

**The Genesee Community Charter School
Board of Trustees
Education Governance Council
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2020
Virtual meeting (due to CoVID-19)**

Board Members Present: Michelle Burack, Michele Hannagan, Marcia Joy, Nolica Murray-Fields, **Cheryl Moeller**, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, **Elizabeth Pietrzykowski**, Mark Schiesser, Allison Shultes, Kevin Sutherland
(Bold: BOT non-voting)

Board Members Absent: Annemarie Wess, Traci Terrance

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

Legal Counsel Present: George DesMarteau

Invited Guests Present: Maureen Milke, Robin Blew, Jeremiah Ditch (4th grade),

Zoom protocols and etiquette were reviewed prior to the start of the meeting.

Meeting called to order by Michele Hannagan at 5:36PM

Teacher Presentation

The 4th grade teachers Jeremiah Ditch and Becki Mason shared information about teaching practices during school closure from the pandemic. They are holding morning meetings once per week, with nearly the entire class attending (26-27 out of 32 students), with meetings typically lasting ~1 hour. Teachers are also calling each student once per week and/or conducting Google Hangouts meetings with smaller groups of students. Tools include a class YouTube channel and Epic (online resource for books). They are leveraging the situation to teach digital literacy (e.g. passwords, how to write a good email, other online best-practices) and have encouraged kids to keep a pandemic journal with the idea that this could serve as primary source material for future historians. Video content includes reading picture book and chapter books, and some math challenges. The intent is to have a combination of lessons and fun. Math challenges are inspired by Mrs. Mason's recent sabbatical, focused on problem-based tasks and mathematical thinking. They are optional, but students appear to be loving them -- over half of students have turned in all 5 problems so far.

All of GCCS is using Zearn which is a (currently free) online platform for math teaching. All kids were able to start on the module they were due for in the planned curriculum; a teacher comes on to explain if they get a problem wrong.

Expedition learning has been adapted in light of the need to cancel the Boston trip. They are co-planning with 5th grade. Content has been streamlined to 16 lessons (2 per week), split across the two teacher teams, in the form of pre-recorded lessons. Students are missing the hands-on activities and simulations but teachers are still trying to find creative ways to deliver the content.

Overall engagement has been high. For 4th grade, 25 of 32 tune in for morning meeting each week. Only 1 student has not yet logged into Google classroom at all; they just connected with the parent of this student today (mom reached out to all 3 teachers). There are 3 students who were absent for most of this week (no exit ticket, no morning meeting, no work submitted); one of these is the student they just made the parent connection with. Another student is an ESL student, recently provided with a chromebook to facilitate engagement.

A board member asked how much content are the students getting relative to what they would be getting in -person. With expedition, they are actually going into more depth with the constitution and bill of rights, partially making up for the loss of hands-on experiences.

Another board member commended the teachers for being well ahead of other districts and county schools with meeting the full scope of needs of our students -- learning, pragmatic (i.e. food) and social-emotional needs. The social-emotional needs have been prioritized in the context of this community trauma, with phasing in of academic content.

Board president asked about how well teachers are able to glean stress and barriers. They have had one-on-one discussions with every family; it is hard to know how forthcoming people are being, and respecting privacy is also a priority. School Leader update (below) will provide school-wide information on this topic.

David Frank with the NYSED Charter office acknowledged that this time with online learning will never take the place of seat time in school, so there is realism about what we can accomplish. In light of families at risk, basic needs are a central focus.

Finance Review

Overall fiscally sound; no new variances of significance. Investments are anticipated to stay fairly stable despite fluctuations in the market because of the relatively conservative portfolio. There are some anticipated savings from closure in the areas of field study and food service. Some expenses for next year may be pre-paid from surplus this year, to facilitate balancing next year's budget despite lower per-pupil allocation. Field study revenue includes un-spent funds from families; Boston funds have been returned to parents. This will be reflected in next month's review.

Minutes

Motion 200415.1

Upon motion of Jessica Nordquist, and duly seconded by Marcia Joy, RESOLVED, that the minutes of March 11, 2020 be approved with corrections to the attendance list.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Michele Hannagan, Marcia Joy, Nolica Murray-Fields, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Mark Schiesser, Allison Shultes, Kevin Sutherland

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200415.1 passed 9 to 0

School Leader Update

Family and Student Culture and Climate Survey Data

Students: Particular attention was paid to evaluating the effectiveness of the social-emotional learning grant, especially with regards to zone regulation. The student survey included prompts about students articulating their feelings and making decisions in the moment. SL reviewed results with Staci

Intrilligator from EL education, and identified 3 responses they will track over time, liked to 3 target character traits: “I feel respected and included by my teachers” (Respect); “I speak up when I see someone being mean to others” (Courage); “I want to learn things that will help me make a positive impact on the school” (Responsibility).

Reviewing results by demographics, the proportion of students responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” was overall comparable for white and non-white students. This was also reviewed by grade level, and in February, teachers looked at their own classroom responses and talked as a team about the aggregate responses and racial differences, thinking about equity and implicit bias.

Family: This year’s survey was nearly identical to last year, also administered in conjunction with student-led conferences with nearly 100% capture. Communication channels continue to rely on classroom newsletters, email, and backpack mail. In the context of school closure, most communication has been via email; very little is being communicated via snail mail due to rapid changes. Targeted phone calls augment electronic communications to ensure closing the loop.

In the domain of family engagement, most-attended activities include community circle, ice skating, and the family picnic. Work hours remain the biggest barrier to volunteering. (Volunteering is not required, but highly encouraged.)

Classroom management and discipline are still the top response items for areas of improvement.

Attendance (up through and after Covid closure)

Through March 10: 96% (School closed on March 13; some families were keeping students home in the days leading up to closure)

Attendance after closure: 85% in the first week after closure; 89% the week of 4/10.

Teachers take attendance every day; any evidence of student engagement counts. (Exit ticket, Google Hangout meeting, work on an online resource). Assignments are focused on relevance rather than volume. Teacher workload was initially overwhelming but they are settling into a rhythm. Since TA’s are doing less instruction, they are helping more with checking different platforms. Maggie Deutschbein explained how they divide the work for Kindergarten: each teacher monitors specific platforms to integrate the attendance data across the different platforms.

Discipline Data

The number of incidents thru 3/10/2020 was comparable to the number of incidents for the entire 2018-2019 school year. There is still a disproportionate number of black males involved in discipline measures. Most incidents involve physical contact (e.g. hitting, shoving), with very few injuries. The most serious consequences occur in older grades. Incidents in younger grades typically involve physical contact or damage to materials / classroom (meltdowns leading to throwing items). There have been missing child incidents involving two students who were flagged as “flight risks” (flight risk was identified at enrollment; one younger, one older). This is a newer issue for the school to manage. There have been 3 instances of suspension (one dual suspension for two kids involved in an altercation). SL is contemplating additional resources to address these trends.

Coronavirus response

Continuity of learning plan, feeding plan, social-emotional / mental health plan, and communications plan (optional) were submitted to NYSED within 2 weeks after closure. The plans submitted to the state

are posted to Google Drive for Board access. They are designed to be fluid. SL is awaiting formal feedback, but spoke to Susan Gibbons and she was satisfied with what we are doing.

SL has attended webinars and meetings for charter leaders provided by NY Charter Association 3 times a week, as well as an additional meeting with local Rochester charter leaders. These have been a phenomenal resource, with David Frank from NYSED charter office and Susan Miller Carello, from the SUNY charter office answering questions, providing guidance, and clarifying expectations. The Rochester charter group has been high yield for shared resources (e.g. attendance log) and idea-sharing.

SL created Task Force Crews for food distribution, communications and operations, curriculum, and family outreach, comprised of Social Worker, food service staff, and TA's. In addition, there is a Family support crew consisting of FA officers, parent board reps, Social Worker, and classroom parents. Room parents agreed to contact families to touch base re: how things are going, support needs, etc. as an adjunct resource for keeping in touch.

Feeding plan: Food is being provided thru Julia K., multi-day supply offered for pickup on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. There is a staff signup sheet for helping. A handful of families are unable to leave house and they receive deliveries. Approximately 30 students are participating out of 70 who qualify for free/reduced lunch.

Learning: They have deployed 40 chromebooks to students. The paper packets held kids through the first 2 weeks, and then shifted to facilitating online learning by providing chromebooks after room parents identified this as a need. Families with multiple children needed more than one device to accommodate online learning for all. We started with issuing 6th grade's devices (which are now 4 years old). Requests have tapered down. A board member asked about access control on these devices. IT specialist and SL and legal counsel investigated liability issues and put together a commitment form that parents have to sign (in duplicate) spelling out maintenance and use stipulations. The IT specialist cleared prior stored content. Parents are advised that use and content must be monitored by them. (The school is unable to configure the devices to restrict access.)

For students with IEP's, the SPED teachers from RCSD have been amazing. They are going over and above, providing 1:1 tutoring, making phone calls, and helping teachers. Susan Gibbons was most impressed that we have been able to provide services -- including OT and PT (virtual, not in person) -- to our students.

Lottery updates

The lottery occurred at 9AM today. Results have been recorded and transcribed and were posted before noon. Of 30 open K seats, 11 were taken by siblings and staff children. Of the remaining 19 slots offered through the lottery (including one set of twins), 17 have already accepted, and one withdrew; this slot was offered to the first student on the waiting list. There were no openings in grades 1-5; three 1st grade siblings of current GCCS students are waiting to get in. Target demographic data (FRL, ESL, SWD) are not yet available.

For compliance, per Susan Gibbons, the lottery needs to be conducted by someone not related to anyone affiliated with the school. Theron McGee, security officer for RMSC, "pushed the button" for the computerized lottery.

Calendar review and approval

Overall structure of the proposed calendar is very similar to prior years, largely aligned to RCSD 2020-2021 calendar, and including extra emergency make-up days. A disclaimer “subject to revision pending CoVID-19 status” was discussed.

If school re-opens this year, SL has considered adding 2 school days to the end of the year to make up for the gap between the statewide executive order to close schools and the local public health closure (RCSD is open one week later than GCCS; could use that time, with bussing available, to boost face-to-face contact).

Motion 200415.2

Upon motion of Michele Hannagan, and duly seconded by Kevin Sutherland, RESOLVED, that the proposed school calendar be approved, including text indicating subject to change pending CoVID-19 status.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Michele Hannagan, Marcia Joy, Nolica Murray-Fields, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O’Malley, Mark Schiesser, Allison Shultes, Kevin Sutherland

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200415.2 passed 9 to 0

Committee Updates

Discipline: (Jessica) The committee met Monday to review discipline data, and are considering needs based on this data. Right before break, they met with 6th grade to hear about the 4 cities trip, and reviewed their vision for the school’s restorative model. Ingredients include student voice, student leadership, and accountability from all parts of the community. They brainstormed how to collect more representative data for review: there is a lot of restorative intervention already happening, just not formalized. The original goal was for 6th grade to draft a new Code of Conduct, but work is slower due to the transition to online learning. Students are grieving the loss of this work. It has become a lens for learning how restorative practices support communities during crisis. Social worker Lauren Grimm and 6th grade teachers Alexis Stubbe and Chris Dolgos have been supporting the students, discussing these losses openly. The final product will not cover the scope originally planned, but still will have something to present to the Board in June.

Nominating (Committee Chair Annemarie was not in attendance).

There are two open community seats for next year: Rebecca Boyle resigned. Marcia Joy’s term is up at the end of this year, and she is planning to resign. (She is moving, and needs to focus her energy on family.) The Board President expressed deep gratitude for her 20 years of service to the school.

Two parent reps are also leaving (Michelle Burack and Jessica Nordquist).

Nominating committee is working on ideas for new members. They are meeting tomorrow with Deb Hanmer to work on onboarding documents.

Officer nominations (up for vote at May meeting):

Michele Hannagain nominated for President

Kevin Sutherland nominated for Treasurer

Annemarie Wess was nominated for Vice President.

Allison Shultes was nominated for Secretary.

Personnel

Staff Handbook revisions were reviewed.

Motion 200415.3

Upon motion of Michelle Burack, and duly seconded by Nolica Murray-Fields, RESOLVED, that Staff Handbook revisions be approved.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Michele Hannagan, Marcia Joy, Nolica Murray-Fields, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Mark Schiesser, Allison Shultes, Kevin Sutherland

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200415.3 passed 9 to 0

Staffing: There are currently no vacancies. The anticipated possible vacancy discussed during executive session at the March meeting is tentatively on hold. SL has interviewed several candidates for teacher positions as well as Restorative Practice coach with excellent candidates identified for both positions. Hiring of a Restorative Practice coach depends on budget constraints.

Finance

All NYS schools face a 4.5% reduction in state education funding relative to projections of what we were anticipating (had been forecast as a 3% increase). Draft budget is in progress. Recent webinar with NYS charter group was with finance expert; there is an anticipated boost in Title 1 funding from the CARES Act. Guidance indicates that tapping into our reserve funds would be deemed appropriate under the current circumstances. SL is also planning to include a Covid19 contingency line. Currently we are forecasting a \$92k shortfall in revenue based on per-pupil estimates. SL is planning to recommend a salary freeze and flat budget; can consider bonuses if we project a surplus later in the year. There are some natural savings included with CoVID-19 considerations: planning for no overnight field studies next year, and professional development is likely to be offered virtually, eliminating travel expenses for PD. They are working on projections for EL's contribution to salary for teacher on special assignment. Prepaying some expenses from this year's budget surplus can also offset budget costs for next year.

The Board encouraged the SL to draft the budget for the expected costs needed to run the school and anticipate approval for use of reserve funds. A board member asked whether the current projections included ability to hire a Restorative Practices coach; SL confirmed that the current draft budget does include salary for this position as a vital support for anticipated increased trauma. The Board enthusiastically supported this as a priority. A board member also recommended consideration of expenditure of reserve funds for overnight field studies if travel restrictions are lifted.

Accounting policy revisions will be ready for review next month.

Charter Renewal

All schools slated for renewal at the Regents April meeting were pushed to the May meeting. No recommendations have been disclosed yet. Wade Norwood reached out to see how we are doing. One clarification was provided by Susan Gibbons regarding the performance benchmarking: "Exceeds" ratings are no longer given, explaining the apparent downgrading despite comparable performance.

Adjournment

Motion 200415.4

Upon motion of Michele Hannagan, and duly seconded by Michelle Burack, RESOLVED, that the April 15, 2020 meeting be adjourned.

Voting in the affirmative: Michelle Burack, Michele Hannagan, Marcia Joy, Nolica Murray-Fields, Jessica Nordquist, Ryan O'Malley, Mark Schiesser, Allison Shultes, Kevin Sutherland

Voting in the negative: None

Abstaining: None

Motion 200415.4 passed 9 to 0

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Burack
Secretary of GCCS Board of Trustees
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