

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
The Equity Project (TEP) Charter School Board of Trustees
December 11th, 2023**

The **174th** regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of The Equity Project Charter School was held on **December 11th** at The Equity Project Charter School's Middle School location at **153 Sherman Avenue, New York, NY 10034** pursuant to due notice to Trustees via electronic mail sent on 12/8/23. Public notice was posted on TEP's website at www.tepcharter.org.

The following Trustees were present:

Laura Tavormina joined in person.

Brooks Clark, Andrew Buher, Sean Juan, Anyeli Matos, and Jen Mulhern, joined via videoconference from the following public locations posted in advance on TEP's website:

600 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10016

351 West 38th Street
New York, NY 10018

1350 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

235 N Mountain Ave
Montclair, NJ 07043

The following staff members were present:

Casey Ash, Aaron Villela, Shelly Gupta, and Jenoah Jerome.

Meeting called to order at 5:34 pm.

Meeting Agenda and Notes:

1. Student & Staffing Update

Casey Ash, Principal, began by sharing that TEP's attendance rate is 93.7%. This is 1.5 points better than last year. This is still below pre-pandemic numbers which at this point in the school year was at 96%. The school is proud to be currently doing about 3% better than the city, however. The school is pushing for higher attendance rates.

The school has returned to NWEA Map Growth testing – a nationally normed computer-based assessment that tracks progress within the year. Millions of students around the world take this test, which allows for more comparison than NYC and District 6.

Mr. Ash also shared that the school was fully staffed to start the school year, but has experienced a couple of transitions. A Middle School P.E. teacher will transition as of the last day before winter break, but the school has already found his replacement to begin on the first day back. The school had an unexpected departure in the Middle School Science Department, and five teachers will be going on parental leave at the same campus. The school is hiring part-time and full-time teachers for the vacancies.

2. Pre-K Update

Aaron Villela, CEO, shared that part of TEP's vision has been to expand into Pre-K as TEP noticed this need in the community. The school reached out to the NYC DOE Early Childhood division last year and was told that RFP applications would not be accepted due to enrollment challenges. The school remained connected and expressed an interest in Pre-K for the upcoming school year, but once again this year, RFP applications to expand into Pre-K are not expected to launch. The reasons appear to be related to budget cuts. The school is looking for alternative options and will continue to do research.

3. K-4 Facility

Mr. Ash initiated a mini think-tank for support with a challenge regarding TEP's facilities. In anticipation of TEP's anticipated lease renewal for the EC campus, TEP is looking to explore the best options to ensure the school continues to maximize the classroom experience, ideally providing additional outdoor spaces while continuing to prioritize security. The school recognizes the impact that the Sherman campus (home of grades 5-8) has had on students, families, and the community and would like to provide as similar an experience as possible, for the younger grades (K-4).

School staff and the Board of Trustees brainstormed ways to meet TEP's goals.

4. Student Spotlight

Mr. Ash introduced the Board to student AM from TEP's Elementary Campus. The student excels academically and has been supportive of the new students in their classroom. AM's family immigrated from Mexico to raise their family in New York City. AM has plans to visit Mexico for two weeks with their brother as they grow older.

The Board heard from AM in a video.

When asked what they love about being Mexican, AM shared that they love celebrating their family and ancestors during 'Día De Los Muertos' and enjoy Mexican food such as chicken tacos, soup, and rice.

When asked what advice they have for other Mexican children, AM said they should never forget their language. It is important to be able to hold onto their culture.

The Board was charmed by AM and remains excited for future Student Spotlights.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:17 PM.

Minutes recorded by Jen Mulhern.