

Howard Gardner MI Charter School

Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting remotely on Tuesday, March 15, 2022. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and subsequently presided over the meeting. Stephanie led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance and took roll call for the board members and non-voting attendees.

The following Trustees attended: Stephanie Westington, Sam Ceccacci, Laila Kane, Dr. John Ruddy, Laurie Cadden, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and Aaron Nivert. Absent from the meeting: Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; John Marsico, Business Manager; Joe Ross, Director of Facilities and Security; and Deana Bonacci, Administrative Assistant.

Stephanie Westington reminded the attendees the public hearing is on agenda items only, visitors may comment on items listed on the agenda, and names and school districts of residence will be recorded before remarks are made. With no request for comments from the audience regarding the March agenda, Stephanie proceeded with the meeting.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the February 15, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the February 15, 2022 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane, and seconded by Dr. John Ruddy. Stephanie asked if there were any comments or corrections on the minutes. Not hearing any, Stephanie called for a vote. All Board of Trustees members present voted in favor of approving the February 15, 2022, minutes as submitted, with one Trustee absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance to the March 2022 Public Board meeting.

Stephanie began her report by stating HGMICS continues to provide in-person learning for students and continues to operate under the School's Health and Safety Plan. The plan was revised on February 26, 2022, following the CDC's updated mask recommendations for

indoor settings. The School has moved to an optional mask requirement. This correspondence was sent out to the School community. The community should also be aware, that if hospitalizations should increase again, the masking policy may change accordingly. The School will continue to follow the CDC guidance in updating the Healthy and Safety Plan.

Stephanie announced the School's annual enrollment lottery was held on March 10, 2022, where she thanked Laila Kane for presiding over the lottery in her absence. The lottery had over two hundred applications received.

Stephanie stated the Construction project is on schedule. School Administration sent out a communication to families announcing the planned occupancy for July, and also a communication regarding an adjustment to the current school calendar in order to accommodate the planned occupancy. Another five-year strategic planning session has been set for August 9th and August 10th of 2022. The Board will continue to keep everyone updated on this event as details become available. At this time, Stephanie turned the meeting over to Dr. Marie George and Joe Ross to present an educational update on Safe Schools Reporting Requirements.

III. Presentation on Safe Schools

Dr. Marie George & Joseph Ross

Dr. Marie George began by stating the Pennsylvania Department of Education has an office for Safe Schools and exists to ensure that all schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are in compliance with the voluminous legislation regarding the safety requirements in schools. Some of the procedures and policies schools required include a Suicide Prevention program, Emergency Response program, Anti-Bullying policy, Positive Behavior Intervention Support or PBIS program. Our School has all required Board policies and procedures are reviewed and updated as needed.

HGMICS also has a Student Assistance Program (SAP), which focuses on early identification of students experiencing problems whether it be personal, family, alcohol or drug related, and may create a barrier to learning. Participation is strictly confidential where any staff or student can refer, including self-referral. Parents/Guardians are involved throughout the process and since this is not a mandatory process must be agreeable. The School's referrals had averaged 2/year but an increased number are being experienced this school year.

Dr. George turned the presentation over to Joe Ross to detail the School's TACT2 training. Joe began the presentation by identifying TACT2 refers to Therapeutic Aggression Control Techniques. The nationally respected program is a three-day trauma-informed staff training in behavior management, de-escalation, and crisis intervention. The School's Threat Response Team, made up of nine Staff members, recently completed the training which focuses on prevention and verbal de-escalation techniques before resorting to physical intervention. Staff is trained on physical intervention as well, but it is always the last resort.

Any type of physical intervention is reported, and a full investigation takes place. The primary impetus of the TACT2 training is the safety of the child involved, and HGMICS has created internal procedures to properly address any situation presented.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Safe Schools also has mandatory reporting requirements through PIMS that include the annual executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Scranton Police Department, Bus Evacuation Drills, Fire Drill Reports, Security Drill Reports, Student Incident Report, and an annual Safe Schools Bullying Policy submitted to the Board.

IV. Finance/Facilities Committee

Dr. John Ruddy

Dr. John Ruddy reported the Finance/Facilities Committee met on March 2, 2022. The Committee had a very detailed discussion about the budget and went over the construction report.

Dr. John Ruddy asked John Marsico, Business Manager to detail the February 2022 Financial Report for approval.

1. February 2022 Financial Report

John Marsico

John Marsico, Business Manager, reported revenues for the month of February 2022 of \$353,556. The majority of this reflects \$316,992 of School District billings. The school transferred \$4,089 from our PayPal account for the period November 1, 2021, through February 9, 2022. This revenue represents school lunch monies deposited by parents of our students that were utilized during this period. The moneys will be transferred monthly going forward. Expenses of \$390,741 are \$97,210 higher than January 2022. This increase is primarily due to the PSERS payment made in February. The Net Operating Loss for February 2022 is \$37,186, with a year-to-date Net Operating Profit of \$139,653. The School had \$1,007,577 in cash at the end of February 2022. This is approximately \$11,609 lower than the balance at the end of January 2022. There were two draws made on the construction loan in February 2022. Both were for payments to Mar-Paul, Inc. Pay Application #9 was in the amount of \$82,005.29 and Pay Application #10 was in the amount of \$70,234.20. Total construction funds drawn to date are \$1,899,330.

In relation to grants, the School was awarded \$130,663 in Title I funding. \$8,711 was received in February 2022 with a total of \$43,554 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$14,596 in Title II funding. \$973 was received in February with a total of \$4,865 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$10,000 in Title IV funding. \$667 was received in February with a total of \$3,334 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$413,069 in ESSER II funding. \$9,686 was received in

February with a total of \$76,629 year-to-date. The School was awarded \$64,938 in ESSER III Set-Aside funding. \$2,361 was received in February with a total of \$2,361 received year-to-date.

At this time, Dr. John Ruddy entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through February 28, 2022, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by John Ezbiensky and seconded by Aaron Nivert. John called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the February 2022 Financial Report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

Dr. John Ruddy turned the conversation over to Joe Ross for a construction update at this time. Joe Ross began his update by presenting a Construction Project slide show to the Board of Trustees. The pictures encompassed the progress from the first day of construction, April 5, 2021, to present day.

V. Academic Committee

Dr. Clarence Lamanna

Dr. Lamanna stated the Academic Committee met on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, to discuss the previously mentioned policy related to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In addition to the policy, there was information presented by Administration related to parent education involving programs related to literacy and social media. More specific information will be forthcoming on the school's website. Also, initiatives for the 2022-2023 school year for a service-learning presentation available to students and staff as well as a STEAM program, which is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.

1. Nondiscrimination of Qualified Students with Disabilities Policy

At this time, Dr. Lamanna called for a **MOTION** to accept the Nondiscrimination of Qualified Students with Disabilities Policy. The motion was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Dr. Lamanna called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Nondiscrimination of Qualified Students with Disabilities Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

VI. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan reported the Development Committee met on February 23, 2022, and were joined by members of the Howard Gardner School Foundation Board. Julie Imel, Director of Communications; updated the Committee about future planning, priorities, and funding opportunities. The Committee members discussed contacting different foundations in the area to help fund the School's needs for certain kitchen equipment, as well as equipment and

gear for cheerleading and various sports programs. Potential opportunities related to the opening of the building addition and ideas for the ribbon cutting ceremony were also topics of discussion.

VII. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci reported the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, March 1 and March 4, 2022. The Committee received an update about on the Human Resources audit. No proposals were received, and it was decided to conduct the audit internally. The policies, systems, and functions of Human Resources were reviewed and the decided upon changes will be incorporated in the upcoming year. Dr. George updated the Committee on the Strategic Plan and identified the areas requiring more progress as well as her annual goals. Personnel updates were discussed, including the search for the School's Secretary position, and at the time of the meeting several candidates were in the process of interviewing. The Committee also discussed the possibility of the PIMS Data Information System to be handled by the Operations Manager versus the Business Manager. Advertising for open positions for the 2022-2023 school year will take place in April. Positions include a Spanish teacher, Social Studies teacher, a new position for ELA, another Building Substitute and a paraprofessional to help with Special Education. New step charts were received from the Abington and Scranton School Districts, and a review of Howard Gardner MI Charter School's salaries is currently underway. The School's salaries have always been based on a percentage of the wage scale of the two previously mentioned school districts, and it was determined another Personnel Committee meeting is necessary to review potential salary increases for the 2022-2023 budget year. The second Personnel meeting was scheduled for Friday, March 4, 2022, where a decision was made to conduct a joint meeting with the Finance Committee to further determine appropriate salary increases, scheduled for April 6, 2022. School Secretary, Janet Kania, gave her resignation and Diane Carey is the proposed replacement at \$14.50 an hour, starting on March 28, 2022.

At this time, Sam called for a **MOTION** to approve the Personnel Report as presented. The motion was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Personnel Report, with one abstention and one Trustee absent.

VIII. School Matters

1. Principal Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne McEnery began her report by discussing the Future Ready Index website that was recently updated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

HGMICS received the 2020-2021 student PSSA reports earlier in the school year, but reports were released later than usual to families due to PDE extending the testing window into the Fall. PDE suggested schools share a letter with their families to provide context for the Future Ready PA Index updated in early March. The Future Ready Index is a dashboard of the School's individual results compared to all PA schools. HGMICS scored similarly to all schools across PA, other than in Mathematics.

HGMICS' PSSA scores were proficient and advanced overall in comparison with the state. In ELA and Literacy, HGMICS' score is 55.9%, whereas the state is at 55%. HGMICS' Mathematics score is 18.2%, whereas the state is at 37.3%. Science is at 66.1% compared to the state score of 63.7%.

In comparison to test participation across PA, HGMICS had higher participation rates for 2020- 2021. Approximately 95% of our eligible students participated in their respective tests, whereas they saw a decrease in participation by 24% across the state. Understandably, our families that chose to opt-out of the test were primarily all-remote families that were not comfortable with PDE's in-person testing requirement; however, many of our all-remote students did come into the building for the first time in over a year to participate in the PSSAs.

HGMICS chose to schedule the 2020-2021 testing window in late May to provide teachers and students with the most exposure to the grade-level curriculum. The School knew that students would do their best while recognizing the potential impact the expectation by PDE requiring the test to still be administered during the pandemic would have on the final results.

Academically, the School considers the PSSA results responsibly, and plan based on the results while balancing the School's mission that intelligence is expressed in other ways other than standardized tests. However, based on the 2020-2021 test results, Administration immediately addressed the mathematics results by increasing coaching sessions from the OGAP program and looking at our curriculum materials and alignment throughout the grades. Mathematics was perhaps the most challenging subject to teach remotely and to learn in a hybrid schedule, so this year, with all students back in the school, differentiated, hands-on instruction through small group work has been a key instructional strategy to address the varying needs of our students mathematically. As reported in my February Board Report, the School has seen tremendous progress across all grade levels with mathematics this year.

The 2021-2022 PSSA testing dates are scheduled for the last week in April and the first week in May. The School looks forward to seeing the results of the 2021-2022 PSSAs after a year of intensive, in-person instruction which focused on HGMICS core skills and knowledge.

The Schoolwide Advisory Group met recently and has plans for family engagement for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year. In the Spring, Terry Quinn; Literacy Specialist and Jeri McNulty; Schoolwide Title 1 Coordinator, will host "The

Science of Reading: Strategies to Develop and Promote Literacy Skills”. In Fall of 2022, a Family Engagement Event will be led by Sydney Snyder and Jeri McNulty. Matthew Salerno and Jon Iannone will lead a Mathematics Family Engagement in the Winter of 2022 and a Child Development engagement is tentative for Spring of 2023.

The HGMICS K-8 Curriculum Framework is posted on the School’s website along with a second tab displaying the State Aligned K-8 Curriculum Framework.

Trimester II ended on Monday, March 7, 2022. Virtual Spring Teacher Conferences are scheduled for Friday, March 18th, which is a half a day of school. An initiative that started last year will award students who are recipients of Honors and Distinguished Honors. Awards will be presented on March 11, 2022. Honors recipients have a cumulative grade point average between ninety and ninety-five, while Distinguished Honors have a cumulative grade point average between ninety-six and one hundred. The list of recipients has been posted on the School’s Facebook page and will be in the Times-Tribune. Fifty-two students in grades 5-8 received Honors, which is approximately forty percent of HGMICS students. Thirty-nine students in grades 5-8 received the Distinguished Honors, which is approximately thirty percent of HGMICS students.

The Annual Scholastic Book Fair is currently taking place at the School. “Books Bring Us Together” is the theme, and it has been met with absolute joy and enthusiasm by the students. Having the Book Fair in-person truly marks a transition back toward a more familiar learning environment at Howard Gardner and away from the pandemic experience. TreeAnne thanked the Parent Forum for organizing the Book Fair.

An announcement was sent out to families last week regarding all Summer 2022 programs, which are grant and foundation funded. Families can choose from Learning Academy or Enrichment programs, as well as an Executive Functioning Summer Camp and Basketball Clinic. All programs will take place for three weeks in June.

2. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George began by reporting updated school guidance from the Center for Disease Control regarding masking requirements. Transmission rates of low, medium, and high, based off hospitalizations by county, will be used to identify whether masks must be worn. At the time of the February 25, 2022, release date, Lackawanna County had a transmission rate of medium giving Howard Gardner MI Charter School the option to make masking optional. A communication was sent out to staff and families announcing that as of February 28, 2022, students would have the option to wear a mask or not wear a mask. The excitement present in the school from seeing smiles and faces was overwhelming. The teachers expressed sensing the positive energy coming from the students after two years of enduring the mitigation efforts set in place.

In addition to making masking optional, the School decided to discontinue the second temperature reading at the beginning of the lunch period. If the county's transmission rate remains at the low level, by April students will be allowed to face one another while eating lunch and visitors will be allowed to come into the lobby again.

Continuing her report, Marie stated January marked the re-enrollment period for current students with five students indicating they would not be returning next year. There were twenty-six sibling enrollment requests for open seats. Two hundred twenty-four new student applications were received for the twenty-two available seats. The majority of the applications received were for the thirteen Kindergarten seats available, but applications were received for all grade levels. With the exception of the third and fourth grades, all other grade levels had at least one seat available. The Public Lottery took place on Thursday, March 10, 2022, via Zoom webinar with sixty-six in attendance. Trustee Laila Kane was present as an observer to the proceedings as well as TreeAnne McEnery, Renee Dougherty, and Patty Moraski. Follow-up with all applicants on their application status- enrolled or on the waiting list – was completed by the end of the school day on Friday, March 11, 2022. Enrollment packets are now required for submittal by those selected. Kindergarten maximum enrollment is thirty-two and all other grades have a maximum of thirty-six students. We anticipate for the first time reaching our total maximum enrollment of three hundred and twenty students since progressively adding, since 2016, a third homeroom for each grade.

As a result of the pandemic, school waivers were granted to allow all National School Lunch Program participants to provide free meals to all students for the 2021-22 school year. Currently, legislation is pending in Congress to extend the school waiver program for the 2022-23 school year through the Keeping School Meals Flexible Act.

Recently, PA schools were informed of available Food Supply Chain Funds. HGMICS' Attestation Statement was submitted and the School is awaiting notification of the financial reward. Information, requirements, and methodology regarding the award was obtained via a recent Webinar attended by several HGMICS' staff.

The School is in need of several kitchen equipment items, including a replacement freezer, steamer, and replacement steam table. The steamer is a necessity for increased nutritional benefits for the students. The steam table is outdated and needs to be replaced. The School applied for a kitchen equipment grant to replace the freezer and unfortunately the grant was denied. The School has recently approached the Parent Forum for financial support in order to purchase the freezer and is awaiting their response.

IX. New Business

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie asked if there was any new business. Not hearing any, Stephanie moved on to adjournment.

Adjournment

At 8:27 p.m., no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Sam Ceccacci. Adjournment was accepted by all Trustees present, with one Trustee absent. Stephanie thanked everyone for attending.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, April 19, at 7:00 p.m.**