

Howard Gardner MI Charter School

Public Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, June 20, 2023. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. 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: Sam Ceccacci, John Ezbiansky, Laila Kane, Michael Barbetti, Wayne Evans, Laurie Cadden, Dino Galli, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna and Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. Also in attendance: Dr. Marie George, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; John Marsico, Business Manager; Joe Ross, CEO Designate; and Mykenna Hickey, Administrative Assistant.

Stephanie Westington announced that no visitors were present.

I. Minutes

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington presented the May 16, 2023, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the May 16, 2023, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. 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 May 16, 2023, minutes as submitted.

II. President's Report

Stephanie Westington

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance to the June 2023 Public Board meeting. Stephanie noted that this meeting marks the end of another successful school year and the bittersweet end of service for two exceptional trustees – Laila Kane, Secretary, and John Ezbiansky, Treasurer. Both were thanked for their exceptional leadership and service to the school and to the board.

Stephanie also thanked Dr. Marie George for her leadership and direction over the years, as this was Dr. George's last meeting as the school's CEO. The Trustees will celebrate and bid farewell to Laila, John and Marie with dinner at the Country Club of Scranton on Thursday, July 6th.

Finally, Stephanie reviewed the school's 8th grade graduation ceremony on June 1, 2023. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, congratulations and well wishes were given to all graduates.

III. HGMICS Educational Session – “Schoolwide Data Review 2022-2023 Benchmark and PSSA Results”

TreeAnne McEnery. Principal

TreeAnne McEnery, Principal, began her presentation by reviewing all data received within the past two weeks regarding benchmark and PSSA results. This data, which supports the school’s comprehensive plan, is evidence of the growth in the educators and students. Overall, the students’ achievement is steady. Progress has been made in mathematics grades 4, 5, 7, 8. TreeAnne reported that steady progress in literacy is linked to the implementation of ARC curriculum.

TreeAnne described several internal assessment tools used by teachers, interventionists and specialists for benchmarking literacy and mathematics. Literacy is benchmarked by Amplify Reading (DIBELS 8), Grades K-6, and Aimsweb Reading, Grades 7-8. Mathematics is benchmarked by Amplify Mathematics, Grades K-3, and Aimsweb Mathematics, Grades 4-8. TreeAnne mentioned that, moving forward, Acadience will replace Aimsweb to improve capabilities for regular education teachers and specialists. These internal assessment tools are used at least three times per year in addition to annual PSSA testing. All students receiving targeted interventions are progress monitored on a more frequent basis.

TreeAnne highlighted several initiatives put into place for the 2022-2023 school year. Specialists, interventionists, an elementary science position and rearrangement of teachers were implemented for student benefit. Grades 3-8 science was increased to 5 days per week, as compared to 3-4 days per week in prior school years. Screeners were implemented to identify students in need of social-emotional supports. An academic grouping program was piloted in Grades 7 & 8 (Senior Pod). Frequent meetings between the Pods and Principal were also established.

Data from Amplify and Aimsweb was reviewed for Grades K-8. TreeAnne praised the work of the Kindergarten teachers, interventionists and specialists for the tremendous growth that was seen in the Kindergarten Pod this year. Many Kindergarten students began the school year with little to no formal education, and now 75% of those students are now first-grade reading level.

At this time, TreeAnne opened the floor for questions. Stephanie Westington, Board President, asked how a student’s benchmark score affects the student’s academic plan for the school year. TreeAnne responded by stating benchmarking scores are nationally normed while the PSSAs are normed against all Pennsylvania students. The benchmark scores do not inform the curriculum; this would come from the PSSAs directly. Ultimately the goal is to get the student to grade-level. Sam Ceccacci, Trustee, then asked what influenced the lack of preschool education in the 2022-2023 Kindergarten students. TreeAnne stated the COVID-related decisions by other school districts, including closures and cyber schooling, ultimately

affected the preschool education. She is impressed by the incoming 2023-2024 Kindergarten students, as they are well-equipped to begin Kindergarten in the fall.

Moving forward, TreeAnne presented the schoolwide PSSA data for Grades 3-8, comparing this year's scores to three prior school years. Currently 65% of Grades 3-8 are at or above proficiency in Literacy. Data from other school districts will become available in the fall, allowing us to compare our scores to theirs. The remarkable growth in literacy is attributed to the stellar literacy teachers. All Middle School teachers are certified in ELA. PVAAS scores will also be reviewed in the fall, and we are expected to surpass the state's monitoring requirements.

Last year, 26% of students were at or above proficiency in mathematics. This year, 30% of students are at or above proficiency, which is evidence of continued growth in student performance in mathematics.

One goal for our 2021-2024 Comprehensive Plan was to exhibit growth in science. Based on the 2022 and 2023 PSSA science scores, scores show significant growth in student performance in science, with an average of 10-15%.

TreeAnne presented the Schoolwide initiatives for the 2023-2024 school year. Key initiatives include implementation of the Universal Design of Learning (UDL) by NEIU19. A "What Is Needed (WIN)" period has been added to all Pod schedules, at which time Tier III students will be pulled out of their classroom for interventions. The WIN period will prevent students from missing direct instruction in their core subjects. Another initiative is the implementation of *Handwriting without Tears* for Grades K-4. Another initiative is to review and recommend a new math curriculum for Grades K-6 to increase mastery and proficiency in this subject. Lastly, a science coach from the NEIU19 will be working with teachers.

The state of Pennsylvania recently made the decision to require schools to participate in Anti-Bias and Restorative Practices training, both of which will be offered this year to our instructional staff.

At this time, TreeAnne opened the floor for questions. Wayne Evans, Trustee, asked if COVID has affected other school districts' data. While the data is not available for our review just yet, TreeAnne confirmed that all schools were affected negatively by COVID. Stephanie Westington, Board President, commended the scores which reflect the growth seen post-COVID. Dr. Clarence Lamanna, Trustee, commended the school's internal tracking methods which allows for adjustments to be made as needed during the school year, rather than waiting until the end of the year.

All Trustees thanked TreeAnne for her presentation.

IV. Finance/Facilities Committee

John Ezbiansky

John Ezbiansky reported the Finance/Facilities Committee met last week. A letter was received from the Pennsylvania Department of Education accepting our 2021-2022 single audit.

1. May 2023 Financial Report

John Marsico

Revenues for May 2023 of \$505,755 are \$17,326 higher than the revenues for April 2023. Tuition revenue remains consistent with what we bill to the school districts. In May, the Howard Gardner Charter School Foundation Board of Directors approved \$34,426 to be transferred to the School's General Checking account. This amount represented monies that were donated to the school but held in the Foundation account despite the dollars having been spent during the period of 7/1/2022 through 5/31/2023 through the school's general operating fund. This transfer was recorded as Donation Income in the month of May 2023. In addition, the Howard Gardner Parent Forum donated \$8,000 in proceeds from its 1st Annual Walk-A-Thon fundraiser to be used for playground equipment. Otherwise, revenues for the month of May 2023 were as anticipated.

Expenses for May 2023 of \$404,506 are \$74,910 lower than the expenses for April 2023. This is as expected again due to the billing issues encountered by PPL. Once again, we did not receive a March 2023 electricity bill. PPL has corrected the issue and we paid two months of bills in April 2023. In addition, two months of health insurance bills were posted to the system in the month of April. The second month's bills were not paid until the first week of May, but the expense was recorded in April. This is simply a result of when the bills are posted. Finally, a reduction in expenses is anticipated during each school year's end.

The Net Operating Income for May 2023 is \$101,249, as compared to Net Operating Income of \$9,013 in April 2023, with a fiscal year-to-date Net Operating Income of \$573,895. This is as expected for the month of May 2023 for the reasons above. We did receive an additional \$15,191 in ARP ESSER funding in the month of May 2023, otherwise Title and ESSER funding received, as well as the National School Lunch Program, remained consistent for May 2023.

The school had \$710,027 in cash at the end of May 2023. This is \$280,133 lower than the balance at the end of April 2023. We anticipated this reduction in cash due to the fact we knew we would not be receiving the May redirection payment from Scranton, Dunmore, Mid-Valley, and Old Forge school districts until 6/1/23 in the amount of \$349,393.06. We continue to make principal and interest payments on the Construction Loan in the amount of \$25,035.47 per month. The amounts being applied to principal and interest each month are based on a 20-year amortization schedule for a \$4,500,000 loan at an annual percentage rate of 2.99%. The amortization schedule was provided by Baker Tilly and is being compared

and reconciled, if necessary, monthly to the Construction Loan bank statement. The principal balance outstanding after the May 2023 payment is \$4,402,118.

At this time, Stephanie Westington entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through May 31, 2023, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. Stephanie called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the May 2023 Financial Report, as presented.

2. Hamlin Motor Sports Vehicle Purchase

John Marsico

Stephanie Westington entertained a **MOTION** to approve the purchase of a 2023 Polaris ATV/UTV in the amount of \$17,084.00 from Hamlin Motor Sports. The motion was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. John Ezbiansky called for any questions or comments, not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the purchase of a 2023 Polaris ATV/UTV in the amount of \$17,084.00, as presented.

3. Conte Paving and Construction Parking Lot Resurfacing

John Marsico

Stephanie Westington entertained a **MOTION** to approve the cost of resurfacing the employee parking lot by Conte Paving and Construction in the amount of \$43,450.00. The motion was made by Michael Barbetti and seconded by Wayne Evans. John Ezbiansky called for any questions or comments. Not hearing any, all Trustees present voted in favor of approving the cost of resurfacing the employee parking lot by Conte Paving and Construction in the amount of \$43,450.00, as presented.

V. Academic Committee

Dr. Clarence Lamanna

Dr. Clarence Lamanna stated the Academic Committee did not meet in June.

A **MOTION** to approve the revised HGMICS Family Engagement Policy as submitted was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Sam Ceccacci. All Trustees present voted in favor of the HGMICS Family Engagement Policy, as presented.

VI. Personnel Committee

Sam Ceccacci

Sam Ceccacci stated the Personnel Committee met on June 6, 2023, to discuss several personnel updates.

A **MOTION** to approve the June 2023 Personnel Report as reported and submitted was made by Laila Kane and seconded by Dino Galli. All Trustees present voted in favor of approving the personnel report as presented.

VII. Nominating Committee

Laurie Cadden

Laurie presented the Nominating Committee's recommendations for the Slate of Officers for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School Board of Trustees. These officers will each serve for the year beginning July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. The Slate of Officers includes Stephanie Westington, President; Sam Ceccacci, Vice President; Dino Galli, Secretary; and Michael Barbetti, Treasurer.

A **MOTION** to accept the Slate of Officers for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School Board of Trustees as presented was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Wayne Evans. All Trustees present voted in favor of accepting the Slate of Officers for the Howard Gardner MI Charter School Board of Trustees as presented.

VIII. School Matters

Dr. Marie George

1. Annual Safety Report

Dr. George presented the Annual Safety Report, as is customary each June prior to submission to PDE and PCCD. This report was prepared by Joe Ross, Safety Coordinator, and Dr. George. Several school safety benefits were noted: PBIS, MTSS, SEL curriculum, the implementation of a Safety Committee and efficient adjustments to student arrival and dismissal. Dr. George highlighted the school's positive engagement with local law enforcement, including training with more coming next school year. Safety initiatives established this year include active shooter training, emergency response training for administrative staff and emergency response flip charts issued to all staff members. Two staff members are certified TACT2 instructors. Dr. George also mentioned the recently constructed annex which directly connects the Kindergarten pod to the school, eliminating disruption in the Primary II classroom.

Short-term safety goals include increased signage, improved landscaping, expansion of the student and staff wellness program, provision of additional two-way radios to staff, evacuation drills including a rally site, establishing a unification site and additional trauma response training. One long-term goal mentioned was the implementation of a School Resource Officer.

2. CEO Update

Dr. George thanked the Board for the tremendous support extended to her throughout the years and reflected on the wonderful memories and accomplishments she has made during her time at Howard Gardner MI Charter School. She also noted how rare and wonderful it was to work with a Board who provided her with so much support from the beginning of her journey.

Joe Ross happily announced on behalf of the staff that a nomination was submitted for Dr. Marie George to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award through the PA Coalition of Public Charter Schools.

IX. New Business

Stephanie Westington

At this time, Stephanie Westington asked if there was any New Business. John Ezbiansky expressed his thanks to the entire Board of Trustees for the terrific foundation this school provides to all students. TreeAnne McEnery also shared her gratitude to Dr. Marie George for the wonderful leadership she has provided during her tenure as CEO. Following these remarks, Stephanie Westington moved on to adjournment of the meeting.

Adjournment

At 8:11 p.m., Stephanie Westington adjourned the meeting.

A HGMICS Public Board meeting is not scheduled for July 2023. The next Public Board meeting will be held on **Tuesday, August 15, 2023.**