

Boston Renaissance Charter Public School

Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

8:00-10:00am

1415 Hyde Park Avenue, Boston, MA 02136

Attendees:

Trustees: Aaron Kesler, Stacia Copeland, Shaumba Dibinga, Harold Raymond, Lupita Bispham, Edwine Alphonse (phone)

Guests/Staff – Alexandra Buckmire, Monique Taylor, Phil Littlehale, Franklin Shearer; Brian Keith

I. Welcome and Public Comment

None

II. Review and Approval of Minutes, September 20, 2017 Meeting

One minor typo found, correction made.

- Motion to accept minutes made by Lupita Bispham;
- Motion seconded by Shaumba Dibinga
- Approved unanimously

III. Head of School Report – Alexandra Buckmire

- School year is going well so far, focus on instruction and instructional support has been ramped up this year. Regular data meetings are taking place, looking at internal and external data; teachers planning instruction based on trends in data.
- Social-emotional curriculum “Second Step” is being implemented; teachers are working with the climate and culture team and mental health team. We have received a lot of positive feedback on the curriculum from teachers and the mental health team.
- We are working well with parents this year. We are going to conduct a parent survey that was developed with all Boston charter schools. All the schools are planning to conduct the same survey in order to get a full picture of parent feedback across the Boston charter sector, but it is really important for us for our own family engagement efforts. The survey is not fully finalized yet; our POR executive committee will review the survey before we send it out. We agreed to implement the survey but we are going to make sure it is a positive tool that we believe in as a school community.

- Emergency lockdown protocols are being reviewed. Mr. Veale is working with Boston Police Department to make sure we have the proper procedures. We're doing this just to make sure we are prepared for any kind of emergency. An important aspect of this, which are working on now, is notifying parents so they understand the procedures and what they can/should do if there is an emergency at the school. Once the parents are notified, we will conduct drills with the staff and students.
- Donuts with Dads was a great event. Over 200 fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and male mentors showed up. The event was for grades K1-2 only, and now grades 3-6 are eager to have a similar event of their own. We received coverage in the Hyde Park Bulletin. Additional parent-focused events are being planned, perhaps a "muffins with moms" event. Overall, this fits in with our emphasis on the importance of partnership between family and school.

IV. Finance and Operations Report – Phil Littlehale

- Facility Update:
 - Looking at the floor on the first floor to determine whether it will need to be replaced, now that the floor on the 2nd and 3rd floors is taken care of.
 - Maintenance is looking at the HVAC unit to determine what level of upkeep and investment it need to stay fully functional. It looks like it will be a minor expense, far lower than the \$50k we previously believed may be needed.
 - Temporary offices outside have been fully installed, walkways paved. These offices are fully operational and meeting the needs of the staff stationed there.
- Food service is being audited by DESE this year. Procurement is going to be reviewed. This can be a lengthy and intensive process, but our Dining Services Director Mark Van Etten has been through it before and we are working with him to successfully manage the process.
- Still finalizing numbers from last year's budget.
- This year's budget – Q1 financials almost done. The updated budget projections will be done in the coming weeks, numbers from the state.
- Updated fiscal procedures still need to be approved by the Board.

Harold Raymond – Have we continued looking at the option of purchasing of the pods?

Littlehale – Yes, we are looking at that option. We need to get another estimate. Thus far we have heard it would cost approximately \$300k, and this seems to be too high.

V. Bus Monitors – Buckmire & Littlehale

- Buses are provided by Boston Public Schools (BPS). BPS reduced the number of buses this year. We now have fewer buses (16) with more students on them (50 or more on most buses). Behavioral problems on the buses continues to be one of our biggest challenges for students. Climate and culture spends a lot of time dealing with issues that happen on buses. We propose the hiring of additional bus monitors for increased student safety.

- Nine of our buses have monitors b/c of student IEPs; BPS assigns those monitors. The other 7 buses have no monitors at all.
- There are two options – 1) we can add monitors to only those that don't have them already; or 2) we can add monitors to all of our buses, effectively putting two monitors on the nine that already have one.
- The monitors we have in place now are employed by and through BPS; by hiring our own, we can conduct our own hiring process and manage the monitors ourselves. The preferred choice is to hire our own monitors for all of our bus routes.
- The full year budget cost would be approx.. \$127,000 per year, and we budgeted \$80k for the year. So, to hire our own monitors to cover all bus routes this year we would need to spend an additional \$47k. If we were to pursue option 2, we would need to spend \$10k more than the 80k budgeted.
- Mr. Littlehale has been looking into existing funds, including funds currently held by the Boston Renaissance Foundation, that we may to allocate toward this initiative.
- If implemented this year, this would be a practice that we would likely want to continue in following years. Therefore, it would become something the school has to budget for every year.
- Edwine Alphonse – I support the proposal and think we should cover all the routes with our own monitors. This year it will cost \$47k more than what we have budgeted, this is something we can afford.
- Alphonse - Motion to approve the allocation of 47k for additional bus monitors for SY17-18
- Seconded by Harold Raymond
- Motion passed by unanimous vote.

VI. MCAS Update – Alexandra Buckmire

DESE has created a new MCAS test, called Next Generation MCAS. After changes in recent years, from MCAS to PARCC and now a new MCAS, state officials say this will be the state test for the foreseeable future. The new MCAS seems more focused on ensuring students demonstrate critical thinking skills. State standards have been revised and made more rigorous, and the MCAS reflects that increased rigor.

BRCPS' results on this first year of the new MCAS were lower than previous years. However, DESE has emphasized this assessment is significantly more rigorous than the previous MCAS test, and the bar for "meeting/exceeding expectations" are higher than the "proficient/advanced" bar on the old test. This year's results set the new baseline for all schools and districts.

One of the positive developments this year is that we have been provided with item-level analysis that we never got before. We can see students' gaps at a granular level that was not

available to us previously. We can see how every student performed on individual standards and test questions.

[Slide show presentation with comparisons between BRCPS, BPS, and state averages. Review of grade level results for ELA, Math, and Science.]

Highlights/Focus Areas:

- BRCPS did particularly well in Science, outperforming the state average. Science MCAS is taken in 5th grade but it is a cumulative test – the students are learning science content in the Lower School, this is a reflection of strong work up to and including 5th grade.
- Grade 6 results were disappointing; we are working hard with the 6th grade team this year to strengthen their understanding of the revised standards and instructional strategies.
- These results provide motivation to improve.
- We have a new hire in the Data and Assessment Coordinator position, a former BRCPS teacher. She is breaking down data at the student level, classroom level, grade level, working with teachers.
- A team of administrators went to Data Wise training at Harvard over the summer, the team is bringing that learning back and using it as we look at the data.
- Teachers have reviewed data from MCAS and ANET and have developed action plans
- MCLASS (targeted after-school tutoring program) will begin on Friday.
- We are continuing our collaboration with Brooke Charter Schools, after multiple visits there last year, with an emphasis on how they foster student independence.

L. Bispham – is this MCAS a good measure of student learning?

A. Buckmire – it is very rigorous, but it is a good measure of student learning, and a good tool for teachers to be able to know what they need to teach. We are using the data in more strategic ways now. More detailed data is really helpful and the new Data & Assessment Coordinator is an important addition to the team.

A. Kesler – the emphasis on writing is a big change, affecting the ELA outcomes. Students have to write longer essays than they have ever had to before. It is an adjustment for students and teachers. Now that we know what to expect, we should be able to improve our performance.

VII. Strategic Planning Update – Franklin Shearer

Strategic planning process has begun. We are moving slowly at the outset, as the consultants are focused on learning as much as they can about the school. Meetings with the Board will be scheduled, with the first coming in January.

The first phase is focused on internal analysis, along with an external landscape study, to establish a shared understanding of our current status, strengths and challenges. The future-oriented discussions will take place in March and April; this will be the most important phase and will include significant Board participation.

VIII. Media & Social Media Update – Franklin Shearer

We have had some success in getting articles in local newspapers, particularly in the Hyde Park Bulletin. (Handouts, copies of articles.) We have also increased our social media efforts, with consistent, high-quality posting to Facebook and Twitter.

S. Dibinga – the social media activity has been great. The school’s Facebook page has featured some great posts, parents and family members I’ve spoken to are enjoying it and appreciate this effort by the school to share things that are happening on social media.

IX. Committee Updates: Academic, Governance & Nomination, Finance, Parents of Renaissance – Committee Chairs

Academic Committee (Aaron Kesler):

The committee met on October 30. We established the following goals:

- Keep the Board aware of academic goals
- Work with the head of school to sustain success
- Partner with other high-performing schools
- Communicate with the Boston Renaissance Foundation more regarding our fundraising needs, as appropriate
- Recruit new board members with K-12 experience

Next committee meeting is scheduled for December 18th.

- We will focus on Exemplar best practices in the school and think about how to ensure those are being shared and implemented throughout the school.

Governance & Nominations Committee (Lupita Bispham):

The committee will nominate Brian Keith to join the Board; to be discussed later in the meeting agenda.

Finance Committee Update (Edwine Alphonse) –

The committee met in October; no specific update at this time. The FY17 audit is in process; we expect a clean audit, will share the final report with the Board as soon as we receive it.

Parents of Renaissance (Shaumba Dibinga):

- Donuts with Dads event was a huge success
- "Snowflakes and Skates" family holiday dinner has been scheduled for December 8th
- Family Dance taking place in February
- Members of the Parents of Renaissance Executive Committee have expressed interest in a foreign travel program for older students; they are gathering more detailed information to share with the Board in the coming months.

X. Mentoring Breakfast, November 16th – Alexandra Buckmire

Several board members expected to attend the annual mentoring breakfast tomorrow, including Ms. Dibinga, Ms. Alphonse, and Ms. Copeland.

We would like to use the breakfast as a way to outreach for growing the board. We were hoping to contact some people in advance of the meeting, but didn't get the message out in time. But we have a plan in place; Franklin Shearer will be focused on talking to people who may have interest in the Board; a short list of individuals has been identified.

E. Alphonse – When we send out the "Thank You" email, we can add the Board outreach component to that email, for the individuals who have been identified.

A. Buckmire – In terms of the mentoring, we have heard feedback from the mentors that they would like to stay in touch with the mentees and would like us to facilitate, create more opportunities for continued relationship-building throughout the school year. We will be focused on providing follow-up opportunities for the mentors and mentees; the Director of the program, Ms. Evelyn Lee, is working on ideas and I will be following up with her to support this effort.

XI. Nomination of Brian Keith to join the Board – Introduction, Q&A, Nomination, Vote – Lupita Bispham

Brian Keith, entering the meeting at 9:40am, provided a self-introduction and discussed his interest in supporting children and families in Boston, and his interest in K-12 education as a key lever for progress, particularly in urban communities. Mr. Keith further discussed his perspective on the need to address divisions between supporters of charter schools and district schools, emphasizing that adults must focus on what is best for children. He closed by discussing his background in the aviation industry and his current role as Vice President for Sales at SkyJet.

After presenting his qualifications, Mr. Keith exited the meeting at 9:50.

A motion to elect Mr. Keith to the Board of Trustees was made by Lupita Bispham. The motion was seconded by Aaron Kesler. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the Board members present.

L. Bispham – Yes
A. Kesler - Yes
E. Alphonse – Yes
S. Copeland – Yes
S. Dibinga – Yes
H. Raymond – Yes

None opposed, no abstentions.

Absent, not voting – Senam Kumahia, and Kelly Williamson

Mr. Brian Keith was elected to the BRCPS Board of Trustees on November 15th, 2017.

XII. Lupita Bispham made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:55a.m.

Motion to go into executive session

L. Bispham - Yes
E. Alphonse – Yes
S. Copeland – Yes
S. Dibinga – Yes
A. Kesler – Yes
H. Raymond – Yes

Meeting Adjourned after Executive Session, 10:05a.m.