

BCS Board of Directors - Meeting Minutes

Brooke East Boston | 94 Horace Street, East Boston, MA | November 15, 2017 | 6 - 8 PM

In Attendance: Scott Oran, LaRoy Brantley, Thomas O'Rourke Jr., Lauren Kushman, Trevor Rozier-Byrd

Also In Attendance: Kimberly Steadman, Jon Clarke, M. Scott Knox, Hagar Berlin, Yvette Phillip, Isabella Cucchi, Mark Loring, Angela Callado Kiley

Unable to Attend: Joanna Jacobson, Alex Finkelstein, Devita McConnell, Charles Ledley

1. Opening Items

- a. Scott O. calls the meeting to order and asks for any public comments
- b. Isabella C. records attendance

2. Mission Moment

- a. Jon C. explains why centering on Brooke's mission is important as a board at the beginning of meetings - making sure the board continues to stay educated about what's happening in the classrooms - and introduces three videos that celebrate teachers who have been with Brooke for 10+ years.
- b. Jon C. invites comments on the videos and on what board members would like to see in future mission moments. Trevor R. comments on how much the students in the video value the teachers and how they all remarked on the impact their teachers have had on them outside of the classroom - speaks to the fact that our teachers teach the "whole child"
- c. Jon C. celebrates Angela C. for a great Book Club event at Boston College on November 2nd, and then invites Scott O. and/or LaRoy B. to comment on Book Club.
 - i. Both comment that it was an incredible night, a great venue, students who attended were well prepared, insightful, and impressive; Steve Pemberton was outstanding, and that the students were very vulnerable during the conversation which was admirable.
- d. Jon C. encourages other members to attend the next Book Club event: Deval Patrick on March 15th.

3. Board Business

- a. Scott O. calls for the approval of the September 2017 meeting minutes. Scott O. motions, Thomas O. approves, Trevor R. seconds, unanimous approval.
- b. Scott O. calls for the approval of the Charter Accountability Plan.
 - i. Jon C. notes that this document is required by the state.
 - ii. Lauren K. asks if we can get the charter renewed even if we don't meet all of the goals in the plan; Jon C. says yes.
 - iii. Scott O. asks if there is a feedback loop on the plan? Jon C. says that when we do an annual report for compliance reasons, it is organized based on whether we met these goals or not, and we report on progress towards the goals.
 - iv. Scott O. motions, Lauren K. approves, Thomas O. seconds, unanimous approval.
- c. Scott O. calls for the review of the 2016-17 Audited Financials, per the Finance Committee's recommendation.
 - i. Yvette P. says that the audit went well and there were no findings.
 - ii. Jon C. notes that the auditor said that it was the best audit that Brooke has ever had, especially given the complexity this year; we ended the year with a \$2M surplus.

4. Brooke High Capital Campaign

- a. Hagar B. provides an update on the the resulting Capital Campaign goal and progress to date, noting the original plan was to put forward \$10.7M in Brooke equity which was inclusive of philanthropy and reserves, but after reviewing Brooke's philanthropic potential and the non-optimal interest rate on the subordinate loan, Jon C. and Hagar B. determined that the new goal will be to raise \$14M in philanthropy for the Capital Campaign and leverage what will be \$8M in reserves while still protecting 2 months of cash on hand.
 - i. Progress to date: \$7.8M raised (56% of Capital Campaign goal) in philanthropy so far this year; \$3.4M raised in high school start-up funds (counts towards the reserves).
- b. Hagar B. leads discussion about top campaign prospects and board connectivity
 - i. Hagar B. explains that Brooke has developed a fairly rigorous development pipeline system (includes discounting gifts depending on where they are in the cultivation cycle). As of today, that pipeline gets us to \$9.9M, leaving an urgent \$4M gap to identify (there are actually \$15.6M in opportunities in the pipeline, but again they are discounted)
 - ii. Thomas O. asks how the development team sources its prospects; Hagar B. explains it is from a conglomerate of sources (other charter funders, our current funders, intel from other board members, etc.).
 - iii. Board reviews prospect list and notes any connections they have.
- c. Hagar B. reminds board members to participate in the annual appeal.
- d. Scott O. remarks on a recent visit he had to Brooke High School, Hagar B. and Jon C. - said that the tour was incredible and productive and highly recommends others invite their networks to tour the high school as well.

5. 2017 MCAS Results Presentation

- a. Kimberly S. leads review of changes to the state assessment in 2016-17; what the MCAS assessment looked like
 - i. High School MCAS includes an ELA assessment in 10th grade, Math in 10th grade, Science in 9th grade or 10th grade (at Brooke - Biology for 9th graders). Students can retake MCAS exams in 11th and/or 12th grade; they have to pass all three exams to graduate high school.
 - ii. 3rd-8th grade state assessments for past 2 years, Brooke participated in the PARCC assessment (there was an option at the time); In 2017, Brooke returned to the MCAS (MCAS 2.0) - the exam is significantly different than it used to be, and more difficult than it used to be.
 - 1. Bigger focus on composition (more points, conventions graded on every grade level), higher bars and different names for levels
 - 2. Overall, results across the state are way down on the MCAS 2.0, which is not necessarily a bad thing (good to have a rigorous assessment, etc.)
- b. Kimberly S. reviews Brooke's scores
 - i. Brooke High School (9th grade Biology MCAS) scored #1 in the state and #1 in Boston with 99% of students scoring proficient; and 8th in the state and 1st in the city with 70% of students scoring advanced.
 - ii. 3rd - 8th grade network results
 - 1. All of our results are shared externally as one network, not as individual schools (internally, principals get school-specific scores, teachers get grade/classroom specific scores, etc.)

2. Relative to the state and city we are doing well and are still the highest performing charter school in the state. Compared to other districts across the state, however, Brooke as a district fell to 41st in Math and 108th in ELA. Statewide scores show a bigger achievement gap than existed in past assessments (socioeconomically elite districts performed better on this MCAS). Brooke's internal network assessments were down last year as well, so the results were not surprising, but disappointing
3. We have already made some adjustments:
 - a. Staffing changes
 - i. LaRoy B. asked about whether the staffing changes were made before the test results were received, Kimberly S. said yes. Some teachers asked not to return to Brooke this year, others shifted focus areas and are teaching single subjects or are leading small group instruction
 - b. Making data more actionable
 - c. Rebooting Brooke's Associate Teacher Program
 - d. Redesigning Content Professional Development
 - e. Improving grammar instruction
4. We are also moving forward with additional adjustments
 - a. Recommitment to our 'hedgehog concept' (Good to Great by Jim Collins reference): great teaching
 - b. Resetting a culture of urgency and high expectations

6. Strategic Planning

- a. Jon C. talks about the opportunity to focus on strategic planning given that Brooke is not growing (due to the MA ballot initiative outcome) - Strategic Grant Partners (SGP) is facilitating a data collection process to precede our strategic plan. SGP is excited that Brooke has a lot of quantitative data (and strong data) which makes the analysis process easier. Data will be collected by the end of the calendar year and Brooke will present it to the board in February.
- b. Jon C. mentions that the purpose of the strategic planning process is to ground ourselves in our mission and theory of change - also mentions that the full Brooke staff revisited our mission and theory of change during an all staff retreat in the fall.
 - i. Review of our mission: great teaching can close the achievement gap - and we grow best when we grow together. Review of our hedgehog concept and why focusing on great teaching matters most.
 - ii. Review of initiatives Brooke could take on, and discussion around which of those initiatives fit within our hedgehog concept, and similarly, review of the things that we could stop focusing on because they don't meet our hedgehog concept
 - iii. Discussion of Brooke's philosophy of a strict/warm teaching style, importance of Brooke students feeling both challenged and known
- c. Trevor R. mentions that the theory of change and mission all seem to be the right focus, but brings up the ballot initiative and notes that we were taken by surprise; the community might not have been receiving us in the way that we intended; we need to bridge that disconnect and ingrain ourselves in the community while still staying core to our mission and being a leader. Jon C. concurs and mentions that being a strong community partner is still a goal for Brooke - this exercise is mostly around why our hedgehog concept should be one very specific, focused thing we do well.

- d. Board engages in conversation around what makes Brooke unique in our approach to great teaching, and given those things, what are the right initiatives to take on? (“If you are so great at teaching, then why not take on initiatives like parent education? Why professional development?”)
 - i. Lauren K. asked how teachers reacted to the presentation on our mission and theory of change / asks whether Brooke has pressure tested this with parents
 - 1. Jon C. says that he believes it was well received among teachers, notes again that that presentation was different than our strategic planning process.
 - 2. Hagar B. mentions that one part of SGP’s work in the early stages of this strategic planning process is gathering and reviewing qualitative data as well as our quantitative data, especially via focus groups which include some teachers.
 - ii. Scott O. and Jon C. lead clarification discussion around strategic planning process vs. presentation about what are Brooke’s mission and theory of change - reminder that the strategic planning process is not an attempt to change our mission.
7. Closing Items
- a. Jon C. and Kimberly S. invite the board to continue the conversation about the MCAS results and the strategic planning process offline any time.
 - b. Scott O. adjourns the meeting.