Magellan Charter School

Board Retreat

July 22, 2025

4:00pm

Board members in attendance: Suzy Allaire, Jim Nowak, Jessica Leggett, Ailis Monsees, Sean Witty, Jessica O'Donovan (non-voting)

Visitors: Jairus Dolfi, Becky Green

The meeting was called to order by J. Nowak at 4:00pm. No conflicts of interest relating to the agenda were declared.

Welcome @ 4:00pm by J. Nowak

Members spent time brainstorming Board of Director top priorities and goals for the 2025/2026 school year, to include:

- K-2 Feasibility Study
- Leadership and Staff Succession Planning
- Clarify and Reaffirm Mission & Strategic Focus
- Charter Renewal Readiness
- Committee Productivity

Mission & Strategic Focus Discussion @ 4:25pm

- The Board engaged in a thoughtful discussion regarding the effectiveness of the current mission in the context of a changing educational environment and the evolving needs of students. Recognizing that the landscape of education continues to shift—driven by technological advancements, societal changes, and new understandings of student development—the Board acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the mission remains both relevant and impactful.
- There was consensus around the need to continuously evaluate the mission statement to determine whether it adequately reflects the school's aspirations and supports student success. The Board affirmed its commitment to ongoing review and reflection to ensure the mission remains aligned with current priorities, best practices, and the expectations of the community.

Head of School Highlights & Overview @ 4:45pm by J. O'Donovan

The Head of School shared a number of key successes from the past year and outlined goals for the upcoming year.

Successes highlighted included:

- Strengthened staff collaboration and team relationships, with an emphasis on building a positive and supportive culture. Efforts to gather and act on staff feedback have increased, providing new opportunities for meaningful engagement and continuous improvement.
- Effective implementation of student behavior strategies, leading to increased consistency and productivity in addressing student needs. The Head of School noted this as an area of ongoing focus, with continued efforts planned to enhance outcomes.
- Hiring and onboarding J. Dolfi as Assistant Administrator

Continued focus on:

- Refinement of disciplinary processes ensures consistency, transparency, and fairness across the school.
- Creating intentional opportunities to foster positivity and appreciation, strengthening relationships and morale across all levels of the school. Recognizing effort, celebrating success, and building mutual respect are central to cultivating a supportive school culture.
- Exploration of AI literacy – Begin a strategic focus on AI education.

K-2 Expansion Feasibility @ 5:36pm

The school will explore the feasibility of expanding to include Kindergarten through Grade 2 as part of a long-term strategy to strengthen the academic pipeline and engage families earlier in the educational journey.

- External constraints—particularly limited land size and local permitting requirements—have posed significant challenges to expansion.
- Community feedback indicates strong family interest and support for a dedicated K–2 program. However, site restrictions and associated costs remain the most significant hurdles.
- There was broad consensus that the school should engage an owner's representative firm to oversee a formal feasibility study, including engineering, architectural planning, and preliminary cost analysis.

Succession Planning for Staff and Board Members @ 6:30pm

Head of School provided the Board with an update on impending teacher and staff retirements. Administration has begun to outline anticipated staffing needs and retirement timelines, initiating the groundwork for long-term planning.

Key points from the discussion:

- The team identified several key teacher characteristics aligned with the school's mission, including:
    - Commitment to high academic rigor
    - Adaptability to evolving educational needs
    - A culture of positivity and collaboration

- The Board discussed the value of proactive interviewing and early identification of likely retirements over the next 1–3 years to ensure a stable transition and continuity in key subject areas.

- The administrative team will conduct a full review of staffing needs and present their findings to the Board in the coming months.

The Board discussed the importance of strategic board recruitment to ensure a diverse and skilled membership aligned with the school's evolving needs. There is a recognized need to recruit new board members with specialized expertise, particularly in:

- Legal affairs
- Construction or land development
- Fundraising
- Education
- Marketing and communications

Enhancing Board–Staff Communication @ 7:27pm

The Board engaged in a productive discussion on improving communication flow and transparency between Board members and staff, with a focus on avoiding confusion, reducing information silos, and keeping teachers informed of major decisions.

Key points and proposals:

- Several members expressed the need to feel more connected to key leadership conversations. The group agreed to move forward with short "Board Chair weekly update" emails summarizing key leadership conversations or developments, with no confidential content included.

- Proposed weekly or bi-weekly check-in calls with Administration with a rotating second board member to maintain regular touchpoints.

- The Board reaffirmed the value of having official communications to staff throughout the year.

- Board walk-throughs of classrooms were recognized as meaningful and well-received by faculty. Members agreed to schedule at least two classroom visits during the year and provide positive feedback notes to teachers as part of the effort to strengthen board-staff relationships.

Charter Renewal Preparation @ 7:53pm

MCS is approaching its 10-year charter renewal cycle, with the formal process beginning now and culminating in site visits expected in spring of 2026. Early preparation is essential to ensure a strong showing across all areas of evaluation.

The Board anticipates in-depth questions from authorizers related to:

- Academic performance and growth metrics
- Financial stability and long-term sustainability
- Student demographics and enrollment trends
- Governance structure and board oversight

To support readiness:

The Board's Financial Committee will develop a clear and accessible financial overview to help all members understand and communicate:

- Revenue sources
- Key budget categories
- Fund balances and reserves

Facility Upgrades @ 8:22pm

The school is addressing persistent drainage issues that require resolution before or during the start of the school year. Also, the Board reviewed proposals from multiple vendors to address the school's drainage issues.

Hiring Recommendation: 8th Grade Advanced Math Teacher @ 8:35pm

The Head of School shared the hiring recommendation of Jason Burman for the 8th grade advanced math position, which includes teaching Math 1 and Math 2. The recommendation follows a thorough vetting process conducted by administration including:

- Reference checks
- Departmental and team level feedback
- Review of instructional approach and team fit

Jason Burman has 25 years of teaching experience, with a strong background in working with advanced learners. He is widely recognized for his creative instructional methods, effective collaboration, and alignment with the school's academic standards and culture.

Discussion: Spirit Rock Implementation @ 8:43pm

The Board discussed the upcoming introduction of a "spirit rock" on campus—an initiative designed to allow students and families to paint messages for special occasions, such as birthdays, accomplishments, or school spirit events.

Key discussion points included MAP and Boards proposed thoughts on:

- Cleanup responsibilities
- The use of spray paint vs. brush paint (covering the ground)
- Reservation scheduling
- Potential fees
- Weather-related disruptions
- Board-approved guidelines for the spirit rock

KPI Development Discussion @ 8:58pm

The Board held an initial discussion on defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track progress and ensure accountability across key areas of school operations. These indicators will be used to monitor school health, drive data-informed decisions, and surface issues requiring board or leadership attention.

Key Areas and Initial KPI Suggestions:

- Finance: Fundraising performance, % Overhead (OH) relative to budget
- Academic Excellence: EVAAS (growth data), report card outcomes, student attendance and tardiness rates, number of IEPs and 504 plans
- Staffing: Staff turnover (voluntary and non-voluntary)
- Family Engagement: % of families meeting volunteer requirements, tracking of volunteer hours

Limited Board Business @ 9:12pm

Closed Session @ 9:12pm

- On proper motion by A. Monsees and seconded by J. Nowak, the board unanimously approved to enter Closed Session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel issue.

- On proper motion by S. Allaire and seconded by S. Witty, the board unanimously approved to leave Closed Session.

Open Session @ 9:36pm

Approval of Board of Director Meeting Minutes:

- S. Witty made a motion to approve the board meeting minutes from 6/25/25. J. Leggett seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of 8th Grade Math Teacher Hire:

- J. Leggett made a motion to approve the hiring of Jason Burman for the 8th grade advanced math position. A. Monsees seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Contractor to use for Drainage issues/resolution:

- S. Allaire made a motion to move forward with using vendor Yardnique Inc. for the first phase of the project (Moffat Pipe will also assist) with a proposed budget up to $65k. S. Witty seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The next board meeting is scheduled for August 19th.

S. Allaire moved to adjourn, and S. Witty seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:39pm.