

**The Genesee Community Charter School
Board of Trustees
Education Governance Council
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2020
Held at RMSC Cunningham House, 657 East Avenue**

Board Members Present: Michelle Burack, **Cheryl Moeller**, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Kevin Sutherland, **Traci Terrance**, Annemarie Wess; (Mark Schiesser joined late)
(Bold: BOT non-voting)

Board Members Absent: **Rebecca Boyle**, Michele Hannagan, Marcia Joy, Nolica Murray-Fields, Allison Shultes, Nathan Hayes

Educational Governance Council Members Present: Becki Mason, Maggie Deutschbein, Shannon Hillman

Legal Counsel Present: George DesMarteau

Invited Guests Present: Robin Blew, Elizabeth Pietrzykowski, Sarah Johnson, Erika Barone, Maureen Lockner

Meeting called to order by Annemarie Wess at 5:31PM

Teacher presentation

Arts team presentation focused on arts integration. They highlighted patterns in nature as a focus for all 3 arts modalities, e.g. dance movements inspired by three of these underlying patterns from nature: branching, spiraling, and layering. Heartbeat is another pattern from nature used as a connection for rhythm in music.

Maureen Lockner (Visual Arts teacher) presented on her sabbatical work. She collected natural materials at Lake Ontario and Seneca Lake. In September, she had space to see the fall light in a different way compared to the usual hectic frenzy at the start of the school year. She grew corn, beans, and squash plants in her garden (3 Sisters for the First Peoples of the Americas expedition). The squash vine and squash blossoms inspired links to the branching and spiral forms that inspire dance. She has been bringing artifacts from her sabbatical to the classroom, and students in first grade are now depicting corn beans and squash in their work for the expedition.

Financial Review

Overall we remain in the black with total YTD expenditures below budget forecast and total YTD revenues higher than budget forecast. Site Seminar generated over \$4000 of revenue. A Board member asked for clarification regarding the Instructional staff benefit which is budgeted \$29,000 higher than actual expenses to date; this is typically budgeted higher than expected to cushion any unexpected increases. The Health Reimbursement Accounts are also fully funded and typically not fully utilized. There are no pending invoices reflected in the surplus.

Minutes

Motion 200212.1

Upon motion of Jessica Nordquist, and duly seconded by **Traci Terrance**, RESOLVED, that the minutes of the December 11, 2020 meeting be approved.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Kevin Sutherland, Traci Terrance, Annemarie Wess

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200212.1 passed 6 to 0

Motion 200212.2

Upon motion of **Tracy Terrance**, and duly seconded by Kevin Sutherland, RESOLVED, that the minutes of the January 11, 2020 meeting be approved.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Kevin Sutherland, Traci Terrance, Annemarie Wess

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200212.2 passed 6 to 0

The School Leader will request a copy of notes recorded by the Retreat facilitator during discussion of expansion/replication.

School Leader Update

Site Seminar: A total of ~50 people attended (has been as high as 150 in the past); 30 were attending via EL, which will result in fees paid to the school from EL. An additional 17 people from Canada attended (EL does not provide services outside of US). Steven Levy offered to facilitate without a charge in exchange for these Canadian attendees. Attendees completed a survey for EL that we will get feedback from. There were many informal positive comments.

One central area of focus for the site seminar was "literacizing" expeditions, with an intentional literacy focus of expeditions (literacizing expeditions rather than expeditionizing literacy modules.) The Arts team also advocated for making sure all site seminar attendees accessed content relevant to arts integration (not just the subset that had indicated this area of interest), to underscore why arts integration mattered. This was favorably received by attendees.

An EGC Teacher commented about the experience. Although workshop prep can be a lot of work (on top of regular teaching planning), the open workshop format was helpful to de-stress this element. The opportunity to share with peers makes it rewarding. Observers were supportive, not intimidating.

These comments were underscored by survey data from teachers: The experience was overall positive, not too high pressure. The number of attendees was manageable, and the experience felt more personal with the smaller cohort. There is a new application to host EL site seminar for next year; SL is holding off for now. Considering doing on our own rather than via EL to make it more accessible -- no one locally participated due to the cost. (We have done site seminars outside of EL in the past.) As part of the school's dissemination efforts, Site Seminar remains an important activity.

Student Led Conferences: SLC's were held today, and more scheduled for Friday. Thus far they are going smoothly. Once again this year SL is conducting the Family culture & climate survey at the same time as the best opportunity for nearly 100% input/feedback.

Mid-year review: (with Staci Intrilligator from EL) Activities include reminders of goals, collecting evidence to make sure we are on track. Reviewed iReady scores and highlighted vocabulary as a target for focus for the rest of the year. (This showed up as a lower-scoring dimension compared to other facets.) The goal is not just expedition vocabulary but also global academic vocabulary, aiming for stronger word choice. Phonics and phonemic awareness scores are exceptionally good. Planning days for the next expedition are next week.

Equity and race and bias: Staff are participating in Book Club groups. Staff self-selected one of 4 options: How to be an Antiracist (Ibram Kendi); Blind Spot (Mahzarin Banaji & Anthony Greenwald); White Fragility (Robin DiAngelo); For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood (Christopher Emdin). This activity connects to EL regional leadership cohort that is focusing on using student data to inform thinking about race and equity and bias. SL and the staff PD advisory crew is building strong conditions and protocols so staff can have deep conversations about these topics. Gandhi Institute will also be involved to help facilitate book group discussions.

Family Association/ Playground: Successful auction led to FA offering to support the school in a visible/tangible way. School Leader is concerned about the deteriorating state of the playground; recess time is a source of conflict, and some of it relates to having enough different activities to choose from. Aspiration would be a Nature playground like at Highland Park and Seneca ParkZoo. SL spoke to preschool and they are interested in partnership. There is additional investigation required regarding regulatory requirements with age / height range. Goal is for installation “sooner rather than later”, i.e. hopefully this summer. A board member asked about garden space (spurred by art teacher sabbatical activity of gardening inspiring connection to expedition). We do have raised beds; discussed each class adopting a bed. There is currently no protocol or system. SL strategic thinking about curriculum links and/or recreational links (playing and digging) so this can be part of the overall playground design plan. A board member also recommended identifying members of our community who have expertise to help with this planning.

Charter renewal

Notification about charter renewal is anticipated anywhere between now and April. Some charter schools in Buffalo and NYC have gotten full-term renewals, so there is reason to be hopeful. NYSED data will be released to the public tomorrow.

In follow-up to Susan Gibbons inquiry to the board during her site visit re: how we evaluate EL as a curriculum framework, the School Leader asked our EL regional director for resources to help with this evaluation process (survey prompts to evaluate what is working and what isn't, including school designer's work, quality of professional development, understanding how EL core practices are used in our school).

Committee Updates

Advocacy committee: (Shannon Hillman)

Met this week and discussed: 1) reboot / redefine the purpose. (When it originally formed, it was meant to advocate in Albany for charter schools, particularly diverse charter schools, and helping guiding language and parent advocacy around budget time. Reboot is focused on positive messaging locally-- because of what's going on in RCSD, there has been a lot of anti-charter language. (Triggered by specific social media posts about *this* school, as well as an anonymous letter sent to Regent Norwood

recommending not renewing our charter, with numerous incorrect statements including requirement for volunteer service.) The committee identified several misconceptions and brainstormed ways to improve messaging. Two union teachers on the Advocacy Committee are also in social media group for union teachers and countered misconceptions with data. A parent is also writing a letter to the Regents expressing a parent perspective on these issues to counter the anonymous letter.

Discipline: (Jessica Nordquist)

Jess and Nolica returned to 6th grade last week to discuss the current code of conduct, walking through different discipline scenarios and identifying how the code does not currently match what is actually happening. (E.g. a student commented “We do mediations not suspensions.”) Upcoming 4 cities trip will be looking at restorative work and practices at other schools, and the class will work on a draft of revisions to present to the board at exhibition night in June. The target is to revise zero-tolerance language to reflect a more restorative code of conduct, incorporating the restorative practices that are already happening.

Nominating: (Annemarie)

Rebecca Boyle is stepping down; the committee is looking for a member to replace her. A board member suggested considering transition of an already-approved parent rep whose term is ending from parent to community position. The committee will be meeting to discuss onboarding materials and flesh out goals for the year.

Personnel: No updates

Finance: (Kevin)

The committee is updating the accounting manual, which has not been updated in ~10 years. They are about halfway through, and will continue. Maureen Milke and SL met with the regional state comptroller yesterday. Summary of findings from their audit last May and ongoing review through the summer and fall will be put into a written report for the board. Many findings were linked to the manual, highlighting areas that need revision. Final report will go to the regents.

Letter to John B King

(Mark Schiesser joined the meeting at this point). The board suggested a handful of minor revisions to the language. Board Secretary will finalize the language by the end of this week and send to Board President for signature.

Board Facilitation Proposals

SL and executive committee met to debrief with Deb Hanmer after the retreat. Feedback in the post-retreat survey was overall positive.

SL obtained quotes for additional facilitation, including Strategic Planning, Advocacy committee reboot, and Nominating committee support for new member onboarding. BKT’s initial proposal for the entire calendar year (12 months until our next retreat), 100 hours, \$150 per hour. There is also a version for services over a 6 month time frame, allocating some services now and some for a future contract later.

SL wants to have a plan in place for her next conversation with Charter Authorizers.

Motion 200212.3

Upon motion of Michelle Burack, and duly seconded by Annemarie, RESOLVED, that The SY 2019-2020 proposal from BKT Lead be approved

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Ryan O'Malley, Mark Schiesser, Kevin Sutherland, Annemarie Wess

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: Jessica Nordquist

Motion 200212.3 passed 5 to 0

SL to talk to Empire charter about elements of their services (which we already pay for) that can support these goals as well.

Follow-Up from January Retreat

A board member suggested revision to Bylaws to clarify language as it pertains to parent representatives.

Adjournment

Motion 200212.4

Upon motion of Michelle Burack, and duly seconded by Mark Schiesser., RESOLVED, that the February 12, 2020 meeting be adjourned.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Mark Schiesser, Kevin Sutherland, Annemarie Wess

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200212.4 passed 6 to 0

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Burack
Secretary of GCCS Board of Trustees
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