



Board Meeting Minutes  
March 18, 2020 3:00 p.m.

**ATTENDING:**

Dr. Yanira Oliveras-Ortiz, Dr. Michael O'Dell, Mr. Jeffry Kennemer, Mr., Daniel Rodriguez, Ms. Angela Wright  
Dr. Jo Ann Simmons, multiple directors, staff and parents (177+ participants).

**OPENING:**

The emergency board meeting of the UT Tyler University Academy was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 via Zoom video teleconferencing.

**1. Call to Order:**

Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz confirmed a quorum of Board members were present.

**2. Pledge:**

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag  
Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**3. Request Approval for Extended Closure**

- Dr. Simmons: The University announced they will be going online for the remainder of the semester and all classes will transition to an online platform. My recommendation to the President this morning was that the Academy move to an online platform for the remainder of the school year. Meaning that on Monday, 23 March students would begin transitioning to online instruction. We are looking at the resources that we will be providing the students and the parents, such as Zoom meetings to engage in chat sessions in the event they have questions. Teachers will be available remotely and if a student has a question, they can set up a time to meet with that teacher to get that additional help. Our goal is to support students and provide them with the instructional support through the remainder of the school year. The Commissioner has assured us that schools will continue to be financially supported.
- *Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz: What is the attendance plan? How will it be accounted? How will it be taken?*
  - Dr. Simmons: The message from the Commissioner is that this has not been established as of yet. They have explored several options from looking at the student completion of the assignment, to being able to show the student has engaged. We continue to explore options to provide resources for attendance.
- *Dr. Odell: What is the impact on the STAAR test?*
  - Dr. Simmons: The state is waiving the STAAR test for this school year as well as the graduation requirements pertaining to testing/committee. This will be a district level decision. We will be meeting with our teachers on Friday to continue these discussions. We have a responsibility to continue to ensure our students receive support to move them onto the next grade level.
- *Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz: Regarding technology, what is the plan for students without access to a computer or access to the internet so that they can continue to do the work?*
  - Dr. Simmons: We want to make sure that every student has the resources they need in order to be successful, so those students who do not currently have a device, will be issued a device. Given that the campus will be open M-F, 9-2, parents can check out the devices for the students. If no device, we can also provide other opportunities for instructional resources to be

in a paper format such as workbooks. We plan on setting up a time that parents can come up to the campus to pick up these items.

- *Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz: The current rule states that no more than 10 people should be meeting at a time. How do parents go about getting to school? Do they schedule appointments or just show up?*
  - Dr. Simmons: We have been discussing this and we will get that in place with the expectation of not having more than 10 people meeting at one time.
- *Ms. Wright – What are the plans for the senior end of the year activities?*
  - Dr. Simmons: As of now, the senior banquets and graduation has not been canceled. The University has postponed their graduation until the fall possibly. We understand postponing will not work for our students as many will be at college in the fall. We are exploring opportunities since we know a high school graduation is a once in a lifetime opportunity. It just really depends on what we are faced with in the coming months.
- *Dr. Odell: Some people are concerned, what if some schools go back to school? It's my understanding from the commissioner that once you have taken the steps for online instruction, schools won't suddenly go back into session. Are we anticipating all schools to shut down?*
  - Dr. Simmons: I have a conference call with the commissioner every day and know that most schools are thinking this will be a closure through year-end. Many schools are not setup to transition into an online platform as quickly as we are and therefore have not made a final decision to close, but instead plan to make decisions in 2-week increments. I feel confident it is the right decision to make now, versus making decisions on a 2-week increment schedule.
- *Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz: What's the plan to offer services for Special Education?*
  - Dr. Simmons: Will be meeting with special teams to ensure that we meet the guidelines established by the federal government. Services are not waived, so it is important that as teachers are creating instructional support, they take into consideration any modifications that students may need and provide those instructions and assignments to those students.
- *Dr. Oliveras-Ortiz: Some local internet companies are offering free internet for families who not have internet.*
  - Dr. Simmons: Some companies have reached out to offer free options and other free platforms to support parents. I have stressed to the staff to be flexible since every parent/household is faced with a different challenge. We want to ensure that we provide a variety of different platforms to support our students and parents to help us get throughout this time.
- *Ms. Wright: Will teachers be at school or working remotely?*
  - Dr. Simmons: Teachers will be working remotely, but will have a scheduled rotation on each campus since each campus will be open from 9-2 every day. There will likely be a few teachers in the event a student needs assistance or if a parent needs to pick up resources. Teachers may need to meet with a student in the event a student is struggling so they may have to schedule a time that works for all. We must provide instruction and we must continue to provide grades.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer. Motion passed 5-0.

#### **4. Request Approval for File Attendance Waiver for missed school days**

- Ms. Krier: In a normal situation, schools build bad weather days into their schedule. In the event those days are needed, they use them. Any missed school days beyond the scheduled bad weather days would need to be made up, unless a waiver was filed. This waiver allows those schools who will be closed beyond their normal bad weather days, to not make them up later in the summer. We must also file an attestation document along with the waiver that states we will be providing online instruction and we are not just canceling school for the rest of the year. The attestation states that we are going to be closed, but we are going to be providing instruction and the other is the wavier asking to not make up missed days.
- *Mr. Kennemer: Will there be any impacts on next school year?*
  - Ms. Krier: This waiver is just for this school year, no impacts on next year.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Ms. Wright. Motion passed 5-0.

## INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

### 5. Superintendent Report:

- Administrative Updates

- Dr. Simmons: After the board meeting, we will be sending out a press release that will go to the school community explaining the closure and the next steps, office hours, instruction, etc. I am hosting a district meeting on Friday to discuss how to achieve the next step. Curriculum team will be working with teachers so that we begin this process and make the online transition. We will be as flexible as possible. We understand that we have parents that are still working so we want to make sure we set deadlines that are easy to meet. We will be sending this information out to parents soon. We will be here to support the parents and the students to make this transition as easy as possible. We will be addressing the questions from the parents either through the directors or through campus informational updates.

### 6. Motion for Adjournment:

1<sup>st</sup> motion: Mr. Rodriguez, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion: Mr. Kennemer

Adjournment occurred at 3:36 p.m.