

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday September 23, 2014
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
Elementary School
36-12 35th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11106
7:00 – 9:00

The Trustees present were:

Jeanette Betancourt, President
Steven Solinsky, Vice President and Treasurer
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary
Sarah Espanol

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
Karinne Montaque, Business Manager
Yvette Strachan, Executive Assistant
Jamey Greco, Special Education Director
Olubunmi Emigli, PTO Co-Chair
Ayse Eldek Richardson, PTO Co-Chair

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

Finance Committee
Steven Solinsky

401(k) Plan

Mr. Solinsky reminded the Board that some staff were not enrolled in our retirement savings plan in a timely manner due to a software programming glitch made by our vendor when the school cut over to a new system. The correction action plan prescribed by IRS guidelines has been completed.

As previously reported, each year, OWN budgets 6% of salaries as a contribution to our employees' retirement savings plans. In a normal year, since not all employees participate in the plan, there is usually a balance left over after routine employer contributions (3% employer contribution regardless of employee participation, plus a dollar for dollar match of up to 3% of salary). It has been our practice to distribute the balance as a discretionary contribution to all eligible employees.

While technically the school is not required to make a year-end distribution, since according to our plan document it is discretionary, upon discussion, the Board felt strongly that we should make a distribution as usual, and that the business office should calculate the amount

to be distributed in a way that most closely simulates what the balance would have been if no errors had occurred.

The Board reviewed the components of the corrective action plan intended to make the employees affected by the administrative error whole:

- a) 3% to make up for the lost employer contribution;
- b) 3% additional Qualified Matching contribution (QMAC);
- c) 1.5% Qualified Non-Elective contributions (QNEC); and
- d) Lost earnings (calculated by our 401(k) provider according to a prescribed formula).

They deemed that elements b) the QMAC (representing a higher than usual contribution to employee accounts) and d) the lost earnings should be borne by the school, and should not affect the amounts to be distributed to staff for either calendar year 2013 now, or 2014 a few months from now.

The Board also asked the Business office to continue to pursue its efforts to recoup these funds from the vendor who made the error setting up the software for OWNCS.

Ms. Montaque, the Business Manager, remarked that our vendor had made another error since then. After OWNCS issued funds to the vendor for our corrective action plan, they placed the funds in the wrong account and did not distribute them to employees. However, once it was pointed out to them they quickly fixed it and took full responsibility for the additional lost earnings that ensued.

PTO

Olubunmi Emigli

- Ms. Emigli introduced her new PTO Co-Chair, Ayse Eldek Richardson
- Community building and fundraising events are off to a great start:
 - This year's Mets game fundraiser was a lot of fun, though the turnout was lower than last year when it was held on a weekend.
 - The K-8 potluck picnic on Saturday, September 20 was very well attended, with wonderful food from all over. This is a tradition that the PTO will definitely continue.
 - A K-1 potluck will be held in October.
 - A Save-the-Date email has been circulated for our Auction to be held on Friday, November 7.
- The Deans, guidance counselors and social worker will present as a team at the next PTO meeting.

Director's Report
Brian Ferguson

General Business

- Back to School Nights have already been held
- Annual Reports have been submitted.
- Routine school lunch audits are pending

21st Century Learning Center

The 21st CLC after school program started on Monday. This program is specifically designed to serve students with IEPs, those who are economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners, whereas our program with SAYA is for all students. The two programs are designed to be complementary, and the new program teams are working out ways to be flexible within the program constraints and enrollment targets.

SUNY Charter School Institute Comparative Performance Analysis

Ms. Betancourt thanked Mr. Ferguson for circulating the Comparative Performance Analysis that compares OWNCS state test results to similar demographic groups in the state. The results, which were received much earlier than in prior years, document excellent results for the school: we achieved an overall comparative performance that was “greater than expected to a large degree” in both ELA and Math. Mr. Ferguson pointed out that these are the major criteria that SUNY uses for our charter renewal, and that we have done very well each of the last three years. Ms. Betancourt encouraged Mr. Ferguson to share this good news with our school community.

Education Committee
Sarah Espanol and Brian Ferguson

Analysis of State Test Results for Curriculum Development

At its last meeting the Education Committee reviewed the state test results in greater detail with an eye towards analyzing how those results were achieved and creating a work plan for the coming year. For instance, Mr. Ferguson explained that the administration is taking a closer look at the ELL students who passed the tests to see what support each individual student received (Reading Recovery, after-school, etc.) and what types of support this group of students have in common to help determine what is helping them to succeed.

Mr. Ferguson noted that our special education students have held steady in their results, which means they are all making progress with new material and not falling further behind. He also mentioned that the school has never had a large cohort that only scores a one, and that he will pay extra close attention to the results of the few who did score a one to determine the best way to get them to a score of 2 as an appropriate next step, which will position them to achieve a passing score of 3 down the road.

OWNCS is waiting for the release of an “item analysis” which shows how each student did answer by answer. (This has already been released to DOE schools but not to charter schools.) Once received, we can see if there are programmatic gaps at any level, including among the students who received higher scores. Ms. Betancourt encouraged Mr. Ferguson to focus on the content over the scores. Mr. Ferguson concurred that the scores themselves can be misleading since the cut-offs are different at each grade level. Therefore, it was agreed that it’s most important to look at data patterns in the responses to questions to guide our curriculum development. Furthermore, he will break down the results by demographics, including a gender breakdown. He noted that OWNCS is atypical in that girls are regularly outscoring the boys.

Professional Development: Instructional Rounds

OWNCS is participating in a network of Tier 3 PICCS schools that has formed groups who make class room visits (“instructional rounds”) to help each school analyze and make progress on a particular “problem of practice.” OWNCS identified its own issue to seek input on, selecting the broad challenge: how we can engage students in higher levels of thinking. The school randomly selected 15 classrooms to be observed by a team of external and internal visitors (led by a prominent practitioner in this field) over the course of 2 days this week. It’s very important to note that the intent of the rounds is to focus on general practice, not individual teachers, and that all involved need to remain sensitive to this. It was a very intense couple of days and the team is looking forward to receiving some additional perspective on this issue. The outcomes will be presented to the Education Committee, and a plan of action will be developed.

Development Committee

Jeanette Betancourt

Ms. Betancourt said the Committee misses Josh Adland’s leadership as Chair of the Committee, but that they are getting back on track and have scheduled their next meeting. In the meantime Mr. Ferguson is working with the development department to create a work plan to align with the goals established at the Strategic Planning meeting this summer.

Board Business

Jeanette Betancourt

Ms. Betancourt announced with regret that Steven Solinsky informed her that he would be stepping down from the Board in November at the end of his term, after six years of service. She acknowledged that this is difficult news, since we have experienced some turnover recently after many years of stability in our membership. Furthermore, as Treasurer, Steven brings a unique knowledge base and skill set to the Board, so she noted that we will need to focus on recruiting for that skill set. Steven has offered his assistance to recruit and orient his replacement.

A Board member asked how many members we currently have and how many we are required to have by our By-Laws. Ms. Betancourt responded that we need a minimum of seven, which is the

number we currently have. The Board and administration brainstormed recruitment ideas, and several attendees volunteered to follow up on various leads in the community and with organizations that help match potential volunteers with Boards.

Resolutions

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

RESOLVED to approve a methodology for calculating the 2013 401(k) year-end discretionary distribution to staff that excludes from consideration any components of our Corrective Action plan which went beyond normal employer contributions (the QMAC and lost earnings), in order to mimic our usual year-end distributions as much as possible. The Board further **RESOLVED** that the Treasurer should review and validate the final calculation to ensure the Board's intent is carried out and authorizes release of the distribution before the October deadline.

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

RESOLVED to approve the Board minutes for December, 2013 and January, February, June and August, 2014 with minor edits as discussed.

Respectfully submitted by:
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees