

Howard Gardner MI Charter School

Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a Public Board of Trustees meeting remotely on Tuesday, May 17, 2022. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:08 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, Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, John Ezbiansky, Dino Galli, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and Aaron Nivert. Absent from the meeting: Laila Kane, Dr. John Ruddy, and Laurie Cadden.

Also, in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; John Marsico, Business Manager; Joes Ross, Director Facilities & 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 April 19, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the April 19, 2022 Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and seconded by Aaron Nivert. 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 April 19, 2022, minutes as submitted, with three Trustees absent.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

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

Stephanie began her report by stating the Finance/Facilities committee met and reviewed the final budget for the 2022-2023 school year.

Construction on the building addition continues to progress. Joe Ross completed the bidding process for furniture for classrooms, offices, and high traffic areas. Joe will be submitting agreements to purchase the furniture and if approved, the furnishings will be

supplied from three local businesses. The furniture will be in place and ready for the formal dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled for August 17, 2022.

On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, Stephanie wished a happy retirement to long-time employees Elizabeth (Betsy) Briganti and Lupita (Pita) McFarlane. Both Betsy and Pita have been with the School over ten years. Stephanie thanked them for their service and dedication to the School and students and wished them much health and happiness in their retirement.

The School will be participating in the NEPA Gives fundraiser taking place on June 3, 2022. Stephanie encouraged everyone in the Howard Gardner community to support the School. The fundraising goal is \$12,000 and Stephanie thanked the Hawk Family Foundation for providing a match donation of \$2500.

Lastly, Stephanie announced Matt Salerno, the School's STEM Specialist, Terry Quinn, the School's Literacy Specialist, and Jeri McNulty, Schoolwide Coordinator, will be presenting information on the Schoolwide Title I Acadience Literacy and Mathematics Assessments.

III. Schoolwide Title I Acadience Literacy and Mathematics Assessments

Presenters: Matt Salerno, STEM Specialist; Terry Quinn, Literacy Specialist, and Jeri McNulty, Schoolwide Coordinator

Jeri McNulty began the presentation by defining Acadience as a universal screening and progress monitoring snapshot that occurs three times during the school year. Acadience Reading K-6 measures early literacy and reading skills. Acadience Math measures the acquisition of mathematical skills for grades K-6. Acadience Reading is a set of measures and procedures for assessing the literacy skills of K-6 graders.

Matt Salerno described how Acadience works with mathematics at the Kindergarten level. There are three components students are tested on, each for one minute. They are Beginning Quantity Discrimination (BQD), Number Identification Fluency (NIF), and Next Number Fluency (NNF). As students go on to first grade, Advanced Quantity Discrimination (AQD) and Missing Number Frequency (MNF) are added to the list of components. Grades two through six are tested on Computation (Comp) and Concepts and Applications (C&A). The data identifies what components students are scoring advanced and below or well-below. Kindergarten and First Grade scores are predominantly above benchmark. Grades two through six dip in the computation section.

Terry Quinn, Literacy Specialist presented the Reading portion of Acadience. Kindergarten students are tested on Letter Naming (Identifying the letter), First Sound Fluency, Phonemic Segmentation and Nonsense Words. First Grade students are tested on Nonsense Word Fluency, Letter Naming Fluency, Phonemic Segmentation Fluency, and (mid-year) Oral Reading Fluency. Grades two through eight are tested on many of the same components as well as Oral Reading Retell Quality, Maze, and Silent Reading.

Next, the presenters talked about areas of focus for the 2022-2023 school year. Mathematics focus at the Kindergarten level will be on Number Naming Fluency and Next Number Fluency. Second through Sixth grade focus will be on computation fluency and application.

Kindergarten Reading benchmarking will be conducted the first week of school which will determine the focus of instruction for students. First and Second grades will focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, and retell. Second through Sixth grades will focus on retell and comprehension skills.

IV. Finance/Facilities Committee

Stephanie Westington

In the absence of Dr. John Ruddy, Stephanie Westington reported the Finance/Facilities Committee met on May 4th, 2022. The Committee had a detailed discussion about the budget.

Stephanie Westington asked John Marsico, Business Manager to detail the April 2022 Financial Report for approval.

1. April 2022 Financial Report

John Marsico

John Marsico, Business Manager, reported revenues for April 2022 of \$275,264 are not in line with what was expected for the month. During the month of April 2022, a full analysis of the Tuition Income account and the Due from Districts account was conducted. These fiscal year-to-date balances were compared to our School District billing details for the fiscal year through April 30, 2022 and adjusted to reflect actual balances through April 30, 2022. Expenses of \$418,197 are \$9,770 higher than March 2022. This increase is primarily due to the timing of bill payments. The Net Operating Loss for April 2022 is \$142,933, with a year-to-date Net Operating Loss of \$40,905.

The School had \$882,071 in cash at the end of April 2022. This is approximately \$110,348 lower than the balance at the end of March 2022. This is primarily due to the tuition received from the Scranton School District being \$108,949 less than what was billed. There was one draw made on the construction loan in March 2022. The total was \$471,863 and was for Pay Application #12 to Mar-Paul, Inc. in the amount of \$133,604. Pay Application #3 in the amount of \$31,450 to Joyce Electric, and Pay Applications #6, #7, #8, and #9 to Scranton Electric in the amounts of \$221,629 and \$85,180. Total construction funds drawn to date are \$2,626,737.

In relation to grants, the School was initially awarded \$134,343 in Title I funding. \$8,711 was received in April with a total of \$60,976 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$14,996 in Title II funding. \$973 was received in April with a total of \$6,811 year-to-date. The School was awarded \$10,000 in Title IV funding. \$666 was received in April with a total of \$4,666 received year-to-date. The School was awarded \$413,069 in ESSER II funding. \$9,687 was received in April with a total of \$96,003 year-to-date. The School was awarded \$64,938 in ESSER III Set-Aside funding. \$1,181 was received in April with a total of \$4,723 received year-to-date. The ESSER III award of \$835,519 for the school was approved in March 2022. \$30,383 was received in April.

At this time, Stephanie Westington entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through April 30, 2022, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by John Ezbiansky and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the April 2022 Financial Report as presented, with three Trustees absent.

2. HGMICS Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget John Marsico/Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George presented an overview of the budgeting process that commenced in February 2022. The budget development process was led by John Marsico, who collaborated with the School's budget managers in a zero-based approach that included input from teachers and others. Various functional areas of the School, such as Student Services Operations, I.T., Food Service, Facilities Administration, etc. submitted budget requests that were compiled by John Marsico and then reviewed on a line-item basis with the CEO. Several meetings were held with the Personnel Committee looking at salary data and with the Finance Facilities Committee looking at major budget parameters. A joint meeting of both Committees was held as well.

John Marsico then presented the proposal for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year budget. The Proposal comparatively lists the Approved FY21/22 Budget and Proposed FY22/23 Budget with the year-to-year increases/decreases listed in dollars and percentages. The \$5.2 million budget has a 4.06% net operating income and with a fully funded depreciation and a small amount of net income. For the Board's approval is the attached one-page Budget Proposal that conforms with the required financial format issued from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and will be submitted to PDE by June 30, 2022. John detailed the Major Budget Parameters for the Board starting with Enrollment, Health Benefits, Retirement, Salaries, Facilities, and Principal/Interest. Next, John reviewed the Fiscal Year 22-23 Budget Line Items under Revenue and Expenses.

At this time, Stephanie Westington entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School as presented. The motion was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Dino Galli. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the HGMICS Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget as presented, with three Trustees absent.

3. Expansion Project: Furniture and Furnishings Bidding Process Final Three Agreements Joe Ross

Joe Ross stated a formal bidding process was conducted in accordance with the Office of Management Budget Uniform Guidance Regulations. Three local vendors were chosen for furnishings going into classrooms, offices, and high traffic areas.

A **MOTION** was called to approve the purchase of classroom furniture from Phillips Supply Company at a cost not to exceed \$57,000 was made by Dr. Clarence

Lamanna and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of the Phillips Supply Company purchase agreement, with three Trustees absent.

A **MOTION** was called to approve the purchase of office furniture from Stone Office Equipment at a cost not to exceed \$31,000 was made by Sam Ceccacci and seconded by Dino Galli. All Trustees present voted in favor of the Stone Office Equipment purchase agreement, with three Trustees absent.

A **MOTION** was called to approve the purchase of furniture and furnishings for high traffic areas from BMC Office Equipment at a cost not to exceed \$39,000 was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by John Ezbiansky. All Trustees present voted in favor of the BMS Office Equipment purchase agreement, with three Trustees absent.

V. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci reported the Personnel Committee met on Tuesday, May 3, 2022. The Committee discussed two retirements effective June 2022, Elizabeth Briganti and Lupita McFarland. The Committee discussed and gave recommendations on employee recognition for those with five to ten years of service at the School. Also discussed was the Annual Performance Evaluations, which are linked to employee job descriptions and are due to be completed, including an evaluation for Dr. Marie George as the CEO. Finally, the Committee talked about the need to expand the position of Director of Student Services from ten to twelve months, effective July 1, 2022, to cover legally required summer work. The Personnel Report includes hiring a 10-month Paraprofessional/PCA to support the School's special education program. The full-time position becomes effective August 15, 2022. The cost associated with these expanded services would be covered by the ESSER II grant for at least two years.

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

VI. Development Committee

Susan Hennemuth

Susan Hennemuth reported the Development Committee met on April 27, 2022. The Committee discussed, which had been previously announced, the purchase of a new kitchen freezer for the School provided by the Parent Forum. A steamer and steamer table are still needed at the School. It was reported to the Committee that Julie Imel and Dr. Marie George met with the Scranton Area Foundation to see if a grant for these items would be possible. Other sources of donations were also discussed. The NEPA Gives fundraiser was an agenda topic and how the HGMCIS Board of Trustees could participate as well as finding sponsors for other match donors in addition to the Hawk Family Foundation. The August 17th Ribbon

Cutting ceremony was reviewed and ideas for commemorative gifts were provided. Lastly, the Committee created a list of regional foundations that might be interested in donating towards Kindergarten play equipment for the School's playground.

VII. School Matters

1. Flexible Instructional Day (FID) Application

Dr. Marie George

Dr. Marie George reported the School is submitting a Flexible Instructional Day Application to enable the school on a yearly basis to offer up to five flexible instructional days. That application is due by June 1, 2022, and is submitted to the PA Department of Education. The Board is required to review the application and an Affirmation statement must be signed by the President of the Board of Trustees, Stephanie Westington.

At this time, Marie entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Flexible Instructional Day Application and Board's Affirmation Statement that will be submitted to the PA Department of Education by June 1, 2022. The motion was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the Flexible Instructional Day Application, with three Trustees absent.

2. Principal Report

TreeAnne McEnery

TreeAnne began her report by stating instructional staff and students are busy wrapping up the 2021-2022 school year. Final year field trips, projects, and planning for their new classroom spaces is the buzz. The annual field day held at Connell Park is scheduled for Friday, May 27, 2022. This year we welcome back parent volunteers to help with activities and serve schoolwide lunch.

While this year focused on approved comprehensive plan goals, implementing, and developing a Schoolwide Title I program and family engagement, new curriculum, and coaching, addressing learning loss and pandemic impacts on the emotional well-being of students, all while navigating enhanced mitigation efforts and student quarantine, the positive impact HGS teachers have had on their students is evident in their social and academic growth and achievement.

The School had a positive outcome of student participation in the 2022 PSSAs. Very few families requested an exemption from the test; however, we experienced high rates of absences during the testing windows resulting in many make-up tests. While make-up sessions are typical, many students had two to three tests or sections to complete. We predict this number of make-up tests to impact our overall scores.

The final CDT benchmarks will be completed by May 26, 2022.

With the Acadience presentation by our Schoolwide Title I Coordinator and Title I Specialists this evening, there is a greater context in these final percentages and understanding of Title goals related to these final scores.

The SRSA-funded Environmental Education programming for this year was a success. All classes accessed regional environmental education programs in both the Fall and Spring.

The School had two upper students that placed 1st and 2nd in the annual Lackawanna County Middle School Stock Market Challenge and Budget Game. Aiden H. led our school to victory by securing 1st place in the Lackawanna County Middle School Stock Market Challenge and 3rd place in the state! Aiden won \$130 total in Amazon gift cards and a Chromebook! Aiden began the challenge with \$100,000.00 and ended the game with a whopping \$176,015.34. The day before the competition ended, his total was over \$190,000.00. What a fabulous accomplishment! Raeleigh R. secured 2nd place in the Lackawanna County Budget Game with a final score of 31,638. In addition, Raeleigh received an Amazon gift card for \$50.

Annual Media and Design Competition. Two senior students, Makayla W. and Maeve J., won first place in the regional media and design competition and are eligible to move forward in the state competition, which they will attend at Dickinson College on May 25, 2022. TreeAnne wished both student's good luck.

The grant-funded afterschool Band has two performances scheduled to celebrate their first year. The students will play as a full ensemble on May 31, 2022, for band families and on June 1, 2022 at the schoolwide assemblies. Next year, there will be a beginning band afterschool program and a second-year group.

3. CEO Report

Dr. Marie George

For the first time this school year, our number of COVID-19 cases reached the 5% student population threshold over a fourteen-day period that PDE established as a basis for school closure and return to remote learning. HGMICS communicated to staff and families that a three-day remote learning period would take place on May 6th, 9th, and 10th. With students and faculty already using the Schoology learning management platform for assignments, a seamless transition to remote learning was made with the use of Zoom and Schoology. For the younger students, hard copy packages were sent home with them as well.

Mike Abballe was available during the remote days to address technology needs for all staff, students, and families. He received 12 family requests for assistance on May 6, two requests on May 9 and none on May 10; all were satisfactorily addressed. During the school closure instructional staff worked from home while deep cleaning of all student areas took place. Professional/administrative staff worked from the school. The three-day period spaced over a weekend that enabled quarantine periods for COVID cases to be completed and a seamless return to in-person on May 10th. In-door masking is now required and a limited number of visitors to the building. No parent complaints were received about the closure or return to masking for the balance of the school year, which will be 13 days as of May 17th.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee had its final meeting of the school year on May 5th. The areas covered in next year's Schoolwide Title IA, IIA, IVA Grants were reviewed, and input provided. The Schoolwide Plan for 2022-2023 will be submitted to PDE for their

approval by June 1st. Goals and Action Plans carryover from the 3-year Comprehensive Plan submitted June 2021. The opportunity to revise next year's goal and quarterly targets is available and will be discussed with the Department Chairs. The Committee was then briefed on the end of the year academic results and progress made towards the targets and goal for 21-22. The data reviewed was based upon the latest administration of the Acadience assessment. Goals and results were then discussed as well as strategies planned for next year.

The four-year cycle for federal monitoring of PA public schools was reviewed; HGMICS is in cycle 3 with a monitoring visit slated for the 2023-24 school year. The Committee was informed that TreeAnne will take on the role of Federal Program Coordinator for the 2022-23 school year in light of her role in leading the Title I Schoolwide academic program. All members were thanked for their contributions and commitment to the Committee's work. CPC meetings will resume in early Fall and include the Committee's input into the next strategic plan.

The PBIS team recently completed the annual self-assessment, based upon national benchmarks and standards. The representative from our Intermediate Unit (NEIU-19) will visit prior to the end of the school year to conduct the annual on-site review that includes observations and interviews of staff and students. The self-assessment indicates fidelity to the majority of standards with more work needed, as presented to the Board at their April Educational Session, on data collection and reporting. The purchase of Navigate 360 is expected to address this area beginning next year.

The Student of the Month Assembly for May was recently held – one each for the Elementary and Middle School students. In addition to a performance from the Pep Squad, all student awards were presented by Champ, from the Rail Riders. One final Assembly is planned on June 1st.

Based upon the School's participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), an award to compensate for the increase in food costs was recently announced. The Food Supply award amount granted to HGMICS is \$10,674. and was received on May 13, 2022; the award must be expensed by June 30, 2023, and detailed accounting for allowable costs/purchases will be kept by our Food Service Supervisor, Dawn Miller and Operations Manager, Patty Biko.

Just a reminder that the Waiver Program expires after this year when all students received free lunches, regardless of eligibility. Next year only low-income eligible students will receive free or reduced (\$.40) lunches and all others will pay the full amount (yet to be determined) but previously had been \$3.15.

With a more diverse, student friendly menu, we are hopeful that the current participation rate that averages 100/day will continue and even increase. The breakfast snack provided this year averaged 35 students each day thus justifying the need for the School to offer Breakfast. Next year, a full breakfast will be offered and will be reimbursable through the NSLP. Afterschool snacks will continue as well as expanded a la carte items, adult lunch, and catering options. The school's a la carte options has substantially increased with revenue, year to date at \$11,120., compared to previous years at \$2500.

Despite the Waiver Program, all HGMICS families were encouraged to complete their certification application in the event there would be available services/reimbursement. Notification was just received that reimbursement may be available through the Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Program (P-EBT) for NSLP low-income eligible students who were absent this year due to COVID illness/quarantine and unable to receive school lunches. A webinar explaining this year's P-EBT program will be attended by Patty Biko.

On June 2nd at 6 p.m. the eighth-grade graduation ceremony will be held on the school campus with Dr. Sunny Weiland as commencement speaker. There are 21 graduates this year and after graduation, a reception hosted by the Parent Forum will be held for the graduates and their families.

End of year surveys included a staff climate survey and professional development survey with almost 100% participation in each. Regarding responses the climate survey, additional staff programming is under discussion for 2022-23. PDE is targeting educator wellness as a significant area of concern and supports using federal and state grants to address this area. Additional ways to recognize employees was recently discussed with the Personnel Committee.

Suppi Chandrahiri, Instructional Assistant in Upper III (5/6 grade) is currently in India visiting family but while visiting, she experienced a severe fall and is now recuperating from surgery. Suppi is beloved by all staff and students, she is a passionate and dedicated employee who develops strong bonds with students and considers HGMICS her American family. While bed-ridden, she requested to assist her lead teacher, Kim Wall, during the 3-day remote learning. Imagine the students' surprise in seeing Suppi joining from India for their Zoom classes.

Marlene Richardson, an experienced Behavioral Technician, will fill the new position of Paraprofessional/PCA for the 2022-23 school year and assist in providing required special education services for designated students. Marlene will report to Cathy Opshinsky, Director Student Services.

Two long-serving and dedicated Instructional Assistants, Betsy Briganti and Pita McFarlane, will retire at the end of this school year. Their service pre-dates 2012 when the school was chartered to school's private school days. Our end of the year celebration will recognize their years of service. Of special importance will be 72 student notes from the 1st/2nd graders identifying in words and art, what they think Pita and Betsy will do upon retirement – endearing, funny and creative responses. In honor of all our Instructional Staff, a weeklong recognition took place during Teacher Appreciation week (May2-6) that included surprise notes/gifts, a Cara Mia lunch from the Parent Forum, Cinco de Mayo Taco bar and a breakfast from Zummo's from TreeAnne and me. Additionally, our two school nurses, Amy Ryan, RN and part time nurse, Kathy Racavich, LPN were recognized in numerous ways on May 11th, School Nurse recognition day.

Following the approval of the 2022-23 Budget, staff will be informed of salary increases for next year. For all ten-month employees, who are the majority of employees, increases are effective August 15th. All other employees' increases are effective July 1, 2022.

VIII. 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 8:43 p.m., no further items of business or comments had been raised. A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna. Adjournment was accepted by all Trustees present, with three Trustees absent. Stephanie thanked everyone for attending.

The next HGMICS Public Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 21, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.**

