



**Voyageur Academy
Board of Directors**
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**Approved "Board Retreat" Board Meeting Minutes
Saturday, May 31, 2025**

Mission Statement:

The mission of the **Voyageur School District** is to prepare students to be **College Ready and College Bound**. This mission will be achieved through the foundational pillars of Discipline, Focus, Hard Work, Perseverance and Character; and the humanitarian pillars of Empathy and Compassion.

Call To Order 9:00am

Roll Call

Curtis Wade – **Present**, (Wayne County, Detroit, MI)
Minika Benning – **Present**, (Macomb County, Macomb, MI)
Barbara Smith – **Present**, (Wayne County, Inkster, MI)
Dale Williams – **Present**, (Oakland County, Southfield, MI)
Robert Redmer – **Present**, (Oakland County, Oakland Twp., MI)
Laura Benedict – **Excused Absence**, (Oakland County, Oakland Twp., MI)
Anita T. Gibbs – **Excused Absent**, (Oakland County, Farmington Hills, MI)

Others Present: Vergil Smith (Superintendent,) Rod Atkins(Deputy Superintendent- K-8 Principal), Patricia Crosson(HS Principal), Joseph Gagnon(K-12 Director of Program Quality and Data).

**Reading of the Mission,
Vision and Core Values
Statement** Minika Benning

Approval of Agenda: Motion to Approve the May 31, 2025 Board Retreat Meeting Agenda
Moved by Benning, supported by Smith
Yes - 5 No - 0

Agenda Amendment/s: **Discussion Items**
No agenda, Amendment discussions

Agenda Amendments Approval No agenda Amendment discussions

Consent Items No Consent Items

Correspondence None

School Admin

1. Superintendent Report - Vergil Smith
2. K-12 Director of Program Quality and Data Report- Joseph Gagnon
3. K-8 School Leader Report - Rod Atkins
4. 9-12 School Leader Report - Patricia Crosson

Discussion Items

Vergil Smith Discussion Items on Educational Reset, School Index Score, and District Challenges.

VS started the presentation with an educational reset and discussed the following.

- Voyageur from MDE perspective
- Voyageur from Ferris State's perspective
- Voyageur vs Competitors
- Our Core Challenges
- The opportunity "Educational Reset" came from Curtis as a time to slow down, make realistic goals.
- "Who holds us accountable and how?"
- School index score based on state-mandated test results and data. State-mandated tests include MSTEP, PSAT, and SAT. MSTEP is aimed at measuring student progress towards content standards, administered once/year, each spring, and test results lag.
- Ferris State holds us accountable by contractual goals based on state-mandated assessments and Ferris State-selected assessments, such as NWEA.
- We have chosen to use NWEA in HS, and PC will talk more about that.
- NWEA MAP is taken three times a year, and you can see how the data points stack up. Most useful tool to guide MTSS groups, push differentiated instruction and Joe will talk about that later.
- Bottom line targets are new as 3 years ago, and we helped them pilot this. FSU works with us to create goals due to not meeting all or some contractual goals. If we hit the bottom line target goals, we will be on track to meet our contractual goal.
- The next slide is a pie chart that shows are index scores on state-mandated assessments. $\frac{2}{3}$ of our index score.
 - K-8 as an index score from MSTEP
 - HS index score from the SAT
 - Board is asking if the Pie chart is an HS or K8 chart. RR supports by stating that this is the scale of what the state uses for all schools within the state.

- 10% is the graduation rate, 10% is how students perform on the WIDA assessment, school quality means do you have a librarian, PE teacher, Art, and Attendance. 2% are you testing everyone on state-mandated assessment, and 2% are you testing everyone on WIDA. VS-2 years ago, we got dinged due to not testing all students in one particular subgroup. One subgroup of 7th-grade social studies, which caused us to go to an ATS.
 - MB asked if a student is illA discussion of the testing regulations regarding attendance due to illness took place. VS said they gave us a timeframe, but in this particular case, some students refused to come into the school after COVID.
 - No index scores in 2020-2021.
 - VS- showed index scores in comparison to other schools. RR asked a question regarding a perfect score. VS explained that the scale is 0-100, in addition to being above 30. In the 40s is a healthy number. Not many schools in our area are in the 50s and 60s. High school had a poor year last year, when looking at data points. The scale is relative. 48.25 is the highest the school has seen. RR gives acknowledgement to previous year school leader.
 - CW mentioned that we have a long way to go in comparison to national scores.
 - VS goes over 2024 scores in traditional public schools that are open enrollment. Voyageur is ranked 3, and other schools have a CSI. If you have a 70% graduation rate, you can be designated a CSI. It was a down year for the HS. Rob discusses that the index is not just on the students, but it's on the administration, teachers...
 - 63% growth and proficiency 73% comes from academic performance is on the school and us to get the students to perform.
 - VS discusses Selective enrollment vs open enrollment index scores. Frontier International is one of the highest. VS discusses the Mackinac report and how the report takes into consideration the school's demographics. For two years, we were top 10. Were were number 1 and then ranked number 2, but then dropped. Performance in the city is not great, and we should be number 1. Curtis stated that having a leader is a big part. A discussion on Frontier Academy took place regarding demographics and location in Detroit. K8 2024: to traditional open enrollment. 42.68 is one of our highest scores. VS shows a comparison to the competition, other open enrollment schools, charter and public schools.
 - Cass tech.. 88.98 and Renaissance is 89.40. We lost some of our highest-ranking 8th graders to these schools.
- At 9:36 VS moves into looking at the Ferris State University Pillars: Compliance, Fiscal Solvency, Operations, Academics. Academics have been red every year since 2018. VS Academic Pillar: contractual foals focused on State-mandated Assessments (MSTEP-PSAT8). VS- displays the goal, one conceptual goal, and we have green and yell. He explains to the board that he is going to stay at a high level. A discussion took place regarding Incosinstitant's achievement, contractual goals, we discussed bottom-line target goals. We have achieved those every year.
 - VS- moves on to discussing challenges, both core and peripheral. What are some of the challenges that keep us from being high-performing schools? Two core challenges:
 - The first peripheral challenge is parent involvement. As a district, we have to define parent involvement. CW would like the parents to contribute by working in the school. Actually working and participating in the school.
 - Dr. Atkins discusses mindset and discusses a poverty mindset (single parent homes, 25% of our families make less than 25K a year, and discusses examples of mindsets from our population demographics.

- Room-to-room Staff Instructional Quality. We are now getting certified teachers. And we need to get highly impactful certified teachers.
 - We have some rooms where teachers are kicking butt in the room and others we have some room that need improvement.
 - A discussion regarding students who have two bad years in a row with poor teachers is the most negative impact. BS-, "What do you mean by poor?" The answer was... classroom management, lack of effective instructional...
 - A discussion regarding what we do for inadequate teachers took place. If someone is inadequate and is given feedback but does not take it, we do not keep them. We have gotten rid of teachers in the middle of the year if the students are suffering due to the teacher. How do you know they were bad? Answer: video, observation, parent input etc. Dr. Atkins, we gave them coaching, put them on a performance plan. It's difficult to get rid of a teacher because we have HR component.
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- Language barriers: ELL population on campus is not new, but the fact that we have HS students not speaking English and using kindergarten words.
 - Non-academic needs of students: our student body comes from single-family homes, broken homes, situations, not academic baggage, our social work department has grown, and SEL support, good nutrition a good night's sleep...
 - Attendance- around 90 percent ADA, but the 10 percent is the difficult part and may fall into the other challenges.
 - Board and Dr. Atkins talked about attendance and contacting authorities for truant students.
 - Most students Lack Foundational Skills: we will have 5-year-olds who show up in kindergarten but never attended preschool, or do not get academics at home. MTSS to address the gaps.
 - Students Lack Proper Mindset: Last year Dr. Atkins and his team noticed that students do not have their multiplication tables. VS displays an example question. Reading comprehension, patience, problem-solving mindset, critical thinking mindset, docs, stamina, sticktoitiveness, willing to give best effort, and not give up. VS was not proud but said most of our students do not have these mindsets and discussed in relation to the mission statement's core values. If you have a problem-solving mindset, you will be successful. Even our teachers need this mindset. Too many students see this question and give up. Rob, is it because they can't read? VS said the students look at the problem and don't try. What qualities do we want kids to have when they leave Voyageur?
 - BS, isn't that today's culture, everything today is quick, simple, and easy? RR, do the students in athletics do they have this mindset? Answer, from BS, PC, and Dr. Atkins... not all but some do.
 - VS- closes by speaking of room-to-room instructional quality: How are we making the best efforts to retain and recruit teachers? VS- gives an example of a super competitive salary structure compared to the Michigan average first year. Master teacher average is 85K. Certified Retention bonus \$ 2000, benefit package, no single health care cost in 7 years. Certification scholarships. Search globally for highly qualified teachers, staff appreciation, board bonuses, and a career development framework. Be exposed to more opportunities. VS will email us the Career Development Framework. VS discusses the role of Lead Teacher and Master Teacher, such as hosting grade-level meetings. The career development framework is not a finished product, and looking for ways to improve. Rod mentioned that it's a good program and is pushed by the board.
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- 10:18 5-minute break. To discuss the career development framework.
 - 10:25 back in session

- 10:25 CW discusses the Career Development Framework and states that you have an experienced teacher, not just years of experience, but effective classroom management and instruction. Data that supports academics. No one should get promoted because they are a good person and they have been there for years. We need to incentivize the teachers to move up the framework. VS says he loves that and recommends the bonus framework for next year. CW said we want to put the bonus structure out there so all teachers know. RR asks if everyone knows who is promoted. VS says yes

Joseph Gagnon Discussion items on NWEA Reports and MTSS

- JG- Leads a presentation and discussion on the reports used by Voyager Staff from NWEA, Voyager Academy MTSS program, and how data is utilized.

Dr. Atkins' Discussion on District Demographics

- Dr. Atkins presents on demographic and income level, comparing Voyager Academy families to state and national norms.
- At 11:39 Dr. Atkins talked about "So what do we do with all of this quantitative Data?"
- In 2025-2026, we have to make a shift that emphasizes both on growth and proficiency: Writing across the curriculum, Science teachers incorporate math, More reading, each student will have to have a portfolio.
- A discussion with board members and other members of the meeting regarding how teachers grade work: a lot of grading is digital. CW, "if we get more data points in the gradebook, then we have more data points to look at. If we grade electronically, is fine." We need more discussion on virtual alignment. We want K-2 to talk more, 3-5 to talk more, and MS/HS to talk more.
- Educational Reset and Realistic Goals. Academic Culture. Understanding where we are vs where we want to be. Educational reset-realistic goals, Impact of Vision Modification, in our Mission and Vision, which is cutting out empathy and compassion. How do we augment our current mission to align with CTE. RR recommended that the word accountability be part of the mission and the consistency of accountability.
- Understanding where we are vs where we want to be. Culture shifts are more transformative, not so much traditional, programs for genders, and mentoring programs are more reused.
- Dr. Atkins showed a chart based on the spring 2025 testing progress tracker.
- Dr. Atkins' presentation ends at 12:03
- Break at 12:05 (lunch). At 12:33, Dr. Atkins showed the NWEA growth in 148% for 8D. In Math.

Patricia Crosson's discussion on Academic Focus and Initiatives, High Stakes vs Low Stakes Data

- Data points to measure success year to year and spring to spring main focus is ELA and Math.
- Low stakes: grades, Current and or Requested High Stakes-NWEA new to high school. Add a grade level each year up to 11th grade. High stakes-MSTEP.
- MME (Michigan Merit Exam) 3-day exam SAT, M-STEP, ACT Work-keys,
- Look at a three-year trend
- WorkKeys is a workplace assessment, and we need to research ways in which we can use that assessment.
- Factors to consider in the 3-year trend. Michigan Merit Exam. 1-2 year trend data would only be used for staff who have been with us for less than 3 years.
- When you do a three-year trend, the data is more valid.
- New and realistic goal considerations
- New goal considerations, which is more of a tiered approach
- We want to include the subgroups of ELL, SPED because they need to show improvement too.

- PC: Meet or exceed the state average. PC mentioned that urban, suburban schools' scores decreased statewide once it went to digital. Final tier will be the lowest one, which would be improvement, even if it's just a 25-point growth. CW: Tier 2 will change each year. The tier data will also be used for the bonus structure. PC: discusses the growth of the cohort. CW mentioned that Tier 1 is heavily weighted Tier 2 is weighted. CW asked for PC to send this out, and we will input some weighting should be.
- A discussion regarding the Tiered approach and bonus structure takes place.
- Dr. Atkins: What about the non-core teachers? PC says that the math/reading are held accountable. The fine arts teacher currently has an average. They are getting a benefit from something they do not contribute to. PC: We are giving something not earned. Dr. Atkins gives examples of 2 teachers, LMI/AH. CW said they need to quantify it. VS mentioned we have other teachers too
- Super high level: Should everyone have the opportunity to receive a bonus? VS, maybe their bonus should be based on their performance. CW mentioned that that is still subjective, but mentioned having criteria such as GPA. PC: Just mentioned the requirement by SLO, and the assessment needs to be approved. We could use their SLO. VS-we want to avoid our PE, ART etc, teachers earning 10K while others are earning 3K because they are held to a different standard. Dr. Atkins mentioned how LM' dance and AH Metro Detroit. BS mentioned having a cultural arts bonus.
- PC: mentioned that no one qualified for the assessment data piece because the criteria were not realistic. PC: Low-stakes data points, grades: master of knowledge grades and grades have been entered within one week of the audit. Summative/module assessment: This data must be reviewed by content teams and DOI routinely. MB asked, "What are they grading when entering grades? PC "what we put in PS should be related to standards. MB "Do teachers have to be automatically placed in PS. No, the teacher has to manually put in the scores. Is the teacher really grading and checking the work? PC: Teachers are grading based on mastery of knowledge. HW is not given out as much as K-8. MB is are teacher giving the same work, and the teachers' gradebooks are aligned. PC, we moved to more alignment with grades with a 70/30 gradebook. There is discussion of doing 60/40 instead of 7/30. It is getting better based on how many assignments next year in my newsletter, I will include how many teachers' grades should be. PC said that over 25 gradings in the gradebook is too much and too much data. The gradebook should show what students learned. PC, we have to be able to look at assessment data. PC I do not trust Gradebook yet to say a student mastered the concept. I should but we are not there yet. Dale: Shouldn't bell work have a correlation of what is being taught? Dr. Atkins stated: Do nows should be aligned by either review of the previous lesson or introduction to a new concept. PC discussed how some teachers use stamps to check bell work but putting over 25 assignments does not allow a student to recover because it does not allow students to recover. A discussion between board members and presenters took place regarding notebook checks and the quality of student notes.
- 1:13 changes for next year. Planning will be revised to include the following: scope and sequence
- Essentially, teachers will unit plan.
Curriculum mandates/non-negotiables
- Multiple assessments, not just multiple choice. Including writing.
- PC and Board have a discussion on grading requirements with writing.
- PC: Failure reports. If a student is failing, what prevention measures have you taken if you provided a failing grade? MB, " Are we at least putting something in place to try to keep the student from failing? " PC: It's an alarm for the admin but not the teacher due to past VCP practices. We keep blaming the students for everything, but it's not just the students.
- Future considerations for leadership positions: VS mentioned that our reading specialist and math specialist are K-12, but they are spending 95% of the time K-8. Doc mentioned that people in their

roles need to be more efficient. PC for HS, we need a dedicated person. MB is debating about another body in the HS to help move the needle. Doc talked about overspending and having a flat line financially. VS, we add mostly 10-12 more positions.

- At 1:29, Factors that impact student achievement. What are the top things?
- 252 elements. Hattie's rankings are based on 2018.
- High School adjustments: Eradicate deficit mind thinking, Teachers who need to be developed (need for an HS instructional Coach).
- The last part of the presentation is gradebook audit examples by subject and grades.
- PC provided a handout to retreat members on teacher evaluations and discussed new laws pertaining to general information.
- RR stated that he was hoping to get the strategies and actions to meet the next year's adjustments.
- 1:44 End of PC presentation
- At 1:45, Dr Atkins displayed an example teacher's gradebook. PS gives the parents/students the ability to look at the gradebook.

CW Presents on Governance Framework

- At 1:49, CW discussed creating a governance Framework; what is the governance Framework, Voyageur Academy Governance Framework, board Structure, Governance Structure. It's a structured approach to decision making, oversight, and accountability.
- The Governance Framework for Voyageur Academy Board of Directors. And discussed the Vision and decision statement.
- Governance Structure from the US Department of Education to the Voyageur K-12 school district and its responsibilities. MB asked if there was any more discussion from the current administration of the Department of Education. No new information. DW: Are we going to use a new logo or one of the three logos? CW: We could look at that, but we have not. Rod discusses how we should market this program. This is the first charter school to offer a CTE program.
- Next is Voyageur Academy Board policy and procedures. Everything we do, the board is responsible for. This will be a living document that we can change it. Academic oversight: curriculum approval, assessment and accountability, Special Education Compliance, English Language Learners (ELL) Support, Student Performance Monitoring. RR stated that he does not recall a time they approved the curriculum. VS informed him that nothing had changed from the time before he took a board seat. Curriculum does not require board approval, but is responsible for making sure we teach the standards.
- Financial management: annual budget adoption and oversight, procurement and contracting, auditing and financial reporting, use of public funds, reserve fund... The management company does hiring or firing on behalf of the board. Even though the management company does the hiring/firing. MB mentioned that we don't see the guidelines, but CW said we are still held responsible, we hire The Romine Group to act on the board's behalf. The board is responsible everything. Question on if we are doing performance evaluations? Have you had employee grievances. VS. Yes. MB said Why don't we know that. VS I'm not sure if that's something I would need to bring to the board. CW said that we are "in-trusting" TRG for their process. We don't want to be in the business of creating the policy, but we don't need to have a high-level process and want it to be legal. VS said we have not had any high-level grievances. VS said we will have to define what this point means when the board would like to know about a grievance. CW stated that we will finalize this until we review these items.
- CW moves on with discussion student, facilities and operations. A discussion took place regarding having active shooter drills.
- CW ended presentation with talking about legal compliance and reporting

At 2:21 BS Presented on Security and reviewed the AWP Initial Security Assessment Report

- I was unaware that we are going to change our security. Doc stated we fired the last company because they were falling asleep and not effective. We also let go of the security that was hired by us. Is this a short-term contract? Yes. BS had a conversation with the new security company, and she is impressed. They did an initial assessment report of our campus. BS took highlights of the document. BS recommends that our priority actions in our monthly security meetings and AWP Security supervisor be there too. BS reads the executive summary. Staff identification finds and solutions BS thinks, is a good recommendation and CW agreed. BS talked about Activity management. Activity management and emergency response protocols. VS stated we have the emergency response protocols for staff, but not for security which is an improvement area.
- Priority action items that BS believes we can act on:
- Implement a staff ID enforcement program immediately
- Establish a dedicated security monitoring location for the security team
- Develop and distribute written emergency protocols
- Conduct radio training session for all security personnel
- Improve the visitor management system for after-school hours
- Staff training for any new protocol
- Parent communication for all procedure changes
- Install privacy screening along the back of the portable fence line. Enhancing your presentation.
- Next steps AWP security recommends a comprehensive follow-up assessment to evaluate implementation.

2:35 MB presents out on verifying Wi-Fi on Ipad and the Google Drive Folder for the board

- MB starts a discussion on the use of IPAD and Voyageur email.
- DW uses comcast email to receive communication
- MB wants to make sure everyone is using our devices that we brought, and if any issues Jason is there to support.
- At 2:37 MB talks about Google Drive, and because we have so many committees, we got away from the Google Drive and the Google Drive shares and collaborations. MB wants to make sure we know our Voyageur Academy account and are using our Google Drive. MB explains that if documents are shared in Google Drive then we don't have to worry about some not getting access. The board created a Voyageur Academy Board of Directors Gmail. The document has tabs for academic finance and all board committees. If we get back to using our Google Drive it will be better for the superintendent and staff.
- At 2:47 VS asked if we devise our goals for next year. CW said we will start looking at replacement items, but want everyone. Put the mission and vision statement June Agenda. VS mentioned the preliminary talks of removing the humanitarian core values of empathy and compassion. This is due to the two pillars being added during COVID.
- MB "are we still keeping college-ready college board?" VS said it does not have to be the core value, the same but we can look at changing the mission statement. Dr. Atkins mentioned "college and career-ready."
- In June meeting the leads will bring a recommendation. Is everyone verbally comfortable with trimming down to 5. They said yes. No need to brand the old items, such as light pole flags.
- Dr. Atkins acknowledged the board for being amazing, he likes how they look at things in detail, and VS chimed in with stating their dedication to sub committees.

Action Items**No Action items****Board Committee Reports/****Board Individual Comments**

1. Specialized Services Committee - Meeting in April
2. Budget Development Committee – Met in February
3. Academic Excellence Committee - Will follow up in April or May
4. Policy Committee – Meeting scheduled for April
5. Technology Committee – None
6. Athletic Committee – None
7. Security Committee – None
8. Facility Use Committee – None

Call to the Public

None

Announcements

The next Board of Directors meeting will be June 17, 2025, at 6:35 pm.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 2:50pm

Moved by Benning, supported by Smith

Yes – 5**No – 0**

*Individuals wishing to address the Board of Directors under items II and XII above are requested to sign in with the Board Secretary prior to the start of the meeting. Individual comments are limited to no more than three (3) minutes each and a total time allowance not to exceed thirty (30) minutes. The Board will not verbally respond to public comments but may follow up in the most appropriate and time-effective manner.

*Complaints or concerns regarding Board members or school employees associated with the Academy shall first be addressed in writing and delivered to the Board President at least five (5) days prior to the Board meeting or such complaints or concerns shall not be heard by the Board. The Board will not verbally respond to public comments but may follow up in the most appropriate and time-effective manner.

This meeting is a meeting of the Board of Directors in public for the purpose of conducting the Academy's business and is not to be considered a public community meeting. There is a time for public comment during the meeting as indicated in the agenda.

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Board Recording Secretary

Date

6-17-25

Board Secretary

Date

6/17/25