

Meeting of The Odyssey School
Board of Directors

Wednesday, November 19, 2014
4:00pm - 6:00 pm
Professional Development Room

Attendance: Christina Carlson, Jason Fritz, Marcia Fulton, Corey Goodrich, Chad Harman, Heather Lamm, Jon Liu, Andrew Mohraz, Illana Poley, Justin Silverstein, Jen Stefanacci, Erin Wilhoite, Eric Williams

Guests in attendance: Kendra Padgett, Jon Exall

- **Public Comment**

- Jon Exall, 6th grade teacher, spoke about concerns around staff sustainability at Odyssey.
- Staff are feeling that their work is not sustainable over the long term and are feeling increasingly burned out. There is not an easily apparent solution on the horizon but staff are eager to identify specific solutions. Jon wants the board to be aware of these concerns and of the work that staff are doing to understand the sources of these concerns and look for concrete solutions. This may be an issue where, over the next six-to-nine months, the board needs add resources to help staff and address the causes or support solutions.
- Erin asked for Jon to identify more specific root causes, which, Jon confirmed, the staff is working to do.
- Christina asked if this is a conversation that was happening five years ago, or if it is largely a new concern. Jon said that while there may have been some concerns about the demands of the job and its sustainability five years ago, those concerns are considerably more significant and pervasive this year.
 - Corey added that it feels like this conversation is happening a lot more now than it was when three years ago when she started at Odyssey, though she is not sure why. There may have been a sense before that a lot of work had been done that might resolve those concerns but even with that work, the concerns haven't gone away.
 - Heather commented that it is the board's role is to hire and fire our Executive Director and to set budgets. This doesn't mean the issue is unimportant to the board but solutions needs to be driven by leadership. It is not the role of the board to get into this level of work and we wouldn't be very good at it.


- **Marcia's Update**

- Staff have started a more school-wide conversation beginning in October about issues related to Jon's concerns.
 - Some consistent complaints – the job is too hard over the year, adventure scheduling is a challenge.

- Marcia met with the leadership team. We need to name this conversation and have the discussion as a crew, not one-off conversations. We need to unearth patterns, themes and causes. Hearing words like “drudgery, drain.”
 - Acknowledge that the sources are probably different for everyone.
 - For Jon and Corey it may be hours and hours of grading and planning, but different concerns with younger grades.
 - Some of it is beliefs and expectations of our staff. Do we have to work on the weekends? Is this our own man-made unsustainable model? “We kind of made a beast here. Can we lower the bar?”
- Corey: The people who I look to as models are saying this isn’t sustainable. It isn’t just new-teacher burnout, you see that everywhere. These are veterans, and it speaks to me as something that is broken in the model.
- Erin: There is so much weight for being a mentor-school, a model. How is that affecting staff? We heard this in the Visioning conversations too.
- Marcia: We are talking about things with budget implications – e.g. mentor school, site seminar. And also how teachers are evaluated. That has implications for their own family budgets.
- Justin: Some of this has to be connected to fear of change. We don’t want to lock new leaders into absolutes.
- Corey: That may be the impetus for bringing up some of the issues that had been lingering under the surface before, but these aren’t brand new issues.
- Illana: Are similar conversations happening at other schools?
- Marcia: There are some conversations with EL – definitely those out there who feel that EL is not a sustainable model. Staff really have a broad spectrum – some definitely feel that this could be sustainable – no one stated they definitely need to go but some feel like they aren’t sure.
- Erin: Speaking from the board, you all have our support and we don’t want anyone to leave Odyssey. But we also have to acknowledge that at the same time, sometimes making changes personally is the right, best thing.
- Corina will be doing a lending fair on December 2nd with the middle school as part of its economic expedition. Actual market is December 17th from 4 to 8. (Board meeting day).
 - Jason and Chris have a blood drive on December 10th as well as a health and wellness fair.
- Site Seminar – Day 1 is completed.
- Enrollment
 - Not a great sense of where fifth graders are. Sense that about eight are looking.
 - Very full open houses. No sense of panic about new mission, vision, new ED.

- **Finance (Jason)**
 - Revenues – way above budget through the help of the Janus grant and Lake County project. All this flows through direct expense items on the back end. Some benefit to the school but generally this is not flowing to the school bottom line.
 - Beyond that, good news is that we are about \$6K within budget. Basically about where we expect to be.
 - Expected surplus about \$23K end-of-year. Includes branding, search committee and purchase of a bus.
- **Executive Session.** Negotiations (See C.R.S. § 24-402(4)e)). Jason motioned into Executive Session; Heather seconded. Illana motioned to come out. Erin seconded. Heather motioned to approve recommendation from Executive Session. Jason seconded. All approved.
- **Search committee update. (Heather).** 13 applications submitted; Deadline is December 3. May extend this – suggestion that many people think about job transitions over the winter break.
 - Current candidates are very diverse in their locations and level of experience. First level vetting is happening on a rolling basis to determine whom to take to the next level.
 - The general opinion is that we still want more good candidates. A handful are really interesting – they are more than worth going forward in round one but not as many as we ultimately want.
 - Job announcement continues to be posted. Another push from the board during the holidays would be helpful. Will continue with paid sites through the deadline if not beyond.
 - Christina: I suggest we all reach out to three people directly and the same of the staff.
 - The deadline of December 3rd is there for a reason and candidates will begin to be invited for interviews on that date. Interested candidates may be considered after that date.
 - **Calendar. (Justin)** – executive committee recommends applying this year’s Odyssey calendar and to the DPS calendar that is published in January.
 - Jon – change as little as possible.
 - Eric – how closely do we map to DPS?
 - Jen – general feedback is that people are really happy with the calendar this year – more so than in the past.
 - Corey – staff perceptions are across the board. Is it a situation where input is useful or is there a sense that we need to keep it the same? A precise survey would give staff the chance to weigh in on whether or not we consider changing the calendar in the same year we are searching for a new ED. Do we want to vote that we won’t change the calendar without hearing from staff what their primary concerns are about staff sustainability? At the same time, clear leadership is also helpful from a sustainability standpoint. Feedback is great but asking for it when we won’t use it is not.

- Erin: This is a recommendation from the board. We are drinking from a fire hose. We know there are sustainability challenges and the calendar may be related. But this is not one we can solve right now given other issues (e.g. ED search). The transition committee should put together a list of things that need to be worked on (e.g. calendar). I don't think we know what the right calendar is. Need more research – look at schools that are hitting it out of the ballpark.
- **Minutes** – Andrew motioned, Jason seconded to approve September minutes. All approved.
- **Development.** Sign confidentiality pledge and sign letters.



President of the Board

1/21/15

Date