

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
THE WOODSTOCK ACADEMY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ACADEMIC COMMITTEE
September 11, 2023



These minutes are for
informational purposes only.

PRESENT: Folkerts, Chandler; Ellsworth, Rob; Gronski, Melany; Harten, Michael; Larrow, Jeff; Munroe, Heather; Musko, Jason; Nguyen, Cang—alt.; Paquette, Philippa; Samborowski, Len; Sandford, Chris; Singleton, Holly; Walley, David; Woodland, Julie; Young, Scott
ABSENT WITH NOTIFICATION: Rich, Matthew; Staples, Ethan

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Paquette at 5:31 p.m.

At the request of Committee Chair Paquette, all present and on Zoom introduced themselves and provided their job title or role to the group.

2. Community Participation – None.

3. Secretary's Report—Minutes of May 8, 2023

MOTION: (Musko/Singleton) To approve the minutes of May 8, 2023.
Unanimous

4. Welcome New Members

All new and existing members were given a warm welcome by Committee Chair Paquette.

5. Opening Days Review

Dean of Academics Dr. Michael Harten and Associate Head of School Holly Singleton reviewed the schedules provided to faculty and staff during the opening days of school. Trustee Jeff Larrow was thanked for welcoming everyone back on the first day. Other highlighted events included Lisa Marie Rivera from Silver Linings, who spoke about trauma accommodating practices in the learning environment, Director of Equity and Inclusion Denzel Washington who spoke about DEI initiatives, and new Director of Technology Bob Olson who provided an IT update. The PowerPoint created by department heads to be shared with new students on their first day was praised as very comprehensive and helpful since all new students received the same information to get them off to a great start. Other feedback included transportation adjustments (next year, students will start on South and head to North), and the flow of activities on the first day for new students. Committee members agreed that the 2023-2024 school opening was better than in previous years, with positive energy, movement, and tone.

6. Academic Report

Dean of Academics Dr. Michael Harten provided his Academic Report using PowerPoint. He highlighted a 99% graduation rate for the class of 2023, with 84% attending college, 3% enlisting in the armed services, and 14% listed as "other." AP testing data showed 205 students taking 323 exams, with 69% scoring 3 or higher, which is a little better than typical. Every junior who took a test scored over a 3. SAT scores were mixed, as 64% of students met the state's goal for English and 33% met the state's goal for math. However, the cohort showed a 30-point growth in English and a 30-point growth in math. Three-year comparisons in these subjects were discussed, with COVID, absenteeism, changes to group demographics, and the fact that many colleges no longer require SAT scores in their applications as contributors to lower scores. This fall, the October 25th PSAT/SAT test will be entirely digital. In Science testing, 58% of the students met the state goal. Interim assessments and classroom interventions will continue in all these subjects throughout the year.

Discussion shifted to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the school setting, as previously discussed in the committee and revised school policy. At the moment, AI is widely available and used by students, AI detection is not perfect, and there are many opportunities to leverage AI for lesson planning and instruction.

Dr. Harten shared that nearly 20 teachers will participate in an Apple Professional Learning opportunity this fall where they will be able to collaborate on lessons, units, and ways to increase student engagement.

Further, with the help of a \$48K state grant to expand dual credit options, 12-15 additional dual credit courses will be added to the 20 existing dual credit courses we already offer. 30% of WA's 11-12th-grade students meet the state's benchmark for participation. Dual credit classes are available from UCONN, Eastern, QV, and Nichols College.

7. Committee Goals for 2023-2024

Members used the 2022-2023 committee goals to craft goals for the current school year. After some discussion, the 2023-2024 committee goals were listed as:

- A. Monitor social and emotional support for students and staff and collect data.
- B. Encourage BOT members to attend classes and events.
- C. Encourage understanding of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the Academy community.
- D. Monitor, assess results, and support plans to improve student assessment data, particularly in science, English, and math.

8. Other

Len Samborowski described some of his own experiences using artificial intelligence (AI) at home and at Nichols College. Through an AI initiative at Nichols College, up to 250 virtual headsets might be available to Academy students for research and publications, and Mr. Samborowski offered his help with AI and virtual reality (VR) applications at The Academy. Mr. Samborowski planned to reach out to Dr. Harten about using AI for script writing or in 3-D animation classes. Committee members shared their thoughts about using AI and VR as tools during a brief discussion.

9. Adjournment

MOTION: (Larrow/Musko) To adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m.
Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Woodland

Julie Woodland
Board Clerk

The Woodstock Academy prepares all students by providing diverse opportunities through a rigorous curriculum and a variety of programs in order to cultivate the necessary skills to become lifelong learners and global citizens.