CHARTER CONNECTION

January 2021

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE FOR ALL THINGS CHARTER

Table of Contents

Director's Message
School Spotlight
Dr. Ed U. Cation
Themes of the Month
Opportunities for Schools
Outstanding in Our Field
January (2021)
February (2021)

Director's Message

Happy New Year to all of you! It has honestly never felt so good to say "hindsight is 2020!"

On January 14th, the State Charter School Board will meet to discuss the merits of new school applications and decide whether to authorize any of them. To prepare for this, SCSB staff, USBE staff, and third-party contracted readers have read through the applications and prepared feedback for the board's consideration. We would also like to hear your thoughts. You can read the applications at https://www.utahscsb.org/january-2021 and submit your public comments here.

As always, my staff is here to help with whatever questions you have. Feel free to reach out anytime.

—Jennifer

SCSB STAFF SPOTLIGHT—

Smriti Dhakal was born in Nepal, the land of the Himalayas that encompasses Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. Growing up in a country with a variety of ethnic and cultural differences, Smriti learnt how to embrace cultural diversity and understood the importance of working together as a team to accomplish desired goals, no matter what backgrounds the individuals are coming from.

While growing up, Smriti keenly participated in school annual functions and took part in plays, choirs, etc. which helped her remove her stage fright, boost up confidence and most importantly taught her the importance of teamwork. She voluntarily helped her teachers in various class projects and especially loved working as a tutor to teach mathematics, her favorite subject, to her fellow students and juniors.

Smriti was always fascinated to see how quickly her dad, an auditor by profession, was able to crunch large numbers and do all kinds of financial analysis. That motivated her to choose accounting as a profession to perform financial assessments and make mathematical conclusions. After getting married to her high school sweetheart and moving to the US, she continued her education and obtained a Master of Accountancy degree, with audit track, from the University of Utah.

Smriti is a dedicated, skilled, and thorough individual with great problem-solving skills. In her prior roles, she had been an integral part of a team performing the regulatory compliance (Fair Credit Reporting Act, Bank Secrecy Act, etc.) as well as operational (cradle to grave, rotational) audits. Working in these audit areas gave her a solid understanding of the importance of being compliant for any given institution, and the importance of abiding by both the internal rules of conduct and the external rules and regulations.

As part of a new member of the SCSB team, Smriti looks forward to working on various important projects and have already started off her role with auditing of the charter school websites for compliance with the Open and Public Meetings Act and other statute. Smriti is very excited about the opportunity to work with SCSB as the job role primarily includes looking into the financials and analyzing the overall financial health of a given charter school, including the short term and long-term viability, and providing support and guidance to these schools in the needed areas.

Smriti is a proud mother of two wonderful kids and loves to spend time with her family playing board games. She also enjoys travelling with her family and has seen quite a few places in Europe and Asia so far.

Dear Dr. Ed,

I am waiting for my school's vaccination timeline to come from the Health Department. In the meantime, I have had some employees asking if they are required to get the Covid Vaccine. What should I tell them, and how do I keep everyone as safe as possible?
Sincerely,
On the Front Lines

Dear On the Front Lines,
Superintendent Dickson shared that the Utah State Board of Education and the Utah Department of Health are not recommending requiring vaccines for teachers. However, this does not preclude an LEA from requiring vaccines for their employees. This can be a condition of employment, at the local level.

Helen Hechtkopf, an Attorney in New York stated "If an employer plans to require its employees to get a COVID-19 vaccine, (they) should develop a written policy. For employees who refuse to be vaccinated, the employer needs to find out why."

In addition to legally protected reasons, employees may have general objections to receiving a COVID-19 vaccination that do not require a reasonable accommodation. However, if a significant portion of the workforce refuses to comply, the employer will be put in the very difficult position of either adhering to the mandate and terminating all of these employees, or deviating from the mandate for certain employees, which Brett Coburn, an Attorney in Atlanta, said can increase the risk of discrimination claims.

"Rather than implementing mandates that could lead to such difficult decisions, employers may wish to focus on steps they can take to encourage and incentivize employees to get vaccinated," he said. For example, employers may want to:

> Develop vaccination education campaigns.
> Make obtaining the vaccine as easy as possible for employees.
> Cover any costs that might be associated with getting the vaccine.
> Provide incentives to employees who get vaccinated.
> Provide paid time off for employees to get the vaccine and recover from any potential side effects.

Kevin Troutman, an attorney in Houston, also suggested offering incentives before adopting a hardline mandatory vaccination policy.

"Communicate clearly and often with employees and help them understand how vaccinations will make for a safer workplace," he said. "Lead by example and ensure that management takes the vaccines first."

—Dr. Ed U. Cation

(adopted from: www.shrm.org)

Theme of the Month

Facility Review Policy Update

During our November 2020 State Charter School Board (SCSB) meeting, the board adopted an update to the "Review of Facilities Contracts or Finance Agreements for Charter Schools" policy. You can find the updated policy at: https://www.utahscsb.org/scsb-policies-and-procedures

The goal of the policy update was to ensure that we were doing what was required per the law (53G-5-404-9b) which states that, "Beginning on July 1, 2014, a charter school, including a charter school that has not yet opened, shall submit any lease, lease-purchase agreement, or other contract or agreement relating to the charter school's facilities or financing of the charter school's facilities to the school's authorizer and an attorney for review and advice before the charter school enters the lease, agreement, or contract." We think this update will make the policy more effective while adding a layer of transparency.

This policy applies to all new "leases, lease-purchases, facility financing, construction, modification, built-to-suit, or development contracts or agreements of a charter school facility that costs $50,000 or more per year or 5% of a charter school's annual budget."

Opportunities for Schools

- Has your charter school governing board done its annual training on the Open and Public Meetings Act yet? The Office of the State Auditor has a training for you
- Pluralsight One, with USBE, is offering grant licenses to LEAs to provide course training for computer science, business, and technology. If interested, email amber.hellstrom@schools.utah.gov with the subject Pluralsight license, name of LEA, and emails of those needing license
- Work with an awesome charter school colleague at a SCSB authorized school? Nominate them for Employee of the Month at https://forms.gle/dtEGG9EdnGkjrHP7A
- Looking for resources concerning the coronavirus? https://schools.utah.gov/coronavirus
- Mentoring trainings are available at https://www.utahscsb.org/mentoring. Contact Marie.Steffensen@schools.utah.gov for more information.

Outstanding in Our Field

- Congratulations to Ms. Kerrie Upeniecks, a teacher at Beehive Science & Technology Academy, who was spotlighted by Ed Direction at the November 12, 2020 State Charter School Board meeting.
- Ms. Jonel Condra; a speech-language pathologist at Spectrum's STARS (functional skills) campus, and North Salt Lake Related Services Team Lead of Spectrum Academy; was awarded December's Employee of the Month of SCSB Authorized Schools.
- You all are outstanding! We love to hear and share of your accomplishments. Please send them to james.madsen@schools.utah.gov

January 2021

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	USBE Meeting 7	USBE Committee 8	9	10
Charter Directors @ 12:30 11	12	13	SCSB Meeting 14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2021

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Director's Meeting 8	9	10	SCSB Meeting 11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28