

Board Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2021 at 12:02 PM



**ATTENDING:**

Dr. Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz, Dr. Michael Odell, Dr. Dominick Fazarro, Dr. Joanna Neel, Mr. Eric Semlear, Mr. Daniel Rodriguez, Dr. Jo Ann Simmons, UA staff, and various parents.

**OPENING:**

The board meeting of the UT Tyler University Academy was called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz on Thursday September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**1. Call to Order**

- Dr. Oliveras confirmed quorum of board members were present with 6 members in attendance.

**2. Pledge:**

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag  
Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**3. Open for Public Comment**

- Dr. Oliveras confirmed no request for public comment were received.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**4. Swearing in of Newly Elected/ Appointed Members**

- a) Eric Semlear- UA Longview Campus Parent Member
- b) Dr. Dominick- College of Business Member

**5. Consent Agenda**

- a) Previous Minutes, August 26, 2021  
1<sup>st</sup> motion: Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Odell. Passed 6-0.

**6. Request Approval of policy Updates**

**a) PG-2.14 Gifted and Talented Handbook**

Ms. Dennis explained that a nomination period has been implemented, beginning in August and ending in February of each year. Reassessment was updated to occur only once in elementary, middle school, and high school. To align with Texas' gifted and talented regulations. Students that transfer from one UT Tyler University Academy campus to another will be counted as transfer students.

Mr. Semlear asked how this gifted and talented program differed from other already established gifted and talented programs.

A blue ink signature of Eric Semlear, enclosed in a blue rectangular box with the letters 'DS' in the top left corner.

11/14/2021

Dr. Simmons and Ms. Dennis answered Mr. Semlear question, stating that the model was essentially the same but allowed for additional opportunities for gifted and talented students.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Dr. Neel, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, Passed 6-0.

**b) PG-2.30 Parent and Community Involvement**

Ms. Dennis explained that the Parent and community Involvement policy was updated to reflect the academy's name, UT Tyler University Academy. Ms. Dennis also provided an overview of District Wide Parental Involvement Policy a) *General Expectations*.

Dr. Simmons clarified that only the Palestine campus qualifies for Title 1 funds. To qualify a campus must have a certain percent of the population classified as economically disadvantaged.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Dr. Odell, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Neel, Passed 6-0.

**c) PG-3.17 Students at Risk for Anaphylaxis and Seizure Management Plan**

Ms. Dennis explained that Sam's law was added in accordance to House Bill 684.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Odell, Passed 6-0.

**d) PG-3.20 Wellness Policy**

Ms. Dennis explained that all information regarding National School Lunch Program was removed, reason being that UTTUA is not participating in that program.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Dr. Odell, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Neel, Passed 6-0.

**7. Request Approval of the District Food Safety Plan (HACCP)**

- Ms. Dennis explained that the year and name of the academy was updated in the plan to reflect the correct information. Vendor information was removed as UTTUA does not utilize any vendors for the Food Safety Plan. There remains an opportunity to acquire new vendors for the Foodservice Operation. Vending machines have been replaced with concession stands. Refrigerators are only being used for convenience use only, no food from concession are required to be cold. Breakfast menu items updated.

Mr. Rodriguez brought up concerns regarding the nutritional value of food items being sold at the concession stands.

Dr. Simmons answered that under the new plan, healthier food items are planned. Ms. Dennis added that currently only 1 soda and 1 candy bar a day are permitted for purchase per student.

Several Board members and Dr. Simmons expressed the barriers associated with offering students' meals, and the selling of healthy food items. Past experiences resulted in UTTUA losing a substantial amount of funds while subsidizing under the

DS  
MQ

NSLP. Options are currently being considered.

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Dr. Odell, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Neel, Passed 6-0.

## INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

### 8. Superintendent Report:

#### a) Gifted and Talented Handbook

Dr. Simmons and Ms. Dennis presented and explained the Gifted and Talented Handbook.

#### b) Wellness Plan

Dr. Simmons presented and explained the wellness plan, noting that concerns were addressed during the Request Approval of the District Food Safety Plan (HACCP).

#### c) Food Guidelines

Dr. Simmons and Ms. Dennis presented and explained that there was no new updates to the food guidelines, as stated by Nurse Mackey's letter.

#### d) Financial Update

Ms. Chesnut presented the board with the August 2021 Financial Report. ESSER expenses have been filed for reimbursement and should be received within the 13<sup>th</sup> month and recorded to the upcoming audit for FY21.

#### e) Public Health Guidance Updates

Dr. Simmons presented and explained that TEA guidance changes often and that currently the wearing of mask are encouraged, but are not required. Positive COVID case notifications only get sent to the classroom where the student was assigned, and positive test results are self-reported. UTTUA plans on creating a dashboard on the school's website, to allow parents to track the number of active COVID cases reported in the school.

Dr. Odell commented that the Texas Tribune put out an article that predicts 25% of all students in Texas will test positive for COVID by December 2021.

#### f) Remote Conferencing & SB 15

Dr. Simmons presented and explained remote conferencing & SB 15. When a student is out for long periods at a time they are allowed to do remote conferencing. Teachers who are out due to illness or otherwise cannot attend in person classes, will be conducting online teaching for students in remote conferencing. Each student is allotted 20 days of remote conferencing a school year. This is different than Remote Learning which allows for a student to enroll in full-time remote instruction. However, the rules/restrictions are more involved and schools must determine if this is something they wish to pursue, it is optional. Only 10% of students can be enrolled, they must qualify, and teachers cannot be forced to teach remotely.

Dr. Odell commented that the commissioner released a study, showing the learning loss for remote learning students statewide is 1-2 years, just from the past year and a half. Suggested the board members review the study as well.



**g) District/ Campus Enrollment and Attendance**

Dr. Simmons presented the current enrollment and attendance rates. 348 Tyler, 260 Longview, and 237 Palestine with District totaling 845. Total attendance rate is currently 92.81%. Low attendance waivers are available and can be filed by year end to help increase the ADA. No Missed Day Waivers are available for COVID related closures at this time.

**h) Facilities**

Dr. Simmons presented and explained that several projects were underway among Tyler and Palestine campuses. Projects have been delayed due to shortage of materials in the supply chain.

Dr. Odell suggested every meeting it should include a bullet point regarding lab-school activities, because UTTUA was created as a lab school for the UT Tyler College of Education & Psychology and there are numerous projects taking place.

- The Ingenuity Center has paid for the Lab School Membership for staff to participate and present on research.
- There are currently 3 counseling interns working with the UTTUA LPC to complete their hours for College of Psychology.
- Dr. Neel is conducting tutoring at UTTUA with 35 UT Tyler students.
- The Doctoral Program has received feedback that UTTUA has “the best teachers” in the program.

**9. Adjournment**

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Dr. Odell, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Dr. Fazarro, adjournment occurred at 1:37 p.m.

Adopted at a meeting of the Board on November 11, 2021.

DocuSigned by:  
*Michael Odell*  
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Michael Odell - Presiding Officer  
Secretary, UTTUA School Board

11/14/2021

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Jaema Krier  
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Director of Administration  
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