



# Yuba River Charter School

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## CHARTER COUNCIL MINUTES

Meeting of May 11, 2011  
3:30pm YRCS Library

Yuba River Charter School is a community focused on the development of our children. The primary responsibility for the governance of the affairs of the school falls upon the Charter Council, composed of teachers, staff, parents and community member(s). Regular meetings of the Charter Council are held the second Wednesday of each month. The Charter Council invites input from all constituencies of the school. For more information regarding the functioning of the Charter Council, see the Charter Council By Laws and applicable policies.

### 1. Call to Order - 3:35 PM

**CC Present:** Doris Rainville (DR), Leila Barber (LB), Dan Martinez (DM), Torrie Mudd (TM), Robert Wallis (RW), Mariana Nielsen (MN),  
**CC Absent:** Newman Peery (NP)  
**Guests:** Caleb Buckley (CB), Susan Egan (SE)

### 2. Public Comment

This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the council on non-agendized items. Note the council cannot discuss or take action on non-agendized items at this meeting, but such items may be agendized for a later council meeting for discussion and/or action. Agendized items may either be addressed at this time or when the items come up for discussion and/or action. All comments are to be pertinent to the business of the board as determined by the chair. Furthermore, comments which reflect adversely upon personal character or motives are out of order as are those which reflect racial, religious, economic or political views. Such statements are grounds for summary termination of the privilege of address.

Ilene Christdahl (IC) spoke about her request to expand the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class size due to a miscommunication that led to their family missing an enrollment opportunity. Later, Melissa Seibold (MS) spoke about the steps that had been taken during the enrollment process. See item 5g below for a related discussion regarding class size.

### 3. Consent Agenda Action Items - None

### 4. Discussion Items

#### a. Update on NC move.

- CB spent ~3 hours at NCE site.

- Good news, phone service appears to be less expensive to return to service than expected (~\$500).
- Yard was viewed with the plan to move as much playground equipment as possible from current site. Kindergarten items into new Kindergarten yard. Boatyard equipment into the wood chip area of the big yard. The boat itself will not be moved.
- Larry Hierman has been hired as volunteer coordinator to handle the move. Other leaders are also being identified. Volunteers are signing up and contacting the leaders.
- NCE still has a lot of items remaining from the previous school, especially in the library. They have until the end of May to remove it.
- Nevada City School of the Arts (NCSA) will be renting the upper grades of our current campus next year, helping us avoid the need to modify classrooms and yard to previous conditions as NCSA is happy with facility as it is.
- The final lease for NCE is really close, but waiting to resolve one final detail. SE provided a draft and guidance for the language in the lease to the real estate agents involved.
- SE has begun discussions with Nevada City about signage and has received positive initial feedback.

**b. Little Creek Program for 2011/12 school year.**

- There is a lot of interest in Little Creek next year.
- NCE has space for a program with 8-10 students. A realtor is investigating nearby home rentals which could be licensed and potentially increase the program to 12 - 14 students.
- The program is being evaluated by CB and its director and a proposal will be presented at the next CC meeting.

**5. Discussion/Action Items**

**Motion to move item f up to the first action item to accommodate guests:** DM 1st, LB 2nd - Passed unanimously

**Shall CC approve proposed changes to the Home Study Program?** Tabled

- Jean Remley and Raelynn Noel presented a proposal to revise the Home Study Program. See Attachment 1 for details.
- Questions arose regarding ensuring that any materials created as YRCS curriculum do not infringe on copyrights and on obtaining more details on the budget and the expected responsibilities of the new director. A revised proposal was requested for the next CC meeting.

**a. Shall CC approve minutes for 3/28/11 and 4/6/11?** DM 1st, RW 2nd  
- Passed unanimously

**b. Shall CC approve filing a waiver with the State for exemption for 2011/12 deferrals?** LB 1st, TM 2nd - Passed unanimously  
Two waivers were needed. Post-meeting note: These waivers were approved by the State.

**c. Shall CC approve a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class size increase to 32 students for the school year 2011/12?** LB 1st, TM 2nd - Passed unanimously  
This allows for a class co-teacher, has worked well for Mr. Bell's class this year, and helps create more feeder students for upper grades. After April 1, the class size will revert to 29 students.

- d. Shall CC approve the contract for the Perc & Mantle with Youngdahl Consulting Group, Inc.?** RW 1st, DM 2nd - Passed unanimously

This is the same firm doing the geostudy program. The contract was reviewed by RW and the Project Manager.

- e. Shall CC set an interim meeting for 2011/12 budget approval, summer CC calendar, and CC retreat?** LB 1st, RW 2nd - Passed unanimously as amended **Shall CC set an interim meeting for 2011/12 budget approval, Home Study Program and Little Creek Program, summer CC calendar, and CC retreat?**

Wed May 25, 3:30 PM at YRCS

Thurs June 16, 1:00 PM at NCE, all meetings at NCE from now on

Wed July 27, 1:00 PM

(note no meeting on Aug 3)

Wed Aug 17, 3:30 PM

Wed Sep 7, 3:30 PM (and first Wed of the month thereafter)

Fri/Sat, Sep 30 - Oct 1, after lunch through dinner, CC Retreat

- f. (moved to first item of discussion, see above) Shall CC approve proposed changes to the Home Study Program?**

- g. Shall CC approve recommended class sizes for the 2011/12 school year?** DM 1st, DR 2nd - Passed unanimously

- 4<sup>th</sup> will increase class size to 32 students to allow for keeping a co-teacher. At the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, the class will not add new students unless it falls below 29. Grades 1-3 will start the year with 30 students, but only add if class size falls below 29. Grades 5-8 have a class size of 29. The kindergartens will maintain current class levels. The overenrollment by one student in the lower grades helps minimize disruption of adding new students as classes are forming.
- A clarification was made regarding enrollment policy when class sizes fall below specified levels. Families will be notified of an available opening in writing and told they have 72 hours to respond to the request. If they have not responded, the spot will be awarded to the next person on the waiting list. Anyone who does not accept an opening when it is available is eligible to reapply and be put at the bottom of the waiting list for the next open enrollment period. If there is no one on the list, they remain on the list at the bottom until the next open enrollment period. This policy will be explained when the position is offered.
- It was agreed that communication was confusing and misleading regarding the recently available spot for the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade class; however, the enrollment policy is clear and considered fair, and faculty recommended that the class size not be increased due to the miscommunications. Administration was charged with improving the formal communications surrounding enrollment, clearly identifying time constraints and policy to interested families.

- h. Shall CC approve the final YRCS Strategic Plan?** Tabled

**Motion to vote on items i, j, and k together:** TM 1st, RW 2nd -  
Passed unanimously

- i. Shall CC approve membership in the NC SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) as an LEA (Local Education Agency) for the purposes of providing special education services?**
- j. Shall CC agree to the policies adopted within the Nevada County Local Plan?**
- k. Shall CC approve "Special Education Local Plan Area Local Education Agency (LEA) Assurances?"**

These items are the detailed agreements necessary to formalize the new structure that will allow the region's Charter Schools to collectively negotiate special education funding and determine special education priorities. It gives YRCS and its Charter School partners more control over these programs, and the belief is that these benefits will outweigh the greater responsibility involved.

## **6. Reports**

### **a. Director - Caleb Buckley - to include updates on Bldg. project.**

- Although funding for the school on Rough and Ready has still not arrived, all possible preparations have been made. We are now simply waiting for the equivalent of the loan to fund.
- Some preparation work is being paid in advance with school funds in anticipation of this funding to keep the process moving so building timelines can be met.
- The architects are slightly modifying the original visions they presented at the Community Meeting. In the latest version, the buildings are more up hill towards Adams St. on the flatter part of the site.
- If funding has not arrived within a month, we will have to decide how to stall the project.
- Administration in conjunction with the architects are attempting to secure additional funding for the site to improve the quality of the buildings, including greater energy efficiency and less toxic building materials.
- The Capital Fund for the new site will kick off near the time of ground breaking and is likely to focus on enhancing the site with additional needs such as a multipurpose room.
- Enrollment is at record levels with only one opening throughout the school, in the current 6<sup>th</sup> grade class, and a student visiting to determine interest for it.
- Charter renewal is due in September. CB will work on this over the summer.
- Our lawyer recommended that enrollment policy not change as a result of attendance.

### **b. Business Manager - Susan Egan - to include State budget update**

- The current projections by the state are to expect anywhere from a \$350 - \$800 reduction in revenue per student for 2011/2012. Each school is required to budget with an additional \$650 in reserve per student. Luckily we reduced our rent and we have excellent enrollment, but this will still be a very challenging goal to meet.
- The state has extended the reduction of the school year by 5 days to 175.

- The state has extended allowing larger class sizes.
- The switch of insurance brokers is complete and teachers and staff are enrolling in new plans.
- SB will work on an improved website over the summer.
- SB working on details required to become a non-profit.
- SB reported that we would not hear whether we'd been approved for an exemption to the state's payment deferral program, but a post-meeting note is that this exemption was granted, averting the need to come up with creative loan/financing solutions to solve cash flow problems.

**c. Parent Council - Robert Wallis**

- The PC sponsored a successful, beautiful May Fair. The fundraising was also successful.
- Mark Dahlstrom is stepping down as PC Chair and is identifying a replacement.
- PC polling indicates that there will continue to be a need for parent co-ops for families of K-2 students who have siblings in the upper grades. Administration and Faculty will evaluate where and how to house these families, but the priority now is to find space for the school sponsored programs. This will be evaluated more closely over the summer as the final details of how the new site will be used emerge.

**d. Ed Foundation - Doris Rainville**

- No update
- DR indicated that next year she would like to step down from Ed Foundation to reduce her participation to one school committee.

**e. Faculty - Leila Barber**

- End of the year excitement: lots of fieldtrips, plays, Medieval Games, Pentathlon.
- Planning in-house graduation with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the Rose Ceremony, and the Kindergarten fly away.
- Coordinating the logistics of the move.
- Preparing for the in-service days at year's end and student reports.
- Hiring many assistants for next year. Positions will be posted and include aids for several classrooms, a school psychologist, and a Kindergarten assistant.

**f. CC Chair - Torrie Mudd - to include updates on Treasurer position**

- No one has been recommended to fill the Treasurer position yet. An attempt will be made to solicit participation from Nevada City CPAs.
- MN has been elected to a two year term.

**7. Closed Session - 6:46 PM**

The Council invited in: Guests: Caleb Buckley (CB), Susan Egan (SE): TM 1st, LB 2nd - Passed unanimously

- a. Shall CC approve the final lease for NCE?
- b. Shall CC approve the contracts for Administration and Classified Staff for school year 2011/12?
- c. Student discipline report on 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**8. Reconvene and Report out of Closed Session: 7:50 PM**

- a. Tabled
- b. DM 1st, TM 2nd - Passed unanimously
  - Barbara Inman - Receptionist
  - Jim Inman - Maintenance and Custodian
  - Jimmy Simanello - Custodian
  - Catherine Ardagh - Librarian
  - Marguerite Volz - Preschool Director
  - Krissa Connelley - office Manager
  - Melissa Seibold - Enrollment Coordinator and Development Associate
  - Karen Wedge - Kidspace Coordinator
- c. A discussion was held regarding student discipline in the upper grades.

**9. Next Meeting Agenda Items and Action Items****a. May 25 Meeting**

- Budget 2011/2012
- Little Creek Preschool proposal for 2011/2012
- Home Study Program proposal for 2011/2012

**b. June Meeting**

- Treasurer position
- CC bylaws, including a change to the routine meeting time

**c. July Meeting**

- It is anticipated there will be at least construction contracts that require approval.

**d. Sep Meeting**

- Charter Renewal Draft

**e. Action Items**

- CB to improve the formal communications surrounding enrollment, clearly identifying time constraints and policy to families and ensuring critical communications with deadlines are in writing.
- TM to obtain a copy of IC's written statement regarding enrollment miscommunications for the CC records.
- CB to respond in writing to IC regarding the decision to not overenroll Mr. Charles' 6<sup>th</sup> grade class.
- RW to draft a letter for SE to review to contact Nevada City CPAs regarding the Treasure's position.

**10. Call to Adjourn - 7:52 PM**

Respectfully Yours,

Mariana Nielsen  
Charter Council Secretary

**Attachment 1**  
**Home Study Program Recommendations**  
**May 11, 2011**

This last year Yuba River Charter School initiated a Home Study program using Live Education! as the curriculum. Spanish and Handwork were taught on site once a week. Starting small and enrolling more students, a total of 13 students have been enrolled in the program. There were also families that left the program during the year, citing difficulties with the curriculum being used. Currently there are 6 students enrolled in the Home Study Program.

It was felt that a review of the current curriculum was needed.

Another difficulty the Home Study Program struggled with was due to the fact that there was no single person who had the time needed to devote to the management of the entire Home Study Program. There was some confusion about which responsibilities fell to whom, and sometimes things fell through the cracks.

This showed a need for a director to be hired to manage the Home Study Program.

For these reasons, a committee was created consisting of Elise Hierman (1<sup>st</sup> grade Co-teacher and Educational Specialist for the Home Study Program), Raelynn Noel (3<sup>rd</sup> grade Co-teacher, Educational Specialist for the Home Study Program, a former homeschooling parent for 3 years using a Waldorf-based curriculum, and a specialty class teacher for ten years at a home study program), and Jean Remley (YRCS parent and former homeschooling parent for 5 years using a Waldorf-based curriculum).

### **Curriculum**

After reviewing several Waldorf-based or inspired curricula, the Committee felt that the curriculum offered by Christopherus would be a much better fit for our Home Study families. The subject matter coincides with YRCS class content, and it offers more guidance for the Home Teacher. Christopherus currently offers a complete curriculum for grades 1-5, and a syllabus and curriculum guide (with all supplemental books needed) for grades 6-8.

The Committee recommends offering a choice of Live Education! (which did work pretty well with older students) or Christopherus to families of students in grades 6-8. We feel that it is important to offer a home study curriculum to all grades. In addition to supporting families with children in multiple grades, it provides a larger source of income for the school.

In order for the Educational Specialists to have time to familiarize themselves with the curriculum, a set of the Christopherus curriculum grades 1-8 needs to be purchased soon (approximately \$2000). In addition to it being a resource for the Home Study Program, it can be used as a supplemental resource for class teachers.

The Home Study Committee also felt that a restructuring of the Block Classes would be beneficial, to offer more diversity throughout the year. Instead of 2 classes offered the whole year, there would be several blocks of classes (each block would be 6-8 weeks) alternated throughout the year. Block Classes would be divided into lower grades and upper grades to avoid a wide age-span in one class. A Block



Class would only be offered if there were a minimum of 3 students. For those 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who wish to participate in Pentathlon and Medieval Games, a commitment of 75% attendance at Games classes would be required.

This last year, YRCS paid \$250 for mentoring sessions for each student with Live Education! These were not well utilized and it is recommended that these be discontinued.

### **Director**

The Home Study Committee feels that hiring a person to manage the Home Study Program would improve the cohesiveness of the program and provide for a more streamlined program. Different home study programs do this in different ways. Some have a full-time faculty member manage the program along with other responsibilities. Some hire a person specifically to run the program. The number of hours allotted for this position would increase as the student body grows.

### **Educational Budget**

Another benefit most home study programs provide their families with is an Educational Budget. This can be used to pay for Block Classes or enrichment classes outside of school from an approved list of vendors. Curricula and supplies would be provided to the families (this is approximately a \$600 value). The Home Study Committee recommends an Educational Budget of \$500-\$1000/year for each student.

### **HS Student Income and Expenses**

A Home Study student brings in about \$5000 in ADA.

Expenses per student are:

\$600 Live Education! curriculum and mentoring

\$200 Materials/Supplies including: Handwork, recorder, Spanish book/cd, crayons, paper, etc.

\$100 Educational Specialist per month

Specialty Teachers were paid a total of around \$1,619 for the year (\$704 for Handwork, \$704 for Spanish, plus about 15% for statutory benefits). This expense is shared by all the students.

### **Logistics**

With space at a premium at the NCE campus, a possibility for the Home Study Program is to hold its classes in the afternoon, in a classroom or two (if there are enough students for both lower and upper grade Block Classes). With a small enrollment, one day a week would most likely be enough.

The Home Study Program would also need a place that is toddler friendly, to meet with parents and to store supplies, as many times younger siblings are along. More library time and a shelf for Home Study resources in the library would be very helpful.

## Development for the Future

The Home Study Committee views this next year as a year to stabilize and to grow the Home Study Program with more advertising and outreach. It is important to attract families that want a Waldorf-based Home Study experience and not just a way to get priority on the waiting list for the school. This would create a more stable Home Study student body.

Block Classes would start small, just one day a week.

Ideally, developing our own Home Study curriculum would align it with YRCS' curriculum and also negate the need to purchase a new curriculum each year for each family, thus making it more sustainable for the school. Patricia Montijo has expressed an interest in creating this. She feels (and the Home Study Committee agrees) that it "would be advantageous for our school to have its own curriculum based on the lessons that our teachers provide students. This way, when a Home Study student matriculates into a regular classroom, he/she can do this without much stress or transition because the lessons have been the same. Also, the class teachers could use this material as a basis for their lessons (as we have been doing with live ed). Another plus is the ability we would have to market our product as has Live Ed, Christopherus, etc. This could prove to be a fine and unexpected source of income for the school."

Patricia could begin as early as this summer, starting with grade one and working her way up through the grades. She would consult with the class teachers in creating lesson plans that they approve. When the first grade material is completed, it would be reviewed by everyone concerned before proceeding to the next grade. Once a grade has been approved and the Educational Specialists have had time to familiarize themselves with it, it could be introduced at the beginning of the next school year.

The Home Study Committee also felt that it would be beneficial to create DVDs of Circle Time/Movement activities and verses, instructional DVDs of Block Crayon Drawing, Chalkboard Drawing, and Wet-on-Wet Watercolor painting. Creating a CD-ROM and hard copies of our own student's Main Lesson Books, form drawings and paintings would also be a great resource for the Home Teacher.

The Finance Committee has approved a stipend of \$5000 for the Home Study Program. Some of this could be put towards these development goals. In January, the Finance Committee will review the Home Study Program and determine whether another stipend will be awarded.

As each year passes, we envision growth in the number of students, and growth in the number and diversity of Block Classes. Involvement by the Home Study students in assemblies and Festivals would bring them into the wider circle of the YRCS community.

When we move to the Old Dairy site, we see a comprehensive, robust Waldorf Home Study Program, with a curriculum consistent with all the grades, and possibly a Farm-School program where students would work alongside Malaika Bishop (who proposed a five year farm plan for the new school site). The house currently on the property, next to the land proposed for farming would be an ideal location to house the Home Study Program.

Our hope is that within five years, YRCS will have a thriving Home Study Program that offers another option in Waldorf education to the Nevada County community.

Thank you for your time,

Elise Hierman

Raelynn Noel

Jean Remley