

SOAR Charter School Board Meeting

Date, Time and Place: December 11th, 2015, 4800 Telluride St. BLDG 4, Denver, CO 80249

Attendance of Board Members:

Present: Sue Sava, Rosann Ward, Shelli Brown, William Weintraub, Claudia Gutierrez, Ellin Keene, Rona Wilensky, Laurie Godwin

Present by phone: Sonia Sisneros, Brad Fischer

Absent: Dan Smink, Ethan Hemming

Staff absent: Sonia Sisneros

Quorum? Yes

Also in attendance: Marc Waxman, Brad Fischer, Lacey Martinez, Jessica Welch

Members of the public in attendance: Marty Caplan

Meeting brought to order – Rona moved, Rosann seconds 8:52 AM

Business Meeting

8:45-8:50 Public Comment

- Sue welcomes Marty Caplan to the meeting.
- Sue congratulated Marc & SOAR on the PARCC scores. With passing scores, we will automatically renew.

8:50-9:50 Search Process Update and Board Networks for job posting - Marty Caplan, Sue and Rosann

- Marty explains his search process.
 - Marty started by meeting with 25 teachers & about 20 parents.
 - He talked to all Board members & met with Marc, Jess, Meghan, Sonia & Brad, individually.
 - He wanted to get a sense of what the school is all about, what the strong & weak areas are, what the philosophy is, etc. He wants to understand who he is working with.
 - He asked: “What are areas of the school that we are proud of, that we don’t think should change?”
 - ❖ Everyone (parents, teachers, Board members) thinks the philosophy & approach to the whole child should not change. They appreciate that we not only care about academics, but the social emotional learning as well.
 - ❖ The arts programs were highly praised – art, dance and music.

- ❖ Almost every single person noted that they are happy with the finances of the school.
- ❖ Teachers and parents are happy with the administrative staff.
- ❖ Folks said that SOAR is a progressive school in an urban environment.
- Marty also asked, “What areas need improvement?”
 - ❖ Food in the lunch program (not sure if it is quality or type).
 - ❖ There are concerns among the parents and teachers about what we are going to do with the handful of students in the school who have significant behavioral problems. The teachers do not always know how to handle the student or how the administrative staff is going to handle the student. The parents are not clear on discipline or corrective action.
 - ❖ Teachers feel that there is so much expected of them and that what they are doing feels like it is never enough or good enough.
 - ❖ Teachers are concerned about how much money is being spent on consultants and how much time it is taking away from their work day. It takes a significant amount of time for them to prepare for these meetings and they feel that they are not living up to what they feel like they need to be living up to.
 - ❖ Questions to think about: “How do you deal with discipline in school & the other students who are having their education disrupted?” “How do you deal with the fact that you are trying to help your staff grow but they feel overburdened?”
- The job posting for the new Head of School is drafted.
 - The search committee edited Marty’s draft & the board will make the final drafts.
 - Marty will get the job posting to Sonia & the list of where we are to post it.
 - Applications need to be in by Jan. 31st from any potential candidates.
 - Marty will talk to anyone who might be a candidate via phone call, first.
 - Marty will forward applications to everyone in the search committee.
 - Marc will be a part of the semifinal visits with the candidates. The search committee will prepare questions & interview candidates as a group.
 - References won’t be called until after the semifinals meeting unless they are from out of town. Marty will do extensive reference calling after semifinals are completed.
 - The job posting will not include the salary.
 - If we do not find a candidate, we will need to come up with an interim plan. When we start looking at candidates, we might find one that we really like but they might be weak in certain areas so we need to be open to the possibility of restructuring to fit the new potential candidate.
 - Rona notes that we should be looking for someone who has a personal quality that will not change & a skill that can be worked on. Character traits versus skills.
 - Ellin notes that it is really hard to find a successor to a founder. She wants to know what needs to happen to hedge every bet we can with respect to replacing a founder.
 - We want to end up with someone who will reflect that all voices have been heard.

- We need to constantly remind the community that there is strong leadership in the school community already – the new person we bring in will complete the team.
- Marc wants to know why we are changing the title from Director to “Head of School”. We need to maximize the number of people who are going to apply. Head of School leaves it more open for candidates who might apply.
- We want someone with cross cultural skills and cultural responsiveness.
- We want someone to make a very deliberate decision to work & serve in our community.
- Wording needs to be added to the job description around the kind of community that the new Head of School will be working with.
- We need to better define the community so the new candidate knows what they are walking into.
- Laurie notes that this candidate should do some research and study the community so they know what they are coming into; do they know it, do they understand it? Have you demonstrated anything to show that you’re capable of handling this community?
- Bill asked if a Board member can apply for this job. Sue noted that if someone wanted to apply, they should reach out to Sue first. We want to make sure that there is no inappropriate participation in the search process.

9:50-9:55 Consent Agenda

- Minutes
- Monthly dashboard
- Monthly financials
 - Finalized 990 (last month the board saw the draft)
 - Finalized audit (we had a few revisions from the last “final” copy the board saw)
 - Financial packet for October (the standard monthly packet, part of consent agenda)

Motion to adopt consent agenda

Rona moved, Ellin seconds 10:15 AM

9:55-10:15 Finance Committee - Reserves and Budgeting Priorities

- 990 has been changed – differed inflows & outflows regarding PERA.
- The audit was redone
- We are currently working on this year’s budget – per DPS’s position we are not revising in January because they are not. We are going to wait until we get new numbers at the end of January.
- Brad, Sonia & Marc are going line item by line item to get an idea of next year’s budget.
- PPR is going to stay flat.
- A policy on reserves - Marc, Sonia & Brad want to bring it to the board but we are waiting to hear from DPS.

10:15-10:45 Director’s Report

- FY16 and FY17 budget updates
- FY17 Calendar update – alternative approach based on staff feedback

- With board approval, we will add a week break in October. Staff has expressed that this is when they feel the most burnt out. We would start a week earlier and this schedule matches more closely with a lot of the schools around SOAR.
- Denver Foundation
- Monthly updates
- Consultant survey
- FY15 PARCC Test Results – Preliminary analysis
 - The connections between the charter renewal & this data have some nuances.
 - To renew, DRA scores needed to meet expectations and they did.
 - Parent satisfaction needed to go up and it did.
 - For ELA & math they look at the SPF measure & you have to be within five percentage points to be in the midpoint. We are told that we exceeded ELA but did not meet expectations for math. We were 1.5 points away from meeting the math requirements. This did not seem to be a barrier to us receiving an automatic 2 year renewal, pending final approval.
 - DPS wants to do a spring site visit & they want to work with us to set some bench marks for the next two years.
 - Rona wants to know why we think we didn't do well in math & what can we learn from the other schools who exceeded in math?
 - ❖ 3rd grade was at 17% - 6th highest
 - ❖ 4th grade was at 20% - 3rd highest in the area
 - ❖ 5th grade was at 6% - 2nd lowest in area.
 - The standards with PARCC change the most in the 5th & 6th grades. In 3rd & 4th they stay about the same. Teachers feel more comfortable with where the kids are now than where they were.
 - This is how we got pulled in the middle. Our composite score of 14% was in the 42nd percentile. The middle was 18%.
 - Marc spoke with a Chalkbeat reporter about PARCC testing and scores. He consulted with Bill and Dan prior to.
- Marc spoke on the surveys that went out to staff. Some staff opted out for the next school year, some said they were going to stay and a lot are in the middle & aren't sure.
 - Staff have voiced that they like PD but they are struggling with the things that go along with PD. It takes a lot of time to prepare to meet with consultants & they come out of PD with a lot of tasks. There is a stress & sustainability issue among teachers.
 - In the next 6 months Marc is going to do everything he can to get every staff member to return. He is going to allow things to move a bit to get them to return. Marc wants to set up the new school leader with a solid staff.
 - Based on the preliminary view of the budget, Marc would assume a significant reduction in PD as a line item.
 - Sue notes that because of the potential conflict, Gianna has given Sue goals & reported her progress.
- Ellin would like to revisit the PD discussion to see if we should modify the PD schedule rather than cut back. PD will be added to the February agenda.

- Major improvement strategies are included – nothing has changed drastically.
- Given our math results, math will remain a major improvement strategy.
- The action steps are built & Jess will do her 2nd upload (with PARCC scores added) in January.
- DPS requested more details around our support plan for ELL's. The feedback was mostly all positive.

Executive Committee

- February board meeting agenda
- Board retreat in January

Adjourn – Ellin moved, Rosann seconds 10:59AM