

The Odyssey School
Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 20, 2013

Board Attendees: Jon Exall, Marcia Fulton, Nilmini Hecox, Chris Herndon, Heather Lamm, Illana Poley, Peter Sherman, Jason Shiroff, Erin Wilhoite, Eric Williams.

Parents attending: Bridget, Jason

1. Instructional initiatives

Marcia presented a discussion of new instructional initiatives at Odyssey.

Grant application. Odyssey did not receive a state grant but Gretchen put Marcia in touch with the State put Odyssey in touch with David Gregory as a result of Odyssey's application. The goal of this new opportunity is to do more long-term planning.

Reading Plus is funded by the Morgridge Foundation for three years. The biggest question for this program is if it is worth teachers' and students' time. It has been used in a variety of ways by different teachers. Some have assigned it as homework or for extra work at home, some teachers have brought it back into their classrooms for younger students and Patrick has used it as an intervention for middle school students. Concerns include being able to follow through, technical issues, less time for reading and challenges using the data to measure against other assessments. Teachers are still working through how to use Reading Plus in the classroom.

Menu math allows students to move along at an individual pace, meaning that different students can work on a range of grades or levels of work in the same classroom. The menu gives students access so that they can move at their own pace, work from home or in the classroom, and move on after testing out of a skill or level. Instead of teaching one mini lesson to a classroom, there can multiple small-group mini lessons. This has really changed how instruction happens in the classroom. Jason's entire math curriculum is organized using the menu. Students review this every day even if there work is not being done with the computer. Parents can access the menu from home as well.

Currently teachers are working on how to organize the curriculum according to Common Core standards. There is a sense that the school is not there yet, but staff are making decisions on how to get there.

Platooning (where one teacher provides instruction for either math or literacy in single-grade blocks) has positive momentum and staff generally do not want to stop. There are still concerns around balance for teachers. Is there the right balance between math and literacy teachers? Is there the right balance for reading and writing and how can this be better supported by blended learning?

Overall, *Blended Learning* is not just about technology but about how to get kids to build the right skills at the right time in the right sequence. This is still really a piloting year.

Next steps – formal decisions have not been made yet, but the inclination is to move forward on this. There needs to be intentional structure and support of learning. Learning still needs to be individualized more and tools need to be used well. Platooning is supported by kids, teachers and the data. ALEKS is strong and Odyssey will probably continue to use some elements of Reading Plus and use it as an intervention.

There is frustration with the lack of a learning management system to turn this into a real aligned data system that uses these results along with other assessments. (Heather noted that DSST has used Polaris but then done their own customization – but at least the systems speak to each other. Peter added that this is a challenge across the country, and not even just in education, but also in many industries.) It would be nice for teachers to have all the data crunched so that it could be more useful.

2. Board updates

There are a number of openings on the board for next year (2013-2014). Peter will stay on for another year to fulfill his Past Chair role, but an election will be held for a new parent representative. Jon's term will end and staff will choose a new director for that position. Alicia is leaving her position and Heather Jovel will be leaving at the end of the school year.

The board reviewed a new formal policy for board members and recommended revisions. These included being explicit that members are expected to participate on a committee as well as a strategic initiative. There is also a separate need to formalize job descriptions for the different types of board members – parent, teacher and community. These descriptions could live in the commitment letter. The formal policy could refer back to the commitment letter where committee participation and financial commitment are discussed, as well as regular board attendance. On a separate note, we need to revise and update the board's by-laws. Job motioned to approve the policy as revised, Heather seconded and all voted to approve the policy.

Jackie will coordinate the parent election this spring. Teachers will also elect a new member.

Current board needs include more members with a financial skill set, particularly planning and modeling, strategic planning and some financial forecasting ability. This is detailed work. The new accounting position might help with this but would not fill the need for financial skill.

We continue to need additional fundraising experience, especially connections to foundation opportunities and grant writing skills or connections.

We would benefit from experience with technology opportunities or learning/education data management systems.

The board needs to begin conducting surveys of families and alumni. Staff will also be surveyed as in years past.

3. Marcia's Updates

TCAP. Tests are underway this week. Make ups will be held after the break.

Enrollment. The DPS system has been challenging to work with this year, including assigning an incorrect number of students to a classroom. Staff are working with the district to find a resolution to these issues.

Silent Auction. April 6, 2013, 6:00 pm, Northfield. Childcare is available at Odyssey but must sign up in advance.

Passages. Need volunteers – if interested, contact Elki.

Downtown EL school - the new EL charter school located downtown has hired a Director. Marcia will continue to explore opportunities to collaborate. This is an exciting development.

Approved on 30th day of April 2013 by:



Peter Sherman
Board Chair