

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. The HGMICS facility, located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA was the location for the public meeting. Dr. Susan Trussler, President called the meeting to order at 7:01 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, John Ezbiansky, Stephanie Westington, Sam Ceccacci, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert and Dr. Fran Langan. Absent: Laila Kane, Laurie Cadden and Dr. John Ruddy.

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

Dr. Susan Trussler announced at this time any visitor may comment or ask questions pertaining to items listed on the February agenda. At this time, the visitors in attendance had no comments or questions regarding the agenda. The meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the January 21, 2020 Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked if there were any corrections or additions. With no corrections or additions, a **MOTION** to approve the January 21, 2020 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler reported that the eight grade graduation has taken place over the past few years at the Scranton Country Club. The Board of Trustees had been exploring other viable options for graduation. Susan was pleased to announce that this year's graduation will take place on June 4th and hosted by the University of Scranton in the DeNaples Center, Moskowitz. A reception for all in attendance will immediately follow. Further information will follow.

III. Finance Committee

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington informed the group that the Finance & Facilities Committee did not meet in February. They will be meeting prior to the March meeting. Stephanie added that Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager compiled the Financial Report and at this time Stephanie deferred to Chuck to present the monthly Financial Report.

1. Financial Report

Chuck Wallinger

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager reported revenues are \$4,069.81 above budget for January, 2020. The Tuition revenue was below budget by \$2,163.70; this was based on a decrease in enrollment to 273. The Food Service revenue was above budget by \$6,951.20; this is due to an increase in Ala Carte items being sold such as cookies and ice cream. Expenses were \$2,247.65 above budget for January 2020. The Instructional were above budget by \$1,377.63 due to HRA Health Insurance costs not budgeted. The HRA Health Insurance costs are based on volume that can vary from month to month. The Net Operating Revenue for January 2020 was \$10,705.82 that was above budget by \$1,822.17. The Fiscal Year Net Operating Revenue budget amount is expected to be reached. There is 170 days cash on hand, which places the school in a very positive solvency position.

There is \$408,441 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%. The December 2019 School District billing was paid by Unipay in January 2020 for \$257,092.96. The five School Districts that are not paid through Unipay redirection are up to date through December 2019. Abington Heights School District will be paying on a quarterly basis. At this time, Stephanie Westington asked if there were any questions.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through January 31, 2020 as reported and submitted was made by John Ezbiansky and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

1. Field Trip Policy

Dr. Fran Langan informed the group that the Academic Committee has met and will continue to look at all new or updated Academic Policies. The Academic Committee is presenting the Field Trip Policy and Procedures to the Board of Trustee for approval. Fran stated that the Field Trip Policy and Procedures will inform HGMICS parents and the student body about the purpose of educational field trips, and guidelines for planning and conducting a field trip. The field trip policy and procedures was also created to lessen the occurrence of risks that students may be susceptible to when traveling away from the school.

With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Field Trip Policy as submitted was made by Sam Ceccacci and seconded by Aaron Nivert. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Field Trip Policy as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

V. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan Hennemuth informed the group that the Development Committee met in January to discuss the matter of hiring a consultant for a Capital Campaign. It was decided not to proceed at this time with hiring a consultant until the fundraising infrastructure is in place. The Development Committee has decided to start with the basics of fundraising, which will include looking into a software program to track potential donors, alumni, families, etc.

VI. Personnel Committee

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Trussler reported that the Personnel Committee met in January. Agenda items included the

development of next year's budget and the concerns over teacher retention. Susan Trussler thanked those faculty who have provided possible enhancement ideas in order to retain the exceptional faculty. The next meeting for the Personnel Committee will take place in March.

VII. Nominating Committee

Dr. John Ruddy

In the absence of Dr. John Ruddy, Laila Kane and Laurie Cadden, Dr. Marie George informed the group that the the Nominating Committee is preparing to receive candidates to replace two out-going Board of Trustees, whose terms expire June 30, 2020. Those Trustees scheduled to rotate off in June are Dr. Susan Trussler and Dr. Fran Langan, who have been significant contributors to the School in their capacity as Trustees. The Nominating Committee is soliciting recommendations for trustee candidates.

VIII. School Policies

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George reported that Amy Ryan, School Nurse and Dr. Debra Georgetti, School Physician are reviewing and updating all school health policies. This has been an ongoing project since the start of the school year. Three updated policies are presented for approval as follows:

1. Health and Illness Policy

Dr. Marie George presented the Health and Illness Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Health and Illness Policy was made by Dr. Susan Trussler and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. All Trustees present voted in favor of the Health and Illness Policy as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

2. Medication Policy

Dr. Marie George presented the Medication Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Medication Policy was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of the Medication Policy as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

3. Allergy Policy

Dr. Marie George presented the Allergy Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Allergy Policy was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of the Allergy Policy as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

IX. School Matter

1. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George reported:

- Students and teachers recently celebrated the 100 day of school and are past the mid-point of the school year which is already racing past us. Marie finds great rewards in observing students working together on group projects. In addition when visiting classrooms, individual student

presentations to peers is occurring at all grade levels, which promotes their confidence and independence including the Primary to see students in 1st grade making presentation to their peers gives such proud satisfaction for the work that the faculty are doing.

- National School Choice Week took place the week of January 26th to 31st. It was celebrated HGMICS in a variety of ways with signage and student testimonials posted throughout the school. The School was provided with materials as a participant in this national recognition of the right to school choice and as a participant, HGMICS was awarded a certificate acknowledging the School's participation. In conjunction, our inaugural "Open House" was held with 100 people in attendance, which represented approximately 40-50 families. Families were primarily from the Scranton School District area but other areas represented included Abington Heights, Riverside, Pittston, Mid-Valley and North Pocono. The majority present were interested in enrolling Kindergarten students, with others also interested in higher grades. The program began at 6 PM followed by numerous questions about the admissions process, academic program and then concluded with small groups touring the school. As expected, the School made a favorable impression. One parent, when exiting the building stated, "Even if we don't get in, it's good to know schools like this exist".
- The Strategic Plan 2019-2021 that the Board approved in December 2018 continues to guide the operational planning for the school. On February 14th, following early dismissal of students, an In-Service was held for all staff related to the strategic plan. Marie facilitated a workshop, *Envisioning Our Future*, where all aspects of our plan were reviewed with particular time spent on our vision for HGMICS's future.
- On February 20th, the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) will meet to begin the process of preparing our Comprehensive Plan required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). The timeline will be established at the CPC meeting to ensure that a public period of review is met, followed by Board approval then submission for the November deadline.
- Parents and teachers have expressed concern about teacher retention. Teachers are meeting to discuss and generate ideas that might improve teacher morale and retention. Several teachers have provided input to the Personnel Committee thus far. A formal report from the teaching staff, as a group, will be presented to the Personnel Committee for the March 2nd meeting.
- The Finance Committee oversees the School performing regular due diligence for all service providers. As part of the schedule, a Request for Proposal for legal counsel was recently distributed to several interested law firms. The due date for proposals is February 21st.
- Re-enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year has finished. Registration for current student siblings and new students are now being accepted. The Lottery will take place in the beginning of March.
- Governor Wolf's FY2020-2021 Budget Proposal includes ways to reduce monies received by PA charter schools as a means to increase funding to other School Districts. The budget calls for charter school law reform, which is needed. However, the Governor seeks ways to reduce funding from Charter schools that would then be reallocated to traditional school districts. His latest budget proposal call for a reduction of \$280 million from Charter School's special education funding. A similar proposal was also presented at Senator Blake's legislative breakfast held on February 14th. A follow-up with HGMICS parents and staff is underway to encourage their outreach to local legislators and the Governor's office. Additional information can be found at the advocacy websites established for PA charter schools at www.pacharters.org and www.143Krising.com. We need to unite and stand up for all the 143,000 students attending charter schools in Pennsylvania!

2. Principal Report

Maria Rozaieski

Maria's report summarized school happenings from the end of January until the present date. They were:

- The Professional Development Committee has been meeting regularly to plan activities for the remainder of the and the 2020-2021 school year. Topics include Project Based Learning, Technology, PSSA training, Classroom Diagnostic Tools training, Acadience training, Curriculum related training in English Language Arts and Math. The committee will be looking at data that has been collected along with developing a survey for teachers and aides to address their areas of need.
- Maria and TreeAnne McEnery, Assistant Principal participated in a demonstration consultation with a Defined Learning representative. This is a resource originally shared with the faculty during our initial Project-based Learning professional development earlier in the year. It will be available to the faculty until the end of February for them to explore and give feedback. The initial feedback from the Curriculum Committee was that this could be a valuable resource for the school
- Parent Forum held its annual Family Friendly Bingo on Sunday, January 26th. They reported that this is their largest fundraiser for the year with a net profit of over \$9,000.00.
- On Thursday, January 30th HGMICS held our first open house during National School Choice Week. We had a great turn out and the CEO, Principal, Assistant Principal, and Admissions Manager gave a brief presentation which was followed by a question and answer session and a tour of the school.
- HGMICS Enrichment Program began on February 3rd and will continue for 10 weeks. The program is held three days per week from 3:15-4:30 and is offered to all students free of charge. Enrichment is offered in Literacy and Math for grades K through 8th and has approximately 44 students enrolled.
- Additional school happenings include the Cross-Country team has been meeting several times a month for indoor conditioning to help prepare for the upcoming season. Several after school clubs are also in session January through March. The January/February Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) monthly blowout reward was a Valentine's Day Dance on February 14th. Classes K-6th were treated to a 30-minute dance session hosted by parent D.J. Ryan Schofield. The Senior class students (7th & 8th grade) participated in a teacher vs student game of dodgeball. Festive attire, decorations, and photo op made it a special day.

X. Educational Presentation

Amanda Conti

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

Amanda Conti, Upper 5th-6th Grade Teacher, presented a power point presentation on the Student Assistance Program (SAP) to the Board of Trustees and audience. Amanda began by informing the group that every Pennsylvania school district is required to have a plan for identifying and assisting students who experience barriers to learning. SAP is designed to assist in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, mental and health issues. Vaping is now included under the umbrella of tobacco use.

The team is available to help families access school and community services for students. In addition, the SAP team helps find services and assistance within the school, and if needed, in the community. The SAP team does not diagnose, treat, or refer any student for treatment.

The SAP team must have a representation from Administration, teacher, counselor, psychologist, social worker and nurse in order to qualify. Each team member must successfully complete 3 full days of training courses in order to assist the team in identifying students who may need assistance.

There are four phases to the SAP Process. The first phase is “Referral”. Anyone can be referred. Referrals can be by teachers, other school personnel, a family member, a student’s classmate and even the student themselves. Second phase is “Team Planning”. The SAP team gathers cognitive information from teachers, staff, parents and students. The team meets with and discusses results with parents/guardians to form a plan. The third phase is “Intervention and Recommendations”. The plan is put into action. The team will assist in linking the student to in-school or community services. Phase four is “Support and Follow-up”. This will include monitoring, mentoring and motivating the student for academic success.

Amanda went on to explain that participation in the SAP program is voluntary. Parents/Guardians have the right/ability to deny services recommended by the SAP team. Amanda stated, “In a perfect world parents would always accept services; however this is not always the case”. Amanda stated if a parent/guardian says “no” to SAP phases 2 through 4, the team must stop. The team then will continue to monitor within the scope of regular school monitoring.

In closing, Amanda said that the student can also be potentially referred to another school service; such as Child Study, and can be referred again at a later time and more than once. Amanda also said that statistics show there is a higher percentage of high school students that are referred to SAP. Amanda asked if anyone in the audience had any questions.

A question was asked about the number of HGMICS students that have been referred to the SAP program. Amanda stated since this is a confidential service and names/situations cannot be given but on an average 3-5 families per year may be referred to SAP. the answer could not be given; however there have been some families that have been helped.

Another question posed was if the SAP team has mental health, bullying and domestic issues referred to them. Amanda answered by stating that the SAP team does not diagnose, treat, or refer any student for treatment; however HGMICS has other programs and services e.g. the Olweus Bullying Program, Child Study, Peer Mediation and many other avenues that can assist depending on the referral. Amy Ryan, School Nurse added that most parents don’t want anything getting out about their personal/family life; however there is a great support system for students within the school setting for families in need.

IX. New Business

At this time, there was no new school business that needed to be addressed. Dr. Susan Trussler asked if there was anyone in the audience who had any school-related topic to discuss. At this time there were no school-related topics to discuss.

Adjournment

At 7:49 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Susan Hennemuth and accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with three Trustees absent.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 7:00 PM.**