

Prairie Creek Community School  
School Board Monthly Meeting Minutes  
March 23, 2023 @ 7:00pm  
Prairie Creek Community School, Northfield MN 55057

1 Call to order 7:04pm

2 Attendance

2022-2023	Aug 25	Sep 22	Oct 27	Nov 17	Dec 22	Jan 26	Mar 2 (Feb 23)	Mar 23	Apl 27	May 25	Jun 22
Shelly Dickinson	✓	✓	X	✓	C	✓	✓	X			
Zaki Haidar	✓	✓	X	✓	A	✓	X	X			
Kelsey Fitschen-Hemmah	✓	✓	✓	✓	N	✓	✓	✓			
Tim Goodwin	✓	X	✓	✓	C	✓	✓	✓			
Beth Molitor	✓	X	✓	✓	E	✓	X	✓			
Nancy Dennis	✓	✓	✓	✓	L	✓	✓	✓			
Lyndsey Reece	✓	✓	✓	X	L	X	✓	✓			
Christine Williams	✓	✓	✓	✓	E	✓	✓	✓			
Margit Zsolnay	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	✓	✓	✓			
Simon Tyler-ex officio	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Keith Johnson- ex officio	X	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	X			
Colleen Braucher	✓	✓	✓	X		✓	✓	✓			

3 Recognition/Announcements: Makers on Saturdays has been really fun and it feels like before pandemic times. It has really been a great addition. The Egrets and Cranes for their bridge culminating event held today. K/1 team and the 2/3 team for organizing field trips this week. A great reminder how vital experiences outside of our building are for the children. Enrollment lottery happened on Monday. Diana and Colleen reworked the system to streamline the enrollment process. The new system went very well.

4 Public Comments: Jessica Provancha, parent of a Chickadee, was here to observe our meeting.

5 Approve Agenda

Moved: Lyndsey Reece

Second: Nancy Dennis

Passed: Passed

6 Approve Minutes from the March 02, 2023 meeting

Moved: Margit Zsolnay

Second: Lyndsey Reece

Passed: Passed

7 Items for discussion and/or reports

a Director Report:

**Enrollment and Waiting List for 2022/23**

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Enrollment (current)	30	30	30	30	30	30	180
Waiting List (for 22/23)	0	1	0	14	5	0	20

**Program Updates**

Key program happenings / updates:

- The Herons' class culminated their Silk Road theme with a learning fair
- The K/1 team went to the Science Museum on March 20
- The 2-3 team took a field trip to Minneapolis to study bridges and visit the Guthrie and Minneapolis Institute of Arts
- The Student Council hosted a "Bagels and Books" activity for all children

**Staffing updates**

- No updates

**Building / Grounds**

- No updates

**Community Connections / Outreach**

- Michelle Martin is leading a Makers' Space on Saturday mornings for interested families
- Dr. Matt Hillmann conducted his annual authorizer site visit on March 6 (see report in packet)

**Professional Development**

- Faculty committees led professional development workshops:
  - Multi-age / Bird Buddies Review

Is the educational program a success?

Prairie Creek continues to outperform the Minnesota averages on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA).

Scores in % 2017 2018 2019 2021

PCCS Science 70.0 73.3 85.7 65.5

State Science 60.6 58.7 54.9 47.9

PCCS Math 67.4 61.4 70.5 51.9

State Math 59.2 57.7 55.5 44.2

PCCS Reading 73.0 71.6 70.5 72.0

State Reading 60.6 60.4 58.3 52.5

Conversations with board members, teachers, staff, students, and the director yielded a high level of satisfaction with the educational program. The school continues to balance direct content instruction with its commitment to being a progressive school, allowing students to engage and have an integral voice in their individual learning process. Special education staff indicated their alternative delivery of specialized services (ADSIS) reading program is producing results. While the school has the most individual education plans (IEPs) that it has had in some time, the special education team feels they are solid referrals because of the ADSIS intervention. The challenge of re-acclimating students to the progressive model where students have substantial agency was noted across interview groups. Prairie Creek shifted to a more directed instructional model during the school years most impacted by the pandemic. There is substantial intentionality in re-centering learning agency with the student this year because the current student body has less experience with that freedom. All indications from the site visit show that the effort is paying off.

### **Is the organization efficient and well-run?**

Evidence continues to suggest that Prairie Creek is efficient and well-run. Teachers, board members, and administrators described a high level of competence in operating the organization. The financial stability of the school is strong. Enrollment is stable. At the end of the 2021-22 school year, the unassigned fund balance was 39% or approximately \$832,000. The board has a goal of a 25% fund balance as projected three years into the future. Because the school is small, minor financial disruptions can have a dramatic and adverse impact. However, the school has experienced two years of deficit spending and there is concern about its fourth year out, which is showing the potential to fall below its fund balance goal. They plan to consider reductions over the next two years to ensure alignment with their fund balance goal. As with students, Prairie Creek staff is working to re-acclimate parents to Prairie Creek traditions and culture. Because of pandemic-related disruptions, the school's family events were not held in the same way as in the past. The "handoff" from one generation of parents to the next was interrupted. School staff is working hard to re-establish the school's most beloved traditions while letting less effective traditions change or sunset. Staff noted they have been unable to recruit as many parent volunteers as in the pre-pandemic school years. Parent volunteers are an essential component of the Prairie Creek structure. The staff is confident it will return to pre-pandemic levels but is working to accelerate that process. The school plans to shift its facility leasing to an "affiliated building corporation" from its long-time non-profit facility owner. The affiliated building corporation is a common strategy for charter schools to manage their facility because they cannot own their school building. This approach is intended to provide greater transparency. The transition will provide the Prairie Creek school board with opportunities to be more involved with building and grounds management, sustainable planning, and engaging student voice more in environmental stewardship. The latest audit was "clean" and had minimal findings. More information about the audit and other Prairie Creek accountability measures are available at: <https://prairiecreek.org/accountability/>.

### **Is the school meeting its legal obligations?**

No data suggests that Prairie Creek is not meeting its legal obligations. The board has a process to regularly review and update policies to keep up with the latest statutory implications.

Are strategies in place for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term?

Prairie Creek is committed to continuous improvement. The school is returning to intentional development (financial fundraisers) to assist with its financial sustainability. The school is implementing a new teacher evaluation model and mathematics curriculum. Regular PLC meetings, board reports, and their annual improvement plans presented to the board indicate they are on track to sustaining their success.

### **Summary**

The site visit to Prairie Creek was enjoyable and productive. It is a joyful learning environment and a well-run school. Prairie Creek continues to purposefully seek to realize its mission as a public progressive charter school.

b Education Program Committee: We have been working all year on the teacher evaluation plan. We put together a new form for teachers that are aligned to our progressive mission. Then we aligned it more closely with each bullet of our mission. Finally we then took the MDE standards for practice and cross referenced what we have in our rubric. We now have a spring to spring evaluation plan. This gives teachers a chance to reflect over the summer. We have built in time to our calendar so we are specifically reviewing our goals during teacher work day.

c Finance Committee: Not much has changed since the last meeting. We discussed the 5 year budget.

d Development Committee: We are trying to close the gap on what we budgeted and where we are right now. Looking at an event sometime before the end of the fiscal year. Our development budget for next year will be increased by \$20,000.

e Nominations Committee: The bios were sent out on March 3rd. The ballots will go out on Wednesday April 5 and will need to be returned to school by April 11. Counting the ballots on Friday, April 14, 2023.

f Policy Committee Nothing New

g Sub Committee Reports No New Reports

8 Items for Action

9. Adjournment 7:59pm

Next board meeting Thursday, April 27, 2023 @ 7:00pm