

Howard Gardner MI Charter School Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees virtual meeting via ZOOM on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. 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 non-voting attendees.

The following Trustees attended: Dr. Susan Trussler, John Ezbiansky, Laila Kane, Stephanie Westington, Laurie Cadden, Sam Ceccacci, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Aaron Nivert, Dr. Fran Langan, and Dr. John Ruddy. Absent from the meeting was Susan Hennemuth.

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

Dr. Susan Trussler welcomed visitors and asked if any visitor had comments regarding January's agenda items. Stacy Nivert, Sydney Snyder, and Christa Irwin all from the Scranton School District requested to make comments. The School Solicitor reminded those in attendance of the policy limiting individual comments to a 2-minute limit.

Stacy Nivert, Scranton School District stated that she did not receive an agenda for tonight's meeting and wanted to know where she could obtain an agenda. Dr. George stated that the agenda for tonight's meeting was sent out by 1:30 PM as an attachment with the link to all attendees requesting access to the Board of Trustees meeting. Janet Kania, School Secretary confirmed the procedure.

Sydney Snyder, Scranton School District commented on the decision to move to in-person hybrid classes in February. Sydney stated that she has a 2nd and 5th grade student in the school and feels that the school day is long for both of them attending Zoom classes. Sydney feels that this educational format of all-remote is not productive for her children. She urged the Board of Trustees to consider moving the educational platform back to hybrid since the School has made all necessary precautions to keep a safe environment for the students.

Christa Irwin, Scranton School District stated she has a 2nd grader who is having a good experience with all the teachers; however, her student is struggling with the virtual days. Christa is satisfied with all the protocols that have been put in place since the Fall and is hopeful to move forward with virtual and hybrid educational plans.

Stacy Nivert, Scranton School District added that she echoes both Sydney and Christa's comments. In addition, Stacy feels that younger students are bouncing in and out of Zoom classes and specials impacting their education. Stacy feels it is hard for students who are receiving Title I services. Her child is scheduled to receive Title I Math Services and has only received one session in the last six weeks because the service has either been rescheduled or the Zoom platform does not work. She also feels there are deficiencies in the all-remote program similar to Title I with respect to services such as OT, Speech, etc.. Thus, the longer school is all-remote so students are not getting the services they need. Stacy also commented on the 2020-2021 School Calendar and would hope the Calendar is not

getting shortened in any way, shape, or form that would impact students' education. She appreciated there would be no snow days to make up, however, due to power outage issues, water main breaks, and issues with the Zoom platform, she feels these are impacting the students' education. We need to look at what it means on paper versus what educational impact it might have for the student's education. Dr. Trussler stated that a discussion will take place later in the meeting regarding the Revision of the 2020-2021 Calendar that is scheduled for this meeting.

At this time, with no further comments or questions from the visitors the meeting proceeded.

I. Minutes

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler presented the December 15, 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 December 15, 2020 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane, and seconded by Dr. Fran Langan. At this time, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

II. President's Report

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Susan Trussler began by thanking all Board of Trustee members for their generous financial contributions towards the gift cards and luncheon that had taken place for all faculty and staff prior to the Holiday break. Dr. Trussler informed the Board of Trustees that many notes of thanks and appreciation had been received from the faculty and staff.

Dr. Trussler announced that the plans for construction of the building addition are proceeding on track. More information will be presented by Dr. George in her CEO report.

Dr. Trussler added that "National School Choice Week" will take place next week. A "Virtual Open House" will take place on Thursday, January 28th. More information will be presented by TreeAnne McEnery in her Principal's report.

III. Finance/Facilities Committee

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington reported that the Finance/Facilities Committee met on January 12th. The December finances had been reviewed. Discussion surrounding necessary budget adjustment, building addition construction had been topics presented. In addition, a presentation from Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Securities regarding feasibility for in-house cleaning services took place.

Stephanie announced that the 2019 Form 990 for both Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School and the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation had been presented to the Board of Trustees for informational purposes only. Stephanie then asked that Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager present the Financial report for December and deferred to Chuck's presentation.

1. December 2020 Financial Report

Chuck Wallinger

Chuck Wallinger, Business Manager, reported revenues are \$1,896 below budget for December 2020. The Student Activities revenue is below budget by \$3,000 since there are

no field trips being run for the students due to COVID-19. Expenses are \$989 above budget for December 2020. Instructional costs were above budget by \$11,082 primarily in light of COVID-19 salary and benefit costs due to all-remote instruction. The Business costs are above budget by \$3,493 since legal costs were not budgeted. Cafeteria costs are below budget by \$5,428 with less meals being served due to remote and hybrid schedules. The Debt Service was below budget by \$7,519 due to the delay in the \$4.5 million dollar loan from FNCB.

The Net Operating Revenue for December 2020 of \$5,296, was below budget by \$2,885. The School has 135 days cash on hand, which places the School in a positive solvency position. The Scranton School District balance is expected to be paid in January 2021. There is \$339,269 remaining on the FNCB loan at a fixed rate of 3.35%.

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

IV. Academic Committee

Dr. Fran Langan

Dr. Fran Langan reported that the Academic Committee did not met. However, additional updates on the academic programs will be presented by the Principal and CEO as part of their report.

At this time, Dr. Langan asked Dr. George to present the following special education policies for Board approval.

1. Special Education Policies

Dr. Marie George

a. Exceptional Student Records Confidentiality Policy

Dr. George presented the Exceptional Student Records Confidentiality Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to accept the Exceptional Student Records Confidentiality Policy as submitted was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Stephanie Westington. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Exceptional Student Records Confidentiality Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

b. Independent Education Evaluation Policy

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George presented the Independent Education Evaluation Policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to accept the Independent Education Evaluation Policy as submitted was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Laila Kane. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Independent Education Evaluation Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

V. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

In the absence of Susan Hennemuth, Laila Kane reported the Development Committee is ready to move forward with 4 nominees to serve on the Board of Directors for the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation. Each approved Board of Directors member will serve for one term, or three years,

effective February 1, 2021. Laila Kane presented the nominees of Suzanne Jaffe, Barbara Nivert, Michelene Pagnotti, and Dr. Susan Trussler as Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation Board members. With no further discussion the **MOTION** to accept and approve Suzanne Jaffe, Barbara Nivert, Michelene Pagnotti, and Dr. Susan Trussler as Directors of the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation Board was made by Aaron Nivert and seconded by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. All Trustees presented voted in favor of approving the four Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation Board of Directors as presented, with one Trustee absent.

VI. Nominating Committee

Laurie Cadden

Laurie Cadden reported that the Nominating Committee did not meet last month. At this time, there are no comments to report.

VII. Personnel Committee

Dr. Susan Trussler

Dr. Trussler stated that the Personnel Committee had no changes in personnel and no additional items to report.

VIII. School Matters

Dr. Trussler asked Dr. George to present the Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar to the Board of Trustees. Dr. George reported that the 2020-2021 School Calendar was presented to the Board for approval because of virtual remote learning classes, which would eliminate the need for snow days. Dr. George explained with the option of virtual remote learning days, the 2020-2021 School Calendar would be in compliance for the required 180 school year calendar required by PDE and by consistent with 180 teaching days as indicated in each teachers' annual appointment letter. Calendar changes are as follows: the last day of school would be moved from June 4th to May 28th, and March 12th will be a half day for students followed by a half day for Teacher-In-Service, and the 8th Grade Graduation will be scheduled for Thursday, June 3, 2021.

Laila Kane inquired if one factor of shortening the 2020-2021 School Calendar was due to the construction project. Dr. George responded by stating that there is little need to accommodate the construction project and more need to plan for summer programs. Dr. George also stated that funding for summer programs would be reviewed in her CEO's report.

Aaron Nivert expressed his concerns with the completion of curriculum for the 2020-2021 school year. TreeAnne McEnery responded by stating the teachers have not reported any issues with the completion of curriculum at this time.

1. Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar

Dr. Marie George

At this time, Dr. George presented the Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar to the Board of Trustees for approval. With no further discussion, the **MOTION** to approve the Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar as submitted and presented was made by Dr. Fran Langan and seconded by Dr. John Ruddy. Nine Trustees present approved the Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar, Aaron Nivert opposed the motion, and one Board of Trustee member was reported as absent.

2. Principal's Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal reported the following:

- Grant-Funded After School Enrichment and Tutoring : the second session of the SRSA and SEIO grant-funded afterschool enrichment and tutoring programs are scheduled to begin January 25th through April 2nd. All Enrichment and Tutoring programs are all virtual through Zoom. Approximately 40 students are currently registered. A diversity of enrichment program options for students this Spring range from skills-based programming to artistic development. Enrichment programs include: Literacy Enrichment for Primary with Terry Quinn and Jeri McNulty on Mondays; Literacy for Intermediate through Upper's Monthly Newsletter with Kim Hoskins will take place on Thursdays; and Music-Singing for Upper and Senior's with Steve Kurilla also on Thursdays. Tuesday offerings include Literacy for Intermediate with Terry Quinn and Jeri McNulty, Music Ukulele for Primary through Uppers with Steve Kurilla, and Art for Grades 1 through 5th Paper Mache with Melissa Cruise. Thursday's offerings also include Music Beginners Piano for Primary with Steve Kurilla. Tutoring is offered Monday through Friday and is scheduled according to family availability.
- Acadience Assessment Schedule: the second administration of Acadience, for our K-6th benchmark assessment that helps determine student eligibility for Title I services, is scheduled to begin January 21st with the all-remote students in grades K-2nd. At-School assessments will begin once students are back in the building. Title I teachers have been serving just less than 60 students that scored at the well-below benchmark for literacy and/or mathematics both at school and all-remote. The next benchmark results will provide data on students' progress and growth since being back at school.
- Teacher Effectiveness: the Fall formal observations for teachers not participating in the differentiated option are complete. The Spring formal observations are scheduled to begin in March.
- National School Choice Week - Open House & Spirit Week: January 24th through January 30th is National School Choice Week. A virtual Open House for families that are not enrolled at the school is scheduled on Thursday, January 28th at 6:00 PM. Public announcements about the Open House are posted on the School's website and Facebook page, as well as posted on a local billboard. This year, instructional staff will present an overview of HGMICS programming, beginning with the kindergarten, K-4th science mathematics, specials, and concluding with our Senior curriculum and Pods. Some highlights teachers will present are Montessori instruction, hands-on, experiential learning, Project-Based Learning (PBL), middle school contests, and more. In addition to the instructional staff, two students will speak at the Open House. The students will share their experiences while attending HGMICS, one student has been enrolled at HGMICS since kindergarten and the second student transferred in at the Upper Pod. TreeAnne is sincerely grateful for the instructional staff and student support. School Choice Spirit Week activities are being finalized, some fun schoolwide activities the PBIS Committee has discussed are, where yellow day, virtual mascot contest, and a Why I Love HGS poster contest. Finalized activities will be posted soon.
- CPC Instructional Staff Sub-Committee; the CPC Instructional Staff Sub-Committee will facilitate an ELA, mathematics, and science data review for the Comprehensive Plans needs assessment on January 27th during an instructional staff virtual meeting. Instructional staff will observe, review, and discuss content area summary reports of Acadience, CDT's, PSSAs, and other measures of assessments to identify

three areas of strength and challenges relative to the School's mission, vision, and Future Ready goals.

- Curriculum and Professional Development Committee: the instructional staff that serves on the Curriculum and Professional Development Committee have decided to break into sub-committees to address the Professional Development Plan that will result from the CPC Needs Assessment reports and the Ready to Learn Grant goals of K-2nd curriculum and competency-based learning.

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

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. George reported the following ITEMS.

- Construction Project Update – with recent Board approval to move forward with the construction project, the following are underway: final building plans are being prepared, contracts with the four prime contractors are being finalized, revisions to the original zoning approvals have been submitted. On January 21, 2021, the School's application for tax-free loan will be resubmitted to the Scranton-Lackawanna Health and Welfare Authority since the original approval exceeded the year-long timeframe. Brian Koscelansky, Esq. will once again represent the School and has prepared all the necessary materials. We are still awaiting an estimated timeline for the project with the anticipation of groundbreaking in April 2021. Kim Scanlon, Esq., will continue to represent the School, as originally planned, for the final bank loan closing. Once the prime contracts and final building plans are completed, FNCB can proceed with the final review, appraisal, and loan approval.
- ESSER II Funds – the recent Federal Relief Act will provide K-12th schools with another substantial allocation of ESSER II funds, based upon the Title I formulae. HGMICS is targeted to receive an estimated \$379,544 ESSER II funds and the application through federal e-grants opened on January 15th with awards that can be used for pandemic related expenses, including summer school, remote learning, social emotional support services, etc. within a three-year window, if needed.
- School's Response to the Pandemic – all-remote learning is taking place for the month of January with the expectation to have students return to in-person learning February 1st. HGMICS families will be informed by the end of the week. Prior to students' returning, families will be reminded about the Health and Safety protocols in place and the need to keep the school informed of travel, exposures, and positive cases within the household. The School continues to monitor daily COVID data along with families and staff who keep the School informed if experiencing quarantine, exposure, travel, testing results etc. We are anxiously awaiting information about the availability of vaccinations for the staff; our school nurse has already received hers.
- Comprehensive Plan – Aspects of the Comprehensive Plan were summarized in the Principal's report. Dr. George reported that a special work session will be held on January 21st with four members of the Committee who will examine HGMICS data presented on the Future Ready PA Index. The third component of the needs assessment will collect survey data from stakeholders on Leadership, Teaching and Learning. The Committee is scheduled to meet on February 18th and will review the needs assessment data survey, which will be the basis for identifying goals for the 3-year Comprehensive Plan. The Committee's work is on track to have a draft prepared plan for fall of 2021 with time for public review and board approval prior to its required

submission on November 30, 2021.

- Re-Enrollment and New Enrollment – re-enrollment forms for current students are due by January 22nd and include sibling enrollment . New enrollees are required to submit a one-page application for inclusion in the March lottery. New enrollment applications are being accepted until February 26th. The recently approved Admission by Lottery Policy will be in effect and a virtual public lottery will be held.
- Personnel – Kim Wall (in-house substitute) will be coving for Kat Hicks (Primary II teacher) who is out on maternity leave. Kait gave birth to Elias James on January 7th and the family is doing well with big sister Emma excited to have a brother. Since Kim Wall is covering Primary II through March, we are seeking individuals who can serve as per diem substitute teachers when we return to in-person learning. Business Manager, Chuck Wallinger is slated for heart surgery on February 4th and arrangements to cover Chuck’s duties by other staff are in place, except for the monthly financial report for which we will utilize Michael Gavigan, CPA on a consultant basis. All staff will be sending good thoughts and healing wishes to Chuck. Also, the staff were most appreciative to celebrate the 12 days in December leading up to the winter break. Each day brought special treats including support from the Board of Trustees that contributed toward a Cara Mia lunch and 12 gift certificates from local businesses. Thanks to the Board of Trustees for their generous contribution.

Dr. Fran Langan acknowledged that it was good to hear about the ESSER II funding and plans for summer education. Dr. Langan stated with more vaccines becoming available there will be a lower risk for infection as summer approaches. The use of outdoor classroom education will allow for and increase student motivation. One thing that is certain, trauma and stress due to the shutdown and various educational modes is a strain to keep students actively engaged in learning. During the summer, both learning and resting can be accomplished to engage students. Due to the shutdown over the past year, Dr. Langan noted that instead of the ‘summer slump’ it is now being identified as the “COVID Cliff”, and therefore summer education is vitally important and will allow the students to climb up the ladder for success. Dr. Langan congratulated Dr. George for her hard work in targeting funding for summer educational plans.

Dr. Susan Trussler reiterated best wishes to Chuck Wallinger on his upcoming surgery. Dr. Trussler thanked everyone for their on-going commitment to keeping the students’ education on track, to ensuring the daily functions of the school, and to moving ahead on various projects. Dr. Trussler asked that everyone take care and stay safe.

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 called for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

At 8:06 PM, no further items of business or comments were raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Dr. John Ruddy. Adjournment was accepted by all Board of Trustees present, with one Trustee absent.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 7:00**