

SOUTH COAST EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE (SCEC)

Board of Directors' Meeting June 13, 2024 Minutes

Present: J. Schoonover, M. Ryan, M. Pontes, R. Kidwell, J. Robidoux, J. Cabral, J. Saba-Maguire,
D. Heimbecker, J. Prendergast, L. Thibault

1.00 - Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Superintendent J. Schoonover at 1:10 PM.

2.00 - Minutes of April 11, 2024

The minutes of April 11, 2024 were presented for review and approved.

Motion, J. Cabral: To approve the minutes of April 11, 2024

Second, J. Robidoux

Vote, All in Favor

3.00 - Financial Information

3.10 - Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust

Director of Finance, Jennifer Prendergast noted the current account balance is \$207,000 and SCEC's OPEB liability is \$8.9M. OPEB trustees are recommending an additional \$25,000 be added to the trust in addition to the \$25,000 approved through the FY24 Budget Process.

3.20 – Updating of the FY 24 Business plan/Budget

Director of Finance, Jennifer Prendergast noted at the end of May 2024 student count is at 226 and SCEC's staff count is at 223 with a loss of \$98,000 for the month. SCEC's year to date profit is \$600,000. SCEC is still in the process of hiring additional staff and will continue to monitor the student/staff ratio.

Through the business plan FY2024 approval process SCEC will be adding \$25,000 to the Capital Reserve for FY24. The Director of Finance is recommending adding an additional \$25,000 from surplus revenue.

Motion: J. Robidoux: To deposit an additional \$25,000 to the OPEB Trust and Capital Reserve Plan from FY2024 surplus revenue.

Second, M. Pontes

Vote, All in Favor

Director of Finance, Jennifer Prendergast noted SCEC received \$270,000 in grants for FY2024. SCEC believes these grants lessen the burden on member districts and help SCEC create safe healthy classrooms for students.

3.30 - FY 25 Business/Plan

Director of Finance, Jennifer Prendergast presented the board with a breakeven Business Plan for \$24 million. This included a 5% increase to tuition rates and \$25,000 deposits into OPEB and Capital Reserve Fund.

Executive Director, David Heimbecker thanked the Board for allowing SCEC to make necessary changes to keep growing, and of course for continually sending students to our programs.

Motion: J. Cabral: To approve the Business Plan/Budget for FY25 as presented.
Second, M. Pontes
Vote, All in Favor

3.40 – New 3- Year Union Contracts

A new 3-year contract was ratified on a 78 to 12 vote by SCEC's union members on June 10, 2024.

Executive Director, David Heimbecker issued the Board the new MOA showing the changes that were made and noted that SCEC tries to balance the changing culture with balance. He is proud of the SCEC team and the Union President for their work with negotiations and appreciates the Boards support.

Board Chair, Jeff Schoonover spoke on bereavement and how to navigate this topic with miscarriages specifically. The Board agreed with Executive Director, David Heimbecker when noted, the understanding is- "we will work together, it's a heavy experience and each person has their own story".

The Board agreed that FMLA is available for certain circumstances.

Vice Chair, John Cabral asked for confirmation on #21 from the MOA referencing retirement and severance. Executive Director David Heimbecker confirmed, upon the retirement or death of an employee who has worked twelve (12) or more consecutive years for the collaborative, the employee shall receive a lump sum severance benefit according to the following: Effective July 1, 2024 - forty percent (40%) of their daily rate times the number of sick days with the maximum benefit of \$10,000.

Board Chair, Jeff Schoonover asked for confirmation regarding #11 from the MOA referencing Tuition Reimbursement, there were no changes to the contract except adding the last sentence, Reimbursement is for out-of-pocket expenses only.

Motion: J. Cabral: To approve the new Union Contract
Second, J. Robidoux
Vote, All in Favor

3.50 – Updating the Status of SCEC’s 2024 Annual Audit

Auditors have begun collecting the information and files they need to start work on the 2024 Annual Audit. They report that all the information they require is in an acceptable order and that it has been made accessible to them.

3.60 – SCEC Financial and Control Policies

As existing policies are honed and new ones emerge, Board member participation and oversight will be encouraged and solicited.

4.00 - Human Resources:

4.10 - New Hire(s):

4.11 - Amelia O’Brien, ABA Paraprofessional, 12 Months

4.12 – Deb Laurent, Clinician, 12 Months

4.13 – Shane Vezina, Buildings Manager, 12 Months

4.14 – Ashley Botelho, Nurse, 12 Months

4.20 - Transfer(s): None

4.30 - Resignation(s):

4.31 – Diana Rego, RBT Paraprofessional, 12 Months

4.32 – Jessica Henriques, Nurse, 12 Months

Motion: M Pontes: To approve the New Hires, Transfers and Resignations as presented.

Second, R. Kidwell

Vote, All in Favor

4.40 – Retirement(s):

4.41 – Richard Shannon, Building and Grounds Director, 12 Months

4.50 – Leave of Absence(s): None

4.60 – Termination(s): None

5.00 - Executive Session: None

6.00 - Building Program Update:

6.10 - Repairs and replacements at most SCEC sites are being completed on an as needed basis. E.g., A new septic system has been installed near the parking lot at LIFE Academy and cleanup activities are in progress, roof repairs are being made at Gallishaw and North Schools, at the Main SCEC Office, repairs to the heating system have been completed, along with electrical work required to support upgraded technology and the first-floor bathroom is being renovated.

6.20 - Minor renovations are being completed in newly acquired program classrooms.

7.00 - Policy and Procedures:

7.10 - As current administrative policies and procedures are refined and new ones emerge, Board participation and oversight will be encouraged and solicited.

8.00 - Internal & External Professional Development – Prepared by Dr. Carolyn McKearney & Frank Gallishaw

8.10 - Internal Professional Development – Prepared by Frank Gallishaw Jr.

8.11 - The members of the SCEC Deep Learning Leadership Team (DLLT) met on June 4th. The primary focus of the meeting was a year-end review of the DL work completed at all Collaborative sites. Team members were asked to report on the steps they had taken throughout the year to promote DL and to address the established goal of using questioning to promote DL with their students. Additionally, team members were asked to provide any artifacts collected to be added to the SCEC DL Hub.

8.12 - On May 3, 2024, all SCEC employees participated in our final online training for the new Massachusetts DESE IEP. The continued focus of the training was Accommodations and Modifications in the New Massachusetts IEP. Training team members included Associate Executive Directors Jennifer Faria and Lisa Martiesian, LIFE Academy Leader Lisa Fournier, GHS Clinical Coordinator Cristen Henderson, Related Services Leaders Linda Cullen and Bethany DeNardo, and Facilitator Amanda Jones.

8.20 - External Professional Development – Prepared by Dr. Carolyn McKearney

8.21 - The SCEC/BSU master's in special education cohort – January 2024 started this SCEC's cohorts fifth semester. The anticipated graduation date is Fall 2024. Cohort enrollments consists of 5 SCEC, 2 Somerset/Berkley staff members, and 1 Seekonk Public Schools part-time member.

8.22 - In collaboration with BSU, SCEC recruited 23 candidates for the bachelor's degree in special education program. This program is not like the traditional cohort model because candidates enter with different programming needs and course requirements. Candidates are eligible for the Para Grant and Student loans. There is a rolling admissions process. Potential candidates should contact Dr. McKearney if interested.

8.23 In partnership with other collaboratives and BSU, SCEC has applied for an Emergency License Educator Preparation grant. This grant opportunity will provide \$260,000 per year to support coursework as well as 50 MTEL preparation vouchers.

8.24- Dr. Carolyn McKearney is assessing potential interest in the following programs at BSU: Master's in educational leadership, Master's in special education, Bachelor's in Special Education, Social Emotional Learning Credential, ASD Credential, and Transition Credential. Memos were sent via email to the SCEC Board Members in January 2024. Please consider distributing them throughout your district.

8.25 - Dr. Carolyn McKearney is providing consultation to Dartmouth, Fall River, Seekonk, Mansfield and Norwood in the 2023-2024 school year.

8.26 – Dr. Lisa Fournier and Dr. McKearney completed a program evaluation of the Transition Program for Avon Public Schools in January 2024.

8.27- Both Initial and Refresher CPI courses are available from SCEC’s CPI team. If interested, please contact Dr. Carolyn McKearney at (508) 922-6213 or cmckearney@scecoll.org.

8.28 - SCEC’s ESL teacher, who is also a certified special education teacher, is available to assist SCEC member districts in supporting their English Learners in the 2023-2024 school year. Examples of available supports include:

- Support WIDA testing for students
- Support/train staff on WIDA testing
- Consult with classroom teacher to support EL students in the acquisition of the English language.
- Collaborating with teachers to plan lessons that include language goals in listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Determining appropriate teaching methods for students based on their English proficiency.
- Assessing student progress
- Consult on EL students who also require special education services
- Communicating with and supporting families

Contact Dr. Bethany DeNardo if interested in this service at bdenardo@scecoll.org or call/text at (508) 962-6521.

Executive Director, Heimbecker stated he is very proud of the work that the SCEC leadership has and is accomplishing and mentioned that Dr. Carolyn McKearney will maintain her work after retirement.

9.00 - Superintendent Issues

9.10 – Executive Director’s Book Review: Sustainability through transforming high conflict into good conflict and focusing on the right stuff:

According to Amanda Ripley in *High conflict: Why we get trapped and how we get out* (2021), good conflict is a necessary force that pushes us to be better people. However, high conflict is seen by her as being counterproductive, because it turns disagreements into an us vs. them battle in which participants often become what they hate. (Amazon, April 5, 2022)

Ripley believes that we can turn unproductive high conflict into productive endeavors by reframing disagreements from battles to be won or lost into opportunities to understand. Active listening and communicating what has been heard are seen as being essential to the transformation. In this sense, progress is seen as understanding and accepting, but not necessarily as agreeing. Once understanding and acceptance are established, common goals can be established and pursued.

Recently, Jim VandeHei one of the authors of *Smart brevity* wrote a book about the secrets to success.

The book is entitled *Just the good stuff* (2024) and in it VandeHei models the writing style (less is more) that he and his co-authors espoused. On pages 87-89, he maintains that to be a worthy leader, the following are indispensable:

- A moral framework
- A probing mind
- Courage
- Relentlessness
- Candor
- Grit
- Agility

As leaders striving for access and equity for all in an environment where conflict can be a constant, forging transformative roadmaps seems essential. In doing so, it is becoming increasingly clear that we need to create an inclusive culture that encourages good conflict. Being worthy leaders, active listening and reflective communication can assist us as we deeply and profoundly understand and accept each other. This reinforces and enhances an organizational foundation upon which all members of our educational community will grow and prosper.

Please note that there is a growing body of neuroscience research studies revealing the health benefits of reading fiction. In that vein and as a gesture to our collective DEIB efforts, James McBride's *The heaven & earth grocery store* (2023) is being offered for Board members' summer reading.

9.20 - As a result of SCEC's Senior Leadership Team efforts, SCEC will be receiving DESE funds for use in addressing student absences.

9.30 - Senior Leaders have aggressively pursued DESE resources resulting in new ELA and Mathematics curriculum being purchased with accompanying technical assistance to support adaptation efforts throughout SCEC.

9.40 - Updating the Status of SCEC's 2023 Annual Report:

Dr. Bethany DeNardo, Teacher-Leader Linda Cullen and their team are currently compiling information that will be needed to

10.00 - Other Superintendent Issues

10.10 – National Conference Opportunities:

As is the SCEC tradition, Board Members who attend national conferences are invited to share their learning experiences with other Board members at each Board mtg.

10.20 - Executive Director Heimbecker mentioned he is looking forward to the Summer Institute this year and hopes to see you all there.

11.00 - Warrants:

Presented to Board Members through DocuSign approval.

12.00 - Other Item(s)

12.10 – Updating and Discussing Leasing Property for Instructional Purposes

12.11 – Leases have been extended at the Berkley Community and Middle Schools, Palmer River Elementary School in Rehoboth, Freetown Elementary, George R. Austin Intermediate School in Lakeville, the North Grades 1-8 School in Seekonk, the Gallishaw High School in Seekonk, and SCEC’s inclusion classroom at Seekonk High School.

12.12 - Superintendent, Bill Runey has space in Dighton-Rehoboth. They will consist of 2 SCEC inclusion classrooms at Beckwith Middle School and 5 SCEC inclusion classrooms at D/R Regional High School.

SCEC is set to move into Beckwith Middle School on July 5, 2024 and Bishop Connolly folks are scheduled for their move into D/R Regional High School on July 29, 2024.

Given the Berkley, Dighton-Rehoboth, and Seekonk schools departments’ partnerships, SCEC’s Leadership Team is pleased to be able to maintain inclusion programs serving the entire K-12 grade span. LT members are grateful to the SCEC Board members who have made grade inclusion programming available in the past and future.

Executive Director Heimbecker shared thanks with Superintendent Maria Pontes for her help focusing on inclusion with Durfee High School and Bishop Connolly High School. Executive Director Heimbecker also wanted to thank Superintendent Runey for his hard work and help executing the space in Dighton-Rehoboth.

12.13 – It is reported that Lease renewals for the Freetown Elementary School and the George R. Austin Intermediate School in Lakeville will be executed within the next few weeks.

12.14 – As previously mentioned, on December 7, 2023, the LIFE Academy building and property were purchased by SCEC from the YMCA in Swansea. As Board Members know all too well, this purchase is the culmination of 7 arduous years of networking, planning, investing, and program development. SCEC’s Leadership Team is grateful to the SCEC Board of Directors for strong and consistent support for this entire project.

13.00 - Adjournment

Motion, J. Cabral: Motion to adjourn at 2:07PM

Second, J. Robidoux

Vote, Unanimous