school?
  - *No, it is similar to an Individualized Learning Plan, where there are more checks and balances. For example, a student may have two math blocks: the grade-level math class, and an intervention math block to help them catch up.*
- How many students are Promotion-in-Doubt?
  - *Zone staff to follow up with data.*

### Balanced Calendar

The board held an extensive discussion about the proposal of the Zone to tackle the significant problem of summer learning loss by potentially implementing a balanced

calendar for the 2023-2024 school year. Research shows a balanced calendar benefits both students and teachers, and provides additional daycare support to families. No decision has been made, however the board will vote on the proposal in late April, based on community feedback and additional data.

The balanced calendar keeps the same 180 instructional days, but redistributes them into nine-week quarters. Between quarters, there are three-week intercession “breaks,” and a five-week summer break between school years. The Zone proposes to offer day camps during the five weeks of summer, and during two of the three weeks of each intercession. The Zone will also hold “summer” school for one to two weeks in each intercession, as well as at the beginning of summer. The Zone will also provide additional professional development for teachers for one week during each intercession.

The Zone is in the process of gathering input from its stakeholders, and all information will be made available to the public before a recommendation is made to the board.

The 46 of 50 states include districts that have adopted a balanced calendar. Within Indiana, at least four districts follow a balanced calendar and provide opportunities for the Zone to learn more about its advantages and drawbacks, as well as insights for a successful implementation.

Board comments:

- We are excited about a proposal for innovation and transformation of Zone schools. We started the Zone because we need to do something differently—we have to think boldly and outside the traditional box
- I look at different school models across the country, and the balanced calendar excites me; stakeholder feedback is critically important. If the Zone implements this, we have to ensure we support families
- I’ve also seen this work in multiple districts and parents see opportunities to do things with their children that they would not ordinarily be able to do because of the school schedule
- The Zone and SBCSC boards should engage directly on this topic, especially as the district goes through the Facilities Master Planning process

Board questions:

- What kind of feedback have you received so far?
  - *At the two teacher meetings so far, we have received extremely positive feedback. We have also received positive feedback from the NEA. Prior to this proposal, parents have proactively suggested Saturday and/or year-round school to help student academic achievement. We would expect some*

*movement by teachers and families both to and from the Zone, if the balanced calendar is adopted.*

- Our children have working parents: during the breaks, where would children go?
  - *We would have both extra school and subsidized day camps during the three-week breaks.*
- Many children rely on the meals they receive at school, how would that be affected by a balanced calendar?
  - *The Zone would continue to provide food for students in need adjusted for the calendar*
- Does it make sense to implement a new calendar before knowing the future of the Zone after next year?
  - *No, but we are in informal conversations with SBCSC about the Zone and the Facilities Master Planning process—everyone agrees that there is urgency on this decision—and we will engage formally soon*

#### VI. FINANCE

The Zone is on track with regard to budget to actuals for our 501c3. The board emphasized the importance of insight into the funds housed within SBCSC, which the Zone expects to report on in the next meeting (approximately \$35M). Finance is also working on the proposed 2023-2024 budget, to be discussed in April and May. The 2022-2023 audit is in process, and the Zone will have an update on the audit soon. The board. Motion to approve (Rea), seconded (Wilson): the board approved the financial report unanimously.

#### VII. PERSONNEL

The Zone is in effect in a hiring freeze due to budget constraints. There were some separations in January in anticipation of the upcoming year because a role won't exist. Other separations are largely contractors assigned to a Zone school.

#### VIII. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

The Zone has made progress this year, and appreciates the discussions we are having about new proposals such as the balanced calendar. In addition to providing feedback about the calendar, the board also asks the community to participate in the SBCSC facilities master planning process.

#### IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn (Rea), seconded (Ball). The board unanimously approved to adjourn at 7:59pm.