

Dreamland Academy of Performing & Communication Arts
Board of Directors' Meeting
December 13, 2011
5:30
AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY FUNCTIONS

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call

II. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- A. Welcome to Guests
- B. Board President's Comments & Announcements
- C. Superintendent's Monthly Report

III. FINANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Not Applicable

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Approval of minutes of call meeting in November
- 2. Approval of employment contract for Ronald Land @ 20,000 (prorated)
- 3. Approval of after school contract for Ronald Land @ 15.00 per hour
- 4. Approval of William Carter to substitute for Dr. Clark @ previous daily rate
- 5. Approval of termination of employee contract for Etta Thomas

V. BOARD POLICY AND REGULATIONS REVIEW

VI. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

VII. HUMAN RESOURCES

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

IX. HEARINGS

X. ADJOURNMENT

EMO/Superintendent's Monthly Report

December 13, 2011

Item 1: Approval of Minutes of November Call Meeting

(Brend add minutes)

Item 2: Employment of Ronald Land

Background: Two factors prompt my request for a math tutor and my request for Ronnie Land in particular. For one, Dreamland students are being tested weekly and monthly and we are learning of the specific needs of students as a result. We have assessment information that groups students into cohorts that all need instruction in one or more areas of mathematics, so now we know what areas of mathematics students struggle with and they range across the board. This information is useful for creating small groups and teaching students the areas in which they need help.

Secondly, state assessments in mathematics are tools for revealing the proficiency levels of students. The Arkansas assessments are not addition and subtraction tests as many teachers believe; they are instead, assessments that test students' ability to think mathematically and to use this mathematical thinking to solve math problems. To prepare students for the state assessments, teachers must figure out how to teach them to think mathematically and while in that thinking mode to solve math problems. However, most that I have seen at Dreamland cannot get the important part done: the mathematical thinking.

As a result, I have struggled to get the Dreamland staff to implement a games-based approach to teaching mathematics, but the approach requires training in the technique and it requires a coordinator to go into math classes and teach students to play the game. The results are impressive: students who play Equations do not fail state assessments in mathematics because the game teaches them to think mathematically—something that is difficult to do when teaching math in a traditional way.

Sometimes, teachers are too pedagogical; that is they view teaching and learning through more traditional means that are teacher directed. Because the students at Dreamland did not fare well academically using the traditional approach, giving them more of the same does not make sense to me. They need an alternate approach to help students' master mathematics. Despite my awareness of this gaming approach, I have not been able to encourage the traditional teachers we hire to move from teacher directed instruction to student directed instruction as most teachers here fear losing control of the students if they place them in groups. As a result, a significant part of what I believe is needed is sitting on our shelves because the teachers are timid about using the approach I believe will turn students around.

I made the request to hire Ronnie Land, son of Dr. Clark, because I am well aware of his scholarship and I know that hiring him is not an ethical violation—even though his mother

is superintendent. I checked with Leonard Davidson and Chris Bell to make sure that employing him would not constitute an ethical violation. It does not.

Ronnie is young and not vested with traditional thinking and I believe we can use him in two important ways: (1) to serve as the coordinator of academic games and in so doing ensure that students learn to play equations and improve their mathematical thinking as a result and (2) to provide small group tutoring to students in the areas identified as needs for the students. He is well suited for this.

I understand the Board's hesitation in approving the employment of Ronnie Land because of previous experience and concern about making sure we operate in accordance with the ethical mandates of the Arkansas Department of Education. For that reason, I asked Leonard Davidson to attend the Board meeting to answer any questions the Board might have regarding the potential ethical violation. He was at the meeting for that purpose, to assure you that my request to employ Ronnie was not one that would create problems for us.

Budget Impact: \$20,000 prorated from state aid

Recommendation: That the Board approve the employment of Ronald Land as requested.

Item 3: Approval of Ronald Land for After School Employment

Background: Ronald Land will serve as the math tutor and coordinator of the academic games during regular and after school programs. In the after school program, he will provide after school tutoring in mathematics in the 21cclc program.

Students in the after school program currently receive math tutoring from Mr. Joseph who will be re-assigned to provide after school supportive services for homeless students as we have remaining fees from our Homeless Grant that are earmarked to Mr. Joseph and we have families in need of his support.

Budget Impact: Funds are budgeted in the 21cclc budget

Recommendation: That the Board approves the employment of Ronald Land as after school tutor in mathematics in the 21cclc program.

Item 4: Approval of William Carter as Substitute for Dr. Clark

Background: We received funds from the ARRA stimulus that we did not spend. We were mandated to direct the remaining funds to an employee or we would lose the funds. Because Dr. Clark was returning as superintendent/principal, I advised the Arkansas Department of Education that we would earmark the remainder of the funds for substitute fees to cover the cost of William Carter substituting for Dr. Clark when she is absent from Dreamland or when she is engaged in required professional staff development.

Mr. Carter has served as the principal for Dreamland Academy for 4 years and as such is familiar with the parents, students, and staff. In Dr. Clark's absence, he assumes the role of school administrator and ensures administrative continuity in her absence.

Typically, I do not request Board approval for substitutes, but in light of the recent employment termination of the bookkeeper, I believe it is prudent to secure Board approval for Mr. Carter's substitution to prevent problems cropping up later since he is married to Dr. Carter and we want to make sure that our actions are transparent and approved by the Board.

Budget Impact: None on Dreamland budget; his fees will come from the remaining balance of the ARRA stimulus funds that we must retire this academic year.

Recommendation: That the Board approves the use of ARRA stimulus funds to cover the costs associated with hiring William Carter as substitute for Dr. Clark in her absence or when she is engaged in professional staff development activities.

Item 5: Termination of Etta Thomas

Background: Attached to this item are documents indicating the difficult time Dr. Clark has experienced in getting Ms. Thomas to be accurate with her accounting and bookkeeping. These illustrate the problems she has experienced and likewise illustrate the efforts Dr. Clark has taken to help her be more successful. Also, I am also attaching a recent memo I sent to Etta. This memo illustrates some of the problems Dr. Clark has experienced.

Budget Impact: not applicable.

Recommendation: That the Board approves the recommendation to terminate Etta Thomas as requested.



Employee Consultation

Employee: Etta Thomas Department: Bookkeeper
Nature of Problem: Continued errors (in spite of new probationary status 12/01/2011)
Date: 12/07/2011
Warning: First _____ Second: _____ Third: _____
Suspension: From: _____ To _____ Return to Work: _____
Discharge: 12/07/2011 due to continued substandard work and errors.

Description of Problem: Ms. Thomas continues to perform poorly in spite of a new probationary status implemented 12/01/2011 for similar substandard work from August 2011 to September 2011.

- 1) On 12/07/2011 Mr. Davidson, Complete Consulting, reported in person that in verifying deposits of a refund check issued by Pitney Bowes, he became aware that a check was receipted and not deposited per policy into the business account with the 24 hour processing period. He approached Etta for explanation to learn she did not know what happened to it. Mr. Davidson contacted the company for a replacement check which would take 2-3 weeks to replace.
- 2) At 3:45pm Davidson emailed me indicating that "Etta found the check after looking for an hour". He noted in his email (attached) that the concern as was that the check was dated 11/09/2011, 2) receipted 11/22/2011 3) it was deposited today 12/07/2011". Well outside the required time for handing funds for the company.
- 3) Writer met with Etta to determine what occurred. She stated 1) she was not aware that the check should be deposited within 24hours of receipt and she did not know what happened to the check but found it under papers (fax cover sheets, etc.) after searching for it. A summary of the events and concerns are as follows:

Most recent probation letter 12/01/2011

Employee: Etta Thomas Department: Secretary/Bookkeeper
Nature of Problem: Probationary Review (9/30/2011-11/30/2011)
Date: 12/01/2011

Description of Problem: As stated in the 9/08/2011 and the probation letter dated 9/30/2011:

"Your performance is unacceptable here at Dreamland Academy. Error free performance in your role as bookkeeper is required. As these errors are not new to our campus by you in this position, I am left with no other choice but to place you on **Probationary Status for the next 60 days**. Should the performance not improve, we **will** move to the next step in the process which may include termination of your employment at any time during the 60 day period should your performance not improve.

Improvement is defined as “NO errors” in the next 60 days and going forward of any kind which adversely affect the organization in any fiscal sense.

The above mentioned substandard work more than constitutes adequate grounds to terminate your employment with Dreamland Academy. We, however, want to give you a final opportunity to prove your value to our company, and are therefore placing you on probation for a period of 60 days commencing on the above date. In the event there is a repeat incident or other problem, we shall have no choice but to terminate your employment without further notice.”

In monitoring of bookkeeping duties and a review with **Complete Consulting** (Dreamland’s accounting services) has been observed closely since the probationary implementation. The areas of concern persist and have not been resolved. Since the probation letter the following issues continue to be of grave concern:

- 1) Errors in the APSCN system (incorrectly input of contract beginning and end dates)
- 2) Payroll is processed twice monthly at Dreamland Academy. Continued errors have led to excessive payroll processing of checks in the APSCN systems in October 2011 (2 additional processing of payroll); November 2011 (3 additional processing of payroll).

On November 15, 2011, Dr. Carter and Dr. Clark met with Ms. Thomas to review her current position and to determine what steps might be taken to assist in improving her performance. During this meeting it was learned that the “bookkeeping/financial duties” would make things easier for her. In order to assist Ms. Thomas achieve success in her duties, we agreed to redesign her duties by assigning the bookkeeping/financial duties to Complete Consulting, our current accountant. These duties would be reassigned effective immediately allowing her to perform only “secretarial” duties from this point forward.

Ms. Thomas is expected to perform *all* secretarial duties without errors as stated in her probation letter. The previously identified substandard work more than constitutes adequate grounds to terminate your employment with Dreamland Academy. Yet once again, we want to give you a final opportunity in this **scaled down position** to prove your value to our company, and are therefore placing you on additional probation for a period of **60 days** commencing on the above date. In the event there is a repeat incident or other problem, we shall have no choice but to terminate your employment without further notice.

Writer reviewed the details of her **original probation 11/07/2011**

Description of Problem: Ms. Thomas continues to perform poorly in spite of a probationary status implemented for similar substandard work from August 2011 to September 2011. Errors noted as:

1. Incorrectly input data in to APSCN regarding employee contract dates (dates listed as 5/31/2011 and should be 06/11/2011; errors for Administration, Loken, All teachers and Janitorial contracts).
2. Pay errors L. Reed, B. Clark and V. Green
3. Violation of approval of overtime policy prior to accrual.

September 08, 2011 Disciplinary action:

Description of Problem: Ms. Thomas cut a check out of the DLA and presented to a board member for signature without the approval from Administration for an employee who did not submit her time card timely or correctly. This past employee called the board member on vacation requesting him to sign her check when he returned. She stated the check would be at the front desk waiting for him. The board member came to the campus on this non-employee request and was presented 2 checks by Ms. Thomas.

September 30, 2011 (Original Probation Letter)

On June 2011 you were informed of specific expectations (bookkeeper performance and concerns for errors in performing your duties) should you be kept as a Dreamland employee. On 9/08/2011 we discussed again those expectations (related to checks in the system and expected performance).

On **9/28/2011** in preparing for our audit and closure of outstanding IRS information, Mr. Davidson asked you for a copy of the June 30, 2011 Quarterly wage report that should have been sent to the IRS in July.

You were not able to provide him with a copy yesterday. "He asked that you redo the form, send Complete Consulting a copy, file a copy at the school and give myself (Dr. Clark) one to hand deliver to the IRS by Friday along with a check, and transcript form the IRS for the June 30, 2010 Quarter". He also stated "if Etta does not provide all these things to you today please let me know (call). These kinds of missed filings threaten to undo all that we have worked on to abate prior amounts to the IRS". On **9/30/2011 payroll** there were 5 errors brought to your attention: 1) Misspelled staff name, 2) Wrong payee on a check, 3) Misspelled vendor name, 4) Contractor check withholdings, 5) Staff incorrect pay amount. On **9/15/2011** overpayment to Chenal Insurance by more than \$2000.00.

The requirement was that:

Your performance is unacceptable here at Dreamland Academy. Error free performance in your role as bookkeeper is required. As these errors are not new to our campus by you in this position, I am left with no other choice but to place you on **Probationary Status for the next 60 days**. Should the performance not improve, we **will** move to the next step in the process which may include termination of your employment at any time during the 60 day period should your performance not improve. **Improvement is defined as "NO errors" in the next 60 days and going forward of any kind which adversely affect the organization in any fiscal sense.**

*It was our belief that this additional probationary period would provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate your capability to perform successfully. To our disappointment it has not. Your employment with **Dreamland Academy is terminated effective 12/07/2011** for continued inability to perform your job satisfactorily and without error subject to Board of Directors' approval.*

Dr. Brendly Clark, Principal/Superintendent

Cc: Personnel File

MEMORANDUM

October 27, 2011

TO: Ms. Etta Thomas, Bookkeeper/Secretary
FROM: Dr. Carolyn Carter, Access
SUBJECT: Pay for extra contractual hours

Etta, regarding the extended days you worked, I discussed the resolution with Chris Bell and Leonard Davidson as well as with Dr. Clark. They pointed out that Board policy require anyone who extends his or her hours to do so only with permission by an administrator. Going forward, you will not be authorized to work after your normal working day without receiving authorization by Dr. Clark or her designee in her absence. Nonetheless, we want to resolve this issue, hopefully, in a way that is favorable to everyone with our being in accord with the following agreement:

Number of Hours Documented: 46.50

Hourly Rate: \$15.00

Settlement: \$697.50

This agreement represents your understanding that future hours worked without authorization will not be paid and you will be subjected to a reprimand for violating Board policy and might be subject to personnel action up to and including termination. My signature below indicates that I release Dreamland Academy from any and all liabilities related to this matter from July 1 2011 to this date.

I agree with this settlement. _____

Etta Thomas

Date

Cc: Dr. Clark

Consent Agenda Items & Background Information

Item 1: Modification in Employment Contracts:

Mark Loken @ \$4,000

Terri Sinclair @ \$4,000

Background:

Mark Loken was offered employment at Hall High School at a higher rate (\$48,000). Mark is critical to our school improvement plans and is needed at Dreamland to further student achievement in math and science. He serves as the teacher of record for students in grades 4 and 5 for math and science (assisted by Mr. Mc Call) and serves as the science and math consultant. He will assume additional duties, administering the NWEA assessments and the ACT-TAAP assessments. He is willing to work after school and has been known to visit students' homes to provide tutoring in their home. He has taken significant training this year to prepare for the challenge at Dreamland, and has demonstrated teammanship across the board. I asked him to remain at Dreamland and offered to increase his salary by \$4,000. He accepted.

Terri Sinclair has agreed to coordinate our art program, *Meet the Masters*. This program requires students to learn a number of European Art Masters and their works of art, and it requires students to create a replica of one of the Master's celebrated paintings. The program contents include replicas of the major works of art produced by the artist, paint brushes, paint, slides, and other materials that require someone to serve as coordinator. The program requires three steps: (1) introduction of the artist to the students, (2) introduction of the artist's signature techniques, and (3) replication of one of the major works by the students. Terri will introduce the artist in the classrooms, assist the teacher in helping students review the art work of the master under study, and set up the needed materials and supplies in the Science Lab for the students. Terri has a bachelor's degree in Studio Art. She is a full-time employee at Dreamland. I asked her to assume this additional responsibility and offered to increase her salary by \$4,000.

Budget Impact: Will add additional \$11,500 to budget with these requested increases and the attendant staff benefits.

Recommendation: That the Board approves the salary increase for Mark Loken and Terri Sinclair.

Item 2: Approval of Dreamland Academy Charter School Renewal Application

Background: Dreamland is in year five of a five year charter. It must submit a renewal application that has been approved by the local Board of Directors. I have drafted the attached renewal application and in so doing detailed the progress we have made at Dreamland since its inception.

This renewal requires me to cover all five years and add a number of financial documents that I will not have access to until I return to Little Rock. I cannot add the November 30th documents until after the month's end, so providing you with a copy of the application is not possible until after month's end. I am attaching a first draft of renewal the application to advise the Board of the scope of the renewal application and will have a final draft renewal application for each member at the upcoming meeting.

Budget Impact: No impact on budget.

Recommendation: That the Board approve the Dreamland Academy charter school renewal application and in so doing authorize Dreamland administration to submit the same to the Arkansas Department of Education for consideration.

Item 3: Approval of Access Educational Management Corporation Contract

Background: Access Educational Management Corporation has been with Dreamland since its inception and has charted the course needed to ensure that the Academy is a viable school program for children and parents in Little Rock. Access currently is contracted for the remainder of the 2011-12 school year, but the contract ends at the conclusion of the 2011-12 school year. Because creating a viable school program for urban students is challenging and because Access and Dr. Carolyn Carter, in particular have done a good job of creating a school concept, erecting the same, and managing the process, Access deserves to continue in the role of educational management organization for an additional 3 years with annual renewable options for years 4 and 5 assuming satisfactory performance.

Budget Impact: The budget impact will not change except for an adjustment for the cost of living that will be determined by our accountants.

Recommendation: That the Board approves the attached Access contract for an additional 3 years with options for years 4 and 5 assuming satisfactory performance and assuming that the Dreamland Academy charter school renewal application is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Education for continuation.

Item 4: Approval of Employment Contract for Dr. Brendly Clark

Background: Dr. Brendly Clark has made significant sacrifices for Dreamland Academy at the expense of her family obligations. She has served as my partner and has demonstrated with her own agreement to work for 18 months without pay to save the academy, that she is an unusual school administrator.

She has managed to take over from Bill and me and hold the school program together, even improving the same by adding more parental involvement, more staff appreciation, and more positive messages to students. Her contract expires at the conclusion of the 2011-12 school year. However, assuming that the Dreamland Academy renewal application is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Education, she deserves a renewed contract as well for 3 additional years with options for years 4 and 5 assuming satisfactory performance.

Budget Impact: The budget impact will be a slight increase in her salary in the following increments: Year 1: by 9,000 to 95,000; Year 2: by 5,000 to 100,000; Year 3 to 105,000.

Recommendation: That the Board approves the attached employment contract for Dr. Brendly Clark for an additional 3 years with options for years 4 and 5 assuming satisfactory performance and assuming that the Dreamland Academy charter school renewal application is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Education for continuation.

Item 5: Approval of ACSIP District Improvement Plan

Item 6: Approval of ACSIP School Improvement Plan

Item 7: Approval of 21CCLC Coaches

Background: Our 21CCLC program provides funds for athletic coaches. This year we will enroll in the elementary school league and recommend the following coaches:

1. Athletic Director (3-5) Mr. Howard
2. Basketball Coach, Boys (3-5) Mr. Blunt
3. Basketball Coach, Girls (3-5) Ms. Hall
4. Math Team Coach (3-5) Mr. Loken
5. Cheerleader Coach (3-5) Ms. Thomas

Each coach will receive a stipend of \$1,500 after the season has concluded.

Budget Impact: These fees are covered in the 21cclc 2011-12 budget.

Recommendation: That the Board approve the employment of the above persons for our athletic program.

Item 7: Approval of October Meeting's Minutes

Item 8 Approval of Annual Report Information & Meeting

Background: NCLB requires schools to hold a public meeting and share the highlights and achievement scores of the students. This meeting must be held before November 15th of each year. Dreamland will host its 2010-11 Annual Report meeting on November 10th.

Budget Impact: None

Recommendation: That the Board approves the annual report information attached behind this notice.

**Title I Annual Parent Meeting
Agenda**

November 10, 2011 7:30-8:30 am

Purpose

Title I law requires that each school hold a Title I Annual Meeting to inform ALL parents of Title I Programs. Your input at this meeting is essential to improving schoolwide programs and your child's academic achievement. In addition, our school's FCAT results with regards to Adequate Yearly Progress will be discussed.

Welcome

Introductions

Title I Schoolwide Plan

Family Involvement Policy/Plan

School-Parent Compact

Parents' Right to Know

- The professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers and paraprofessionals providing services to the child [Section 1111(h)(6)(A)]
- When a child has been assigned to or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified [Section 1111(h)(6)(B)(ii)]
- The amount of funds set aside for parental involvement and the parents' right to be involved in how those funds will be spent [Section (a)(3)(B)]

AYP Status and Consequences

- FCAT Results and Adequate Yearly Progress
- SINI Status and Consequences of Not Making AYP
- Differentiated Accountability

2008-2012 Parental Involvement Plan

Dreamland Academy recognizes that a child's education is responsibility shared by the school and family all through the child's school career. We support the goal of the school being responsible for educating all students effectively with the school and parents working as knowledgeable partners.

We also know that cultural diversity is important, and that parents with diverse cultures are an integral component of the school's ability to provide for the educational success of students. Consequently, the engagement of parents is essential to improve student achievement; therefore, Dreamland Academy will foster and support parental involvement. Parents of students of all grade levels will be included in a variety of comprehensive and coordinated activities that encourage active parental involvement.

Dreamland Academy recognizing that communication between home and school should be regular, two-way, and meaningful. **Dreamland Academy will:**

1) Dreamland Academy shall encourage communication with parents by

1. Preparing an information packet which is given to parents each school year. This packet includes:
 - a. The Parental Involvement Plan.
 - b. The recommended role of the parent, student, teacher, and school.
 - c. Ways for parents to become involved in his or her child's education.
 - d. A volunteer survey.
 - e. Activities planned to encourage parental involvement.
 - f. A system to allow parents and teachers to communicate in a regular, two way, and meaningful way.
 - g. Activities to promote communication include:
 - h. Dreamland Academy's Annual Report to the Public.

- i. Open House.
- j. Two Parent/Teacher Conferences

2) Dreamland Academy shall promote and support responsible parenting by

1. Purchasing parenting books and other materials and placed these materials in the library.
 - a. Parents may borrow these materials.
 - b. Parents will be encouraged to visit the library.
2. Brochures with information for parents are placed in the Dreamland Academy library.

3) To help families in assisting their children, Dreamland Academy will schedules regular parent involvement meetings at which parents are given a report on the state of the school. And an overview of what students will be learning, how students will be assessed, what a parent should expect for his or her child's education and how a parent can assist and make a difference in his or her child's education. These meetings include:

1. Dreamland Academy's District Annual Report
2. Open House
3. Parent/Teacher Conferences
4. PTO Programs
 - a. Classroom presentation demonstrating what children are learning.
5. Curricula materials parents may use include textbooks, and library books.

4) Dreamland Academy welcomes parents into the school.

1. Dreamland shall not have any school policies or procedures that would discourage a parent from visiting the school or from visiting a child's classrooms.
2. Dreamland Academy will compile a volunteer resource book listing the interests and availability of volunteers.
3. 3. Activities to welcome parents and families to school include:
 - a. Open House.
 - b. Grandparent's Days
 - c. Parent Coffees
 - d. PTO Meetings

e. Kindergarten and Fifth grade graduations

5) Dreamland Academy recognizes that a parent is a full partner in the decisions that affect his or her child and family.

1. Dreamland Academy includes in the Dreamland's Student Handbook the process for resolving parental concerns including how to define a problem, whom to approach first, and how to develop solutions.
2. Other activities that encourage parental participations include parent teacher conferences.

6) Dreamland Academy recognizes that community resources strengthen school programs, family practices and school learning.

1. Dreamland Academy has a parental involvement advisory which provides advice for school improvement.
2. Dreamland Academy has a Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO).