

MINUTES

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL RETREAT

MARCH 22, 2022 12:00 – 3:00 PM

AMY RICHARDS & ANDY FAUGHT, CO-CHAIRS

Members in Attendance: Amy Richards, Andy Faught, Clay Thompson, Melissa Burton, Toni Fitzgerald, Patrick Holcomb, Charles Webb

Explore Family Advisory Council: Kelly Bacher, Rebekah Mitchell, Tracee Perrin, Leah _____ (?)

Staff in Attendance: Marsha Edwards, Chris Reynolds, Deirdra Smith, Jim Leckrone, Jessica Talbot, Crystal Curran-Moran, Elizabeth Clay

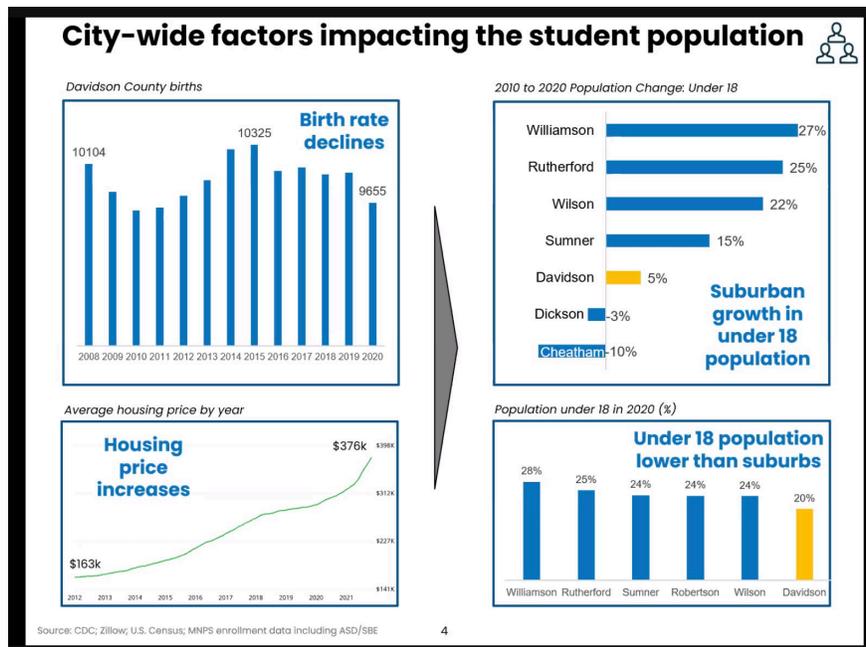
Amy Richards called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm and welcomed the retreat participants. The members of the Explore Family Advisory Council were introduced.

Director of Finance Crystal Curran-Moran delivered the SY22 overall financials for both charter schools. She covered the BEP fluctuation, staff wage increases, and salaries for summer program teachers. The forecast was discussed in detail, particularly the impact of low enrollment on the budget. Due to the difficulty in hiring teachers, we've had to outsource tutors and teacher's aids. Bus contract negotiations were briefly summarized.

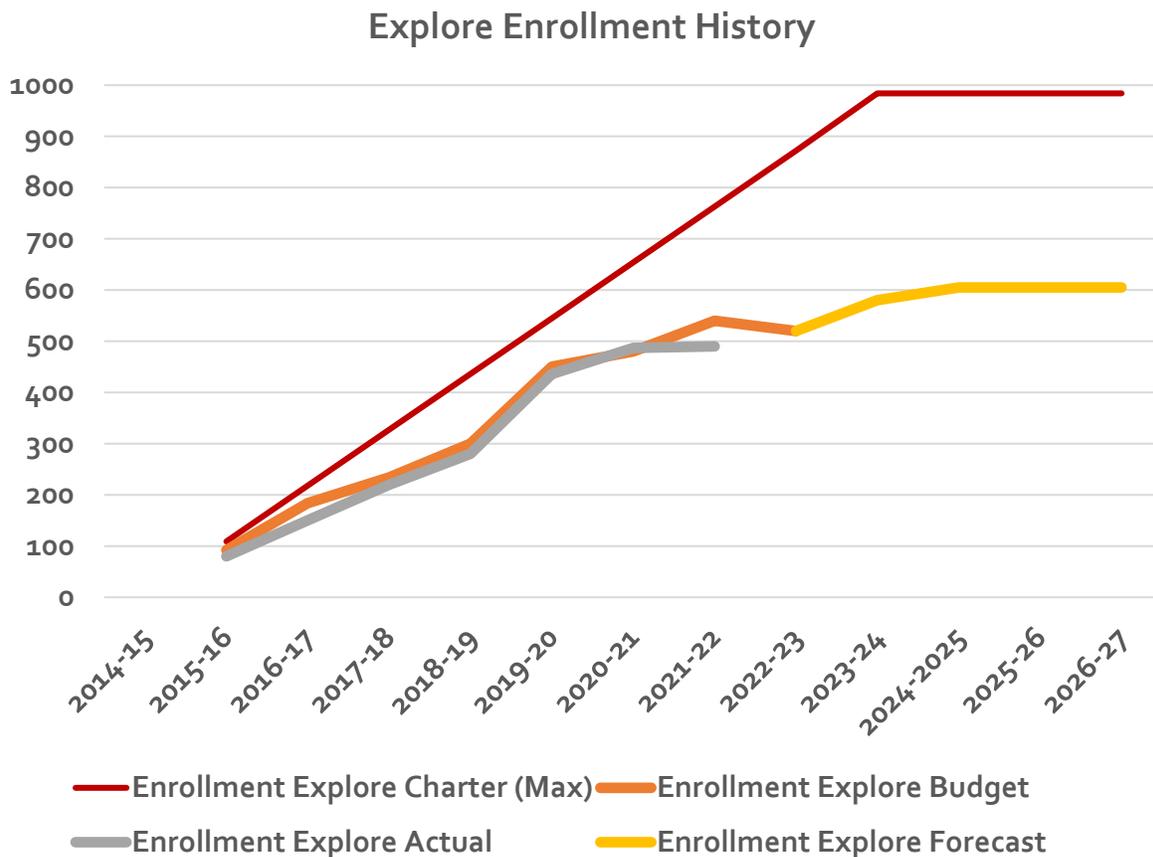
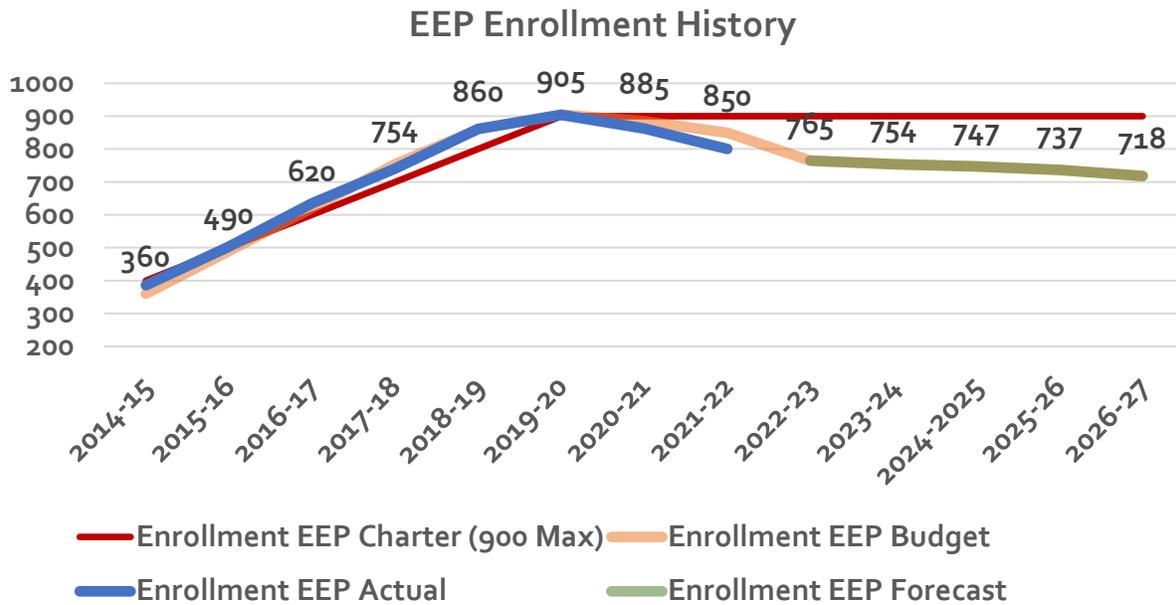
Chris Reynolds presented a SY22 Charter Schools Approved Budget vs Year-End Forecast. The FY23 Budget is in the works and Chris, Clay, Deirdra, Jessica, and Jim will meet soon to discuss. He then provided a data academic update for EEP and Explore and reviewed our top three annual goals and long-term objectives:

- a) Enrollment / revenue
- b) Academic outcomes
- c) Staffing

Chris shared recent research on our student populations (see chart below). Birthrates and massive demographic shifts were discussed at length.



Enrollment concerns prevailed the next agenda item. In the related break-out groups, the discussion continued and highlighted that enrollment numbers are significantly down district-wide and has been in decline over the past seven years. The following charts were shared via PPT slides –



The Explore families who attended the retreat shared the following suggestions:

- The community needs to know what we're doing. The group encouraged our schools to offer more exhibitions and open them up to our neighbors.
- "Coffee with the Principal" might be a good way to recruit by inviting parents in to learn more about who we are and what we do. Inviting parents to breakfast at the schools to hear what we're about and take tours of our charters.
- They strongly felt that our student families are the best way to recruit new students.
- We need to actively work within Cayce to introduce families to Explore.
- The word must be spread about what makes our schools different from other MNPS schools: We offer ethnic diversity and this messaging is especially important.
- The parents shared their experience with project-based learning vs test-based education. They felt strongly that more balance was needed for academic rigor.

Next, conversation led to our serious staffing issues. We are challenged by wage inflation - MNPS increased wages between 4% - 18% last year. The teaching force is seeing unprecedented departures and fewer teachers entering the workforce. Teacher retention has been increasingly difficult, even pre-pandemic. The soaring cost-of-living increase has greatly hurt educators. The group was asked to consider whether our compensation changes are sufficient? Ideas for talent recruitment and development were discussed. Hiring strategies were presented which included bonus incentives, housing stipends, and offering childcare to our teachers with young children.

In the Academic Break-Out Session, we were reminded that we have to maintain a commitment to academic excellence above all else. We must continue implementing a high-quality, aligned curriculum because it will lead to increased student outcomes. This data was included in Chris' PPT presentation:

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Explore Math Proficiency					14%	No Testing	8%
EEP Math Proficiency	80%	No Testing	64%	41%	42%	No Testing	12%
MNPS Math Proficiency	54%	No Testing	29%	26%	30%	No Testing	12%
State Math Proficiency	61%	No Testing	40%	37%	42%	No Testing	28%
Explore ELA Proficiency					27%	No Testing	15%
EEP ELA Proficiency	42%	No Testing	41%	38%	31%	No Testing	18%
MNPS ELA Proficiency	31%	No Testing	25%	27%	27%	No Testing	18%
State ELA Proficiency	42%	No Testing	34%	33%	35%	No Testing	28%
EEP TVAAS			5		1		1
Explore TVAAS							2
Reward School			EEP Performanc e and Progress				

There was unanimous agreement about the serious learning loss that resulted from virtual classrooms during Covid, especially in the lower grades, and particularly within the lower-income families. Our principals, Jim, Jessica, and Deirdra, delivered their own summaries of academic performance data.

Last, the council members outlined what our annual goals and long-term objectives should be. Chris proposed that those key items center on academic improvement, staff recruiting and retention, and facilities acquisition. The council members engaged in an in-depth discussion on what our key strategic challenges are.

The retreat concluded with giving the rescheduled date of the end-of-the-year Council meeting (June 9) with agenda items of SY23 budget approval, approving any major contracts, and proposals of adding family advisory council members to our roster.

With no further business, the retreat concluded and the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.