

Seven Hills Charter Public School
Board of Trustees Retreat
February 6, 2007
5:00 PM Crowne Plaza

Agenda

Welcome

Meeting began at 5:25 PM. In attendance: Carleton Watson, Krista Piazza, Rebecca Blodgett, Lee Cordaro, Jim Duggin, Donna Lemoyne, Dorothy Escribano, Andrew Feeland, Cindy Krackovic, Chris Bogden. Minutes taken by Beth Gillis.

Minutes

Minutes of the January 16, 2007 SHCPS Board of Trustees Meeting presented for approval.

Motion to Approve: Lee Cordaro

Second: Dorothy Escribano

All members voted in favor of the motion.

Public Comments

The BOT has allotted 15 minutes to those individuals from the community or staff who has notified the Board in advance that they would like to speak on a topic that may or may not be on the agenda.

1) Board Report – Reflection and Strategic Planning – Presented by Chris Bogden – Goal is to get through all of the discussion and determine where the school wants to go.

A. Seven Hills Charter Public School 2007

Where have we been? Open in 1996. Successfully renewed charter twice. Edison. Starting a school is not an easy dream to be realized. 500 students. Free/reduced lunch in 30-40%. Reflect the current students of Worcester. School is 75% free/reduced, greater minority population, English in home second language. More challenging population in Worcester. Separated from Edison. Definition of success is ambitious. Able to articulate what is happening in the school, where the data is going, exists at top and filtered to teacher population. Charter school is on the same playing field as any other public school. Same constraints. Same challenges. Same assessments to measure success. 2003 presentation showed only 3 measures. 2004 showed improvement. Refer to 2006 MCAS attachment. Achieving at higher level than Worcester is generally achieving. In a couple of areas we are achieving higher than the state. Performing better: Clark Street, Jacob Hiatt, Midland, Nelson Place, Flagg, Worcester arts magnet (burncoat quadrant), West Tatnuck (K-6) University Park, (middle school) We are holding our own with Worcester. The bad news is that Worcester is not that great. If diversity is important than we need to expand and attract other populations.

Who do we serve? Higher number of minorities, Highest percentage of poverty, Higher percentage of ESL families. Founding board members were interested in diversity and wanted to attract middleclass families. Are we providing a successful service to a population that would not have any options if we didn't offer it. Where do we want to focus our energies? Are we comfortable with our identity? Should we be proud and comfortable with our current population or identify a new target population? 25% white students is reverse demographics of when the school started. Half of the schools are consistent doing worse than Seven Hills but none of these have a more challenging population. Number of options has increased since seven hills started. Perhaps that's why we are seeing some siphoning off. We struggled to great challenging curriculum in the beginning and struggled with initial behavior issues and resulted in loss of families. Opening in 2 temporary sights; logistic issues caused loss. Previous principalship may have also caused some loss. Have we found our target population and comfortable? Do we change our target population? We could attract more middleclass but we are helping families that may not receive the services if Seven Hills is not an option. With this population, we might make a difference. After family preference there are not many slots available. The lottery may eliminate the choice of demographics. We can only market to a new population. If we are successful in the academics, we will attract more interested families. This is the place where people will want their children to attend. Pride in our role in the community. Aggressive marketing campaign may bring other applicants. **Are we comfortable serving this population?** Go with the flow? Charter legislation was designed to serve the under-served. Are we interested in directing energies in other directions? We are serving the community and we should continue doing what we are doing, **Yes, no new initiatives at this time.**

Are we successful? How do we know? New Charter, Comparisons to Worcester, Large Waiting List, MCAS score improvement, Graduate's HS placement and success. Review of Mission Statement would help identify if we are successful. The Mission is diverse cross-section of Worcester residents, High quality education. 33% of class go to Voke, 10% to a performance-based high school. We are preparing to students to go to more challenging schools. Loss at the middle school level may indicate that they are ready for more challenges because we have prepared them and provided them with the foundation. The student who remain are performing well. Building relationships with other schools would provide another dimension of our success. Our students can consider college as an option because we are giving them the tools to achieve. Encourage the schools to take a closer look at the population and also parents to see. Performance measures is that our kids go on to these types of school. **Take the initiative to establish feeder relationship with exam school even at middle level. Identify entrance and placement of students in an "Exam School" at any level as "success". Market opportunity to parents and encourage students.** This requires some energy and devotion.

What sets us apart? Instruction program responsive and flexible based on data/student achievement results. Character education. In-class Instructor/Student Ratio 1:13. Nurturing (Safe) – Community atmosphere. Commitment to arts and music. World language (Spanish elementary). Technology.

2007 Political Environment – New Admin no pro-charter.

Mass Charter Association optimistic and pricey. We cannot succeed without their lobbying presence but we need to be more personally aware of the political environment and community. Make parents aware of the political urgency without making them uneasy about our own stability. Identify the issues that are key to Seven Hills specifically and mobilize the parents to support the cause. We also need to actively cultivate a relationship and alternative funding besides the state. **Endowments** are a significant part of any school funding so issues may be address in long term. Government funding is an essential part of the school industry. Dedicated **Grant Writer** would assist towards fund raising in the future. However, it would have to be someone with a familiarity with the school environment and mission. **Improve our relationship with local delegation.**
Enhance revenues and revenue opportunities (Endowments and Grants)

B. What challenges do we face? Review achievement results and you can see that we continue to under-performing in Math and Science.

Math & Science – It's a national crisis. How is Seven Hills going to address this? In a college environment math is essential to analytical thought. Curriculum is now in place at Seven Hills to address math & science issues. The question may be in attracting teachers with exceptional math and science skills. Creative solutions to finding teachers to meet our standards. Intensive in 5th grade to re-visit science base. Science in lower grades is content specific. Build scientific process in lower grades. Collection, analysis and manipulation continue to be issues in both science and math. Within the context that this is a national crisis, what can Seven Hills do to address the issues with Math and Science? Focus in math in lower grades should carry over to science. More emphasis on JA science program. Quality recruitment and retention is key. More math and science sections will be added to the Elementary Education requirements. Producing higher quality, limited teachers. **Align ourselves with colleges with elementary education programs and recruit student teachers who believe in the mission. Recruit from science-based camps such as Camp Kieve and Nature's Classroom.** Solution to the problem cannot be based on workforce turnover. What about focusing on enhancing the faculty in place with their skills and comfort level with the material? Basic math course needed? Is there an incentive for elementary students to take a class to enhance their current skills. Two study groups currently in place. High quality sustained coursework. Staff is motivated and eager to learn and this could be part of their evaluation. **Directed, as a cohesive unit. Create a sense of urgency.** A solid curriculum of courses to build a foundation, not one single class. Strong curriculum to be taken by our instructional staff in Math and Science to give them the foundation that is required. Assessment and progress monitoring tools are in place for all grade levels for Math and action plans are generated. Teachers are met with and that data is reviewed and impacts their performance evaluations. Professional development to cover these areas are needed. Context is important to teaching the curriculum. **Training in content. Develop a sense of urgency – incentives. Partnering with local colleges and universities.**

** Review and reflect on information gathered in this retreat and revisit during next meetings to develop strategies and make an action plan.

Elementary ELA - - Sustain and monitor current initiatives curriculum/ program implementations. Assess impact in 2+ years.

Staffing (How do we attract and retain) – Develop relationships with local colleges and universities for (Teachers) Recruitment More discussion required about Retaining staff. Benefits, contracts and raises have all be used to aid in the retention of teachers. **Competitive raises** would mean a 8-10% increase in salaries which will not be support by our current budget. Focus needs to be finding ways to fund and support these initiatives. Under-spent funds were not returned to Edison but funneled back to teachers and reimbursed for teacher tuition. However, there are far more teachers taking courses that are seeking reimbursement which may reduce the funds available. Grant writing staff? **Tuition reimbursement for selected courses.** Approach introduction of improvement slowly.

Facility – Not having a consistent quality place for academics, curriculum planning, pull outs, behavioral issues. No space for substitutes to hang their coat. Space has been maximized to the best of our ability. Needing space to deliver instructional material in an efficient manner. Are we going to outgrow this building? Furnishings are wearing out. Technology initiative is addressing some of the “space” issues. Cafeteria, Auditorium. Are some of these issues part of retention issues? **Address the “small stuff.”** Frustrating for teachers who cannot stay in their classrooms for classroom planning. Space is a financial issue. We cannot add costs without adding enrollment. Possible strategy is moving either the Primary or Junior Academy. As a board, space may become a primary goal in 5+ years. **Investigate moving after-school program off-site.** Perhaps an alliance with the YMCA, Girls Inc. and Boys & Girls Club and provide transportation.

Family Support – If the family is supportive than the student is more likely to succeed. Initiatives to education children are poorly attended. How does the school improve family support? Our view if engagement versus the family’s view. Strategies have been implemented. Have we achieved the improvements we were seeking? Governance and partnership. Do we accept that this is where the parents are going to be or do we change the strategy?

Dissemination of Best Practices

- C. Where do we want to channel our resources – Review at next board mtg
 - Role of the Foundation
 - Succession Planning (Administration and Board)
- 2) Old Business
- 3) New Business

- 4) Financial Report – See Attachments
- a) Personnel Update (No Changes)
 - b) Enrollment Report as of Feb. 1, 2007 Enrolled 667, ADM 685, waitlist 135
Lottery March 8, 2007
 - c) Cash Balances 12/31/06 – Reflects Bank of America and DCU accounts.
 - d) Balance Sheet, P/L 12/31/06
 - e) Budget to Actual Second Quarter 12/31/06
 - f) Budget Priorities, Timeline – March Agenda

Accept: Donna
2nd Jim

Motion to adjourn:

Second:

Meeting adjourned at

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 2007

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Elizabeth A. Gillis

Administrative Assistant