

The Classical Academy
975 Stout Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80921

Board of Directors Special Meeting
Monday, Oct 1, 2007

- I. Call to Order. Chairman Matt Carpenter called the open session to order at 7:05 p.m. This special meeting of the Board was called at the request of two-thirds of the Directors: Lisa Sutton, Chris Bender, Steve Tomberlin, Steve Pope, and Chris Leland.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call.
 - A. Matt Carpenter led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - B. Roll Call. The following Directors were present: Matt Carpenter, Chris Bender, Clark Miller, Steve Tomberlin, Steve Pope, Chris Leland, and Lisa Sutton. Also present: Mark Hyatt, President.
- III. Audience Comments on Calendar Issues. Chairman Matt Carpenter explained that the purpose of this meeting was to allow members of the community to make comments on various calendar issues. He asked that those who address the Board provide additional insights about policy, and aspects of the calendar that support our mission statement or values. After audience comments, the Board will discuss the issues, beginning with TCA calendar policy. Mr. Carpenter reminded everyone that there will be no vote tonight; if necessary, a vote may be taken at the regular meeting on October 22.
 - A. Carlina Bobo commented that after looking at the survey data, it appears overwhelming that most families are satisfied with the current calendar. She asserted that one of the special distinctions about TCA is our calendar, and that Fall Break provides for family time, which supports our core values. She requested that the secondary and elementary calendars stay closely aligned.
 - B. Julie Suchsland noted from the survey data that it appears high school parents want something different from the calendar than elementary parents. She asked the Board to address the philosophy discussions that underlie separating the calendars. She commented that the fall semester is very choppy, especially for the high school, and that there seems to be a lot of continuity lost due to partial days before/after holidays and other breaks. She closed with an observation that finishing finals before Christmas seems important, both educationally, and to relieve pressure.
 - C. Jim Kretchman requested that the Board make any decisions by placing a higher value on internal TCA concerns, instead of external factors such as busing. He also asked that they weigh input from teachers very heavily, and support their concerns. He closed by thanking the Board for their deliberations. Matt Carpenter confirmed that secondary teacher inputs had been obtained and that we are in the process gathering input from the elementary staff.
 - D. Carina McBride provided her perspective as a parent of secondary students, and as a family who has been with TCA since it opened. She described the changes that occur within family priorities as children grow, citing that high-school-aged students need more options. She claimed that completing finals before Christmas and ending school before June, would help families offer their children more options, including the ability to compete equitably in the summer job market.

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- E. Jill Phillips cited the emphasis on family time—exemplified in part by scheduling a fall break—as a prime reason her family attends TCA. She advocated to keep the secondary and elementary calendars aligned, to prevent child care problems for families with students at both levels. She referenced the survey data, indicating that 70% of families are satisfied with the current calendar, and 60% of secondary families are satisfied. She expressed concern that the Board will keep dissecting things until we find a need to get rid of Fall Break. She requested that we begin the school year earlier, keep fall break, and end the year earlier.
 - F. Nathan Engar stated that the survey data needs to be strongly considered, and that if we can't demonstrate that something is broken, we shouldn't try to fix it. He observed that fall break is an integral part of the way we do business. He urged the Board to put passion aside, and not rule by who is speaking the loudest.
 - G. Cindy Knight offered insights as a parent of both an elementary and a junior-high student, observing that the current 2007/08 calendar started earlier in Aug, and ended later, but that elementary students are constantly taking days off—almost too many in order to keep students motivated. She cited the opposite phenomenon at the secondary level.
 - H. Ken Childress advocated that the Board begin their discussion by considering what is in the best interest of secondary students, specifically the high school. If they then determine that changes need to be made to the calendar, and those changes result in upsetting the elementary calendar, then that should be the next consideration. He offered that the best place to make any changes appears to be fall break.
 - I. Karen Birch expressed her support for the calendar proposed by the secondary teachers, and asked that the Board and Administration give more weight to teacher inputs than to survey inputs. She then advocated scheduling finals before Christmas.
 - J. Jill Phillips asked the Board to consider the model provided by the schools in the Cherry Creek district. She described that their calendar includes a fall break, and they have successful sports and academic programs.
 - K. Julie Suchsland asked if data could be made available, reflecting how many secondary students are involved in a fall sport/activity, and how many would miss fall break due to participation in these activities.
 - L. Jim Kretchman requested clarification on the survey methodology, confirming that the data breakouts account only for those who indicated that they were not satisfied.
- IV. Calendar Subcommittee Report. Kevin Collins provided an overview of the 2008/09 calendar approval process to date, including a timeline of survey, Board, and committee actions (Attachments 1-11). He quantified the need to approve and publish a 2008/09 calendar by the end of October, and alerted everyone that the approval process for the 2009/10 calendar begins in January. Steve Pope asked for feedback from the secondary teachers. Kevin Collins provided feedback that ending the school year in May was important, and that shortening fall break would be acceptable to most secondary teachers, although it would not be so for the

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majority of elementary teachers. The secondary teachers are open to administering finals for core courses before Christmas. Matt Carpenter inquired into who sets the policy to keep the number of days in each semester nearly equal. Kevin Collins responded that the Instructional Philosophy department tries to ensure equity for semester-long courses, by keeping the number of days as equal as possible. Steve Tomberlin asked if the teachers had attached any value to specific dates for the fall In-service Training (IST) conference, and whether Thanksgiving Break could be shortened to retain a full-week fall break. Kevin Collins reported a change in calculation of contact time, enabling us to keep Parent-Teacher Conferences during the day. Clark Miller asked for the optimal number of snow days, and Kevin Collins recommended seven, based on a risk assessment that covers approximately 10 years. After reviewing the handouts, Kevin Collins announced a new literacy testing requirement for 3rd grade, which may require additional days in the elementary calendar.

- V. Board Discussions. Matt Carpenter opened the discussion by requesting the Board examine the policy issues before examining details of individual calendars. Steve Pope asked that at a future date the Board examine how this subcommittee process worked, and find ways to improve it. He also requested that the Board first review the data, and then discuss the philosophy. Clark Miller recommended that, at the Oct 22nd meeting, that the Board assess the academic and philosophical impact of the calendars, i.e.: choppiness of the first semester, fall break, etc. Steve Tomberlin asserted that the overall TCA philosophy and core values should guide decisions about what calendar policies would best assist the administration and faculty in implementing TCA's philosophy. Chris Leland recommended beginning with the number of required contact hours for secondary students, not only the state mandates, but also what TCA believes is required.

Clark Miller suggested that the calendar philosophy and parameters should address the length of the school day, and that the current philosophy provides inadequate guidance for the current task. Chris Leland inquired into what it would mean for the Board to "review" the calendar, questioning whether that would require a vote, and whether it would be on a one-year or multi-year cycle. Lisa Sutton offered the example of D20, who approves calendars on a 3-year cycle. Steve Tomberlin indicated that if the philosophy/parameters are properly constructed that parents could know the calendars two or three years in advance. Chris Leland thanked Kevin Collins, his staff, and the Calendar Committee for all of their efforts.

Lisa Sutton began the discussion on the end date (paragraph 2.B.2), citing D20's rationale for ending earlier gave students an advantage on summer employment opportunities. Steve Tomberlin noted that organizations based their summer activities based on the majority (in this case, D20), so we are inadvertently placing our students at a disadvantage by varying from the majority, even for one week. Matt Carpenter questioned whether enabling an earlier job search for our students supports TCA's mission and philosophy. Chris Leland compared this to the parameter of a later start date in August, based on our philosophy of allowing for more quality family time. Steve Pope presented a disparity in survey data between questions 12 and questions 51-53, all of which deal with the end date issue. Steve Tomberlin questioned whether there is a clear mandate for change from the survey data. Kevin Collins reported that there is no clear majority mandate to change any of the issues, each of which appears to have a core of support of approximately 20%. Any attempt to change one variable to please one core group will potentially result in a problem created for another core group of roughly equivalent size.

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Chris Bender and Chris Leland asked how important it was—both academically and philosophically—to align the elementary and secondary calendars. Steve Pope indicated that the alignment issue appeared to be about #10 on the survey rankings, and that our current calendars have quite a few days that are not aligned between elementary and secondary. Steve Tomberlin advocated for alignment, to support a community that interacts with each other on the same schedule. He indicated that if the value of alignment to nurture TCA’s culture and community is of significant value, it should override other issues.

Steve Tomberlin broached the issue of finals before Christmas. The administration mentioned some ideas on how they can move finals up to before Christmas for semester classes. Chris Bender suggested that the issue of finals could be worked by the Leadership Team after a calendar is finalized. He then resumed the end date discussion, advocating that the Board maintain their February vote to end school the Friday after Memorial Day. He cited the variables of start date, school-day length, number of In-service Training (IST) days, snow days, and fall break, and asked which should change in order to facilitate ending school the week of Memorial Day.

Chris Leland was excused from the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Steve Tomberlin asked about the impact to lengthening the school day, citing a body of research which indicates it’s not healthy or academically beneficial for adolescents to start earlier in the day. Steve Pope reminded the Board that a 15-minute gap between elementary and secondary carpools at North is required. He suggested ending the elementary day at 3:00 p.m., and extending the secondary day to 3:15 p.m. Kevin Collins outlined the increased stress on facilities scheduling inherent in a K-12 school with limited facilities (gym, athletic fields, etc.). Lisa Sutton referenced the compromise proposed by the Calendar Committee, with a minimum 65% majority on all votes. Kevin Collins showed there was not a lot of support resonating from the surveys to adjust the length of the school day, and Steve Tomberlin observed that longer days were not consistent with TCA’s philosophy.

The discussion shifted to breaks during the first semester. Steve Tomberlin offered that a full week off at Thanksgiving would support our value of nurturing family time more than a full-week fall break. He reminded the Board that when fall break was first instituted, that we did not offer a full-week break at Thanksgiving. Matt Carpenter observed that the teachers currently have IST days the week of Thanksgiving, and Steve Pope commented that there are fewer travel price advantages over Thanksgiving. The Directors concurred that there was no mandate to change fall break, indicated by the survey data. They discussed the option of a partial-week fall break. Lisa Sutton indicated anecdotal evidence that missing no more than three consecutive school days seems a good cutoff from an academic perspective, and Steve Tomberlin suggested a 4-day weekend as a sufficient break to recharge, without getting too far behind academically. Steve Pope cited the preference of the secondary teachers was take two days from Thanksgiving Break rather than starting the year two days early.

Chairman Matt Carpenter allowed additional audience comments, and it was noted that we seem to have more of a buffer in snow days than we really need, and more of a consensus that it would be less invasive to start the year two days earlier. Ken Childress observed that in the survey data that there was only a 1% difference between keeping the current start date(s) and keeping fall break.

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Lisa Sutton recounted another issue D20 considered when determining when to end the first semester—college transcripts. She suggested that ending the semester before Christmas might give our students an edge for college acceptance. Matt Carpenter asked if the Board should include the end of the semester in the calendar philosophy/parameters. Steve Tomberlin urged the Board not to place more value on the survey data than on input from our teachers. Steve Pope asked the Board to consider the hypothetical question, what if TCA had started as a high school, and then grown an elementary—would that change our decisions? He advocated that fall break be modified to address secondary-school issues. Clark Miller suggested minimizing misalignment of calendars as much as possible. Steve Tomberlin suggested that, to enable sufficient time and discussion of all issues, the Board could approve the parameters calendar, and make any changes to calendars and/or philosophy effective for the 09/10 calendars.

The Board concluded the discussion by offering four proposals, in addition to the parameters calendar:

- A. Subcommittee proposal (Attachments 2 and 5)
- B. Secondary teacher proposal (Attachments 3 - 5)
- C. Board proposal (M), with current start date, Parent-Teacher Conferences on Wed/Thurs, a long weekend for Fall Break (Fri-Tues) for both elementary and secondary, ending the week of Memorial Day
- D. Board proposal (B), starting two days early (secondary only); Parent-Teacher Conferences on Thurs/Fri, a full-week fall break, for both elementary and secondary, ending the week of Memorial Day

The community is encouraged to give feedback to the Board and Kevin Collins, and a vote will be scheduled for the regular meeting on October 22.

VI. Other Business. None.

VII. Future Agenda Items. None.

Moved by Steve Tomberlin, seconded by Matt Carpenter, to adjourn to executive session per C.R.S. 24-6-402(4) (f), Personnel and Discipline Matters, at 11:44 p.m., for the purpose of discussing personnel issues. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote.

VIII. Executive Session

Moved by Chris Bender seconded by Matt Carpenter, to move out of Executive Session at 12:20 a.m. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote.

IX. Adjournment

Moved by Lisa Sutton seconded by Clark Miller, to adjourn at 12:21 a.m. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote.

Matt Carpenter
Chairman

Chris Bender
Secretary

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