

Meeting Minutes
July 7, 2025

ATTENDEES

Walter Martin – Board Chairman
Chris Farrell – Board Vice-Chairman
Natalie Wright – Board Secretary
Steve Moody – Board Treasurer
Mark Fleming – Board Member
Marcia Simmons – Board Member
Dr. Marcella Nytz – MS AA
Lea King – Admin
Kelly Shannahan – El AA
Tasha Parnell – HS AA
Stacey Bryant – EC AA
Scott Sides – K12
John Kramer – K12
Jamie Matyas – K12
Kristina Rodrigues – HOS
Sara Struhs – Executive Director

Walter opened the meeting with a quorum met and read the mission statement. He then asked for a motion to approve the agenda and previous meeting minutes. Mark made the motion and Steve seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked Kristina to give the HOS report.

Kristina gave an update on the graduation – which was a great day. There was lots of participation. Tasha and her team did a great job, not only at the graduation, but also for the prom the night before. Two days of great celebration.

She said the enrollment numbers are constantly changing so understand the numbers she is giving will change before school begins. As of now, 7,8,10,11 and 12 grades are at capacity. The elementary school has a lower than usual enrollment and 6 and 9 grades still have vacancies. Still we are at approximately 3760 students. We have now worked through the waitlist and are taking open enrollments. We expect to start school with the enrollment close to 4000 students. She believes we will get to that number in the next month.

She has been working hard to fill all the open positions. There were 63 openings (new positions and back-filling positions). Approximately 18 positions remain open and there are currently 12 offers out. Sara has approved one round, but there is another packet heading her way. We currently have about 33 positions hired and another 30 in some stage of the process.

Kristina then introduced Dr. Marcella Nytz who is the new Academic Administrator for the Middle School. She previously was the Lead Teacher for MS and Kristina's right hand person in the MS. We are so happy to have her as the new AA for MS.

CTE and CR Department got additional budgeted money in the coming year and Kristina asked for 3 additional CTE teachers (Healthcare, Business and Technology and Gaming design) and will also purchase Geometrics and Edu-protocols which are very helpful for getting students prepared for the CTE certifications. Geometrics is an excellent program. Tasha will also be attending the CTE Conference next week and is hoping to speak with Geometrics about a partnership.

Kristina said they are looking at gaming laptops which cost approximately \$2000.00 each and they wish to buy 10 of them. These are needed for competitions. The remaining budget will cover registrations, travel, hotels, etc and other needs for students going to competitions.

The Credit Recovery Department has done an amazing job with the students. They have proven success and are making a difference for those students who have fallen behind or need the extra support. This department needs an additional psychologist on staff. Stacey suggested this and it is a good use of the funding rather than outsourcing this as that takes much more time for the students to receive the services.

Regarding the renovation of the office space, we need to install fire doors to meet the code if we want to have more students/larger groups use the space for testing. We also were contacted by the building manager regarding expanding to include additional space on the third floor. We are looking into this and what will be the right decision regarding adding space or renovating space or both.

And finally, Kristina said they are looking into trips to DC for HS students. They will soon be reaching voting age and this is a good way to tie in civics and government. There could also be opportunities to tie in some CTE experiences.

Kristina said summer school had a 4% retention rate which was lower than previously and Credit Recovery having some more testing done on the second round.

The student handbook is being revised and will be ready for the board's approval at the August 11th meeting. They are working on the AI policy, Bullying policy and behavior metrics. The attendance policy needs to be voted on tonight making the change to remove parents from recording student attendance. We have found that parents are not keeping accurate recordings of attendance and this is especially challenging throughout the year and especially when we can see the exact day and time and length of time a student is participating on line or working on line and the parent does not match with the data. This will create clarity for administrative withdrawals also.

Marcia stated that Infinite Campus process shows tracking of time as well. Live classes are not tracked through that and wonders how to account for the live class time? Can it be done through zoom? Or Canvas?

Kristina said Engageli, which we started using last year gets down to the minute when the student entered late, not late, raises a hand, etc. It is very helpful and should show students in classes or working on line for 6 hrs/day or more.

Scott said some use parent and tech but some do not: it is about a 50-50 split. And he believes we will have a better, more accurate record of attendance.

Marcia asked if all will be trained on this new policy? And Kristina confirmed that all teachers will be trained on it during the WOWeek.

Kristina said she had nothing more for the board and Walter asked if there were any more questions for Kristina. There were none.

Sara then asked Walter if we could move the conversation about the lunch program up so that the presenters from Stride could then leave for the remainder of the meeting. Walter agreed and asked for Stride to begin.

Scott introduced Jamie Maytas and said they have a slide presentation or we could jump right into it. Sara said to was up to them.

Scott began by explaining how this project came about: they are trying to meet the needs of students who would received free and reduced lunch in the traditional public schools, but being a virtual school this has proven to be a more difficult endeavor. They began looking at the needs of their public school students who are learning at home but not receiving the same resources as students in the traditional public schools. Jamie has been living this subject for some time has come up with a possible solution.

Jamie thanked Sara and the board for allowing her to present tonight. She began with an overview of the work she has been doing and then said questions would follow. She began working on this project last October developing a pilot for delivering meals to students who qualify for meals but are not getting them because they are not in a brick and mortar building. The money is allocated to them is not getting to them. The pilot is designed to:

- 1) meet the needs of our students regardless of location
- 2) designed not to put Stride in the food business, but to find a company who is in the food business. They are working with Trio which is a for profit company but does Meals on Wheels and other schools. They have 50 years of experience as a trusted, well-established company.
- 3) meals would be lunch for the pilot: 10 frozen meals in trays delivered in a climate cooled box delivered to the home. Ten meals at the beginning of the month and 10 meals delivered the 3rd week of the month. The meals will have identifying stickers with the ingredients and heating instructions. They may be stored in a freezer or refrigerator and may be heated in a toaster over, microwave or traditional oven. There is no choice of meals for the pilot, but there could be once the program is up and running. This is a pilot to prove that it will work and support the legislative endeavors by Stride and to amend the language that currently prevents our students from getting the meals they deserve.
- 4) It will begin in October
- 5) They are looking for schools to commit to the pilot by the end of July.
- 6) The cost of the meals is \$6.50/student/meal and that includes the delivery costs.
- 7) they are looking for schools to cover the costs of the food and delivery for the pilot and Stride is covering the costs of the staff developing the pilot, the legal team, customer care services, communications to parents and other processing requirements.
- 8) schools considering a subset of students in schools for the pilot (therefore not covering all students in the school) should be determined by the school.

9) When federal language is changed to include these students/schools, it will be available to all students who qualify for FRL.

Jamie identified some questions the board would need to answer:

- a) schools must determine the portion of students to be in the pilot (example: all seniors). Stride believes pilot schools will have an advantage once the language is at USDA is changed to allow the funding to follow the students.
- b) What happens if the funding is not changed by USDA in the 25-26 school year? This would be a decision for the board: continue or drop the program. It would be required to cover the costs if they decide to continue.
- c) Stride covers all costs other than the meals.

Walter asked if there is a suggestion on what population we should identify for the program and Jamie said they believe HS would be the best since they are independent enough to heat the meals and, if we chose seniors, they would be leaving at the end of the year which would make ending the program easier. The caveat is they do recommend if there are siblings in the family, all the students should be enrolled in the program regardless of their grade level.

Mark asked how many other Stride schools have an interest in this?

Jamie said there are about 6 in conversation with them now. All have a minimum of 50% on FRL and they know under-nutritional circumstances are impacting the students' performances.

Marcia asked if it starts in October, when does it end? And what about summer school?

Jamie said including summer is up to the school. We could continue over the summer mailing meals to the households. That would be a decision for the board.

Steve Moody asked: "you mentioned the cost at \$6.50/student/meal – isn't that higher than what is reimbursable?"

Jamie said yes, but the costs will come down once we are able to ship to scale.

Steve asked what is scale? Jamie said we would need a volume upwards of 10's of thousands – so multiple schools – we would need approximately ½ of all Stride schools to reach volume.

Steve said it is his opinion that it is difficult to get money from the Feds and given the current atmosphere in government, it would be difficult. Jamie agreed but does not believe it is gambling. What is different is USDA leadership would be inclined to move this quickly now because it doesn't require new money. The money given to the schools/districts is based on the number of students who qualify in districts for FRL, but the money is not following the students who choose to attend virtual learning. So, this is more a question of mismanagement of funding not adding funding.

Sara asked for clarification: was she stating schools receiving funding for a FRL student, when that student moves to virtual school, the school is still receiving the funding for the virtual learning student? Jamie said yes, but she doesn't know what is happening to that funding once the student leaves for a virtual school. Marcia said she believes that is somewhat true since we saw during COVID that students within the district regardless of the school they were attending were able to get meals at the school.

Steve asked what percentage of our students are FRL. Marcia asked if we have it broken down by grade level to see if elementary has more food shortages than the higher grades. Kristina said we definitely have a problem with a large FRL population. We currently give them an internet stipend in lieu of the meals. If we want the grad band numbers she will have to pull them but we are upwards

of 56% FRL at our school, but we could have more as not everyone filled out the paperwork for the \$10-15 monthly reimbursement.

Mark asked for verification that we are giving some funding for internet to balance not providing meals? And Kristina confirmed.

Marcia asked if we could see the reimbursements by grade band to have an idea by grade band what the needs are and if some are higher than others. Kristina said she would do the analysis.

Natalie asked if there are specific criteria that would indicate a successful pilot? For example: things that work well or do not work well for mailing delivery during the pilot.

Jamie said there are 3 different ways Stride will measure success:

- 1) Trio has a 99.8% reliability on delivery which is a key metric in success
- 2) Are there other related learning metrics and are they moving so they are looking at research that exists tying nutrition to attendance, attention and ultimately performance. They are looking to validate the tie between nutrition and attendance specifically.

Natalie asked if the meals will meet state standards for healthy meals. And what kind of meals are they providing?

Jamie said they mostly follow food nutrition standards – there are some cases where they include an extra pad of butter or margarine, or they may have a cookie so they are not 100% aligned, but predominantly they are aligned. Healthy is meeting all requirements. A variety of 10 meals – a different meal each day of the week for 10 meals – then a repeat in the next box. So they will eat the same meal twice a month. Once the program is rolled out in full, they will be given choice to accommodate religious beliefs or other desires but not with the pilot. There is no choice of meals in the pilot.

Marcia asked about allergies to make sure the school will not be liable. Jamie said they will not be liable. There is a letter they will receive explaining they have no meal choice, ingredients for every meal will be listed on the top of the container, and parents have the responsibility for giving that meal to the student or may give it to a different member of the family if they are allergic, don't like or for whatever reason.

Marcia asked how this works with McKinney-Vento students? Jamie said we will aspire to work with the schools to upload at the beginning of every month the eligible students and delivery address that happens once a month. New address uploads during that first month so the next month it is delivered to the new address. We recognize there are a lot of logistics that won't be perfected in the pilot, but we start here and will improve with time.

Walter then asked if there were any other questions for Jamie. Jamie thanked the board for their time. She explained once we vote to be a pilot member, she will begin working with us to work through the logistics, etc.

Walter asked Chad for the monthly bill update.

Chad said there were no major changes from the previous update:

ADM for the end of year is 3629

The total that was funded was \$37.7m

The total annual expenses were \$33.6m

That left a \$4.2m surplus for school year 24-25.

The invoice for the month is \$446k which was a drop from May but that is normal with the end of the school year.

Kristina confirmed that the laptops are ordered and will arrive in time for the first week of training 7/30.

Walter thanked Chad for the report and asked Chris to present the bonus structure program.

Chris said that after conversations with the administration, we've put together a bonus plan that we want to formalize and put in place before the opening meeting for the school and so he was asking for a vote on it today.

There are 3 elements to the plan:

- 1) A small bonus for loyalty and commitment to NCVA
 - a. \$500.00 for completing the year
 - b. \$100.00 for each completed year service.
- 2) Administrative Achievement
 - a. \$1000.00 for achieving the management business objectives to be created by the appropriate administrative manager. The money is to be divided equally for each objective and paid out for successful completion of each objective. If an objective is not met in a timely manner, that objective will not be paid out. EX: if there are 5 objectives, each one is worth \$200.00 and recipients only receive payment for those that were successfully completed on time.
- 3) Performance
 - a. A bonus of \$5,000.00 for the school achieving a "C" grade
 - b. A bonus of \$7500.00 for the school achieving a "B" grade
 - c. A bonus of \$10,000 for the school achieving an "A" grade

To qualify for any bonus, an employee must be an active employee on the last day of the school operations for the fiscal year.

This bonus structure is only good for this year and may be changed at any time the Board so chooses. Chris would like us to look at the ability for the board to payout the bonuses to teachers if they leave at the end of the school year but before the bonuses are paid out (since school grades come out early fall).

Natalie asked if the MBO's are a new concept or are there performance objectives now?

Kristina said they already have objectives, what she needs to do is to differentiate between the EL, MS and the HS the things that are being done already.

Natalie asked Kristina to make sure when creating the objectives that they have consistency across all grades. Kristina agreed. She wants the idea for then to hit the goal not to fail at it. There are other development goals geared toward them. These are geared toward the success of their school and things they should be doing anyway.

Natalie asked that the number of MBO's be kept the same for all groups and Kristina agreed. She wants to keep them the same and consistent. She wants them to be achievable in their school so everyone is working to hit the same elements.

Marcia asked who the bonus is for: teachers, NCVA employees or all NCVA employees including Stride employees. Chris said in the past giving bonuses to all employees in the school has created strong moral and so this is for all NCVA employees whether board employees or Stride employees.

Steve said he is in favor of the plan. Mark agreed and thanked Chris for his work on this. He also noted a bonus structure is never perfect, but having the ability to tailor it year over year means we can come back to it and tweak it in the future. Chris agreed.

Marcia said the last part is the hardest part because we want to reward those who make the school grade increase happen, but how can we pay them if they are no longer working for us? Chris said he wanted to be able to reward employees who helped with the endeavor but realizes it could be difficult since we will be in a new school year. Chris asked Sara to speak with the attorney and with finance people to find out if this is feasible. He said if we can do it we should but if we cannot it's ok.

Walter thanked him for a good job done. Chris thanked Sara and Kristina for their help with it.

Walter asked Sara for the Executive Director's report

Sara said Kristina has been working on the hires and several have been approved with more coming her way.

She noted we have already discussed the CTE money being used for staffing.

She said the BCBS insurance costs will be presented at a meeting tomorrow morning. She asked Steve if he would like to attend if possible. He said he would try. Sara explained that the cost for the family plan was extremely high (\$1600/month) and could we consider lowering that cost? Everyone agreed. Steve suggested they should give us multiple options.

Walter thanked Sara and moved on to the votes:

Walter asked for a motion to approve the monthly bill. Steve made the motion; Natalie seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to approve a stipend of \$7000.00 for Tasha as the new Data Academic Administrator. Steve made the motion; Marcia seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to approve the bonus structure for all employees. Marcia made the motion; Steve seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to approve the CTE discretionary spending . Marcia made the motion; Steve seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to approve removing the requirement for parents to track their student's attendance. Chris made the motion; Natalie seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to approve participation in the lunch pilot program. Steve made a motion for the subject to be tabled so the board could spend more time discussing it. Mark seconded it. Walter called for a vote: it was unanimous – the vote is tabled until the August 11 meeting.

Walter asked for a motion to approve the hiring of another psychologist using CTE funds. Steve made the motion; Mark seconded it. Walter called the vote: it was unanimous.

Walter asked for a motion to adjourn. Mark made the motion; Steve seconded it. Walter called the vote; it was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm