

**SOAR Charter School Board Meeting
April 11, 2014**

Date, Time and Place: April 11, 2014, Evie Dennis Campus, Student Union Building,
Large Conference Room

Attendance of Board Members:

Present: William Weintraub, Rosann Ward, Ellin Keene, Shelli Brown

Present by phone: None

Absent: Dan Smink, Sue Sava, Rona Wilensky

Quorum? Yes

Also in attendance: Marc Waxman, Brad Fischer, Sonia Sisneros, Gianna Cassetta

Members of the public in attendance: None

8:45 Meet in SOAR@GVR commons

8:50 Observation Kindergarten Literacy, Amanda Davis's room

9:23 Meeting brought to order; Shelli moved, Bill seconds

9:24 Consent agenda

- March Minutes
- February Financial Packet
- Principal was misspelled in the March minutes

Approved: Bill moved, Rosann seconds

9:30 Debrief in conference room

The intervention block is what was taking place during our visit with Amanda's classroom. Work is designed to meet the kids wherever their needs are in their literacy development. Halfway through the intervention block the kids switch between centers and the individual instruction with the teacher. The morning message was an opportunity for the kids to notice errors in the chart and point them out to Amanda. The feedback from the Board (Shelli) is that the format was supportive and encouraging students to read. The kids self-manage and self-monitor during this time because the teacher because supporting individual instruction. They did this well today.

The goal for Kindergarten for total minutes of independent reading is 30 minutes per day. Bill was impressed with how well the kids read and wrote. Amanda knew what she was doing. Ellin explains the correlation between the number of minutes spent reading per day and literacy skills, e.g. conferring, brain regeneration, etc., as well as what data recommends for kids to catch-up that are struggling as well as incremental instruction and time building up to this skill.

9:40 FY15 Budget Review & Vote

- We have the new teacher pay scale
- Includes a contingency at \$56k
- Healthcare contributions; continuing to do what we've always done.
- We expect that in May/July and potentially in August we expect revisions; especially when we learn what PPR will be.
- We haven't heard final Title funding; this can take until next January to get sorted out.
- Rollover from this year will change a little bit.

Is the budget revision process a process that DPS wants; or can we just continue to project? We put in a limit of what we would change, e.g. \$50k, we feel like it's better for the Board to be up to date on any revision. We can't make changes after January unless there is new revenue. This is per the state.

The 5-year: (Bill) is it right to show the deficit? Talking principle...is it better to show the red or cut? We are not showing any fundraising. The finance committee is okay with this as it we still don't know what PPR will be. It's also a good flag for us to understand that if additional revenue doesn't come in then we know we need to make a change.

Regarding the Budgeting Principles, what did we decide to do regarding the fund balance? Ellin was thinking we were incrementally trying to grow it. If we aren't sure is then we need to revisit it. The 5-year is showing that realistically we wouldn't be able to grow this funding. Brad confirms that this is what is stated in the principles; but we clearly made the decision that we wouldn't be able to do it this year. The purpose of the 5-year (Marc) is to use as a benchmark when approving the current budget in our decision making process.

(Ellin) The notion of needing to continue to fundraise for what we need for expenses. In principle, there should be some anticipation of increasing this over time and that would call on people to do some fundraising. Marc agrees as does Bill.

The way that the budget is built it does have money going into reserves in FY16 and FY17. The growth does exist.

We are not voting on the 5-year budget; though we are discussing the principle of the value of these reserves and continue to grow to it.

(Rosann) the expense on the graph minus Oakland this is consistent per FY14 format. Brad confirms.

***Add to August agenda to revisit the Budget Principles and Fundraising.**

- making sure the Board knows and understands their role in this
- dovetail with a conversation on fundraising
- lets remind people that this is a principle that has been approved and we have written it into the document but we deviated from it this year. We can look at this creatively.

Approve: Motion by Rosann, Bill Seconds

9:50 Dashboards/updates

Not much going on in March. GVR had a Flex Teacher leave early to take another position. Not ideal but minimal impact. We are kind of replacing her. We have many Flex Teachers between the schools; we have also received permanent subs through CSTN. In addition, our Playworks person quit; she was actively pursuing other work. We have canceled our contract with Playworks as a result.

(Shelli) It seems that GVR is having more suspensions. Between the budgeted cash flow and the actual cash flow – where does the gap come from? Brad explains that it comes from timing with Title funding. In addition, when teachers leave the sub hired to replace them come with less of a cost. As for the GVR suspensions, there were a couple of pretty big fights – 2 incidents. At Oakland, the students that had been receiving suspensions we have created more supportive plans. The students are still doing things that are “suspendable”, but because of special needs or perceived special needs we do not want to suspend; instead we’ve created supports. It has less impact on the classrooms and more on the staff. The Dean is very active as is the Principal. In addition, at OAK they have created a more regimented ladder system for students to be removed from the classroom and instituted In School Suspension (ISS).

There are situations where parents get outraged and want suspension but the district won’t do it. It’s tricky. Gianna has approved the suspensions here because we have staff that are leaving and are very dysfunctional at handling these situations. Regarding, the Para support, Marc explains the challenge around hiring a Para for GVR. Quality of person hired as well as budget as well as the needs of support; student specific.

This is where public education is so messy. The lack of supports as well as the disconnects with the families.

(Ellin) what might we do to meet these needs? Marc explains the staff psychologists/social work support at Oakland as well as the four Paras. DPS is taking up to 18 weeks of data collection.

There was a suspension yesterday at GVR.

Ellin, who is Beth? Beth is our ELL consultant. Is Leah Mermelstein coming back? No, she is not currently budgeted.

(Marc) Vision Statement Update:

- Staffing for next year – Art and two Flex positions. We had our first person rescind their acceptance for next year. This is okay because we have a great Flex teacher. This vacancy accommodates some shifts we are happy about. The leaving teacher was struggling and we were moving her to a lower grad to give her a different experience. We are optimistic that we will fill with all internal people. There is a great candidate for Art from Oman De Blair, or a teacher we have at Oakland this year. Some of the strongest teachers next year will be Oakland teachers.

10:10 Parent/community engagement discussion

- Homework Committee is moving along in their efforts. Our next step is to take the data and survey the teachers. We are on track to make a recommendation in June. Marc explains the how the survey for families looked as well the large spectrum of responses. Marc's approach to resolving this is to move to a more technology focused homework. At the base of the parent concern is that they don't know what their kid is doing or how their kid is doing. If we can do a better job about this we can remove this concern from homework. We are piloting the tech based homework, Dream Box (math). We are going to do some sort of homework lab and use our laptops; though the survey of access to internet was very high, in the "90's". In addition, we are also looking at a reading program. Ellin will send Marc and Gianna a recent synthesis on homework.
- Enrollment Sessions for next year have started. They have been very positive. We are going to be full.
- We have a parent meeting next week specifically focused on the parking lot. It is possible that we would change our bell times. We'll see what happens.
- We are also doing a couple of different things for ELL families, an enrollment meeting for Spanish speaking families only and a meeting for ELL families to talk about their experiences at SOAR.
- We are creating a PTO (parent committee)
- We have another restraint night coming up; Panda Express
- Antwan Jefferson is helping us work with staff to learn about resources in the community
- Our rebranding is set to be completed on time and it looks good. Everything will be done by June. It's not a total rebrand-just refreshing.
- If we are going to move to the PTO and we still have the School Accountability Committee (SAC); we would like to propose that the SAC is used as a state of the school address. Can we commit to having a Board member there at every meeting? We think this is a better use of the SAC and keeps these conversations from intersecting into other actives, PTO events. Ellin asks that we get the SAC schedule out ASAP so that we can divvy-up the meetings and thinks it's a great idea.
- Our action teams are meeting and moving forward, technology and mindfulness with Rona. Teachers are working on the unit planning action team.
- The summer PD will look very different this year. This year teachers will work together on topics like, word study, culturally relevant pedagogy.
 - In May and April we are rewriting our curriculum calendar to align with Common Core and PARCC. Leah Mermelstein is coming for this work; there is a lead for each grade level; this person will work directly with Leah.
 - Would we offer individualized PD for teachers who will have kids that are more challenging? No, this occurs in every class. We will address in a few ways: Reed and Janis will share this information with Meghan who will be the Dean next year. The objective is to get ahead with the plans for these students that stand out more behaviorally. Gianna explains the work she is doing with Meghan to prepare, (CBT) teaching the student replacement behavior as well as give examples of the techniques. We need to consider changes in the environment, e.g. seating and peer coach. Meghan has already started coming to GVR to begin building relationships with these students.
 - SEL group met with Gianna

- We met with Callan with the lead on the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
- Shelli adds that it is helpful to get the updates in the Board meeting to be able to share with parents that she interacts with. Marc has sent a letter home to give these updates. Shelli would like Marc to send her the updates so she could share. He will do this as well as he explained our approach to move to an electronic communication environment. The new format of the SAC and the start of the PTO will help with this as well.

10:25 Committee reports

- Plan for board self-assessment presented by board development committee
 - Self-assessment in May; something will be sent in April. Not ready yet.
- Board recruitment discussion (Shelli)
 - Rona will find out today if Ethan Hemming can join our board. He comes from OSRI and Marc and Gianna know him well.
 - We need a FNE community member, Treasurer and Chair
- ED Review
 - Rosann gives out the final draft of the Evaluation of Executive Director 2014. Marc sent Rosann the list of responsibilities he has this year. Rosann wants to make sure that the work Marc did at Oakland was covered; crisis management. Do we feel like the statements cover what we felt was Marc's work in this area? Ellin asks that we add students at the end.
 - Planning Administration: #5 Prepares the Board for the CSSI review needs to be deleted.
 - Fund Development: Should we need to ignore for this year but it is used next year. Marc thinks that he can be rated on these metrics. It's not that he didn't have time to raise money; he thought it was impossible given the position we were in with closing a school. Shelli feels that it should be left in. We will use this page.
 - Financial Page: #7 this is an add-in.
 - Program Oversight: #4 this is an add-in to acknowledge Marc's attention to these centers.
 - Oversees Teacher Recruitment Process: stays
 - Individual Attributes: add-in. The more public nature of Marc's work due to the closure

Rosann is emailing in its final form. Rona wants this submitted by April 30th. Rosann will tabulate the responses – they should all be sent to her. Bill wants to recognize that this work was great. Marc agrees. Marc will follow-up with Rona to learn what he needs to do.

Student achievement outcomes: should this be linked? The timing is tricky.

10:45 Retreat plans (Ellin) May 6th

- Cile Chavez is facilitating: Ellin and Gianna have a planning meeting with her. Ellin's goal is that the retreat is cohesive, concentrated work on broad, longer thoughtful consideration. If there are things that you have been thinking about in that context send to Ellin.
- Think through: is there a part 2 or addendum to Marc's evaluation

11:08 Adjourn

Motion to adjourn, Bill moved, Rosann seconds.