

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
May 28, 2013
7:00pm-9:00pm

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Our World Neighborhood Charter School was held on Tuesday, May 28, 2012 at 7:00 pm at the Elementary School of Our World Neighborhood Charter School (36-12 35th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11103).

The Trustees Present were:

Jeanette Betancourt, President
Steve Solinsky, Vice President and Treasurer
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary
Mary Bogle
Melissa Chin
Sara Geelan
Charles Guadagnolo
Jeff Maclin

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
Karinne Montaque, Business Manager
Mark Crusante, Development Director
Lucille Ranchor, Admissions Coordinator
Robin Newman, Director of Technology
Jayme Pabon, Teacher Representative
Sarah Espanol, PTO Co-Chair (term expiring at end of school year)
Olubunmi Emigli, incoming PTO Co-Chair
Sharon Mulligan, parent
Joshua Adland, prospective Board member

Jeanette Betancourt, President of OWNCS Board of Trustees, chaired the meeting.

Board of Trustees Business - Jeanette Betancourt

Board Membership

This was Sara Geelan's last meeting as a trustee, as she is starting a new job in Philadelphia next week. Her resignation will be effective May 31, 2013.

Joshua Adland, a prospective board member attended the meeting. Josh has met with several members of the board, and has visited the school. He took a few moments to introduce himself.

He has a Masters in Teaching and has worked as a teacher at a NYC Public High School in the Bronx with Teach for America and now works as a National Marketing Manager at Kaplan.

Director's Report - Brian Ferguson

NY State Accountability Report

The Executive Director circulated the report to the Board for review while it was still embargoed, and informed the Trustees that it is now public. He reviewed the key elements of OWNCS results: all accountability groups met “Annual Yearly Progress.” A couple of years ago, our Special Ed group did not meet the threshold and the school made shifts to increase staffing, review lesson plans, and to adopt an integrated team approach, increasing collaboration between the SPED team and the teachers. There is still room for growth, but solid progress has been made.

The Performance Index was also met across each category of students. Everyone is worried about how the shift in the NY State test to Common Core standards will affect results this year. The Commissioner is sending letters trying to anticipate lower scores. It is likely that future measurements / growth models used to assess student progress and evaluate teachers will need to shift. As discussed previously, it's hard to compare year over year progress of our students because the tests have changed several times. Therefore, comparing our students to the rest of the students in NY remains a more reliable approach. By this measure, OWNCS continues to outperform state averages.

In addition to comparing OWNCS students to all NY State students the report compares students to 74 “similar” students from the state – that is, students who scored the same way last year – to assess growth and the average increase/decrease in scores for that group. Lastly, it reviews the school in comparison to demographically similar schools. A comparison to the rest of our district has not been published yet.

One welcome new bit of information that we did not have data for before is that OWNCs science scores are very strong. The school has some concerns that 8th graders preparing for the 8th Grade Science test and the Regents would struggle, but they did very well on both tests. 81% of our students scored a 3 or 4; and 33% scored a 4.

The Board asked how we can go about sharing this information with the school community. The ED reminded the Board that the report has to be posted on our website. In addition, he will prepare a summary to include in a Fall letter to parents. The Principal recommended a “Have you heard?” approach to call attention to key elements of the report in small digestible bits that could contain links to the report itself for those who want more information, that was well received.

In the meantime the Education Committee will continue to review and analyze the results with the Administration and will identify any areas that require special focus and recommend any specific strategies, as needed.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

The State has indicated it would like to move to online testing by 2015. This has profound implications for infrastructure, hardware and student preparation, and has been under discussion at the Education Committee. PARCC has issued technology guidelines which were circulated to the full Board. The administration believes the State's goals are too ambitious and unlikely to be fully realized, and raised concerns about access and equity issues for school districts that don't have the funding to execute the guidelines. Nonetheless OWN wants to get ahead of the curve as much as possible, and is planning accordingly.

Facilities Committee Report - Brian Ferguson

Building Updates

The school is doing its annual analysis of summer plans. It has determined that the Elementary School needs a new AC unit, and that it cannot wait for possible building expansion plans.

EDC / RFP Status

The administration continues to reach out to city and state political representatives for support of our proposal to the EDC to expand the premises. The Executive Director had a good meeting with City Council Member Jimmy VanBramer and reviewed a two page summary of our proposal with him. The school is also working with state Congresswoman Carol Maloney and is requesting access to Senator Schumer, since he has been very helpful on other local EDC projects, and the Elementary School building is still federally owned by the Department of Interior.

Education Committee Report - Melissa Chin

Technology / Online Testing

The Committee noted the school has always been proactive when it comes to anticipating needs, and that it is now looking to take the same approach to preparing for online testing. For example it will start introducing a technology curriculum, including basic keyboarding skills starting with lower grades. Additional technology staff, expanded wireless bandwidth, new hardware and software will be needed, along with more teacher training. The Board should expect to see some of this reflected in the budget for the coming year.

The school's objective is to be ready school-wide, however, the Committee and Administration may recommend we scale up gradually, depending on budget. Online testing would start in 4th grade, but we will eventually need to plan for adapting the curriculum from Kindergarten up so that they will be ready by 4th grade.

OWN currently has IT network and infrastructure staff, but needs more instructional expertise to develop a technology curriculum. Furthermore, we do not currently have enough computers or enough bandwidth for all the students in several grades to take a test at the same time. We could only accommodate 3-4 classes at the moment. The school expects to start with enough for 2 grades to test simultaneously.

Scheduling 2013-2014 Classes

Over the last year, OWN has increased the number of Physical Education sections in the Elementary School, and is aiming to do the same in the Middle School this year. This may require additional staffing as well. The scheduling exercise is expected to be completed by the end of June, and recommendations will be built into the budget.

Development Committee Report - Mark Crusante

- The Annual Report was printed and has been mailed to a number of foundations.
- OWNCS joined a consortium of charter schools to apply for a federal grant for Physical Education. Our PE teacher, Ms. Pabon was particularly helpful in preparing the grant application.
- Some students from OWN were in a commercial about charter schools in shared school premises.
- The school applied for federal after-school funding, however rewards are being reduced due to sequestration, so NYSED is re-rating the applications, and the process has been delayed.
- The Board noted that it was prioritizing Development goals via the strategic plan.

Joint Finance & Audit Committee Report - Steven Solinsky

Third Quarter Financial Report

The Committee reported on its review of the unaudited financial statements for the quarter ended March 31, 2013, which was circulated to the full Board for review. As it follows close on the heels of the revised mid-year budget, it tracks very closely to expectations. There is nothing dramatic in under-spending that would indicate programs are not being done. The school is likely to close the fiscal year with a small surplus.

General Business

The Business office has begun work on the budget for the new fiscal year. The Treasurer reminded the Trustees, that we have spent money from our capital budget in support of an anticipated building project. If the project does not proceed, some of those expenses may need to be re-categorized.

The Committee has reviewed the new draft Policies & Procedures manual and recommends it for approval by the full Board. The manual clearly documents the solid practices of the Business Office, and lays out an annual review calendar for the Finance Committee as well. One item on that list is an annual review of the manual itself, so we may use that opportunity to continue to build on this foundation.

Faculty Report – Jayme Pabon

- The Middle School hosted a 3-day orientation for the 5th graders who will start at the Middle School next year.

- The after school Science Academy and Homework Help programs continue.
- The NY state testing is almost done, with only 4th and 8th grade science tests pending
- Over the next month students will take routine end of quarter assessments, and the 7th and 8th graders will take finals.
- Graduation practice is under way for the 8th graders.
- Year-end Danielson evaluations are wrapping up.
- The 4th grade sponsored a Spirit Week to raise funds for a field trip and raised enough to pay for the entire 4th grade to attend the trip.
- The annual Middle School science fair was a big success and had a great turn out.
- The Elementary School hosted a multicultural day, and the Middle School organized a multicultural night at which students performed African drumming, Greek plays and dances, and poetry by famous poets and by the students themselves.

PTO Report – Sarah Espanol

- The PTO held a very successful 10 year anniversary event – a joint Multicultural Day / Carnival Block on Saturday, May 4. It was a lot of fun, and PTO appreciated all the help they got from the staff.
- The PTO hosted its 2nd teacher luncheon of the year, and is planning a special 10 year anniversary celebration of the PTO at their June 7 meeting to honor parents and the teachers who help make the school a success.
- Ms. Espanol introduced the incoming PTO Co-Chair, Olubunmi Emigli.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the Third Quarter Financial Report.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the January, February and March bank reconciliations.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the new Financial Policies & Procedures Manual.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the October and November 2012, and January and April 2013 board minutes pending minor comments and edits.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees