

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 October 29, 2013 at 5:00 P.M. at the School (31-29 60th 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 60th Street Woodside, N.Y. 11377

The following members of the Board were present:

Dr. Richard Welles, Nancy Sills (via webcam), Angela Howard, James Traub, Jessica James.

The following staff members and visitors were present:

Richard Lee (principal), Desiree Galashaw (Asst. principal), Paul Ajon (AoC), Dorothy Bukantz (teacher/OSP), June Schwartz (OSP), Emily Kotsaftkis (PCO)

Rick Welles Called the board meeting to order. He begins with a brief homily about our school mission not only offering to be an outstanding school but also being a beacon for the educational reform. He continued by reading a brief statement from *The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*:

Meaningful victories require bold actions. Many recent school reforms are built on time honored but terribly flawed test teach test model of instruction; the call for national standards and national examination, and the call for more stringent exit outcomes in all levels structured around this model. Ironically, these initiatives yoked to the very approaches that have brought about the need for school reform in the first place. They are attempts to standardize a goal and develop assessment devices. They are journeys down the same old roads and are therefore familiar, timid, and superficial as reforming issues. The core of the matter is still not being addressed. Assessment and standards are undeniably important issues but they've always been and remain the tail that wags the dog. Meaningful school reform must address the central unit of the entire enterprise, the classroom; and must seek to alter the ways teaching and learning have traditionally been thought to interact in that unit.

-Martin Brooks

Rick waived to read the board meeting minutes from September and ask that they be approved; Angela Howard seconded and all were in favor.

Education Committee:

Angela Howard presented the education committees report by stating that the members of the committee are composed of Richard Lee, Desiree Galashaw (as administrators), three teachers, and three voting board members as well as anyone else interested in sitting in.

The meetings will be scheduled normally prior to the board meetings.

The main topics of the last meeting encompassed math curriculum, middle school, and the development of agendas for the upcoming meetings and catching up with the familiarity of the education protocol.

No teacher report available

PCO:

Emily Kotsaftkis reports that parents are gaining momentum. Emily is very excited and hopeful. The second PCO meeting took place on October 8. There were forty people in attendance at this meeting, which were thirty less than the last meeting, but the number of people attending regularly are expected to be steady from now on.

AoC Teacher Barry Miskin and Assistant Principal Desiree Galashaw gave a presentation on classroom management and behavior. A discussion on school foods was also entertained. Movie night was very promising; over three hundred people attended. A profit exceeding five hundred dollars was generated during the event.

The same committee responsible for movie night will reconvene with Noel Peguero and Richard Lee to organize the winter concert event in December.

A meeting took place with RL to discuss fundraising for the playground resurfacing and the acquisition of portable playground equipment. Raffleing, online auctions, and pie sales are the methods being used to fund the erecting of the playground at AoC.

The winter concert is also expected to host a bake sale. Donations in the form of Amazon wish lists are being used to supply the classrooms with necessary resources to teach children. It was explained to the board that each class could make certain requests based on specific interests of teachers and their current curriculum. A link could be added to the AoC website to allow those who donate to view the wish lists of AoC classrooms. It would still need to be further thought out before finalizing.

Talks about the PCO setting up their own non-profit status under a 501c3 took place recently. This would entail the PCO becoming a non-profit legal entity if they were to actually follow through with it. The PCO would have to seriously consider the pros and cons of such an important change. They were advised that it might be beneficial to remain under AoC for certain liability purposes. If the PCO were its own entity, they would not be covered under AoC's insurance and would need to purchase their own insurance for events.

One of the board officers resigned and was replaced. The PCO thought it would be a good idea to have a two people for each function within the PCO as a contingency in the case of someone leaving.

The PCO is trying to devise methods to reach out to parents. It seems that a lot of Spanish speaking parents seem to still not know what's happening in the school. Whisper translation devices may be an option for the foreign parents. Dual language slides can also be an option to help those Spanish speakers.

A brief discussion on the topic of teacher reports surfaced. Members talked about the importance of having a routine teacher report prepared for each board meeting.

Finance Report goes here

RL discussed authorized petty cash and the petty cash limit of fifty dollars. He stated that any money spent in the excess of fifty dollars should be paid with a check.

It was suggested by RL and DB during a conversation, that an increase in the petty cash fund should resolve any issues that may come up when the petty cash fund is too short to cover an expense. RL would need the board's approval to raise the petty cash fund in order to fulfill this increase.

RW moved to add to the agenda and vote to increase petty cash limit to 100 dollars.

All were in favor.

RL spoke about expenses and how they've been minimal lately. The biggest expense has been in purchasing a conference table.

A new thermostat was bought and wired by the custodian, Gerardo; a boiler company was then used to install the new thermostat.

School Report

RL presented the school report. He began by giving us the attendance numbers for AoC. The school has a steady number of 276 children currently enrolled.

Coffee with the principal has been a success and was done specifically for child retention. RL explained to parents why there are so many half days as well as to answer many miscellaneous questions.

The ideal number of children to have enrolled is around 272 after several months. 280 children enrolled gives us more leeway budget-wise and although it may seem preferable for the to have about twenty-five children per classroom, it is safer to over enroll. The bottom line is that the AoC retention rate is huge. There are many factors that are keeping our children in AoC. Having more children allows us a higher budget, which can help us fund a playground and have a broader spending limit.

Parents of children in different grade levels had different questions during coffee with the Principal. RL felt that Coffee with the Principal helped with child retention, and for that reason, another meeting be held in March. Having another meeting with parents in March will also be helpful because parents usually sign up for the lottery again for April.

Assessments:

RL talked about the math assessments and how they've been completed for Sept.

The following assessments will take place in February and then at the end of the year.

Unit plans are going well. RL Showed the education committee the unit plans that are being used. The next unit plans are due in November and then a cycle of report writing which will come after.

Professional learning communities are being held. Jessica Donatelli and Angela Howard will be responsible for leading this particular group of about ten or twelve in a workshop based on working with children that have disabilities and distractibility. RL will be leading a group called Teaching Mathematics to Young Children using a book as a resource, and DG will lead a group called Teasing, Tattling, and Defiance. All teachers will participate.

The guidance counselor, Maria Vergidis has been hired until late January when Rachel Gladstone is expected to return from maternity leave.

Facilities:

As mentioned before, there is a fundraising event for a new playground and playground equipment. The ground still has to be prepped by re-surfacing and re-piping.

AoC has chosen Imagination Playground as the company that will supply our playground equipment. Imagination playground is basically a portable foam block set that can be arranged into sculptures, trains, etc., and stored away afterwards. Children play with these blocks by using and creating their own play spaces. The PCO is expected to raise anywhere from two thousand to five thousand dollars. RL also has requested that the board kindly provide a similar amount to generate some momentum with this project; families are also expected to participate in fundraising to facilitate this undertaking.

The ground needs to be resurfaced before December in order to avoid complications due to weather and temperature. The price for resurfacing the terrain will be in the ballpark of ten thousand dollars.

There was later a discussion about fundraising where fund raising during this season seems like an opportune time to get donations. It would also be wise to contact previous donors and explain our proposal in attempt to spark off another donation.

RL mentioned getting monitors for the main office and entrance, and revamping the school website. After school is going well; there are currently over ninety children enrolled in the afterschool. RL and the DB are hoping to have the balances down to zero because the school is concurrently paying for A/S salaries as well as paying the bus driver to transport children from the school to the Boys and Girls Club.

There was a community fair that recently took place; it housed twenty-four organizations and was well attended. There was also a book fair that took place that day; it was overlooked by the Educational Technologist and generated some profit. The parent turnout was also very promising that day.

SZ presented an overview of what the Open School Project is working on. In regards to the contract work with the school, there is work being done on curriculum development for the fourth grade. RW is part of the middle school task force exploring possible options and sites that can be used to house our expanding school. SZ has met with the legal outreach in L.I.C., a non-profit outreach program dedicated to helping high school students

with an after school program. The site is underused during the day and could be used as a temporary solution.

Steve met with a representative from the RAZA Development and Terry Hughes from the Boys and Girls club to discuss the possibility of expansion of AoC there at B&G. The rep was excited to hear about the possibilities of working with a community-based organization. The option of building vertically or behind the school on our very own school grounds could also be something to explore.

June Schwartz has been meeting with an educational technologist and DG to revise the school website.

E-Chalk can perhaps be an option for revamping the school website. E-Chalk is a company that accepts the e-rate option for paying for website building. In the past, e-rate was described as being a company that works with the school to refund most of the schools money used during various projects.

E-Chalk also gives advice or consulting on how to design the website. Proposal for this could be as little as 600 dollars if e-rate were to be implemented into the plan.

June Schwartz discussed her ongoing venture with the E-Portfolio project. She seemed very hopeful with the progress achieved already.

The board meeting retreat has been agreed upon on for Saturday,

February 1 2014

From 9-1