

Career Academy of South Bend, Inc.  
Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors  
December 3, 2013

Directors Present: Larry Garatoni, Bruce Greenberg, Tracy Graham, Vivian Sallie, Suzanne Wiwi  
By Phone: Steve Hartz  
Directors Absent: James Summers, Rob Staley  
Staff Attending: Ken Horvath, Charles Loeser, Chad Addie, Sarah Fine, many in audience

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the South Bend Career Academy was held at the school, 3801 Crescent Circle, South Bend, beginning at 5:40 pm on December 3, 2013.

A. Call To Order & Introductory Remarks. Larry Garatoni called the meeting to order. It was agreed that the next meeting will be at 5:30 pm on Thursday, January 23, 2014.

B. Approval Of Minutes. The board approved the minutes of the November meeting.

C. School Operations. Chad explained that since the prior meeting was only two weeks ago and this meeting is abbreviated (to allow for the executive session interview of the School Leader candidate), he did not prepare an operations report, but asked Sarah Fine, SBCA's Director of Transitions, to give a presentation on SBCA's vocational focus and ties to other organizations.

Sarah distributed a handout, which she displayed as a PowerPoint. She noted SBCA's program is still developing but there has been substantial progress. SBCA students begin exploration and investigation of career options beginning in the seventh grade (the focus of "Success" class, replacing a "homeroom" period). Seventh and eighth graders are exposed to careers through workplace site visits, and use programs to help identify and find information on college majors and careers that fit their personalities (for example, beginning next semester, the "College On Track" program, see <https://www.collegeontrack.com/>). Ninth and tenth graders explore career interests via half-day job shadowing as well as visits to businesses. The internship program for tenth and eleventh graders, which will begin next semester, is intended to provide a semester-long work experience with a business for which the student has a strong interest, combined with appropriate career-oriented classwork. For seniors and selected juniors, the goal is a two-semester Cooperative Education<sup>1</sup> placement for a career for the student has a very strong interest. A critical element of cooperative education, Sarah said, is for businesses and other organizations to recognize how such programs can benefit them, particularly in recruiting. To-date 28 businesses have toured SBCA and the school has formed working relationships with a number of major non-profit organizations, including the South Bend Civic Theater, the Center for History, and the St. Vincent DePaul Society, as well as Indiana's WorkOne division of the Department of Workforce Development, which will feature SBCA as a partner in its Hire Technology initiative in association with Conexus Indiana (see <http://www.conexusindiana.com/news-release>). Students are aided in finding a career path through an Individual Learning Plan: the ILP provides a structured process for students to set goals, monitor their achievements, and plan for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cooperative education" is the term used in Indiana statutes and regulations for education involving credit for work for employers, see IC 20-37-2-7. A two-semester program is required for accreditation, see <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/ccr/course-titles-and-descriptions>.

D. Grade Policy. Chad explained that the SBCA teaching staff is proposing a change to the school's grading policy to adjust the score required for a passing grade. The principle that students should attain mastery of subject matter led to an initial policy, when SBCA opened, that there would be no "C": passing would require at least a "B." In the second year, that was compromised to the current standard: a student can pass with a "C" (there is no "D"), but needs a score of 74%. This is very different from the practice of other schools, and the school's management & teaching staff have concluded that it is overly discouraging to students who are doing well enough to pass by normal scholastic standards but are "failing" by SBCA's tougher standard. The proposal is to reduce the score required for a "C" from 74% to 73% and to create a classification of "C minus" for a score of 72% to 70%. Additionally, the bottom of the score range for an "A" is to be lowered by a point (an "A" is now 94% to 97% and will be 93% to 97%). For GPA purposes, the practice of counting an "A+" as 4.0 and an "A" as 3.7 will be modified: both will be counted as 4.0.

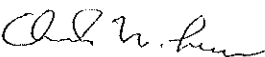
Suzanne suggested that the school consider establishing a minimum score for a failing grade. For example, if a student were to achieve a score of 100 on three tests and then fail to take a fourth test (or hand in an assignment), a score of zero would result in an average of 75, which would result in a "C" for the course, whereas a minimum failing score of 69 would result in an average of 92.25%, an "A-" for the course, which would probably be a more accurate measure of the student's mastery of the material.

Tracy asked what is the argument for the existing standard whereby 73% would be failing? Chad said the premise is that a higher standard will motivate students to work harder, but the contrary argument is that students who are already working hard to achieve 70-73% will be discouraged if graded as failing, and may give up. Tracy asked what's the standard to use in judging whether the new policy is a success? Chad said the best standard is the effect on the percentage of students retained over the year and year to year. Bruce asked how many students will this affect, i.e., how many are in the 70-73% range? Chad said the number is substantial but no count has been taken. The question was raised how to treat students who transfer from other schools with a "D" passing grade: should SBCA treat that as passing, even though a student with the same performance at SBCA would not be considered as passing? It was moved that the proposed changes be approved but that the question of grading policy be reviewed further after additional data is gathered; the question will be considered by the Strategic Visioning planning group, which (with further staff input) will make a recommendation to the board.

E. Expenditures. Ken presented the expenditures/bank detail for the period November 9-November 27, during which operating expenditures were \$206,987.60 and an additional \$131,250.00 (received from the City of South Bend TIF payment) was used to pay down debt to the Garatoni Family. Receipts included \$87,330.50 in tuition revenue and an additional \$450,000 loan from Larry, bringing the bank balance at the end of the period to roughly \$621,000. The report was approved.

F. Debt Limit/Approval. This matter was deferred for future consideration.

G. Opportunity For Comments From Audience. Janiece Fitzgerald, who teaches language arts, suggested (1) Suzanne's idea of a bottom score for failing is appropriate IF the student has truly tried; the problem is if a "floor" leads to students caring less; (2) SBCA should accept "D" passing grades from other schools. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.

  
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Charles Loeser, Assistant Secretary