

**Seven Hills Charter Public School Board of Trustees**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday April 7, 2009**  
**6:00pm – 8:00pm**  
**Held at Seven Hills in Room 209**

Welcome

Meeting began at 6:03 PM. In attendance: Donna Lemoyne, Lee Cordaro, Carlton Watson, Jim Diggins, Krista Piazza, Cindy Krackovic. Staff members in attendance: Donna Clark-Cranham, Donna Riel, Henry Chamberlain, Mike Belanger, Cheryl Hollocher, Brianne Padden and Sharon Thyden. Beth Gillis recorded meeting minutes.

Minutes

Minutes of the March 3, 2009, SHCPS Board of Trustees Meeting presented for approval.

Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes: Jim Diggins

Second: Donna Lemoyne

**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) Presentations:**

a. Dissemination of Best Practices

Ms. Piazza provided an overview of the Best Practices session recently hosted by Seven Hills for approximately 20 special area teachers from around the state. She expressed her commitment to providing dissemination of best practices both in our school and out.

b. Corrective Action Planning

a) School Leadership Model

Refer to attachment. Ms. Lemoyne requested clarification on the role of the Academy Leads and Ms. Piazza confirmed that the Lead would provide basic instructional leadership and support with behavioral needs. She also clarified that the title, Academy Director, was selected as opposed to Assistant Principal because it denotes a higher degree of authority. Mr. Belanger, Tech Integration Specialist, asked if the Lead positions would be open to internal candidates. Ms. Piazza responded that the Intent to Return form will be redesigned so that any employee can express their interest in the Lead positions directly on the form. Job descriptions and lists of qualifications will be made available as well. The Board agreed that the candidates should have their master's degree, 3+ years teaching experience and strong leadership skills. The Leads should know our instructional program as well. The Academy Director should have, administrative certification or be in process. The role could count as the internship component of the certification process if necessary. The Academy Director must have supervisory experience. One Board member questioned the levels of support for

Rainbow House special area teachers. Ms. Piazza explained that the Academy Director would provide the first level of support to Rainbow House and the Superintendent would provide the second.

Motion to Approve the Leadership Model: Jim Diggins

Second: Lee Cordaro

**Vote: 2 Approved, 1 Opposed**

b) Support Staffing Model

Refer to attachment. Ms. Piazza explained that this model was developed to address a the number of students with special needs who failed MCAS or failed core classes. The goal is to enhance student instruction in strategy training rather than just content mastery so that students can develop skills to be independent learners. The model encourages teachers to think about differentiation in terms of content, process and product, rather than just in terms of grouping and physical assistance. Having someone sit next to a student is not differentiation and it is not giving the students the skills to become active learners. The model increases intensity of pull out instruction during certain core blocks for our neediest students in order to close learning gaps and then allow them to be successfully reintegrated. The model also focuses on special education teachers and assistants specializing in content areas rather than having the be “experts” in all areas.

This proposal came out of a series of corrective action planning meetings that took place throughout the year. The first meeting was held in the fall, with the full staff. Subcommittees were formed to explore various issues. The student support committee met monthly throughout the year to develop this proposal. They presented it to full staff in March and made adjustments based on their feedback. A second draft was submitted for feedback and another round of adjustments was made. The draft that is being presented tonight was submitted for a final round of feedback from staff last week, with little response.

It should be noted that although teaching assistants have always reported to the special education department, they may support all learners in the classroom, not just those with IEP's.

In Junior Academy we are adding a special education teaching position in order to meet the demands of the students coming in to JA next year. The special education teachers will specialize in reading, math, or inclusion support. The special education teachers would manage the schedules and supervision of the teaching assistants.

Grades 4 and 5 will be moving toward departmentalization and the TA's would be more specialized to go along with that model. The Special Education Teacher would conduct pull outs, TA's provide inclusion support and tutoring.

The proposal called for TA's to specialize in reading or math in grades 2 and 3 as well. By staggering the reading and math blocks, the same TA could support all three classes within a content area across the grade level. The purpose of this is to improve quality and consistency of instruction across all classes and to allow the TAs to develop expertise in specific areas. Ms. Piazza reported that input has been received from staff at these grade levels, but not all of it was positive. Some teachers, particularly, in grade 2, felt that it was more important to maintain consistency throughout the day within the

room than it would be to specialize support services. Although this does not help resolve the issues of inequity across the grade level, Ms. Piazza understood their perspective.

Ms. Clark-Cranham from Grade 2 expressed her concerns about having her TA, Ms. Riel, rotating in other classrooms. She stated that they have worked together for many years and do not want to be separated. It is their partnership that has created a successful environment for students. “Ms. Riel is my right-hand man.” Floating TA’s would negatively impact this successful relationship.

Mr. Chamberlain from Grade 2 explained that planning curriculum with 3 TA’s instead of one would be more difficult. He agreed with Ms. Clark-Cranham regarding the relationship in the classroom. “Teachers and Assistants are partners. They work so closely that often students don’t know which is Teacher and which is Assistant.”

Ms. Piazza stated that this model is designed to close the gaps in progress from one classroom to the other. The model would increase curriculum continuity across all rooms and skill sets would be shared across the board. She agreed that there is some concern about whether moving a TA with superior skills into other classrooms would buoying their progress, or if this change would only serve to decrease progress in all classes. The reason this change was suggested for grades 2 and 3 is because that is where the achievement gaps begin to occur from room to room, based on teacher strengths.

Staff members in attendance of the Board meeting continue to provide their viewpoints. Ms. Clark-Cranham pointed out that the pacing is different in each room. It would be difficult for the TA who is rotating from room to room to provide instruction with ever-changing curriculum. She also noted that some personalities work better together than others and by having a TA work in three different rooms, you may not get three good matches. She stated that deficiencies in progress should be worked out within the grade level team. Mr. Chamberlain suggested that since the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will maintain the same number of TA’s that the school should not change the model. Ms. Padden, Grade 1 TA, shared her personal experience as a floating Aid and agreed with Mr. Chamberlain’s suggestion that it is difficult for the Aid to maintain the same standards while moving from classroom to classroom. Ms. Piazza explained that that is exactly why she wanted to have the same TA support all three rooms for a specific content area, to encourage more collaborative planning across the grade level and increase consistency with pacing and expectations.

For grades K and 1, the model that is currently in place will not change. However, the case load of the special education teacher will run K,1 versus K-2 as it was in the past. The other special education teachers would be grouped according to 2-5 specialty areas and 6-8 specialty areas.

Mr. Watson suggested that if the issue is achievement and we are not meeting our goal with the current model the school needs to make a change. Mr. Diggins expressed his approval of the current model while Ms. Cordaro is in favor of the new proposed model and has personally experienced its success. Ms. Lemoyne questioned the length of time the school will follow the new model to see if it is successful. The Board and staff

members present at the meeting agreed that 1 year would be adequate to determine the validity of the new model.

Mr. Watson felt that there were enough opinions and facts presented to bring the motion to vote before the Board.

Motion to Approve the Proposed Support Staff Model: Lee Cordaro

Second: Donna Lemoyne

**Vote: 2 Approved, 1 Opposed**

Discussion regarding the proposed support staff model continued. Mr. Chamberlain expressed his concerns regarding the new model but assured Ms. Piazza and the Board that the staff are professionals and would support their final decision.

Ms. Piazza assured the staff and Board that this model would be closely monitored for success. Ms. Hollocher added that Special Education meets monthly and effects of this change would be detected early.

Ms. Padden suggested that Grade 3 be designated the “test” grade and that Grade 2 would remain the same. The TA’s would then stay classroom based for K-2 and begin switching per subject in grade 3. It was suggested by the other members of staff in attendance that second grade students may not be suitable for this model because they are still “very young.” Ms. Thyden, former Grade K, 1, 2, 3 and 5 Teacher and current Librarian, agreed that Grade 3 is the age where students start to display more independence from their teachers. She states that Grade 3 would be the ideal test grade to see if the model is successful.

Ms. Piazza and Ms. Hollocher expressed their mixed feelings about this suggestion. The Special Education model groups Grade K with 1 and Grade 2 with 3. Supervision around two different models for grades 2 and 3 would be difficult, but not impossible. The Special Education Department agrees that they will support the decision of the Board of Trustees.

Motion to Amend the Proposal to have TA’s be classroom based for K-2 and as outlined for the other grades: Donna Lemoyne

Second: Jim Diggins

**All members voted in favor of the motion.**

c) School Calendar and Schedule Modification

Ms. Piazza reported that Worcester Public Transportation has not committed to the extended day model proposed for the 2009-2010 school year. Therefore, Ms. Piazza recommends keeping the existing school hours. She also recommended adding 3-5 school days to the calendar to accommodate possible snow days. The Board agreed that this proactive plan would eliminate concerns for making up snow days in the coming year.

d) Departmentalization of grades 4 and 5

Ms. Piazza reported that details of the departmentalization have been reviewed by the Board as well as the Seven Hills staff. There were no questions.

Motion to Approve Departmentalization of Grades 4 & 5: Jim Diggins

Second: Donna Lemoyne

**All members voted in favor of the motion.**

- e) Standards based reporting and promotion criteria

A committee has been established and has been working to define and measure “mastery” of standards for reporting and promotion purposes. A Mock-up will be developed and presented at the next Board meeting for discussion.

- f) TA Scholarships

Ms. Piazza presented information regarding scholarships for Teaching Assistants as a means to build a candidate pool and develop skills. Ms. Krackovic clarified that the Learning First Foundation would provide the scholarship and that funds would be directed to a restricted account and awarded to appropriate candidates meeting specific credentials.

## **2) Board Report:**

- a. Board Work Plan: The work plan will be revised and presented at the next Board meeting.
- b. Update on recruitment. Mr. Watson and Ms. Piazza continue their efforts to recruit new Board members.
- c. Succession Planning: Mr. Watson and Ms. Piazza continue their efforts in Succession Planning.

## **3) Old Business:**

- a. DOE Site Visit Update: Email summary included.
- b. SPED notice that district is at Level 1 (Meets Requirements). DOE notice provided.

## **5) New Business:**

- a) Resignation of Gerald Yung, Principal. Letter of resignation, and notifications included.
- b) Mass Public Charter School Association Delegate Assembly Update - PowerPoint handout attached to the Board packet. Ms. Piazza presented about the Growth Model and will keep the Board informed of further movement in this direction. Ms. Krackovic reviewed the financial information that was provided.
- c) Formal acceptance requested in acting as the sponsor school for the Spirit of Knowledge Academy (SOKA) Charter School. Informational letter provided. Ms. Krackovic clarified that the State would provide the funds for the SOKA Charter School. Seven Hills will act as the sponsor only. Ms. Piazza reported that a meeting is scheduled with SOKA to determine if a long-term alliance may be developed that would provide opportunities to Seven Hill’s students.

Motion to Approve Sponsorship: Jim Diggins

Second: Lee Cordaro

**All members voted in favor of the motion.**

- d) June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will be a retreat at Peppercorns.
- e) Status of school lunch program and audit enclosed. Tasha Griffin did a phenomenal job. Overall a very good audit and high regard for Tasha, her staff and the services they are providing to our students.

- f) Policy Manual Revision Committee – Ms. Kracovick proposed the creation of a committee that would consolidate the policy manual, remove out-of-date policies and ensure consistency. Ms. Lemoyne was invited to join the committee. The revised manual would be submitted to the Board for approval at a later date.

Motion to Establish Policy Manual Revision Committee: Lee Cordaro

Second: Jim Diggins

**All members voted in favor of the motion.**

## **6) Financial Report**

- a) Personnel Update. Attached.
- b) Enrollment Report as of 03/31/09: 668 enrolled, waitlist 391, ADM 675. Attached.
- c) Cash Balances: February 2009 was presented by Cynthia Krackovic, there were no questions.
- d) February 2009 Balance Sheet and P/L presented by Cynthia Krackovic, there were no questions.
- e) Update on Americans Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for education and the impact for SHCPS. Commissioner's memo provided.

Motion to adjourn: Jim Diggins

Second: Lee Cordaro

**Meeting adjourned at: 8:30 PM**

**Next meeting: May 5, 2009 at Seven Hills**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Beth Gillis

Administrative Assistant