

# **Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting**

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, November 20, 2018. The HGMICS facility, located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA was the location for the public meeting. Dr. Susan Trussler called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM and then subsequently presided over the meeting. Dr. Trussler led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance and then took roll call for the board members and administrators.

The following Trustees attended: Dr. Susan Trussler, Dr. John Ruddy, Laila Kane, Stephanie Westington, Dr. Amy Kenton, Dr. Fran Langan, Lou Nivert, and John Ezbiansky.  
Absent: Dr. Clarence Lamanna.

Also in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; Maria Rozaieski, Principal; Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager; Renee Dougherty, HR Manager; Janet Kania, School Secretary; and Kimberly Kost Scanlon, Esq., School Counsel.

Susan Trussler announced that at this time any visitor may comment or ask questions pertaining to items listed on the November agenda, but that there would be a 5 minute time limit per person due to the length of agenda and number of visitors in attendance.

Visitors in attendance requesting to make remarks: Mina Ardestani, Clifford Smith, and Stacy Nivert all residents of Scranton School District.

Mina Ardestani read portions of a letter that she wrote to the Board of Trustees pertaining to a recent personnel matter and school policies. Due to the subject matter of the letter the Board of Trustees informed Ms. Ardestani it could not provide comment. Additional visitors deferred their comments to the latter part of the meeting.

## **I. Minutes**

Susan Trussler presented the October 16, 2018 Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes and asked if there were any corrections, additions to the meeting minutes. The **MOTION:** to approve the October 16, 2018 Board meeting minutes as submitted was made by Lou Nivert and seconded by Fran Langan. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with 1 Trustee absent.

## **II. President's Report**

**Susan Trussler**

Susan Trussler reported that draft goals for the Strategic Plan were submitted to the Board of Trustees for their feedback. Feedback from other constituents is also being received.

## **III. Finance**

**Stephanie Westington**

### **1. 2017-2018 annual Audit:**

Stephanie Westington reported that the 2017-2018 Annual Audit was completed by McGrail Merkel Quinn and Associates with no issues reported. **MOTION:** to approve the 2017-2018 Annual Audit completed by MMQ and Associates was made by Laila Kane and seconded by John

Ezbiansky. With no further discussion, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the 2017-2018 Annual Audit, with 1 Trustee absent.

**2. Financial Report:**

**Chuck Wallinger**

Chuck Wallinger reported tuition revenues as \$15,811 above budget for October 2018 based on enrollment of 275 children. The Title I revenue was above budget by \$6,840, this revenue is recorded on a cash basis. There was a contribution from EITC funds for IT/computer equipment. Expenses were \$1,425 above budget for October 2018. The budget variance is due to increased computer replacement costs and staff PSERS pension costs. The projections through October 2018 are on budget. **MOTION:** to approve the Financial Report through October 31, 2018 was made by Fran Langan and seconded by John Ruddy. With no further discussion, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial report as presented, with 1 Trustee absent.

**IV. Personnel Committee Report:**

**Susan Trussler**

**1. Primary II Temporary Teacher Appointment**

**Brienne Barrett**

**MOTION** was made by Susan Trussler and seconded by Lou Nivert to appoint Brienne Barrett to the Primary II Temporary Teacher position for the balance of the 2018-2019 school year at a annual salary equivalent to \$37,500 and estimated benefits not to exceed 35% (\$12,125) for a total of \$50,625. Motion was approved by all Trustees, with 1 Trustee absent.

**2. Primary III Temporary Teacher Aide Appointment**

**Shelly Pazzaglia**

**MOTION** was made by Amy Kenton and seconded by Fran Langan to appoint Shelly Pazzaglia as Teacher Aide for the balance of the 2018-2019 school year at an annual salary equivalent to \$18,000 and estimated benefits not to exceed 35% (\$6,300) for an annual total of \$24,300. Motion was approved by all Trustees, with 1 Trustee absent.

**3. Full-time Non-Assigned Classroom Teacher**

Susan Trussler explained the difficulty that the School is experiencing in having Kelly Services respond to our needs for substitute teachers. As a more permanent solution, the Board approved the recommendation to establish a full-time position for a Non-Assigned Classroom Teacher who will act in the capacity of an in-house substitute teacher throughout the school. Anyone who meets the qualifications is encouraged to apply.

**4. Recommendation for Primary II Teacher** Susan Trussler announced that in light of the temporary appointment approved earlier, the Board authorized to post the position of Primary II Teacher for the 2019-2020 school year, in April 2019.

**V. Facilities Committee Report**

**John Ruddy**

John Ruddy reported that the Facilities Committee met on November 1<sup>st</sup>. At this meeting, the Committee's purpose was discussed as well as topics they wish to address at their next meeting. A draft of an RFP for a School Master Plan was reviewed that will be issued in early December. Since there is significant overlap in the membership and topics to be addressed by the Facilities and Finance Committees, they will meet on the same day. The next meeting is scheduled for December 12<sup>th</sup>.

**VI. Development Committee Report**

**John Ezbiansky**

John Ezbiansky reported that Joe Bomba, Spanish teacher developed a Video Club for the

students, which will produce a 3 minute video about HGMICS that profiles students and various activities. The Club, which is attracting many Upper and Senior students, has had an excellent student participation response.

## **VII. Nominating Committee Report**

**Fran Langan**

Fran Langan reported that the Nominating Committee continues to meet and will forward any viable Trustee candidates to the Board.

## **VIII. School Matters**

### **CEO Report**

**Marie George**

Marie George, CEO, provided an overview of recent evaluations for our National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Marie reported that Sara Pavia, Department of Agriculture representative, conducted one of the two required kitchen inspections and no citations were received by HGMICS. Further, Rosemary Piskel, Representative of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE/NSLP), recently spent two days at the school inspecting records, observing meal preparation and meal counting. The site visit went very well and Ms. Piskel complimented the quality of the meals, use of fresh ingredients and the recently Board-approved Wellness Policy and Registered Dietitian who will serve as consultant to the NSLP. Marie also reported that participation has increased from last year's average of 20 daily meals served. Yesterday, 69 students ordered lunch.

Marie reported that the Ready to Learn Block Grant (\$7,249) was submitted to PDE prior to the due date of November 30<sup>th</sup>. A portion of the grant will be allocated for an afterschool tutoring program that was identified as a need by HGMICS parents and teachers. The program will be finalized for implementation following the end of the first trimester (November 26<sup>th</sup>) and distribution of grade reports (November 30<sup>th</sup>). Depending upon the demand for tutoring and availability of our teaching staff, the School may need to hire per diem tutors to support this initiative.

Marie recapped the Strategic Planning Process that is underway. In August the Board of Trustees launched a planning process to develop a strategic plan for the three-year timeframe January 2019 through December 2021. The School's Mission Statement was re-affirmed a Vision Statement formulated. Following an analysis of internal and external factors, four priority areas were identified Spatial Organization, The Academic Enterprise, The Howard Gardner Community and Image/Reputation. This iterative process led to draft goals being formulated and these were reviewed both by the Comprehensive Planning Committee at their November meeting and a meeting with the Parent Forum officers. The draft will be further reviewed by the Board before being distributed to all stakeholders for their input.

It was reported that the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) held their second meeting on November 8<sup>th</sup> at which time they reviewed and affirmed the strategic plan's draft themes and goals. At this meeting, time was spent reviewing student achievement and growth results, and discussing target-setting. It was agreed that student achievement targets should be based upon HGMICS student outcomes and not statewide averages. Following teacher input, additional student achievement information will be brought forth at their next scheduled meeting on February 7, 2019.

The School Safety Committee continues to meet monthly and recently reviewed all emergency response policies. The Committee completed a Safety Survey that was submitted to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), which is directly linked to HGMICS' Safety Grant proposal recently submitted. AJ Samuel, parent and member of the Safety Committee

member, was instrumental in obtaining 5 emergency buckets filled with supplies donated by the Commonwealth Health Emergency Services. Amy Ryan, School Nurse, is distributing the pails to the Kindergarten area and all interior classrooms.

Marie reported that the Future Ready PA Index was launched by the Pennsylvania Department of Education on November 15, 2018. The Future Ready PA Index is a new, public-facing, one-stop location for comprehensive information and data on student and school success. The Future Ready PA Index's dashboard approach heightens transparency around school and student performance by including data on achievement and growth by student group, including economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, students receiving special education services, and racial and ethnic groups. It also features helpful filters and options to compare multiple schools. You can locate the Index at <https://futurereadypa.org/>.

## **Principal Report**

## **Maria Rozaieski**

Maria Rozaieski, Principal reported that a team of nine teaching staff members attended the first of three trainings at NEIU on School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) in mid-October. The students at HGMICS are taught and expected to be Safe, Trustworthy, Accountable, and Respectful (STAR students). The team found that much of the program we now use is valuable and are working on make improvements. The team will be meeting each month, between trainings, to complete the tasks for that the revision requires.

Maria also reported that the teaching staff participated in an afternoon of ongoing professional development on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Franco Forgione from the Lackawanna/Susquehanna Office of Drug and Alcohol Program, presented and overview of the Student Assistance Program (SAP). SAP is a systematic team process used to mobilize school resources to remove barriers to learning. The program is designed to assist in identifying issues including, but not limited to, alcohol, tobacco other drugs, and mental health issues. Faculty and staff, also that afternoon, had a presentation by out Title I teachers, Jeri McNulty and Terry Quinn, who provided an overview to the teaching staff about what they learned from the recent training they attended titled "Equipped for Reading Success". Kindergarten, Primary and Intermediate grade levels heard the importance of phonemic awareness and Upper and Senior grade levels heard ideas to enhance comprehension.

Maria was happy to announce that one week ago the formation of a Professional Development/Curriculum Committee comprised of nine members of the teaching staff met for the first time to define its purpose and function. Maria shared the results of a past professional development survey with the Committee who will prepare and plan for future professional development programs.

Maria announced the following school happenings:

1. Senior class happenings included a group of four students competed in the Young Scholars Program at Scranton Prep on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and this group made it to the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of competition out of three rounds.
2. Also, a follow-up to the pre-service presentation given to teaching staff, a representative from the Lou Ruspi Foundation gave a presentation to students on the top of suicide awareness on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The Senior student class also traveled to the University of Scranton to attend a presentation given during International Students Week on the topic of "Presenting El Salvador".
3. In addition, students from Scranton Preparatory and Holy Cross High School came to HGMICS to give a presentation to our Senior Class students on what their schools had to offer.

4. National Apple Day was recognized at HGMICS on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Nurse Amy Ryan gave out apples to faculty, staff and students to promote healthy eating.
5. Students, faculty and staff participated in the school's annual Halloween Parade on October 31<sup>st</sup> followed by a "Monster Mash" dance session in conjunction with our monthly SWPBIS reward for students with STAR behavior.

**VII. Educational Presentation: "Application of Multiple Intelligences Theory"**  
**presented by Jerri McNulty, Title I Teacher and Maria Rozaieski, Principal**

Jerri McNulty, Title I Teacher began the presentation by explaining that the theory of Multiple Intelligences was developed by Howard Gardner in the early 80's. This theory stated that each person has different ways of learning and different intelligence they use in daily life.

Jerri went on to explain that some people learn well in a linguistically based environment while others are better taught through Mathematical/logic based learning and still others benefit from body-kinesthetic, which is learning by doing with your hands. Each person possesses each of these intelligence; however there is always a primary or dominant intelligence that a person will utilize.

Jerri went on to state that Howard Gardner originally identified 7 distinct intelligences in his theory. His theory that students have different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remembers, perform and understand in different ways has been implemented by many educational institutions. Recent research has since identified two more for a total of 9 distinct intelligences. They are verbal-linguistic, mathematical-logical, musical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential. Jerri defined each of the 9 distinct intelligences' strengths, characteristics and potential career choices. Jerri continued to explain how Howard Gardner's theory has been incorporated in lesson plans here at HGMICS. She incorporated both the Mission and Vision statements of HGMICS. She added while all people possess some level of each intelligence; most will experience more dominant intelligences which impact the way they learn and interact with the world around them.

**VIII. New Business**

At this time there was no new business brought forth.

**Second Public Hearing of Visitors for any school-related topics.**

Visitors wishing to speak: Jennifer Valic, resident of Western Wayne School District; Pam Kobierecki, resident of Mid-Valley School District; Olivia Patane, resident of North Pocono School District; Mina Ardestani, Clifford Smith, Jennifer Wolff, and Stacy Nivert, residents of Scranton School District; Megan Wolfe, resident of Lackawanna Trail School District; Michele Wall, resident of Valley View School District.

Susan Trussler asked the visitors if anyone had any school related topic they would like to add. Susan Trussler announced that a five minute time limit would be given to speakers as there were several visitors who wanted to address topics.

Mina Ardestani asked for permission to finish reading the letter she started earlier and she was granted permission to continue. The letter commented on policies such as hiring practices, as well as postings of available positions and the interview process within HGMICS. Mina commented on the late posting of the Parent/Student Handbook online and asked if the By-Laws are posted on the school's web site.

Clifford Smith commented on a confidential personnel issue asking several questions that the Board was not at liberty to answer.

Stacy Nivert also commented on the same confidential personnel issue asking several questions that the Board was not at liberty to answer. She also expressed concern that there had been four different classroom aides in one class this year, which could disrupt classes and cause instability. She also raised questions about Board and Administration policies.

Pam Kobierecki expressed her feelings regarding the same confidential personnel issue.

Jennifer Valic stated that her children have been attending HGMICS for the past 8 years. They have had many wonderful experiences which make the school unique. However, both she and Jennifer Wolff expressed concern that the confidential nature of personnel issues led to conflicting rumors circulating.

Olivia Patane, read a letter that she had sent to the Board of Trustees regarding the same confidential personnel issue. Again, the Board of Trustees expressed they were not at liberty to discuss the personnel issue.

Megan Wolfe questioned the role of Administrators as opposed to the Board of Trustees in personnel issues.

Michele Wall asked if currently employed Teacher Aides can apply for the newly approved non-assigned classroom teaching position.

Susan Trussler stated that the position for a full-time teacher who will not be assigned to a specific classroom had been approved earlier in the meeting and should help minimize disruption to any one classroom in the future. Susan also confirmed that anyone who meets the qualifications for the full-time teaching position should feel free to apply, even if that person is currently employed by HGMICS in the capacity of Teacher's Aide.

Jennifer Valic asked the Board of Trustees to reconsider any action associated with the confidential personnel issue.

Susan Trussler stated that if there were no other requests to speak at this time the Board of Trustees would conclude the current meeting and take the request to reconsider the personnel issue under advisement.

At 8:55 PM, no further items of business were raised. **MOTION** was made by Lou Nivert and seconded by Fran Langan to adjourn, which was accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with 1 Trustees absent.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 18, 2018 at 7:00 PM.**