

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday August 26, 2014
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
Middle School
31-20 37th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106
7:00 – 9:00

The Trustees present were:

Jeanette Betancourt, President
Steven Solinsky, Vice President and Treasurer
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary
Richard Bogle
Sarah Espanol
Charles Guadagnolo,

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
Karinne Montaque, Business Manager
Yvette Strachan, Executive Assistant
Olubunmi Emigli, PTO Co-Chair

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

Board Business

Jeanette Betancourt

Ms. Betancourt officially called the meeting to order. She thanked everyone for their participation at the strategic planning meeting in July, noting that it was a very productive meeting, and she will circulate notes shortly.

Ms. Betancourt asked the Secretary about the status of the minutes for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. The Secretary responded that some are overdue and that she has an up to date list of what is missing.

Director's Report

Brian Ferguson

Annual Report to NYSED and CSI / Initial Review of NYS ELA, Math, and Science Exam data

- The Annual Report was initially due on August 1 but the due date was changed to September 15 because data was missing. We have now received our state test results and they were circulated to the Board.

- Overall, the results were very positive. Not only did our students surpass the average state results, but grades 3-7 all scored higher than last year on average.
- Based on our results, NY State has designated OWNCS as a school in Good Standing for the 2014-2015 school year.
- As expected, the 8th grade math scores were down because our strongest 8th grade students took only the Regents math exam and those scores have not been included in the overall results. All the students who took the math Regents passed the exam, which would earn them at least a 3 on the state test scale. We are still awaiting guidance on how to incorporate the Regents results into our Annual Report to create a more accurate picture of our 8th grade students' performance. If we don't receive guidance before the due date, Mr. Ferguson intends to footnote the reasons for the falsely low results and provide correct data.
- Again, while all the students who took the Math and Science Regents passed the exam, the results on the math exam were considerably lower than expected due to big changes in the exam itself, and the fact that there were no review books available for this new format. We do not have any data yet about how students at other schools performed. A discussion ensued about how whether the curriculum could be adapted, and Mr. Ferguson replied that we do not have enough information about the subject matter to be covered on the test to be able to adapt the curriculum. Therefore, for now we will still teach a broad curriculum, and we may have to be even more selective about which students are allowed into the program. We may also have to revert to having our 8th grade honors students take both the Regents and the state tests.
- We had a higher number of students in the ELL and SPED categories last year. We made good progress with the ELL students and remained steady with our SPED students.
- Mr. Ferguson will provide additional detail in the Annual Report, and will tackle the data analysis and subsequent work plan with the Education Committee.

Staffing

- We started the school year fully staffed on the teaching side, including some traditionally hard-to-fill posts such as Mandarin, and the Elementary School Dean.
- Mr. Ferguson noted that he will circulate a full turnover report to the Board, but in the meantime shared some highlights about departing teachers and their reasons for leaving. Once again, the trends involved teachers accepting jobs in higher paying districts and/or with shorter commutes. For instance one moved to the highest paying district in the US, in Connecticut, where he also has family. Some of these were very strong teachers whom we had invested in over time, and their skills in the Danielson method and teacher training made them very attractive to other schools.
- The school was able to hire former student teachers and former Teaching Assistants who performed well. We have also had good luck hiring tenured DOE teachers who are seeking a change to the quality of their work life and a positive teaching environment.

Opening of 2014-2015 SY

- Mr. Ferguson was pleased to report that the new year is off to a solid start, and it runs more smoothly every year. Attendance is high despite the fact that we start earlier than most NYC schools. It's too early to say whether the students who have been absent are

planning on attending, or not. When families do not inform the school, we have to wait for a specified period of time before removing the students from the rolls.

- The Board asked about attrition rates, and was informed that our return rates are always quite high, with some drop off between the elementary and middle schools, and again from 6th to 7th grade when some of the high performers are accepted to competitive grade 7-12 schools, such as the Global School for Baccalaureate Education, and programs such as Prep for Prep. Ms. Fitzgerald pointed out that she knows of at least two students who were accepted to the Global School this year but elected to stay at OWNCS.
- The school is planning to produce another play this December with the support of former PTO Co-Chair Shirleyann Kaladjian, who was so helpful last spring.

Finance Committee ***Steven Solinsky***

Fiscal Year 2014 Unaudited Year-end Financial Report

- The preliminary figures for our year-end closing show a revenue of \$10.8 million vs. 10.9 million in expenses. We closed the year with a \$90,000 operating surplus before depreciation, but once depreciation is factored in the report shows an overall loss of \$159,000. Revenues for the year were \$110,000 less than budgeted due primarily to a lower than projected per pupil income tied to a lower student population (704 actual vs. 710 projected). This was offset somewhat by the fact that we had a higher than budgeted number of SPED students. By year-end the expenses were \$19,000 less than budgeted, and as previously noted, salaries were lower, but the expenses for substitute teachers was higher. The school's current assets are still strong, and are held mostly in cash.
- The Corrective Action plan to remedy an administrative error on the 401(k) plan has been completed. The last step is to calculate the discretionary bonus.
- FY 14 was the first year we had a deficit and we are projecting a modest deficit again for FY 15 due to staffing changes. We have filled some vacant posts and created 2 new positions. Mr. Ferguson noted that we budgeted for existing teachers at their current level of seniority, but that some of our new hires are more junior, which may result in some savings that can be figured into our mid-year revision. Mr. Solinsky pointed out that while we do have strong assets, they are not huge as a percentage of our annual operating budget, representing only about one-third.

Capital Development Analysis

- Mr. Solinsky is working with Mr. Guadagnolo to draw up alternative financial models to see what it would take to fund an expansion of the Elementary School building with no rent abatement figured in. They are reviewing the budget projections, and trying to see how the numbers would be impacted by adding students and classrooms. They may ask the architects who worked on the project what might be feasible, and they may re-approach the banks to see what kind of ancillary financing they might provide to help us shoulder the period of time when we would be paying rent and building.

PTO

Olubunmi Emigli

- The PTO has already held its first sponsored event, which was a play date for new Kindergarten students. She reported a great turn out from new families.
- The first fundraiser of the year will be a group event at a Mets game on September 17, and the PTO is aiming to sell 450 tickets.
- This will be followed by a K-8 potluck picnic on Saturday, September 20.

Resolutions

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

RESOLVED to approve the unaudited financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, as presented.

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

RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations for April, May and June 2014, per the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees