

Gateway Public Schools

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

At Gateway Middle School

Wednesday, November 16th, 2016 @ 5:00 -7:00 PM

Minutes

Board Members Present:

Therese Arsenault, Beth Berliner, Cynthia Billops, Sapna Boze, Sarah Byrne, Sharon Gillenwater, Susan Kase, Lisa Kirkland, Annie Klebahn, Susan Masto, Sharon Olken, Mary Plant-Thomas, Jackie Queffa, Adina Safer, Eric Sarb, Laura Spivy, Jennifer Tulley, Julie Wise

Board Members Excused: Joyce McMinn, Will Parish, Aaron White, Valerie Toler

Board members not present: David Booth, Suzanne Schutte, Phil Susser, Allison Thoreson Bhusri,

Also present: Danielle Ciccarelli, Elizabeth Colen, Chris Hero, Anna Heidinger, Lucy Hilardes, Aaron Watson

1. Welcome and Dinner

2. Call to Order, Approval of Minutes from October 19, 2016

Sapna called the meeting to order at 7:20pm. She asked for a motion to approve the October 19th, 2016 minutes. Jennifer Tulley motioned to approve and Sharon Gillenwater seconded. The October minutes were approved without issue.

3. Public Forum

Sapna opened the floor for the public forum. No further discussions or motions were introduced. Sapna thanked all who came to Board Visiting day. She hopes to see everyone at the holiday on December 15th at 5:30. This year, the party will be held at the Academy Bar and Kitchen. She thanked Aaron for hosting tonight's meeting at the middle school. Sapna gave everyone a reminder to send out their thank you notes to luncheon donors. She then gave the floor to Anna for a development update.

4. Development Update (INFO)

Anna pointed out some headlines on the fundraising dashboard. We have raised \$611,668.00, with a million more to raise. This is an ambitious goal but we will meet it. We need to think about other creative avenues to bring people in.

Anna talked about the upcoming year-end appeal, which has 3 components - board giving, major appeal to friends, and family giving. The appeal will be a simple collateral piece which will go out after Thanksgiving. The next important part of our work is happening in the first half of 2017, when we will concentrate on the Impact Lab Campaign. Development is working on events around Impact Labs. Anna thanked everyone for all their support and reminded Trustees that next year is the 15th Matters of the

mind luncheon. She asked everyone to start thinking of dynamic speakers. Beth introduced Sharon for the Executive Director report.

5. Executive Director's Report (INFO)

Sharon greeted everyone and welcomed them to the middle school. It is a very special place and so much great work is happening here. She thanked the hospitality committee and noted that, the delicious food being served was catered by a wonderful Gateway Family - the Tenatra family. We are happy to be able to support members of our school community. Sharon thanked everyone who came to Board visiting day. The recent election's outcome reinforced the importance of our schools' goals. Sharon noted that she asked Aaron to talk a bit about the election and how it impacts Gateway and the work we do. She passed the floor to our fantastic school principal, Aaron Watson.

Aaron acknowledged that it was a hard week at both schools. Leading up to the election, kids were really engaged. Kids went home with a state map to track election results. After the election, he asked staff to create spaces for kids to talk about the results of the election. They watched Hillary Clinton, President Obama and Donald Trump live on November 10th. There was a student of the month assembly that day, and it reflected and reinforced our core values of respect, responsibility and community. Sharon sent a note to parents affirming our values. We have kids who come to school really scared due to the election's outcome. We feel it is important to take a very strong stance and not be silent when events go against our core values. Jennifer asked what we say to kids who are afraid of being deported. Aaron told trustees that we have immigration lawyers in our community, and we may host an information night. The teachers are having long discussions in PD about how to handle this. Sharon added that we know we have a purpose and a proactive way to make a difference for our students. The flip side is that this is an example of how painful it can be for teachers to see what is going on with our kids. It is difficult to put aside your own feelings and be the adult in the room. It is a great thing to be a difference maker for our kids. She asked Mary to comment about things at the high school. Mary said that the events were similar; there was a forum that day for discussion, and many teachers incorporated current events in their curriculum. Most advisories talked about the results of the election. Aaron said that the level of emotion was the result of the level of engagement. Eric Sarb mentioned a blog where kids can contribute and share their thoughts. GMS 8th grade humanities teacher Lucy Hilardes talked about how they taught about the constitution through the election.

Aaron asked trustees to reflect on Board Visiting day. Susan Kase said that she noticed that all students were engaged in classwork and collaboration. Sara noted how kind everyone was. Sapna noticed that every room had more than one educator. Beth noticed how teachers used the timer to keep students focused and on-task. Student collaboration was pretty amazing. Adina noticed that there were no lectures, and lessons felt like passing the baton back and forth from teachers to students. Aaron talked about the student panelists who spoke at visiting day and how they are able to talk about themselves as learners at Gateway.

Aaron shared the document, *Gateway Middle School School-Wide Goals and Priorities for 2016-18*. The GMS leadership team and teachers crafted the school-wide goals. We have a diverse group of students, and we want to foster equity for all students. Aaron reviewed the goals/priorities, and asked Trustees to talk to the text, as students do, and underline something they think is particularly important for middle schoolers.

Aaron asked Therese, Lucy and Eric to talk about how Gateway is working to reach the goals and priorities for 2016-18. Therese talked about what teachers have done to come to a common language around grading by looking at commonalities and differences. Teachers are looking at grading to see if it is in line with our mission. At the end of year they hope to have a statement that reflects our values, and then move to practices. Lucy talked about promoting students' social-emotional learning and creating safe and equitable learning spaces. Teachers explore real ways to handle difficult situations with students. Eric talked about the different methods teachers use to engage all students and get them to think about the material through relevant and accessible curriculum and meaning-making practices.

Aaron asked everyone to take 2 minutes to talk with a partner about what they just heard. He took trustees' questions and listened to their observations. During the conversation that followed, it was noted that collaboration is built into teachers' schedules, and they support each other. Sharon O. talked about how we come up with goals for the year. There are needs that these goals are meant to address which were determined by asking "How are our kids doing? How do we make sure that everyone is excelling? How do we grade to encourage kids? Our kids come from so many different backgrounds, how do we create community?" Lucy said that teachers looked at teaching practices to see if the curriculum is relevant and engaging. Liz Colen talked about using "Facing History" to teach 8th grade curriculum. They are partnering with us, and Gateway is a member of Facing History's Innovative Schools Network. Elizabeth also talked about how she and Lucy spent the summer in South Africa. We hope to host 2 teachers from South Africa in March. They may be in touch to see if board members may be able to host a teacher. Adina spoke about how wonderful her experience was hosting a teacher.

b) Executive Director's 2016/17 Objectives -

Sharon hopes that, as we talk about the election, professional development, etc., one of the things that comes through is our commitment to supporting and protecting the whole kid. Our goal is making sure they are making meaning of math. We are doing work around giving them feedback, and a deeper understanding of what makes them special. She really sees and believes that this resonates with Trustees. The take-home is making sure we are doing all we can to support our kids. Beth mentioned that the Gateway values really came through when she listened to the student panel on Board Visiting Day. They spoke a lot about community and supporting each other. We heard it first hand. Sharon brought trustees' attention to page 7 of the board packet, a one page compilation of Executive Director objectives for the year. At every board meeting we are talking about some aspect of these objectives. The real work of the school shows up in the objectives. One of the things she asks, when coming up with her objectives, is, "If we are able to make these things happen, are we going to be a stronger place for our kids?" Sharon asked everyone to put stars next to objective that are important to them, and email any feedback they may have. She will read everyone's comments and feedback.

6. Finance Committee (INFO and VOTE)

a) Audit Discussion and Approval - Beth turned the floor over to Chris. Chris asked Susan Kase to walk the Board through the audit. She explained that, every year, independent auditors look at our financials, verify balances, etc. The audit committee met with auditors, and there were no material adjustments.

The staff did a wonderful job. Chris went over the review of the audit report. We have had at least 8 years in which the auditors have not required us to add adjustments. This is a pretty amazing record. We ended the school year in a very strong position, financially. Chris spoke about the risks going forward. In the near term, there are no risks. In the longer term, there is a potential downside in state economy. We will continue to follow this closely. The Governor gave pessimistic state revenue projections. The good news is, prop 55 was passed, and most of the funds will go to schools. Chris asked the Board if they have any questions. No questions were asked. Beth asked for a motion to approve. Sapna moved to approve the audit, and Lisa seconded. The audit was unanimously approved. Beth thanked Chris and the audit committee for their work. Next year there will be an audit celebration - Auditcon.

7. Adjourn Meeting

Beth adjourned the meeting at 6:57pm.

Signed: Allison Bhusri Date: 1/11/17
Allison Bhusri, Board Secretary