

## **Academy of the City Charter School Board Minutes**

A meeting of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of The Academy of the City Charter School (the “School”) was held on July 30, 2013 at 5:00 P.M. at the School (31-29 60<sup>th</sup> Street Woodside, N.Y. 11377)

Notice of the meeting was given by submitting a notice electronically to the Queens Courier newspaper, posting the meeting’s notice on the school website, and posting a paper notice on the bulletin board at Academy of the City Charter School, 31-29 60<sup>th</sup> Street Woodside, N.Y. 11377

The following members of the Board were present:

Dr. Richard Welles, Nancy Sills, Angela Howard, Harold Elish, Silvana Vasconcelos, Steve Zimmerman.

The following staff members and visitors were present:

Kate Smallberg (teacher), Desiree Galashaw (assistant principal), Richard Lee (principal), Adam Hunt (director of operations), Digant Bahl (CFO), V. Sembhi (bookkeeper), Dr. Frank Siguenza (Boys and Girl’s Club), Jessica James (prospective board member) and Paul Ajon (AoC).

Harold Elish introduced Jessica James to the board and visitors. He described her as someone who has already been involved in helping and supporting AoC. She had previously helped Jim Traub, a current board member, with a successful fundraising event, and had previously visited the school and given development advice. HE suggested that the board consider her as a new member of the board of trustees. Jessica expressed gratitude towards the board and briefly communicated her admiration for the school, goals, and efforts of the AoC team as well as a great appreciation for the educational opportunities offered to AoC’s students. Ms. James conveyed that it would be her honor and privilege to use her skills and experience in marketing, development, volunteer coordination, and fundraising could be contributed at AoC.

HE moved that the board accept Ms. James into the board of trustees, subject to the approval of SUNY. Angela Howard seconded the motion. All were unanimously in favor

RW discussed learning and assessment, two issues being addressed not just by AoC but by the education community at large. He noted how different the learning and assessment processes in school would be if

teachers came to view themselves as cognitively linked with the students they teach. Rather than using assessment results as indices only of individual student knowledge, such information might shed light on the relationship between the student and the teacher. In this paradigm, the student is not assessed in isolation, but in conjunction with the teacher, and both learn as a result of assessment. He read the following:

“Instead of giving the children a task and measuring how well they do or how badly they fail, one can give the children the task and observe how much and what kind of help they need in order to complete the task successfully. In this approach the teacher and child is not assessed alone. Rather, the social system of the teacher and child is dynamically assessed to determine how far along it has progressed”

*In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms.*  
Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

### **Committee Updates**

HE, as chair of the Finance Committee, gave the report of the committee meeting, held prior to the Board Meeting. The budget for this past year had been examined by the committee. The finance picture of the school was “incrementally better” with regard to the anticipated enrollment and therefore AoC was able to achieve some cost saving. However, the bank balance at the end of the year, as was typical for charter schools, required some triaging of which bills to pay. The finance committee recommended entering into letter of credit agreement with the LaRaza Foundation, to deal with cash flow shortfalls or unanticipated financial burdens. Raza has offered us a line of credit for 150,000.00 dollars at a cost of \$3,000.00 for the first year, with two one year renewals costing \$1,500.00 each.

HE moved that the board approve AoC entering into the proposed letter of credit agreement with the LaRaza Foundation. RW seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed.

DB commented that although we ran low on funds towards the end of June, we came up with money totaling around \$750,000 dollars in July.

SZ noted that the LaRaza Foundation is a superb organization and understood the charter world better than most other funders. AoC looks forward to a long term relationship with them, particularly in relation to a possible middle school.

## **Finance Report**

Digant Bahl explained his written report, which is Exhibit A to these minutes. He noted that the audit of AoC had started and would be completed the first week of October. RW thanked DBahl and RL with regard to the quality of information and the timeliness of the information that had been given to the auditor.

## **Teachers Report**

There was no teachers report given.

RW noted that the collective bargaining negotiation had been successfully concluded with the UFT. He expressed thanks and gratitude to Frank Moss, AoC's pro bono counsel, who gave wise, patient and encouraging counsel. RW noted that Frank's steadfastness and capacity to move the process forward when it was stuck or could have gone in the wrong direction, gave the school the best chance to achieve its goal of having a good, collaborative working relationship with its teachers.

## **PCO report**

SZ read and presented the PCO report. (Exhibit B). The PCO board is working to make sure that the Hispanic community at AoC are fully a part of the organization and their interests are represented there.

## **School Report**

RL and Desiree Galashaw gave the school report. RL expressed how exciting it is to be in the new facility. There are eighteen classrooms although not all will be used initially.

There will be four kindergarten classes, two first grades, two second grades, and two third grades. The basement will be occupied by ELL and SpEd. We ended the 2012-13 SY with 157 children, a 151.2 FTE. The final reconciliation at the end of the year with regard to PPR showed a difference of only \$13. AoC has 137 new children enrolled for next year, primarily in Kindergarten. Of the total available 290 spaces, 281 are filled. First and second grade are fully enrolled. There are still 6 or 7 spots available in Kindergarten and 2 or 3 available in 3rd grade. AoC has plans to continue to enroll children and do outreach to current families throughout the summer, primarily reaching out to families of the 11106 zip code who didn't attend any open houses. Post cards were sent out to all families

setting forth the important dates for the beginning of school. All staff positions are filled with the exception of the after school program and night cleaning staff.

DG noted that the end of the year reading assessments for each grade were as follows:

Kindergarten -- 86% were at or above the benchmark level set by SUNY  
First grade -- 58% were at or above the benchmark level  
Second grade -- 72% were at or above the benchmark level.

At the beginning of the school year, almost all of our students fell below the benchmark level for their respective grades. This is natural as they are only beginning the year and instruction had not taken place yet.

Midyear, when we assessed each grades growth in reading, our students were beginning to meet the benchmark levels; some had already passed that benchmark, and some were still below. The end of the year results are above and were outstanding and showed remarkable progress at every grade level.

The second approach to assessment is for the purposes of identifying students who are at-risk of not meeting standards, or whose growth rate requires intervention. We use a rubric scale that advances as performance expectations rise over the course of the year. The rubric is a scale rated 1 - 4, (with level 4 exceeding standards and 1 meaning below standard) and was designed to show student performance within parameters set for each trimester.

This data helps the school identify any potential problems which may require intervention, whether with individual students, instruction or resources. This data is available by individual class and by grade cohort. AoC uses it for dispatching at-risk services, reading intervention services and to inform our Special Education and ELL service providers so that every department is working toward helping our students achieve.

These results as well as the analysis of the math assessments, which also showed the children's growth over the last year, will be discussed in further detail at the next meeting of the education committee.

RL is optimistic that AoC will be awarded a grant from the Kaboom playground constructing company to build a permanent playground for the younger children. A discussion between RL and Father West took place concerning the outdoor playground space. If AoC receives a \$15,000

Kaboom grant, \$8,500 would be used for equipment, \$1,500 would be used for shovel, spades and food for the volunteers. Another \$5,000 would be used to level the ground for construction. One hundred volunteers would be used to construct the playground. RL noted that the working relationship with Father West and AoC administration has been excellent. Father West has approved the planned community fair to be held in October.

Afterschool possibilities are as follows:

One possibility would cost about \$1000 per child per year and would be provided by the school. NYJTL would have a similar program that would cost about \$1,500 per child per year. Since we were not awarded with a CCLC grant that would have subsidized the per child amount, parents will have to pay anywhere from \$2 to \$10. This would of course be a two hour program for Kindergarten and First grade. There would be an on-site enrichment program (math and test prep) and then an off-site two hour program at the Boys and Girls club for second and third graders. If AoC were to undertake the A/S program, it would be rather expensive and would need board approval. In-house staff would have to be hired for the program if we opted for our own after school. About one hundred children would be in the program.

The discussions with the teachers and the UFT concerning teacher evaluation system will continue in September.

SZ gave the OSP report. He suggested that board members attend a conference on October 18 hosted by the Northeast Charter center. The cost is about \$250 to attend. He also discussed the issue of charters refusing to comply with demands of the State DOE with regard to assessments and the position taken by NECSN and the Charter Center. OSP had refused to sign the petition with regard to a lawsuit brought by the UFT concerning shared space in DOE schools.

### **Board Development Task Force**

AH gave the report of the board development task force. She noted that she and HE had been working together effectively, discussing how to grow the board and what holes needed to be plugged. The goal is that committees ultimately will do the work, with reports circulated to the full board prior to the monthly meetings. RW asked them to address for the future the topic of parents on the board.

### **Executive Session**

RW moved that the board go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter and asked that Jessica James and RL join the board in the executive session. NS seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed. There were no votes taken during executive session. The business of the board during the executive session being concluded, RW moved that the board return to the public session. NS seconded the motion , and it was unanimously passed.

The board returned to public session. There being no further business before the board, NS moved to adjourn the meeting. SZ seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

The next board meeting shall be held on August 27, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. at AoC.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy R. Sills, Secretary

