

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

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via ZOOM on Tuesday, November 17, 2020. The HGMICS facility is located at 1615 East Elm Street, Scranton, PA. Dr. Susan Trussler, President called the meeting to order at 7:03 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 non-voting attendees.

The following Trustees attended: Dr. Susan Trussler, John Ezbiansky, Laila Kane, Stephanie Westington, Laurie Cadden, Sam Ceccacci, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, Dr. Fran Langan and Dr. John Ruddy. There were no Board of Trustee members absent from the meeting.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager; Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security; and Janet Kania, School Secretary. Absent from the meeting: Joshua Pollack, Esq.

Dr. Susan Trussler welcomed visitors and asked if any visitor had comments regarding November's agenda items. At this time, the visitors in attendance virtually had no comments or questions regarding the agenda. The meeting proceeded.

## **I. Minutes**

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the October 20, 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 October 20, 2020 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Dr. John Ruddy, and seconded by Aaron Nivert. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

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

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

Dr. Susan Trussler began her report by stating that there are two items that will be presented this evening. The first item being a report regarding the recent positive test result of COVID-19 at the school. It was reported that a student received a positive COVID-19 test result yesterday. At this time, Dr. George, CEO and Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Securities will present the school's response and handling of the circumstances surrounding the situation.

Dr. George, CEO assured the Board of Trustees as well as those participating virtual, when reporting a student/staff who has tested positive for COVID-19 the identity of the individual will be kept anonymous in order to be in compliance with federal privacy laws. In addition, the Pod or cohort will not be made public. Only the individual(s) and families whose student(s) have been determined to come in direct contact with the infected/exposed individual will be notified by the Administration. The cases/exposures will be reported to local and state Department of Health agencies by Administration. Dr. George reassured that all areas of the building where the individual(s) were pinpointed will be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected. Dr. George then asked Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and

Securities to elaborate further.

Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Securities began his report by stating that the school has been monitoring COVID-19 within the state as well as Lackawanna county and surrounding counties since 8/31/2020. At this time, no evidence has been reported indicating that in-person schooling has contributed to community spread nor that school closures have an impact on community spread. In addition, many cases brought to schools in the Commonwealth have been traced to exposures outside of the school setting.

Joe explained that HGMICS has a strict adherence to our Health & Safety protocols. The comprehensive plan has worked exceedingly well due to:

- an incredible familial and parental cooperation in following symptom screening tools and communicating potential exposures with School Administration
- constant monitoring of case numbers and trends in our community which include a breakdown of cases by zip code of our students. (NOTE: 18505 is South Scranton and 18510 is the Hill section which includes the U of S) are the two highest zip codes for our school
- enhanced internal communication to ensure all potential cases are addressed according to DOH/PDE/CDC guidance
- employee cooperation in remaining at home when presenting symptoms, vigorously monitored by Human Resources
- consistent and correct use of masks with practice social distancing to the largest extent possible
- good hand hygiene and increased emphasis on washing hands
- consistent cleaning and disinfecting of the school, especially in high-touch areas
- continued communication with NEIU 19, PDE and DOH to remain current on all trends and recommendations

Joe stated that the HGMICS response for a student or staff member testing positive for COVID-19 is based on the guidance and direction provided by the PA Department of Education, Department of Health, and CDC. If a student(s) or staff(s) receives a positive test result for COVID-19 within a 14-day period:

- all area(s) where the individual spent time will be isolated so it can be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected. If there are more than five (5) students/staff, the school would close for a 14-day period and the “infected” location or pod would be cleaned and disinfected and off limits for a 2-7-day period based on the level of community transmission table
- Depending on the number of student(s) and/or staff with a positive result, this will result in the length of period of time the school maybe closed and an all-remote program would be begin
- Public health staff will provide instructions to close contacts.
- Due to the physical layout of the school which provides us with flexibility if we are dealing with COVID positive cases, it would be easy to isolate one class or Pod area. As necessary, pedestrian traffic could be altered in the school to avoid areas being sanitized.

Dr. George touched upon the consideration for a short term possible all-remote session. After careful monitoring of the environment and near-by counties, our status changed from “moderate” to “substantial” and was recommended by the PDE that school districts should consider moving to an all-remote learning environment. The week of January 4<sup>th</sup> will be an all-remote week for students and faculty which will be a buffer of time through the holiday season. We will resume in-person classes the week of January 11<sup>th</sup> contingent upon a rise in cases in our area.

Laila Kane announced that there had been a question posted in the “chat” icon. Dr. Trussler announced that questions, comments, or concerns would not be heard at this point in the meeting and asked the participants to hold their questions, comments, or concerns until the end of the meeting. Dr. George added that the school does not require testing and refers students/staff to their physician regarding testing. If tested, then returning to the school occurs only after the results of the test are known.

Dr. Trussler announced that plans to proceed with the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation are underway. The Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation is a separate not-for-profit entity that supports the operations of the School. The Board of Trustees has to approve updated bylaws for the Foundation in order to begin establishing a foundation board of directors and to commence development/fundraising efforts. Dr. Trussler made a **MOTION** to approve the Bylaws for the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation as submitted. The motion was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Laila Kane. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation Bylaws as submitted, with no Trustees absent.

### **III. Finance/Facilities Committee**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington reported that the Finance/Facilities Committee did not have a formal meeting this month. Stephanie spoke with Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager; however there had been no material concerns regarding the budget.

Stephanie Westington asked that Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager present the Financial report for October and deferred to Chuck’s presentation.

#### **1. October 2020 Financial Report**

**Chuck Wallinger**

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager, reported revenues are \$43,863.37 above budget for October 2020. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency COVID Grant revenue was above budget by \$59,314.25; this revenue was not budgeted. Tuition revenue was below budget by \$16,567.11 due to the prior Fiscal Year revenue adjustment. School districts were adjusted based on the PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education) enrollment day calculation from the prior Fiscal Year.

Expenses are \$11,807.74 above budget for October 2020. The Instructional costs were above budget by \$17,697.81 due to the COVID reopening. The Debt Service was below budget by \$7,519.41 due to the delay in the \$4.5 million dollar loan from FNCB. The Net Operating Revenue for October 2020 of \$41,661.50 was above budget by \$32,055.64.

The School had \$1,104,766.81 in cash at the end of October 2020. This represents 146 days cash on hand, which places the School in a positive solvency position. The FY 2020-2021 Unipay redirection and direct school district payments of \$273,620.54 were paid in October 2020. There is \$352,003.02 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%. The Ready to Learn State grant was received in October 2020 for \$7,249. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency COVID Grant payment of \$90,000 was received in October, 2020.

Stephanie Westington thanked Chuck for his report. Stephanie Westington asked if there were any questions at this time regarding the Finance Report. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through October 31, 2020 as reported and submitted was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Dr. John Ruddy. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Financial Report as submitted, with no Trustee absent.

#### **IV. Academic Committee**

**Dr. Fran Langan**

Dr. Fran Langan reported that the Academic Committee met on November 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss a variety of topics such as the Continuity of Education plan, Acadience results, instructional modes and student engagement, and remote and in-person instruction. Several of these topics, will be presented by TreeAnne McEnery later in this meeting,

Dr. Langan also reported that the (CMCI) Compliance Monitoring for Continuous Improvement review will take place in April and the school is preparing for the visit. Finally, the McKenny Homeless Assistance training and review will take place the beginning of December.

#### **V. Development Committee**

**Susan Hennemuth**

Susan Hennemuth reported that the Development Committee met last month to discuss the Annual Fundraising effort. It was agreed by the committee to begin efforts in February 2021. A list of recommended candidates for the Foundation Board of Directors will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

#### **VI. Nominating Committee**

**Laurie Cadden**

Laurie Cadden reported that the Nominating Committee met to discuss the anticipated departure of two current Trustees at the end of this year's term. Recommendations for viable nominees will be discussed in March, 2021 and then brought forth to the Board of Trustees at the April, 2021 for consideration. Recommendations for viable nominees with a background in Education and Finance are preferred and should be submitted to Laurie Cadden or Dr. Marie George.

#### **VII. Personnel Committee**

**Dr. Susan Trussler**

Dr. Trussler stated that the Personnel Committee had nothing new to report but will be meeting in December or early January to discuss staff benefits.

#### **VIII. School Matters**

##### **1. Principal's Report**

**TreeAnne McEnery**

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal reported the following:

- 2020-2021 Continuity of Education: a questionnaire was emailed to the all-remote families as to their plans for continuing with the all-remote program or transitioning to the at-school program as of November 30<sup>th</sup>, the start of Trimester II. Of 77 students currently attending the all-remote, 12 students plan to return to the at-school program. Since this is a very fluid time, 2 students have since contacted the school and indicated that they now prefer to continue attending the all-remote program. There currently are

no changes in the students attending the all-remote program in Kindergarten and Primary grades. There are 3 students who will transition to in-school in the Intermediate grades, 3 in the Upper grades, and 4 students in the Senior grades.

- Title I Programing: TreeAnne and the Title I teachers recently met with Kindergarten through Upper Pod teachers to discuss the results of Acadience and received the teacher's input and confirmation on who the critical students are for the first benchmark. 55 students have been identified as critical in grades K-6<sup>th</sup> and will be offered direct Title I services. While Title I teachers will provide intensive support to the students whose parents provide permission, they have also begun to provide class-wide support for all K-6<sup>th</sup>. Focus is on the foundational skills to supplement and support these skills for all students' continual growth.
- Progress Reports and Parent-Teacher Conference: Trimester I Progress reports will be released on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled for December 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> and will be held via Zoom. TreeAnne will email a communication to families on November 30<sup>th</sup> informing them of the release date, the new progress report format, and signing up for parent conferences. TreeAnne expressed a good job was done by everyone and the students for Trimester I.
- Primary Pod Transition 2021: with input from the Curriculum and Professional Development Committees, the Primary Pod teachers and TreeAnne have been discussing and beginning to plan a transition to one teacher in the pod teaching a main academic subject for all homerooms in Fall 2021. This transition will support each teacher's professional development and students' ability to learn in an integrated grade-level classroom. This transition will also strengthen our K-8<sup>th</sup> subject scope and sequence, develop subject-level instruction teams, and improve student growth and achievement in national and state-level benchmark assessments.
- PBIS: October Monthly Blow Out consisted a Monster Mash and individual Pod parades through the hallways and was a great success. The Parent Forum produces a Halloween remote slide show and held a costume contest.
- Teacher Effectiveness: Supervision and Evaluation – TreeAnne finalized all Goal/Action Plan meetings with the instructional staff. Goals range and focus on differentiated instructional practices and planning or writing across the domains. Teachers have additional professional goals, but all goals align with the schoolwide goals to some degree.
  - \* 20 instructional staff are in the Formal Observation mode – there currently are 24 this year.
  - \* 4 of the Formal Observation mode staff are temporary staff
  - \* 9 instructional staff are in the Differentiated Supervision modeStaff in the Differentiated Supervision mode are either working with a peer coach or are in the self-directed option where they are focused on some element in their instructional practices.

TreeAnne thanked everyone for their time in reviewing her report and asked if there were any questions. With none being heard, the meeting proceeded.

## **2. CEO Report**

**Dr. Marie George**

Dr. George's report illustrated the diverse topics as well as proof of the School being fully operational despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic. All requirements – legislatively, financially, and operationally continue to be met. Dr. George's report stated:

- Health Insurance Rates for 2021 – In the fall, insurance rates are issues for the next calendar year. The Benefits Group (Jeff Haudenschild) serves as the School's benefits broker. The School moved from Highmark to Geisinger in 2020 with no increase in costs for employee health insurance and maintained Guardian for vision and dental, also at no increased costs. For 2021 rates, Geisinger's initial increase was 7% but final increase was negotiated to 4%, which was well within the budgeted increase and Guardian will remain the same for vision and dental insurance with no increase.
- Value Engineering Underway – weekly meetings to discuss progress on value engineering for the School's building addition are indicating excellent progress. Mar-Paul, general contractor is taking the lead in planning including closely working with the civil engineers regarding the lower lot. Anticipated completion of the value engineering or pre-construction work is early December. All staff affected by the adjustments to the building addition and renovation plans have been notified and alternate classroom assignments for Art, Music, and Lower Science have been assigned. Once updated layout plans are distributed, locations for Special Education and Student Support Services will be determined. The Medical Office/Nursing Site will remain in its current location and has benefitted from recent upgrades in response to the School's Health and Safety Plan.
- HGMICS Donations and fundraising – Dr. George stated that the school was fortunate to receive several EITC donations from FNCB, Waste Management, and Landmark Bank. These donations will assist in supporting arts and STEM educational programs. The Parent Forum continues to provide excellent support to the School both in-kind and financially. This year the annual Family Bingo was cancelled, in place a lottery for the month of November was held. In addition, through their new website HGS apparel and other items are being sold. In place of Cookie Day for the staff, a Parent Forum Cookie Recipe Book is being assembled and will also be available for sale.
- 2020-2021 Compliance Monitoring – Compliance monitoring is a six-year evaluative process employed by state and federal agencies to ensure that school districts are in compliance with legislative IDEA and related procedural requirements for the School's special education program. The Compliance Monitoring for Continuous Improvement (CMCI) will take place the week of April 26, 2021 and preparations are underway. Dr. Juanita Kirton from the Bureau of Special Education will serve as chairperson for our review.
- In addition, we were recently notified that the triennial monitoring visit is scheduled for December 7<sup>th</sup> regarding compliance with the McKenny Vento Act that concerns homeless students. Anne Salerno is the assigned monitor from PDE and conducted our previous visit in 2018. Jade Volchoff, School Counselor is the School's Homeless Liaison who works closely with the NEIU and PDE. All staff will participate in a virtual Homeless Training session with Jeff Zimmerman on Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Wellness Programming – The Wellness Committee, led by Patty Biko, has resumed meeting and continues to advance the School's wellness efforts and policies. Featured this year is the Harvest of the Month when selection of fruits/vegetables are sampled by students. Also, posted on the School's Facebook page is a regularly featured "Wellness Wednesday/Harvest Theme Flyer" that provides families with informative nutritional information. A monthly "Harvest" theme flyer will be sent to families by Patty Biko, Operational Manager.
- Also, Brian Kubilis, Coach/Physical Ed Teacher continues with our physical education and health program as part of our Wellness Policy and Program. In addition, Dottie

Shoemaker, Food Service Manager and Amy Ryan, School Nurse are essential to all our Wellness efforts.

- Comprehensive Planning Committee - The fifteen-member CPC will meet on November 19<sup>th</sup> to resume work needed to complete the School's Comprehensive Plan required by PDE. The deadline for the three-year plan was extended to November 30, 2021 for completion. The Committee last met in February 2020.

### **VIII. New Business**

**Dr. Susan Trussler.**

At this time, with no new business from the Trustees, Dr. Trussler asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to voice any additional concerns. Without hearing any Dr. Trussler asked for a motion to adjourn.

### **Adjournment**

At 8:02 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Dr. Trussler. Adjournment was accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with no Trustee absent.

The next virtual HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 7:00 PM.**