

Meeting of The Odyssey School  
Board of Directors

**Wednesday, October 21, 2015**  
**4:00pm – 6:00 pm**

**In attendance:**

Christina Carlson, Christine DeLeon, Brenda Bautsch Dickhoner, Jason Fritz, Wes Frakes, Corey Goodrich, Chad Harman, Andrew Mohraz, Brian Moore, Illana Poley, Justin Silverstein, Jen Stefanacci.

**Also attending:** Peter Sherman

**Financials**

- State funding (PPR) has been cut by \$40 per student or about \$13,000 for the year.
- PERA costs are lower this year than last.
- Insurance costs are another driver
- The finance committee is taking a deep look at our lease. The committee is trying to clarify questions about the dates defining the previous lease. We are in our 6<sup>th</sup> year in this building.
- DPS factors about \$770 per student cost for rental; we are currently at about \$570 per pupil. Our original lease was based on our previous costs at Westerly Creek but current conditions in the district for school space are different than they were six years ago.
- The committee is also looking for a new auditor due to the number of years that we worked with the previous auditor. The engagement process will begin this year.
- A restated audit is coming out. There is no new data in this restated version. The changes are immaterial and the outcome is the same. It is an issue about the presentation of PERA reserves. When the audit first came out, the finance committee and auditor were not entirely clear about what DPS requirements on this issue would be. But DPS later requested that additional schedules be included.

**Wes' update**

- Fall student-led conferences have concluded. Wes was able to attend at least one conference of every classroom.
- His notices included:
  - Students understand what is expected of their learning and can articulate their strengths and needs.
  - There was a lot of parent involvement – they had many opportunities to engage.
  - Preparation for conferences seems to take many calories. Is there a better system to be more streamlined?
  - Question about longer conferences: Liza typically builds in about four extra-long conferences per crew and teachers typically have a sense of which conferences would need to be longer. A double-block allows a teacher to maintain the student-led conference but allow time for a discussion without a student in the room.

- Fall adventure has wrapped up. Nearly all trips had entirely good weather.
- Wes' notices after this round of trips include:
  - Can we be more efficient about how staff are out of the building during adventure?
  - We need to do a better job of naming why adventure matters and lift that up in a more public way.
  - In the spring, we want to think about not just what we do but how we do it. For example, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> crew all went out at the same time, and this seemed to minimize impacts on the school. Two crews were in different places but they had some overlap and did the same kind of adventure. However, the impact on the planning was large. For example, we needed 52 backpacks, and had to have all the food ready to go. But after previous years, this was much improved. The impact of not just the week that crews were out but also the week when one crew was back but another was out was really rough. Overall this was a huge push for Paul but more streamlined for the whole group.
  - From the student and parent perspective, it also seemed more streamlined and better for the week back as well.
- National conference is next week. Wes' sessions will include: meaningful work around race and equity; promote sustainability for teachers; credentialed schools; making habits and mindsets matter; communities of practice and; cultivating leaders of their own learning.
  - Jon is nominated for a national EL award that will be announced at the conference.
  - We will know the winners by this time next week. The nomination itself is really incredible – Corey will see if we can get this to share with the board.
- Data conversations. Odyssey is very well primed for data conversations and data cycles. have done some massive work with data, but we have much farther to go. We have done things already that other people are still trying to catch up with. Wes' job now is to provide perspective and then provide the road map.
  - What are our belief systems around Habits? For example, is what one teacher puts in JumpRope the same kind of thing that another teacher puts in?
- Wes is on track to have three formal observations for all teachers by the holidays.
- By the next board meeting, Wes will have some initial observations. Generally this will lift up what we're doing right and what we need to unpack more.
  - It will look more in depth at operations, culture, crew and diversity and consider if we should be shifting fundraising priorities, becoming more efficient and more intentional.
- The mentor school application process has become more sophisticated in terms of how EL selects applications.
  - Only schools that are credentialed may apply. Now an application is required, where before schools were just appointed.
  - Question: Can we continue to host site seminar if we are not a mentor school?
- Quickly moving forward with “come meet Wes” opportunities. Tonight's Botanic Gardens event has been cancelled due to weather. One goal is to begin to see different faces at these kinds of events.

- School Designer days are scheduled. The first day will be how to observe with an EL lens.

### **Middle school data**

- The board reviewed data from the spring 2015 parent survey around middle school data. The same data was included in the larger presentation of survey data at the summer retreat.
- Question: How does this compare to previous years? Should we be asking different questions about middle school? Are we responding to a perception or are we responding to a problem? How does achievement data triangulate with these results?
- We should be careful about explaining the data away.
- Question: If this is in line with what we've seen before or if it's in line with what other middle schools are seeing, how do we address that problem?
- There is a general feeling among middle school families that the board isn't concerned about middle school and that some of the board's decisions point to the board acting as if Odyssey were a K-5 school.
- The board has no intention of Odyssey becoming a K-5 school; the success of the middle school is critical and the board has a responsibility to better understand why families responded to the survey in the way they did.
- One unique element last year was the Intensives schedule. A survey just about Intensives, which did not continue this year, was sent to parents separately last year.
- We need to rethink the family survey. We also need to be on top of families to complete the survey – 23 families is not enough to have good data on how to move forward. If we want families to participate, we also need to show how we are being responsive.
- Getting results at the end of the year makes it very hard to make changes based on those results; would it make sense to do the survey earlier in the year or multiple times per year? Also hard to follow up with families that leave.
- In terms of survey design, we have to think carefully. If we want to track families, we have to invest in survey tools that actually cost money. Qualtrix is starting up an education sector and might have more affordable rates. If we track families, there will be less participation.
- We should include a name of an independent board member who can hear concerns from parents who are not comfortable including that information on the survey.

### **School accountability and next steps**

- We are required to have a school accountability committee (SAC) and we have attested to DPS that we do have one.
- Requirements of the statute include:
- The committee have seven members, including: School principal or designee; at least one teacher; at least three parents and; at least one member of an organization of parents and teachers.
- The SAC must meet at least four times per year.

- It's purpose can run the gamut. We have a standing accountability committee that looks at academic achievement which can be a part of this but isn't the entire purpose.
- This law came about as a result of a charter school with multiple egregious improprieties.
- The SAC could be a standing committee of this board or it could be family council. The board needs to decide what we want it to be.
- Heather – we have a very unique board structure and we meet 10 times a year. Our board includes parents, teachers and community members. Four times a year, we can designate the first part of the board meeting as an SAC meeting. We always notice board meetings. We can be sure to consider risks and concerns from an accountability perspective. Brenda seconds this – we just need to be clear with documentation in the minutes.
- Justin made a motion that four times a year the board should meet as the School Accountability Committee as a normal course of the board meeting; Brenda seconded. All voted to approve.

### **Board governance decision making policy**

- Andrew circulated this document last year. About six years ago there was an effort to formalize how decisions were made.
- About two years ago, the board and family council started working through the policy to update it and align it with school operations.
- As Wes has noted, Odyssey needs to have more operations and policies documented in some sort of playbook.
- The policy identifies who is consulted and who has input into decisions. The board came to a place where for some decisions there is active consultation, a sort of two-way street. For other decisions, there is an opportunity for input. Comments are welcome but are not necessarily solicited.
  - As an example, look at our selection of a new school director. This was a decision of the board where we invited input but is distinguished from decisions which are in need of more voices in the process.
  - For many, the decision is pretty clear. One difficult area is fundraising where there is not a lot of clarity around who owns the responsibility. Is it the board, family council or school staff? It should be clear that it is a group effort.
- Question – how would adopting this policy fit into the policy – i.e. who would provide input into this policy?
  - Are we clear on the meaning of accountable? What does that mean from a decision-making perspective?
  - There is always one accountable party for every decision. There might be multiple parties responsible for it.
- We can always make amendments in the future.
- Illana made a motion to approve the Governance Decision-Making Policy; Jason seconded. Brian and Jen called for further discussion about the definition of Accountable.
- Brian – We need to be crystal clear about who is responsible for which decisions.

- Jen – these definitions are standard RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed) decision-making protocols commonly used in business. One way to think about accountability is who would get fired.
- An ad-hoc committee will take another look at the policy and report back to the board at its next meeting.

**Development committee**

- Colorado Gives Day is December 8<sup>th</sup>. We would like board members to be here at the beginning of drop-off that day to encourage donations.
- Board members (and others) can begin to schedule their gifts on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Christine will follow up by November 10<sup>th</sup>. We can also set up recurring gifts.
- Board members are asked to give gifts that are significant to you. Participation matters but so does the dollar amount. We make the same request to staff. We want to leverage that 100 percent participation.

**Minutes**

- Justin made a motion to approve the minutes; Heather seconded. All approved.

  
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**President of the Board**

10/22/15  
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**Date**

