

BCS Board of Directors - Meeting Minutes

Brooke Roslindale | 190 Cummins Highway, Roslindale, MA | February 7, 2018 | 12 - 2 PM

In Attendance: Scott Oran, Alex Finkelstein, Devita McConnell, Thomas O'Rourke

Also In Attendance: Jon Clark, Kimberly Steadman, Scott Knox, Hagar Berlin, Yvette Philip, Isabella Cucchi

In Attendance Via Phone: Charles Ledley, Joanna Jacobson, LaRoy Brantley

Unable to Attend: Lauren Kushman

1. Opening Items
 - a. Scott O. calls the meeting to order, takes attendance, and asks for any public comments
 - b. Isabella C. records attendance
2. Mission Moment
 - a. Kimberly S. presents our new online instructional resources (resources.ebrooke.org; video collection that highlights the elements of effective instruction) that are meant to showcase Brooke's great teaching in action and share with others what great lessons look like at Brooke. These videos are used during new teacher training as well as for dissemination purposes.
 - i. Alex F. asks if the videos are password protected, and Kimberly answers that they are not, they are meant for broad dissemination for other educators, parents, and anyone else who might want to see Brooke teachers in action
 - ii. Alex F. asks how we are going to promote the videos and increase Brooke's brand awareness. Hagar B. answers that we are going to blast it out to our mailing list and social media platforms, and shares that we are also working with Charter School Growth Fund on a communication plan for this new microsite. Hagar notes that this resource will be particularly interesting for other educators when they are planning their summer professional development sessions, and that we'll do another blast to our networks around that time, as we will have our professional development videos up on the microsite by that time.
 - iii. Scott O. asks whether other schools do video dissemination, Kimberly S. shares that some other schools do it, but Brooke invested in getting professional videographers to support the project
 - iv. Jon C. shares that this will be a great visual tool for Brooke to use to demonstrate our students' achievement to our stakeholders, not just for educators
 - v. Kimberly S. notes that a lot of our visitors ask for more resources and we are glad that we can now point them in this direction
3. Board Business
 - a. Vote to approve the board meeting minutes from November 15, 2017's meeting
 - i. Vote postponed until our board retreat given the attendance
4. Nominating and Governance Discussion
 - a. Scott O. notes that the Governance Committee has met twice since the last board meeting and has determined that we have the capacity to add board members. More members would allow us to have more committees, be more productive, and diversify our skill set.
 - b. Board reviews Governance Committee's proposed:
 - i. Board recruitment goals

1. Scott shares that we currently have nine members, and our bylaws allow us to go to thirteen members. Goal is to add two members this year, and identify three to five people to add next year or the year after.
 - ii. Board prospect matrix
 1. Scott notes that the governance committee started by looking at the current composition of our board and created a skills assessment template which notes the type of skills we currently have on our board and the skills we might find among prospective members.
 2. Scott shares that we adopted the skills matrix from nonprofit board resources.
 - iii. Proposed slate of board candidates - Hagar B. invites members to nominate additional board prospects
5. Fundraising and Financial Update
 - a. Jon C. gives an update on Brooke High School, shares that the high school construction is on budget so far and moving along quickly, but is not on time (somewhere between two to three weeks behind schedule.) We have used some of our overtime allowance to keep up, but are trying to be strategic. The cold spell put us back a little bit, as did the delay in the delivery of some materials, which the construction company owned. We are still confident we can make most if not all of the time up. We are in a great place and it's very exciting. We are hoping that in March at our board retreat we can take a tour as a group.
 - b. Jon invites board members to visit Brooke High
 - c. Hagar gives updates on the capital campaign
 - i. We have made some progress but have a lot more to do. Shifted our target based on the final financing of the building. Decided to fund the rest of the \$42.5MM project with accumulated reserves and philanthropy - specifically, our philanthropic goal is \$14MM. When we last met, shared that we had a pathway to \$9.9MM and had raised \$7.8MM, we now have a pathway towards \$10.7MM with \$8.4MM raised, which is progress but we still have a ways to go. We have been working closely with board members and with Jon and Brooke's leadership team on ways to close that gap.
 - ii. There are a number of very large swing gifts in our pipeline, including individuals and national foundations. Growing our list of prospects is still top priority, and we are always open to your feedback on that list. A last resort option would be going back to donors who have already invested and seeing if they are interested in giving again at the tail end of the campaign.
 - iii. We are simultaneously raising money for HS program operating funds - not just capital. If we do well with operating fundraising, it will help the capital campaign because it will change how we use our tuition dollars.
 - iv. Alex F. asks what happens if we don't hit our philanthropic goal. Hagar answers that we end up paying more in facilities costs per year because we have to take on debt that is unfavorable. Jon adds that we have the debt already, we are just trying to pay it off. If we don't raise the money, it's just a hit to the operating budget. He mentions that we are talking about refinancing.
6. Strategic Planning
 - a. Jon reminds the board of Brooke's strategic plan process and that we are focused on strengthening Brooke in the next few years. Mentions that we have worked closely with the team at Strategic Grant Partners on this project - SGP has led the data collection and presentation process.

- b. Board reviews Strategic Grant Partners' materials
 - i. Jon highlights the strengths that SGP found: achievement is still very strong at Brooke. Still highest performing non-exam school in Boston. Survey results are very strong among all stakeholders (students, teachers, staff, parents). Staff retention ranks highly among our charter peers. Only Bridge Boston had higher parent evaluations than Brooke, and Brooke had the highest response rate on surveys across the board.
 - ii. Hagar mentions that another strength found by SGP is that Brooke alumni are higher performing than BPS in college matriculation and persistence.
 - 1. Even without BHS, Brooke alumni are outperforming their peers at every milestone, but we know our kids can be doing way more.
 - 2. Joanna J. mentions that there is plenty of data that shows keeping kids through high school affects both their enrollment and persistence through college. She also mentioned that Brooke could expand its definition of college to include military and certificates.
 - iii. Jon shares SGP's findings around areas for improvement:
 - 1. Despite the fact that Brooke's student achievement is high and that our survey results are high for all stakeholders, in almost all cases they are off their high mark from a couple of years ago.
 - 2. Tom O. asks how Brooke thinks about the focus on tests and performance vs. the wholistic Brooke experience, Jon mentions that when student and staff surveys are also down from their high as well, it is clear that culture and academic performance correlate, but that of course we don't want to solely be assessment focused.
 - 3. Jon notes that he and Kimberly think a lot about what the most immediate explanation is for why our results are off track, and that he and Kimberly have done a lot of visits to schools and classrooms to determine this:
 - a. In many classes, Jon and Kimberly still see teachers conducting lessons as strong as ever; students are engaged and culture is strong. However, there seems to be less consistency with culture - middle school culture in particular.
 - b. Scott O. asks whether external factors like the national political climate could play a role in the decline, Kimberly says yes, it could.
 - 4. Jon shares that having a better sense of who we are and what we are about will help - our mission (college prep); theory of change (great teaching); vision of what great teaching is; organizational values .
 - a. Need to focus particularly on great teaching and ensure there is clarity among staff on what warm/strict teaching means, and what challenged/known means.
 - b. Alex F. asks who owns teacher professional development right now, and what that looks like.
 - i. Kimberly shares that this year, it looks a little bit different - four week content cycles, suggested by our external facilitator. So far, teacher feedback has been that it feels like a good deep college level course on important issues (largely about race/racism) but that teachers are

not sure how it informs their instruction or play out in their day to day work with kids.

- ii. Jon C. mentions that all of us recognize that talking about issues of race has been a missing component in Brooke's school culture and that it historically has been a weakness of ours. There are ways we can deliver stronger cultures in our schools and classrooms that incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion. We have to make that tangible for teachers.

c. Jon summarizes the strategic planning focus areas

- i. Bolstering academics and culture
- ii. Staff recruitment and retention plan
- iii. Better connecting operations and instruction
- iv. Resource allocation and development
 1. Long-term budget
 2. Network staffing plan
 3. Development plan
- v. Jon emphasizes his belief that we need to have stronger ties to the communities we serve, and that we have to know how we can do that in a way that honors our central mission and goal, which is to give our kids a great education. By doing that well, by diversifying our staff and leadership, by solidifying what a good classroom culture looks like, we will in the process develop stronger community ties.
- vi. Devita asks what the auditorium is going to look like for the high school - can it be a community asset? Jon shares that it will hold 650 students and that it will be available to the community when we are not using it.
- vii. Tom asks if we have tied goals to each facet of the strategic plan? Jon says that is the next phase.

d. Jon shares the next steps for the strategic planning process

- i. How can the board be involved in the process?
 1. Providing input and feedback, creating a plan for board development and growth to serve this plan, to include understanding our mission and theory of change and becoming culture carriers, working on the long term plan for resource allocation, determining long-term role for philanthropy (development committee), clearly spelling out what are the conditions under which brooke would grow

7. Closing Items

- a. Scott O. adjourns the meeting