

Gate City Charter School for the Arts

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date:

"The mission of the GCCSA is to use an arts integrated curriculum ... to produce graduates who excel in both academics and the arts and have the con for the teachers and staff knowledge, creativity and inquisitive nature that foster a life-long love of learning"

Meeting Date: November 21, 2019

Time: 7:04 PM

Location: 7 Henry Clay Drive, Merrimack, NH

Voting Board Members in Attendance:

Danielle Charest (Chair)

Sarah Thibeault (Secretary)

Neil Mahoney (Parent Rep)

Jack Balcom (Vice-Chair)

Absent Board Members:

Felicia Douchette (Treasurer)

Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Suzanne Wheeler

Betty Mulrey

Astrid Alvarado

Attending Public:.

Mr. and Mrs. Steven Diggins

Eric Charest

Public Comments/Public Matters

No public comment

Approval of Minutes from October

MOTION (Neil Mahoney/Sarah Thibeault) Motion to accept the minutes from the meeting was accepted unanimously

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Finance Committee Meeting

Astrid gave a review of the finance committee meeting minutes from the finance meeting on November 15, 2019 at 9:00 am

Next meeting is TBA

MOTION (Jack Balcom/Neil Mahoney) Motion to accept the minutes of the Finance Committee dated was accepted unanimously.

Committee Reports

PTO- Neil Mahoney

PTO reviewed the previous events including the 5k and Fall Festival. 5k will be changed to a new fundraiser next year and the Fall Festival was a huge success. The PTO will hold a holiday lunch Wednesday December 18, 2019. Beth Ashton designed a logo for the PTO. Next events will be the Holiday Spectacular and the canvas event.

Curriculum Committee- Betty Mulrey Please see Directors report.

H/R Policy Committee-

PR and Community Relations Committee- Sarah Thibeault

Beth Ashton and I spoke about entering a float into the Merrimack Holiday Parade, if we can get enough volunteers, we may be able to make it happen. We have been in contact with Positive Street Art and are eager to learn the next steps to be taken to start a mural in the cafeteria. The website is published and looking great, we will meet with Kastle a couple more time to tweak the finished product. We have ads in Parenting NH for November and January.

Grants Committee- Jack Balcom

We have received two grants so far, Anne Di Nicola for \$3000.00 and Ella Anderson Trust for

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\$5000.00 This \$8000.00 will go towards purchasing Chromebook and charging ports. Marsha Bottino cautioned us to be aware that all items stated in the grant must be purchased by the deadline, and that the set of the Chromebook would not include general maintenance of the schools WIFI infrastructure. The spending of the grants must be documented with specific receipts and invoices. Currently, the \$8000.00 has been deposited into the general fund, it was discussed that a separate checking account would make segregating the grant funds from the operating funds much easier for the school and auditing purposes. Marsha was asked about the Nashua State Art grants available; she has investigated some of them, but the matching and application requirements might end up costing the school money, she will continue to look at these sources.

Facilities Committee-

Kindergarten room wall needs paint and some of the outlets need plates. We have reached out to the building manager about the thermostat problems

MOTION (Jack Balcom/Neil Mahoney) Motion to accept the committee meeting reports was accepted unanimously.

Old Business

Teacher Liaison- Julia Waterman is interested. Danielle will have a meeting with the teachers to discuss the teacher liaison in December.

Strategic Planning-It was discussed that having the teacher's input was greatly appreciated and should be considered. An email will go out to plan our next meeting for the end of January.

Recruiting new board members- we will be looking into the Merrimack Chamber of Commerce and Nashua Chamber of Commerce. As well as an online recruiting agency.

New Business

We discussed our lease ending in 4 years, and how we must be considering what our options are to do next. Will we stay in Merrimack or possible look in Nashua? Our partition walls are not doing very well and will not last another 4 years, Birch Hill will be contacted to see what they use.

Lease assurances-This is a lease aid, we must ensure we are up to date on all our reporting, codes and testing and it will cover 30% of the lease cost.

Accountability Report-Checking in with the board to make sure we are keeping up to date with any changes to our bylaws. Keeping the meeting minutes, change of membership changes of

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methods of the BOT up to date. Astrid will start a shared google document, to share information to keep us up to date.

Middle School Structure-The directors discussed changing the middle school structure, 4th and 5th grade upper elementary and 6th-8th grade middle school. 5th graders may not be ready to be part of the middle school structure.

MOTION (Jack Balcom/Sarah Thibeault) to establish an exploratory committee to restructure our overall middle school model. Motion accepted unanimously

MOTION (Neil Mahoney/Sarah Thibeault) to assign Jack Balcom as Vice Chair. Motion accepted unanimously.

Ad-hoc fundraising committee- January will be Hoopswagg socks organized by Sarah Thibeault and overseen by Astrid Alvarado.

February will be Raise Craze organized by Krystal Cameron, (first grade mom) and overseen by Astrid Alvarado.

Directors Report

Suzanne Wheeler

November began with the start of Educational Assistant observations. It is so motivating to spend a lengthy chunk of time watching how adults and children interact in different situations.

Although this takes an abundance of time, I plan to do another one in the spring. After completing the current ones my plan is to meet with each Educational Assistant individually. This gives them the opportunity to improve on any specific area of need.

IEP meetings have been held at Broad Street school, Birch Hill School, Pennichuck as well as Gate City. Parents continue to be upset about the model being used for direct instruction for Nashua students with IEPs. As a result, they are either allowing their child to choose when they do not want to attend, or they have put their IEPs on hold and are not sending their child at all. There are days when there is only one student on the huge bus.

Much time has been spent on a parent requested bullying investigation. Parents have expressed their dissatisfaction with school's lack of consequences for specific students as well as communication problems. It is very challenging when a child describes a situation and the parent

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describes the incident totally differently. All conversations with parents and child have been documented.

The investigation was completed today by a team of professionals which included a School Resource Officer. It was determined that one student’s behavior was consistent with Gate City Charter School’s definition of bullying. Letters have been written and will be mailed on Monday to inform all parents of students the results of the investigation. Changes to prevent further bullying incidents were listed in all letters.

Our substitute list has dwindled to one. Mr. Wilson is a wonderful addition; however, he does not substitute as an educational assistant which leaves us shorthanded many days and very creative to cover positions. I interviewed two potential substitutes this week, but neither has brought back paperwork.

Yesterday, as a morale booster the staff contributed for a potluck lunch. We had a chance to visit with each other and discuss situations with each other that we don’t get the opportunity to daily.

Staff and students are looking forward to Thanksgiving with their families. I wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving.

Betty Mulrey

Our all-school “Artist of the Month” initiative is currently featuring Henri Matisse. Student processing of Matisse’s work is displayed on the walls of the school.

Teachers attended a Lexia Professional Learning Session webinar this week, as we are piloting Lexia Powerup Literacy and Lexia Core 5 to augment our middle school curriculum. Our Lexia program will begin December 2.

We have submitted a request for Title reallocation funds to support Math Title instruction in Middle School. We are also offering Title support in reading for middle school students.

We are in the process of analyzing our NH state test scores from last spring and our i-Ready assessment from this fall in order to ensure curriculum is geared to specific student needs as well as overall grade level expectations. We also are in the process of developing us vertically aligned curriculum Scope and Sequence for grades k-8. We are gathering information from nearby districts so that we can be on a similar page with them as to what grade level learning expectations may be.

Kindergarten and First Grade students have been screened for indicators of dyslexia, and those students who showed these indicators are receiving appropriate support.

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EL (English Learner) testing has also been completed, and students are receiving support as needed.

The first trimester of school ends on November 26, and report cards are due to come out on December 6.

Our first Celebration of Learning this year is Thursday December 12 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Our select chorus was invited by the Merrimack Concert Association to join the Merrimack community chorus and band concert on Saturday December 14 at the Merrimack High School cafeteria. Our students will perform two songs and a dance. This concert begins at 3 p.m.

Wednesday December 18 at 6:00 p.m. is our Winter Concert, titled "Just Keep Dreaming." This concert will be at the Nashua Community College Auditorium.

Our teachers will be attending the Plymouth State University 25th Annual Integrated Arts Conference on Friday, January 17, 2020. This is a teacher in-service day for us. The conference is titled "Kindness Counts - Building a Safer, Kinder Classroom Community Through the Arts." The keynote address will "Celebrate the fusion of Social Emotional Learning and the transformative power of the arts. This interdisciplinary approach has the potential to create a synchronistic, dynamic union positively influencing school climate and building the landscape for the well-rounded 21st century student." Our art teacher Beth Ashton is putting together an art exhibit from our school which will be exhibited at the Plymouth State Conference. As the musical "Annie" is being presented in conjunction with the Arts conference, our exhibit will revolve around the "Little Orphan Annie" comic strip, and Harold Gray, who wrote and illustrated this. Students will study historical events such as the Great Depression which connect with Little Orphan Annie. Students will also create their art for the exhibit using black and white pen techniques that were shared with us at an inhouse field trip by local artist Stacy Topjian Searle.

Social studies in Middle School featured a virtual field trip with a park ranger in CA about the Gold Rush. Students also connected virtually with a middle school classroom in Louisiana! They played a form of "20 questions" to guess where each other's schools were located!

Kindergarten and 8th grade are piloting reading experiences together based on types of literature and student interest. This model will be expanded to include the rest of the school later in the year.

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Astrid Alvarado

DOE Reporting

Our DOE-25 Financial report has been returned to us as there have been some discrepancies with categorizing of certain line items. I have been working diligently to work through these issues to send back a corrective workbook.

Free & Reduced general ledger line item: After discussion with the Department of Education, it has been made clear that there are no additional funds related to Free and Reduced Lunch. Our Differentiated Aid is reflective of Free and Reduced voluntary information that is optional for parents to provide for the school.

We just received an email today that we will be audited on specific Federal transactions from the grants we have received within the fiscal year of 2018 and 2019. The Department of Education is asking for specific information to support the requested monies and their purposes.

Building Maintenance

Our School Health Inspection was on November 7, 2019. Overall, we did well but will need to plate the 2 open and exposed wires in the Great Hall, re-paint some of the Kindergarten room, and needed to properly clean the fountains in the lunchroom.

Twilio

Twilio is a new text messaging tool that we hope to roll out for next month. It gives the school an actual telephone number that will be more reliable than our previous Remind system. We have signed up for this new tool and are awaiting final confirmations to be able to utilize. This will enable us to do voice messaging as well which will be an additional communication tool.

Upcoming Events

We have our 1st Celebration of Learning on December 12th which will showcase our Artist of the Month work that has been completed since September. We hope to have mini "performances" that will be sprinkled throughout the evening.

Confirmation from the Nashua Community College has been obtained for the Band & Chorus concert for December 18th.

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Current Enrollment

We have maintained 166 students this month. We have a few shadow days scheduled that may attract prospective new students.

MOTION (Jack Balcom/Neil Mahoney) Motion to go into non-public RSA 91-A:3, II (a) accepted unanimously

Roll call was taken

MOTION (Neil Mahoney/Jack Balcom) Motion to adjourn was accepted unanimously.

MOTION (Neil Mahoney/Jack Balcom) Motion to seal the non-public minutes accepted unanimously.

Next public meeting Thursday January 16, 2020 at 7pm

Meeting adjourned at 9:46 pm