

## **Howard Gardner MI Charter School**

### **Public Board Meeting**

Tuesday, January 16, 2024

The Howard Gardner MI Charter School (HGMICS) held a public Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. Stephanie Westington, President, called the meeting to order at 7:03 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: Michael Barbetti, Dino Galli, Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe, Laurie Cadden, Al Dorunda, Wayne Evans, Susan Hennemuth, Dr. Clarence Lamanna, and Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen. Absent from the meeting: Sam Ceccacci.

Also in attendance: Joe Ross, CEO; TreeAnne McEnery, Principal; John Marsico, Business Manager, and Deana Bonacci, Assistant to the CEO.

Stephanie Westington announced that no visitors were present.

#### **I. Minutes**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington presented the November 21, 2023, Board of Trustees meeting minutes and asked for approval. A **MOTION** to approve the November 21, 2023, Board meeting minutes, as submitted, was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Dino Galli. 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 to approve the November 21, 2023, minutes as submitted with one Trustee absent.

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

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington welcomed everyone in attendance at the January 2024 Public Board meeting. Stephanie welcomed Principal, TreeAnne McEnery back from her trip to Hong Kong and stated the Board was looking forward to hearing more details about her trip later in the meeting.

Stephanie continued by announcing the application process for the 2024-2025 school year has begun and Joe Ross has informed her that quite a few applications have been received. Stephanie then stated the week of January 22<sup>nd</sup> is School Choice Week and the School will be hosting an Open House on Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 6:00 PM.

#### **III. HGMICS Educational Session – “Middle School Pods – Mindsets and Differentiated Instruction”**

**Mr. Jon Iannone**

**Senior Math Teacher**

Mr. Jon Iannone presented on how to change the mindsets of his students and how to approach Mathematics from a different perspective.

**IV. Finance/Facilities Committees**

**Michael Barbetti**

**1. Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Financial Audit**

**Michael Barbetti**

Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the **Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Financial Audit**, submitted by the accounting firm of Baker Tilly LLC. The motion was made by Stephanie Westington and seconded by Suzanne Ambrogio-Jaffe. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the FY 2022-2023 Financial Audit, with one Trustee absent.

**2. December 2023 Financial Report**

**John Marsico**

Fiscal year to date revenues for the period ending 12/31/2023 were \$2,891,475 as compared to \$2,950,903 for the same time in 2022. Revenues for the period ending 12/31/2023 were slightly lower than 12/31/2022 due to the influx of ESSER II funding in 2022. Fiscal year to date expenses for the period ending 12/31/2023 were \$3,070,025 as compared to \$2,645,821 for the same time in 2022. Expenses for the period ending 12/31/2023 were higher than 12/31/2022 due in part to the addition of a Speech Pathologist to our staff. Additionally, enhancements to both the landscaping and the security for the building were made in 2023 and food costs have increased in 2023 as well. Our legal expenses have also increased due to the Title IX investigations that have taken place. Finally, an effort was made to spend down the Titles I/II/IV and ESSER II grants by 9/30/2023. The fiscal year to date Net Operating (Loss) for the period ending 12/31/2023 was \$(178,550), as compared to Net Operating Income of \$305,082 for the same time in 2022 for the reasons noted above. In addition, depreciation expense for the 6 months ending 12/31/23 of \$117,000 was recorded, whereby it was not recorded for the same time period in 2022. We did receive the final 2022-2023 Title I and ESSER II funding during the month of December 2023, however, these had previously been recorded as income and a receivable as of 6/30/23 as part of the annual audit. This receipt of this \$95,891.90 was recorded as a credit to the receivable. 2023-2024 Titles I/II/IV payments resumed in December 2023. Our ESSER III and Set-Aside payments as well as our NSLP payment remained consistent. The school had \$764,294 in cash as of 12/31/23 as compared to \$1,172,944 as of 12/31/2022. This decrease is primarily because of the increase in operational expenses over the prior year. 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 November 2023 payment is \$4,304,363.

Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Financial Report through December 31, 2023, as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Laurie Cadden and seconded by Dino Galli. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the December 2023 Financial Report, as presented, with one Trustee absent.

### **3. Revised HGMICS Capitalization Policy**

**Michael Barbetti**

Michael Barbetti entertained a **MOTION** to approve the Revised HGMICS Capitalization Policy as presented. The motion was made by Susan Hennemuth and seconded by Dino Galli. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the revised HGMICS Capitalization Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

## **V. Academic Committee**

**Dr. Clarence Lamanna**

### **1. Annual Review of the HGMICS Discipline of Students with Disabilities Policy**

Dr. Clarence Lamanna made a **MOTION** to approve the HGMICS Discipline of Students with Disabilities Policy as presented. The motion was made by Dino Galli and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the review of the HGMICS Discipline of Students with Disabilities Policy as presented with one Trustee absent.

### **2. Annual Review of the HGMICS Exceptional Student Record Policy**

Dr. Clarence Lamanna made a **MOTION** to approve the HGMICS Exceptional Student Record Policy as presented. The motion was made by Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen and seconded by Laurie Cadden. All Trustees voted in favor of accepting the review of the HGMICS Exceptional Student Record Policy as presented, with one Trustee absent.

## **VI. Personnel Committee Committee**

**Stephanie Westington**

### **1. January 2024 Personnel Report**

**Stephanie Westington**

Stephanie Westington made a **MOTION** to approve the January 2024 Personnel Report as reported and submitted. The motion was made by Dr. Clarence Lamanna and seconded by Susan Hennemuth. All Trustees voted in favor of approving the personnel report as presented, with one Trustee absent.

## **VII. Nominating Committee**

**Laurie Cadden**

Laurie Cadden gave an update about the Nominating Committee and their search for prospective Board members.

## **VIII. School Matters**

### **1. Administrative Updates**

**Joe Ross**

#### **CEO UPDATES – Joe Ross**

Happy New Year! The month of December was an exciting time for our school. As you are aware TreeAnne McEnery had the distinguished honor to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual International Multiple Intelligence Panel discussion in Hong Kong. As expected, TreeAnne did a phenomenal presentation. During a December staff meeting, she shared her presentation with the staff who were impressed with the quality and material contained in the presentation. This enabled our entire community to take a step back and marvel at the accomplishments that we are making daily. As is becoming tradition at HGMICS, we celebrated the 12 Days of Holiday Cheer which culminated with student versus teacher games and competitions. On behalf of the entire staff, we would like to thank the Board of Trustees for sponsoring a delicious lunch!

One new addition to the 12 days was a staff day of giving. On this day, the staff made donations from an item list for the Women's Resource Center. Also, our student council and newspaper group collected mittens and essential items that were donated to the NEPA youth shelter. Our eight student ambassadors and 15 staff members volunteered at the annual Feed a Family Thanksgiving food distribution event at the Scranton Cultural Center in Scranton. These activities are aligned with the Approaching 2030 Strategic Plan to partner with community organizations to increase HGMICS in the community.

The fall enrichment programs were widely attended by our students and were successfully completed in early December. Our sports program is in full swing. In the winter, we sponsor 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls' and boys' basketball and have a cheerleading squad that performs at all the games. Band has been one of our more populated and attended extracurricular activities. Preparations are underway for our spring enrichment programs and cross-country team.

HGMICS continues to present a plethora of opportunities to our students.

#### **Grants and Donations**

HGMICS received a \$1,000 EITC donation from Fidelity Bank. The Scranton Education Improvement Organization provided a \$6,000 donation in December and a \$3,500 donation in January. The SIO director also indicated they will be receiving a donation from Honesdale National Bank that is earmarked for HGMICS.

#### **Admission/Lottery**

January 2024 begins the admissions process for the 2024-2025 school year. The admission application for new students was made available on the website on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. The application is electronic and is housed in our student information system, Sycamore. Notification was sent to

all current families to identify siblings who may be interested in enrolling. As of 1/11/24, we have 119 applications submitted. As part of school choice week, we will hold an Open House on Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. The Student Ambassadors will be part of the Open House presentation. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2024. The lottery will be conducted on March 6, 2024, to fill all available space.

### **Personnel Updates**

Our staff member who was on maternity leave returned to work on January 2, 2024. This return, combined with the hiring of Renee Rinehimer who was electronically approved by the Board of Trustees for a Kindergarten teaching position, brought the school back to being fully staffed and also allowed two teachers to return to their original building substitute positions, increasing flexibility in coverage.

### **PRINCIPAL UPDATES – TreeAnne McEnery Third International MI Education Forum**

With over 14 keynote speakers and 22 schools implementing MI globally present at the conference, the environment was energized with educational collaboration and innovation. One of the primary takeaways from the forum was how many schools demonstrated MI through gifted and talented programs or programs that deliberately seek out neurodiverse students. Due to this predominance, I highlighted how HGS integrates and strives to offer experiences of all MI for all K-8 students, preparing them for more specialized focus in middle and high school. This is an essential factor for the school to highlight and capitalize on, as we were the only MI school present at the forum that did not make students specialize in an MI. Additionally, a question raised across all schools was how to assess MI. I think HGS has opportunities to explore assessment more directly as it relates to MI, which is also one of the strategic goals.

**Schoolwide Title I Winter Family Engagement Event: Science Education** was scheduled for January 9, 2024; we had to postpone the event due to inclement weather.

### **2024-2025 Schoolwide Budgeting**

Departments and Pods are in the budgeting process for the 2024-2025 school year. The mathematics department will transition from Everyday Mathematics to Reveal Mathematics, and the Literacy department plans to transition from American Reading Company to Wit & Wisdom. The remaining non-personnel ESSER III funds will cover both curricula.

**Trimester II Mid-trimester Progress Reports** will be released for middle school students on Monday, January 22.

**Middle of the Year benchmarking** for reading, mathematics, behavior, and social-emotional learning is being conducted. Academic benchmark results will be mailed home to families; if a student is eligible for tiered support, a letter informing families is included with the benchmark report.

### **Schoolwide Title I & Comprehensive Plan Performance Report**

1. In 2022-2023, students scoring proficient in science grades 4&8 will increase by 2%.  
Performance: PVAAS growth measures for grades 4&8 was 3%, exceeding the goal by 1% and PSSA achievement for grades 4&8 was 2.8%, exceeded goal by eight- tenths%.
2. The school will host five family engagement events.  
Performance: We met the goal by holding five in-person family engagement events: the science of reading, mathematics education, schoolwide Title I, schoolwide data, and Reading and mathematics adventure.
3. The school will provide on-site mathematics and literacy coaching.  
Performance: Monthly and bi-monthly coaching was offered for the literacy and mathematics teachers and interventions throughout the school year.
4. PSSA scores will increase for economically disadvantaged subgroups in ELA & mathematics by 3% in each subject.  
Performance: Economically disadvantaged scores for mathematics increased by 4.2%, exceeding the goal by 1.2%. Economically disadvantaged scores for ELA increased by 8.3%, exceeding the goal by 5.3%.

### **2024-2027 Schoolwide Title I & Comprehensive Planning Timeline**

(The timeline has been updated since the agenda was sent to CPC on 1.5.24.)

- Timeline for completion: April 10, 2024
- Draft Presented to BoT April meeting.
- 30-day Public Comment: April 17-May 16, 2024
- Board Approval Final Approval: May BoT Meeting, 2024
- Submit the plan by June 3, 2023.

**2024 National School Choice Week.** The annual School Choice Open House is scheduled for Wednesday, January 24. Registration is currently open for all interested families during the open enrollment period.

This will be the fifth open house that HGS has hosted. Every year, more and more families attend the evening to learn more about a charter school, the HGS academic program, student services, and the admission process. We look forward to another great outcome. Additionally, Mr. Ross and I have MI gifts for the school and hope to have an MI Spirit Week for students and staff.

### **DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES UPDATES – Cathy Opshinsky**

On January 26th, Howard Gardner MI Charter School will implement the Safe Touches Program. Safe Touches is an evidence-based, child sexual abuse prevention program designed for children in Kindergarten through third grade. The Safe Touches program is being offered to Howard Gardner Primary Students this year and other county school districts through a grant awarded to the Children's Advocacy Center of NEPA.

As part of this initiative, a parent/guardian component to the Safe Touched Program will be offered to Parents and Guardians of Howard Gardner MI Charter School on January 25th at 6 pm in the Link. Registration is limited to 20 parents/guardians for this evening program. The Pilot Project, Project Safe and Smart, is supported by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and The Child Maltreatment Solutions Network at Penn State University.

Over 14,000 students in Pennsylvania have received the Safe Touches Workshop. State-trained and certified facilitators from the Children's Advocacy Center of NEPA will present a 50-minute workshop in all Primary classrooms, with the Teacher and School Counselor present.

Developmentally appropriate content about body safety will be presented to students using puppets. Also, children learn tools to utilize to protect themselves in unsafe situations. Following the workshop, students will receive a Safe Touched activity booklet to bring home and complete with a parent or caregiver. The booklet reinforces the safety concepts learned in the workshop and Facilitates conversations at home about body safety.

The parents have the opportunity to opt their child out of this program.

Homeless Monitoring - In early November the virtual McKinney-Vento (Homeless) monitoring assessment was completed for Howard Gardner. Jade Flynn, School counselor and Homeless liaison completed a 40-page monitoring tool to document the data about the implementation and compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act. The sections included in the monitoring were:

1. Homeless Liaison responsibilities
2. LEA responsibilities
3. Title 1A
4. Federal Funding
5. ECYEH Training and Support

## 6. Reporting

Annual monitoring results are compiled and submitted to the Center for Schools and Communities and PDE for review and follow-up. We are pleased to report that out of the 70 possible points awarded, our school received 68. The only area we needed to improve on was updating our Student/Family Handbook with updated McKinney Vento information and including a definition for unaccompanied youth. Jade will also be working on updating the current Homeless Policy.

### **DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS UPDATES – Patty Moraski**

**PIMS Reporting:** A PIMS Internal Snapshot to collect data for the PSSA Precodes and Winter Keystone Reporting #1 is scheduled for January 18th. These Internal Snapshots are PDE-generated student snapshots based on the Staff, Student, and School Enrollment template data uploaded to the PIMS data warehouse. PIMS is actively updated with data changes ensuring snapshots are accurate. HGMICS does not participate in Winter keystones. 217 students in grades 3-8 are coded for the Spring PSSA Assessments. The ACS will be signed off and submitted after 1/18.

PDE will also be pulling Staff, Student, and School Enrollment information for the PVAAS vendor (SAS EVAAS) from PIMS on January 18th. Staff information, which comes from PIMS Staff template data, will be used to create new PVAAS School User accounts. Student information, which comes from PIMS Student and School Enrollment template data, will be used to update the student population available for review in the PVAAS reporting system. The PVAAS platform provides teacher and administrators access to student level projections to proficiency for PSSA, Keystone, AP, PSAT, ACT and SAT. No ACS

**Food Service** The School Nutrition Programs (SNP) Administrative Review (AR) off-site assessment was completed November 9th. Area covering the following: Financial Management, Eligibility Determination and Verification Processes, Wellness Policy, Menu Planning and Nutrient Analysis, Meal Counting and Claiming, Professional Standards.

The on-site portion of the review was conducted on January 9th. The representative from PDE observed the meal service of lunch and breakfast and met with the food service staff. Additionally HGMICS provided a binder supporting daily meal counts corresponding with reimbursement, onsite monitoring by LEA, school Food Safety Plan/SOP/Food Inspections, menus and production, the processing of Free and Reduced Household applications, Verification, etc. HGMICS received technical assistance in the Financial Management portion of the Off-Site Review and corrections were addressed. While On-Site, PDE was pleased with how our school executes a high level of compliance operating the program. The school will be reviewed again in the 2029/30 SY.

Supply Chain Assistance Funds - HGMICS received the fourth allocation of Supply Chain Assistance(SCA) to purchase unprocessed or minimally processed domestic food products to aid with the challenges



administering the Child Nutrition Programs in the 2023-2024 School Year. The awarded allocation was in the amount of \$12,211.20, received on December 13th.

**Admissions** The online portal for admissions was open to the public and current families on January 2nd. This process is done electronically the same as its first launch in the 2023-24 SY.

### **ASSISTANT BUSINESS MANAGER UPDATES – Renee Dougherty**

#### **Benefits**

Geisinger reached out and advised that they were lowering the quoted rates for 2024 by approximately 6 -8 percent.

#### **Development**

The sign for the playground was ordered this week.

#### **Enrollment**

We are updating the lottery process for the 2023-24 school year with a Random Number Generator.

The application process was opened on January 1 for incoming students. We currently have 120 applications for admission.

The lottery date is scheduled for March 6, 2024.

## **2. Hong Kong Recap**

**TreeAnne McEnery**

TreeAnne McEnery presented the Board with a recap of the time she spent in Hong Kong for the Multiple Intelligences seminar.

## **IX. New Business**

**Stephanie Westington**

At this time Stephanie Westington asked if there was any new business. Hearing none, she moved on to adjournment of the meeting.

#### **Adjournment**

At 7:53 p.m., Stephanie Westington called for a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting.

The next Public Board meeting will be held on **Tuesday, February 20, 2024.**