

Salem Academy Charter School
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Monday, November 23, 2015 at 6:00 pm, Room 124

Members Present: Peter Copelas, Leslie Tuttle, Amy Slate, Thomas Monroe, Josh Biber, Nina Cohen, Karen Cady, Ana Nuncio

Members Absent: Paige Nalipinski, Steve Palmer, Connie Burke

Guests: Sean O'Neil, Stephanie Callahan, Sean Gass, Fawaz Abusharkh, Karen Corbett, Pam Rochna and Rick Jones

I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Salem Academy Charter School, 45 Congress Street, Salem, Massachusetts was called to order on November 23, 2015 at 6:24 pm, in Room 124 by Chair, Peter Copelas.

II. Approval of the Minutes

MOTION: The minutes of the October 28, 2015 meeting were presented for review. Leslie Tuttle made a motion to accept the revised minutes. With the motion seconded by Karen Cady, it was

RESOLVED: to accept the October 28, 2015 monthly meeting minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Public Comment

Fawaz Abusharkh offered his condolences and support for victims of terrorism. He also reported that he attended the recent State House Rally in support of charter schools. There was great energy at the event and he was proud to represent Salem Academy.

IV. SFC Report
Pam Rochna

The SFC held a meeting on November 10th. There were 15 members in attendance, including some new parents. Pam Boardway, Lisa King and Pam Rochna will be the tri-moderators going forward. The committee discussed their objectives as an SFC, including fundraising efforts and initiatives. The also discussed concerns regarding parking and pick up procedures.

Jen Pullen, the Director of Nutrition and Food Services at SACS gave the committee an overview of the new food service plan this year.

V. Head of School / Principal Report
Stephanie Callahan / Sean Gass

Stephanie Callahan gave an overview of the PARCC results for SACS. Students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded the state averages on ELA and math. In grades 6-8, 76% of students demonstrated high growth.

In grade 10, performance was lower on PARCC than on the MCAS.

Students in grades 6-8 saw increase in performance on PARCC over MCAS. One of our highlights is grade 8 math. The students received the 6th highest score in state. The students outperformed 142 out of 150 districts (only Excel Charter School and Pioneer Charter School scored higher).

Peter Copelas asked for description of the mechanism that compares MCAS and PARCC results.

Stephanie Callahan reported that we look at the Composite Performance Index (the CPI). It is a measure of the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency in ELA and mathematics). The Lower School is looking at each student, and looking at their proficiency. For PARCC, we are considering a score of 3 or 4 the same as proficient and advanced. Proficiency over time also uses the CPI Index. Essentially, we really look at student growth - regardless of the type of test. Josh Biber added that the percentile at the SACS middle school in math is in the top 10 in the state --out of 700 schools. He added that this is an impressive achievement.

Nina Cohen asked if students are concerned with their scores or if they are more focused on their class grades. Stephanie Callahan reported that the Lower School students are aware of their progress and success on tests as well as in their classes. They feel real ownership of their scores and want to be achieving. They are in the ANet network where they are compared to other schools and we regularly share their placement in the network with them.

Nina Cohen also asked if the scores will change if the PARCC is administered via computers, which is an option. Stephanie Callahan explained that the Lower School is using the on-line test option with ANet this year. We are again participating in the ANet, along with even higher performing schools. Our students are handling the technology well. Our second on line ANet was today and the process was successful and the outcome looks positive. Moreover, students say they prefer the computer-based testing process. Using ANet has been instrumental in helping us monitor that process.

Sean O'Neil added that the Lower School scores are extremely commendable. He thanked Stephanie Callahan for leading this effort.

Quarter I, Lower School

Stephanie Callahan reported that there is a different distribution in Honors and High Honors due to the shift in our grading system. We are still analyzing the data and looking at our grading shifts, but the grades feels more accurate to teachers so far.

Upper School, Sean Gass

Quarter I, Upper School

Sean Gass reported on Quarter I. The Upper School saw some improvements. There was some growth in students achieving Honors and High Honors and there was a drop in at-risk students. However, we still have more students at-risk than we would like. For example, 1/3 of our grade 10 students are at-risk.

The college application process is going well under the guidance of Melissa Lassen. She is reporting an increase in early applications this year. 20 of 42 students applied for early application, as compared to 5-10 students who applied in past years. Currently, we also have two students in the Posse Scholarship finals. Both students are looking at attending Center College in Kentucky.

Human Resources

Sean Gass reported that our Assistant Dean of Students has taken a medical leave and we are opening a temporary position through May. We are also looking for more Paraprofessional support. Finally, we are still seeking a new technology teacher.

Peter Copelas asked if the difficulty in finding a technology teacher is an issue of salary or is it a shortage of candidates. Stephanie Callahan replied that with one candidate salary was an issue - but it could be timing as well. Sean Gass added that it is a challenging time to find the right person now. This position is often seen in larger districts. This kind of dual qualification is hard to find. Sean O'Neil cited that equity among teaching staff was also a priority. This position was defined as a faculty position. The salary isn't as much of a concern as finding a skilled person who is willing to work for a teacher's salary. We may look at redefining the position as more administrative to attract a different kind of candidate.

Thomas Monroe asked if the candidates have been less interested in teaching. Stephanie Callahan shared that they have seen some great teachers who don't have considerable coaching experience, and vice versa.

Activities

The SACS girls cross country and soccer teams both took 1st place titles in the state championships. Coaches Ben Petrides, Matt Chuchul, Annie Brobst and Jennifer Conway were instrumental in making this season so successful.

VI. Executive Director Report Sean O'Neil

Charter Schools Initiative and the State House

Sean O'Neil reported on the State House rally. The Governor and others are trying to raise the charter school cap. The unions are against it. Joan Lovely and Paul Tucker, our state Representatives are not in favor of the cap increase. They believe that funds are still being taken away from public schools so they do not support the cap increase.

At this time, charter schools will likely not get additional opportunities to expand by more than 2 or 3 new schools a year, even though over 40,000 students are currently registered on wait lists.

Peter Copelas asked if a decision was made at the state level regarding the PARCC and MCAS tests for this year. Sean O'Neil reported that there had been an assumption that Commissioner Mitchell Chester would support PARCC because he was involved in its conception. However, there is some opposition because the state is testing on a national common core. Reach for the Top money helped states get the Common Core in Massachusetts. Now there is controversy over whether the state should be using a national guideline for state testing. Josh Biber added that he believes the outcome will likely be a PARCC and MCAS combined assessment that is unique to Massachusetts.

Nina Cohen asked if parents think there is too much testing. Stephanie Callahan replied that we have discussed the testing process with our parents. Last year there was a lot of testing, but that is already being addressed so that PARCC is offered once a year, instead of twice. Sean O'Neil added that our parents understand that we use assessments to gauge and monitor learning and make adjustments to our teaching. Parents also see the results here and are happy with them as well.

Nina Cohen followed up asking about a common lottery where every student in the district is enrolled in the lottery. Sean O'Neil replied that there may be value for such

a system in Boston. For us, it seems that such a lottery could produce a group of students who we don't even know if they want to attend SACS. Ana Nuncio is concerned with the segregation in Salem Schools, especially at the Bowditch School. Sean O'Neil replied that we send a mailing to parents of all 5th and 8th graders each year inviting them to enter the lottery.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee

Connie Burke

Thomas Monroe gave the Finance Committee's report. In the Profit and Loss, there have been some adjustments made for special education teachers. In addition, there have been adjustments made for maintenance and supplies. We have hired a new cleaning company whose rates are slightly higher but the product is significantly better. Our Teach for America funding allocation was less because we have fewer TFA teachers still in training. There have been some additional computer expenses for software upgrades.

Overall, our cash position is still strong on the balance sheet.

B. Education Committee

Amy Slate

The Education Committee met today to discuss the purpose of the committee and its members. This year, we are planning to focus on grading shifts and the impact of the expansion.

Members of the committee so far include Jen Lussier and Sarah Morrill. We are looking at possibly adding a senior staff member and a parent. We are also looking at the timing and duration of meetings.

C. Facilities Committee

Leslie Tuttle

We are still looking at Building 2 to house the art and music space, and build only a new gymnasium. Sean O'Neil is still working with a Shetland Park to get a ruling from the Department of Labor regarding the construction of the new building. There is controversy over whether this is a public or private building since it is owned by Shetland, which is a private company, but will be used by a public school.

D. Development Committee

Steve Palmer

Nina Cohen gave the Development Committee report. The Committee is still searching for grants and will apply for one of 100 grants of \$100,000 each offered by the Cummings Foundation.

SACS hosted a successful Community Luncheon last month.

Sean O'Neil and Erik Sayce are creating a giving registry, so that donors will be able to purchase items for our school, as well as make financial contributions.

The Amelia Peabody Foundation is offering a match of \$40,000 for any funds we raise toward the new arts and athletics center. This process needs to be completed by September 1, 2016. As always, Leadership gifts are helpful and greatly appreciated. Nina Cohen thanked all of the Trustees for their contributions. Thomas Monroe asked if the matching can only come from individuals. Nina Cohen replied that all funds raised would be matched including donations from corporations. The Committee is currently looking at past donors and parents as well. Currently, we already have pledges for half of this amount.

VIII. Transition Planning
Peter Copelas

Peter Copelas reminded the Trustees that the next Board of Trustees Meeting is on Monday, December 14th.

Peter Copelas reported that he assigned Steve Palmer as the Chair to head the search committee for a new Executive Director. He is asking trustees to contact Steve Palmer if they would like to participate on the search committee. We are looking at the possibility of a 2-tiered approach. There may be a small committee composed of senior administrators, senior staff and 4 trustees. In addition, there may be a larger advisory board. The first meeting of the Transition Committee is expected to take place in December.

IX. Motion to Adjourn

Thomas Monroe made a motion to adjourn the meeting. With the motion duly seconded by Karen Cady and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.