

Tallahassee Classical School
4141 Artemis Way
Tallahassee, FL 32311
January 14, 2021 at 6:00 pm
Board Meeting Minutes

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84058318241?pwd=VUNESytSVXhnRUNpZ2ttREIMLzFsQT09>

Meeting ID: 840 5831 8241

Passcode: Classical

Meeting called to order at 6:01 PM

- Public Comment: N/A
- Mohler moves that we submit all 5 candidates to Hillsdale for vetting, and then do our preferred ranking on the back end. Motion passes unanimously.
- Candidate presentations:

Cara Wynn – Currently working at Lutheran Epiphany school, has taught at several levels and served as Assistant Principal and Principal. Raised her family here in Tallahassee, kids graduated FSU in ROTC program, trained at Ft. Lee and got married, expecting grandkids....

Bishop asks about her experience with Classical Education. None formally, but very similar to her early teaching at NFCS. Phonics, basics, math, sciences, etc. Lots of “drill” – similar to the classical methods. Times tests, flash cards, mental math, etc. Clark asks her experience in fundraising. This was among her responsibilities at NFCS, did everything from HarvestFest (family event, open to community), Boosterthon, has been race director for several 5k type events.

Sayler asks her to rate herself on two statements. (1 not at all, 10 absolutely)

I know how to run a school: 9

I consider myself well-versed in Classical Education: 2 (Has done some reading about it.)

Mohler asks leadership role model(s): Dr. Fielding, the school administrator who mentored her and modeled good and Godly leadership. He was fair, strict, and upheld a standard of excellence.

Bishop asks her thoughts on Singapore Math and phonics. She doesn't know a lot about it, but it sounds very similar to Abeka Math that she taught in the 1990's. She taught phonics at NFCS.

West asked about disciplinary methods. Important that teachers are trained and supported in discipline efforts.

Diaz asks if she were to become the Principal, she would be willing to be classically trained. Chen says that Hillsdale will do this for whomever we hire.

Josh Eller – In education for 9 years now. He has vision and passion for what TCS can be. He himself attended a Classical school in its first year. His mother had seen that he was languishing in his prior school, drove him an hour each way to the new school. It was the first place that he encountered high

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expectations, demand for excellence, true sense of curiosity. Those experiences shaped who he became and formed his passion for educating children.

Rigor and discipline are foundational for great education. TCS is, more importantly, for the entire community... bringing this type of education to anyone who wants to pursue it. These kids are tomorrow's friends, neighbors, employees... It's about becoming a whole, well-rounded person.

Disciplinary efforts – teachers need instruction in handling these issues. Working with the teachers to give them the tools for classroom management is a part of it. The other is there has to be a strong presence with the students and the families. Get in front of it early, have conversations with the parents, make expectations clear.

Mr. Clark asks his experience with fundraising, specifically high-level fundraising. He has some experience with it from his church, has sought the advice of friends who do more of it. He knows he has to sell the vision, which requires time and relationships. He would expect that a lot of the background work to be done by board members, he would help to share the vision and make it reality.

Sayler asks him to rate himself on two statements. (10 highest, 1 lowest)

I know how to run a school: 7 The day-to-day are going to lead to relationships, he prioritizes relationship building. Making decisions, reporting to a board, some are skills he needs to develop – but he is good at handling conflict and overcoming hurdles.

I am well-versed in Classical education: 8 He knows classical education – people's definitions differ. Has attended classical schools and participated in Socratic seminars, but the overall emphasis on grammar, logic, rhetoric... the focus on virtue, overall scheme is very familiar.

Mohler asks if he had a magic wand, what would he “fix” about our education system, what would it be and why? He would fix things at the family-life level. Fundamental issues of broken relationships between children and parents. Education itself would be different if kids had stable homes and came to school ready to learn.

Bishop says 40% of our scholars are Title 1 and asks how might this affect the way he would run the school?

Has no experience with Title 1 schools – would be a new setting for him – would maintain the same high expectations. Uphold standards of excellence. Cross the divide, but still inspire. Must communicate that you BELIEVE these students can achieve, despite challenges. Expect excellence.

Bishop asks if he becomes Principal of TCS, responsible for education but also the business side. Share your experience with the business end of a school.

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This is a weakness. He says he's a quick study but would need help from board and existing staff.

Hope Carrasquilla -

Current Dean of Curriculum at TCS. In education for over 10 years now, was a teacher in public and private schools. Served as an (interim) Principal at a local private school.

Mr. Clark sees the primary issues as teacher retention, discipline, and fundraising. Asks how would she approach fundraising?

At CCA when she took over as Principal, the school was \$100k in debt. She would not cut teacher salaries, so she cut staff. They had volunteers running the office and did lots of fundraising. Gladiator Challenge was a fun run for students, raised about \$40k. Made "big asks" of alumnae, former families, etc. By the end of the year, they had righted the ship.

Sayler's two rating statements:

I know how to run a school: 10 I'm not a perfect person, but I know how to run a school.

I am well-versed in Classical Education: 9 Sounds odd, because I've been in classical ed for so long, but it feels like there is always so much more to learn. There's always more to know.

Mohler asks on Day 1, you sit down in the Principal's seat, what's the first thing you do and why?

First initiative is restructure from the top down, the several Deans at equal level causes a lot of stepping on toes. She'd like heads of Upper and Lower school.

Chen asks what drew her to TCS from CCA. She was head of school, temporarily... When they brought in the Principal she envisioned them working together, but he did not share the vision. Our mission brought her back to why she went into education.

Discipline issues were a challenge as kids came back to school this year, all hands on deck. We divided the discipline issues by grades, but it was muddled. TCS has brought in additional help. Important to talk with students, get both sides of every story. Have fair, consistent consequences.

Jeremy Byrd - (recounted his work experience – See resume.) ... loves kids, experience as teacher and admin has been in the Secondary level. 26 year veteran in Education overall... Very concerned about the direction of Public Education. He is ready to move into Principal role, came to this just at the beginning of Covid. A lot needs to be done for children in this country. Wants to spend the last 10-15

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years of his career doing something of deep meaning. Forming young adults that are not only capable of academic excellence, but also capable of great virtue.

Clark asks his experience with major fundraising. None.

Are you and your family prepared to relocate to Tallahassee? Pocket of liberalism surrounded by conservative, rural counties. Would your family be amenable?

Yes. His priority is to run a school where he can make a difference.

Sayler's rating statements:

I know how to run a school. 7.5 He is currently in charge of overseeing two departments, as Asst Principal he oversaw four departments. He is proud of the fact that of the 30 teachers he oversees, only 3 are probationary.... Teachers stay with me. I build relationships with them and I hold them accountable. I understand how to build excellence in teachers. Also in charge of security, overseas classified employees, does not have experience with budgeting. Knows about HR and how Special Education works. There would be a lot to learn about Florida specifically.

I am well-versed in Classical Education. 6 I knew the term classical education because of homeschool friends and families. Last January called Hillsdale after he saw in Imprimus what they were doing... that's how we got his resume. Taught History for years. Athens/Jerusalem 500 BC... the foundations of Democracy, the birth of Western Civilization. History, Arts, Music... Countries whose elementary schools are content-rich are performing best. Give me a year, to a year and a half, I'll be an 11.

Bishop asks – TCS through lottery system is 40% Title 1 scholars. What experience do you have working in schools as diverse as ours. His current school is 74% Free & Reduced Lunch, about 55-60% Latino, 30-35% African American. His last school was about 1/3, 1/3, 1/3. The challenges lie with giving children agency. One thing we're doing terribly in public schools, we are telling kids that their success in life depends on how other people behave. That to me is toxic. It's dereliction of duty. We should tell them that if they are a good and decent person that recognizes and pursues truth and beauty, you will succeed.

Richard Brake –

Grateful and honored to be considered for this opportunity. Just finished teaching Shakespeare, will follow FDR's advice on speaking – be sincere, be brief, and be seated.

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Spent his life in the culture-building business. Our culture is in trouble. It is coarse, crass, and utterly confused about the nature of beauty. Our most precious resource is our children. Build their character by modeling virtue on a daily basis. I will roll up my sleeves to help you accomplish this noble mission.

I know for a fact that although classical education is rigorous, kids from all backgrounds can accomplish anything if they are surrounded by loving and competent teachers and adults. I very much want to share my slice of the American dream with the families of Tallahassee.

Founding Fathers knew that we needed an enlightened and virtuous citizenry. Not a permanent, wealthy aristocracy, but a rotating, natural Aristocracy of talent.

Clark asks about his fundraising experiences. As headmaster at St. Michael, was pres of a family studies think tank. His job was to raise money, got around \$800k from grants... Experienced with grant writing.

Sayler rating statements:

I know how to run a school: 10 My work is my joy. Even the challenges are a joy because I love kids, and the parents want the best for their kids... The teachers are in it for all the right reasons, too.

I am well-versed in Classical education: 10 Undergraduate and graduate training were all classical... so much more Wisdom in the past that isn't being tapped. The repository of knowledge in the PAST is so vast. What kids remember most, will be if the teacher loved what he was teaching.

Disciplinary approach: Classical schools are as much about building virtue as it is about putting knowledge into the kids' heads. Code of Conduct must be loving but strict. High standards. Love is willing the good of the other person. Worst thing that can happen is that the teacher tries to enforce discipline and then the Principal backs down in the face of the parents.

Bishop – asks about the business side. Current school is small, he hires the business manager – two thirds of it is fundraising, month to month is tough – deeply involved in the business side. Expects that TCS would have more money and more staff. Knows balance statements and profit-loss statements.

- Barney moves to send only the last 4 candidates to Hillsdale for consideration. Clark seconds. West also feels that the final 4 were stronger – particularly the final 3.

Mohler stands by all five candidates and points out that they are both members of our local community.

Brinton shared some history where Hillsdale didn't approve any candidates until the last minute, and then the final recommended candidates quit within weeks of starting work at startup schools.

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West – No (send all 5, since Dr. Chen already told the candidates that we would)

Sayler – No

Qualls – No

Mohler – No

Diaz – No

Clark – Yes

Bishop – Yes

Chen - No

(Motion fails 2-6.)

- New Board Member Application – Amy Hines

Barney Bishop moves to accept Mrs. Hines application, Clark seconds.

Bishop had a long conversation with Amy and feels that her insight into classical education – her experience, immersed in this since 2004 – is every reason to think she'd be an asset to our board. She was previously employed at TCS and knows the school.

Motion passes unanimously. 😊

- Next meeting Jan 24th.

Adjourned 7:55 PM