

Boston Day and Evening Academy

Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes

November 18th, 2009

In Attendance: DeWitt Jones, Karl Holland, Beatriz Zapater, Martha Mueller Cook, Alison Hramiec, Connie Borab

Staff in Attendance: Andrea Kunst, Nastasia Lawton, Joseph Boulanger, Jennifer Mills

I. Call to Order

DeWitt announced that Al Whitaker cannot continue on the Board due to other commitments. He still plans to continue his involvement and support for the school. Since there was not a quorum at this time, all votes will be deferred to a later time in the meeting.

II. Presentation: The Instructional Leadership Team: J. Boulanger, A. Hramiec, J. Mills.

Alison Hramiec introduced Joseph Boulanger and Jen Mills and explained their roles on the Instructional Leadership Team.

The PowerPoint presentation focused on Democracy and Equity, one of the ten common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools and its role in the practice of small schools.

The mission of ILT is to make decisions based on data, guide professional development for the needs of the students, share communication with the whole school on goals and initiatives that will help build capacity in all staff to reach school wide goals. ILT was re-formed in 2007 recognizing the belief in shared decision-making. Different stakeholders in the school are involved in decision-making: people closest to the students, teachers, student support, parents, and administrators. When part of the decision-making, staff feel empowered and also feel ownership. Decisions are data-driven; results of staff and student feedback, surveys. Before ILT, decisions were not made in a consistent way. Now everyone is on the same page, communication-wise. Decisions are very transparent. Beatriz Zapater had seen models at work from her work coaching and other essential schools, and knew that they are more effective than top-down decision-making. Before, ILT was an implementation team for top-down ideas, without much dialogue. The ILT now is crucial for keeping staff empowered and feeling a “buy-in”.

Specific roles of the ILT include: liaison to staff provide perspective to leadership tea, troubleshoot areas of concern, oversee initiatives that maintain and support consistence, improve academic achievement for all students, participated in selecting representation for Board and SSAC. The PowerPoint showed an example of ILT work regarding

planning and implementing professional development work groups that are data-driven and address five needs of the school.

Beatriz Zapater mentioned that a recent participant in Principal for the Day asked if BDEA's curriculum considered tracking. Tracking assumes that assumptions are made about students' potential. We do not do that; we set high expectations, meeting them where they are.

Following the presentation there was discussion about communication between the ILT and leadership, challenges that the ILT faces such as time constraints, and the specific decisions that have come out of the ILT in the past.

III. Quorum: Since Al Whitaker will not be chairing the nominating committee. Martha Mueller Cook will take over as chair of the nominating committee. DeWitt Jones and Martha Mueller Cook met to discuss the continuation of Al Whitaker's plan.

Martha Mueller Cook provided an update of the committee's activities, outlining the list of strong candidates that will be put before the nominating committee. Connie Borab, Beatriz Zapater, Andrea Kunst, and DeWitt Jones are on the committee. The goal is for the committee to meet and discuss potential candidates before the end of the year so that in January board meeting, a few new members can be presented to the Board for approval. Committee members will talk to potential candidates, and if interested, Martha Mueller Cook will get their information. The committee will be looking for people who will be interested and willing to put the time in, and will also seek leadership positions on the board eventually. We are not pitching membership for people who will not be able to put sufficient time in.

Andrea stated that she had very good meeting with Kim McLarin, who is interested in thinking about being on the Board. She has been asking all of the right questions, and wants to be useful and engaged. She is particularly interested in advocating for the school. It is the role of the ILT is to put forward staff nominations for staff members. At the last meeting, four names were put out. There are currently three new members and one returning: Connie Borab. Craig Ruiter mentioned he is thinking about stepping down to let new staff have the opportunity.

DeWitt Jones stated that we want to make sure the nominating process includes an orientation for new members to get them engaged from the beginning. This could include a retreat in the spring semester. It is important to bring new members up to speed about the school so that they are not lost right away. Each board member will have a staff buddy, and new members will have board buddies.

Connie Borab suggested that continuity is important in helping to explain roles. It would be beneficial to stagger terms so that there is never a time where there are all new staff members with no veteran staff board members.

The Board thanked Martha Mueller Cook for taking on the role of Chair of the Nominating Committee.

IV. Audit update: Karl Holland

Financials were included in Board materials. There was not a lot of activity in the first few months of the year. Financials are currently showing a surplus of \$84,000. There is one more surcharge to be settled between BPS and us. After that is settled, we should have about \$5,000-\$15,000 surplus, which is normal. We are not sure when this charge will be resolved, and if it will happen by Jan. 1. It would not be prudent to push the charge forward into the next year, because it is better to have charges in the year that they occur.

The charge is for Karen Cowan and Beatriz Zapater salary as Co-Heads of School last year; the portion that we committed and the percentage of that that the city will cover for us. We are still waiting to hear what the city is willing to contribute and the process for that.

VOTE to delegate vote on audit to executive committee:

Karl Holland made the motion to authorize the executive committee to vote to approve BDEA annual audit. Martha Mueller Cook seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously. There was no further discussion.

V. Committee Reports:

Executive committee referred to the minutes of the previous meeting, which were included in the Board materials.

Head of School:

Highlights:

- Principal for a Day: We hosted two visitors from this BPS initiative. One was Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Suzanne Bump, and National Academic Director of YearUp, Michael Brownstein. It was a great experience to have two external people interact with students, teachers, and staff and sit in on meetings. Both gave valuable input, and gained perspective. Secretary Bump, who served on the dropout prevention commission, didn't know that a school existed that embodied the recommendations that she made. She was very impressed and loved the mission of the school, the high level of expectations, and the quality of work that is being produced. She will advocate for us and made it her priority to be our advocate in all forums. Beatriz Zapater is focusing energies on making school known and getting our story told. It was also helpful to have Michael Brownstein see our program.
- We are moving forward with finding productive discussion around our AYP status, not just with city, but also on a state level. We are in Improvement Year II not because of our MCAS scores or graduation rates. We are in this status because of the number of retest takers that we have, because retest does not count. Beatriz Zapater has been having conversations on the city level. We need to get out of this status, but we are unable to get out while continuing to be true to our mission:

students who are overage, and come to us having been out of school and having failed MCAS.

- This is the first time in 6 years that the school has met its projected enrollment for BPS so early in the year. We no longer have to worry about justifying our enrollment, and we will not owe money back for the deficit of enrollment. We are working very hard to keep students, and attract new students. December will graduate 28 students. We are making sure that we reduce our attrition rate.
- New criteria for student government: Cheuper, Andrea, Norman, and Irma will oversee student government, creating leadership opportunities, connecting with student advisory council in Boston. Teachers developed a pool of eligible students to nominate for student government.

Office of Institutional Advancement

- We are waiting on pending grants. Total so far stands at \$298,000.
- There is about \$557,000 outstanding in pending grants; we will hear back by next board meeting on about \$500,000
- We are applying to Nellie Mae for about \$50,000. These funds can be used for operational support.
- We hosted a visit from the Hestia Fund. Four people stayed for almost 3 hours. It was an exceptional meeting. They have supported the arts studio.
- Smith Foundation has also visited. We are applying for \$38,000 to turn a science classroom into a physics lab. The lead teacher on the project has a green way to renovate lab without construction but will be very useful for many years to come.
- Andrea Kunst and Nastasia Lawton presented at fall forum: getting the word out.
- Thanksgiving Dinner, annual appeal, graduation Dec. 3rd, are all coming up. Student government members will be ushers for graduation, which will be at the school.
- The Alumni dinner will include an alumni association meeting. David Nemet is alumni coordinator, and has been reaching out to graduates.
- Coffee house was successful. Next one will be in January, 2010
- Next newsletter themes will be Postgraduate planning and then Distance Learning

Staff

Pulse of the staff:

- Teachers have working very hard managing full enrollment
- Day staff notices that there's not as much time to be able to connect with other staff informally
- Leadership: student support is looking at non-progressing students either in behaviors of success or academics. ILT has made a difference, and student support is addressing that question. Staff is very hopeful that this will move all students forward, identifying any issues, or finding another best fit.
- Attendance: tackling tardy policies, investing in a several-layer initiative to make sure students know that attendance is critical to progress. Tardy students demand attention that takes away from the rest of the students. We are also doing a leadership retreat to redo the accountability plan to be more representative.

- Student leadership team: visit from Jordan Fundamentals Grantors who heard more about program as well as DownDudley, another project being funded by Jordan. Sharif Muhammad, who is a staff board member nominee and leads the DownDudley project, ran the meeting. Jordan is encouraging him to reapply next year. Hudson exchange: a lot of BDEA students who were first time participants. Wonderful to hear how epiphenal it was. Asked both groups what stereotypes they have and what stereotypes they think that others have of them. Students moved beyond the stereotypes, and horizons expanded. Two student leaders accompanied Connie Borab to Fall Forum and helped present in both workshops.
- Coffeehouse, also funded by the Jordan grant, went very well.
- Postgraduate Planning is going really well, serving more and more students, doing incredible work
- Staff wanted to send a shout-out to Alison Hramiec for her work on ILT and with curriculum
- For next staff reports, Connie Borab is considering highlighting one staff member's work, to showcase the challenges and success of staff, and to see the patterns – what a typical day looks like
- Staff is working on the Election to Work Agreement

Craig Ruitter thanked the Board for the experience of being on the Board, saying that he enjoyed his time on the board. The Board thanked Craig for his service.

VI. Approval of Minutes:

Karl Holland made the motion to approve the minutes from September's Board meeting, and Martha Mueller Cook seconded it. The minutes were unanimously approved.

VII. Executive Session

With no new business, Martha Mueller Cook made a motion for the Board to enter into and executive session to discuss a potential legal issue. Connie Borab seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. The Board entered into Executive Session.