

**Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School
Governing Board Meeting Notes - DRAFT
March 18, 2014**

Location: Middle Campus Media Center

Board Members Present: Matt Underwood (nonvoting member), Grace Burley, Mitch White, Michelle Newcome, Sarah Wilcox, Alice Jonsson, Suzanne Mitchell, Greg Parent, Gabe Damiani, Mary Campbell

Visitors: Kari Lovell, Leslie Grant, Terry Roth, Morgan Potts, Lara Zelski, Cathey Goodgame, Elizabeth Hearn (? can't read name), Veleta Greer, Kelley Klein, Jessica Gowen, Layne Wiggins, Laurel Snyder, Megan Noble, Shannon McCaffray, Craig Baker, Cat Jaffin, Lucy Fry, Lori Howard, Elayna Wilson, Marina Saffel, Julie Stoverink, Lauren Robinson, Michelle Bowers, Sherri Scott, John Michael Kearns, Leigh Scott, Matt Miller, Tracy Yandle, Kristi Cameron, Mike Dyer, Susan Taylor, Rachel Alsher, Cheryll Booth, Rebecca Hudson, Kelly Hartley, Amy Damiani, Michael Michaelides, Jasmin Griffin, Maya Jenkins, Sonia Fuller, Narin Hassan, Latha Erickson, Bill Turcotte, Winston King, Myron Polster, Brooke McGhee, Ashely Miller, Heidi Goodwin, Kate Michalak

1. Call to Order

2. Introductions and visitor sign in. Grace commented to the public and board on recent changes. Teachers tend to put a lot of weight on the philosophy of the education while parents tend to put a lot of emphasis on the parent involvement. That can be but doesn't need to be a point of stress. How do we keep parent involvement while also appreciating the profession of the teachers?

3. Approval of ANCS Governing Board Meeting Minutes February 18, 2014
Sarah made the motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting. Motion seconded by Suzanne. Motion passed.

4. Leslie Grant: Update from the Atlanta Board of Education, APS Board Member Grant shared news from APS. A Charter Integration Task Force was created and includes Matt Underwood. The task force was set up to work out kinks between charter schools and APS. Financing of charters is part of the conversation. APS is looking for a new superintendent. Regarding the unfunded pension liability situation, a Pension Resolution Task Force was created to address the problem. Charters are being looked at as a chunk by APS. They look at the data so we need to have good data. Our current data suggests that we need to tweak some stuff and get some scores up because that is how we are judged. Revenues are up and hopefully more money will be coming in soon. APS is increasing foreign language, band, chorus, etc. for middle schools. We need to consider these factors in our decisions.
 - a. Public Question – How will calendar shift impact perception? Leslie - People like when calendars line up (Charters and APS as well as APS with other districts). Helpful for people to schedule their lives when they do.

5. Public Comment
 - a. Lane Wiggins, parent of 7th grader. Statement of concern from another parent, Lisa Roberson, was read, as Lisa was unable to attend. Lane also supports Lisa's position. Lisa's letter expressed opposition to moving away from APS calendar and opposition to decrease in instructional time for increased planning time. These decisions are being made too late in the year. People have made plans made for the summer. Decrease of instructional time not wise b/c of view of APS on ANCS. Board should contemplate taking away the planning time in MC (and therefore increasing instructional time), not increasing it at EC. Plans for enrichment for after school is questionable. Will this time truly be enriching? Who will provide? Asking the board to revisit those decisions.

- b. Laurel Snyder, EC parent, commented herself and also on Abby Golson's behalf. They do trust the leadership and the staff. The instructional time is not the issue, it is the use of the time. They are in support of the changes. Abby's letter expressed support for calendar changes. More collaboration time will have a positive impact on students.
 - c. Julie Stoverink, MC parent, expressed that the short timeline of the decision for balanced calendar was a concern. She suggests looking at the calendar for the next year when APS is also considering it. Plans for summer already made. Wonders whether enrichment for the short days will really be enrichment? Will there be inadvertent inequity if some kids can leave for other enrichment? Will extra planning (and less instructional time) time really translate to increased student performance? Asks that board consider revisiting the decision and considering for next year.
 - d. Matt, parent, commented regarding schedule changes. After school enrichment is a real concern. Believes that the change would mean a 4% reduction in instructional time. A 4% reduction may impact struggling students. He also recognizes that academically challenging enrichment may be a good counterbalance. More clarity is requested on the enrichment plans. Have we really considered the loss of instructional time and its impact on students?
 - e. Sherri Scott – comment on schedule changes. Parents don't have vacation time to take off and there are few camps available during the new breaks. Working parents don't have an option.
 - f. Bill, parent – When spending resources, we need to think about the resource of the teachers. Wants teachers to spend the time with the kids teaching and one way is to keep class sizes low. When money is spent, wants it spent on teachers.
 - g. Kelly Hartley – Trusts the board, trusts the parents. Would like a little more time to transition to the changes. Worries about second grader having early release one day a week. May be a hard schedule for kids with one short day in the middle of the week. Would like to see more collaboration between MC and EC. If early release does go forward, maybe this could be an opportunity for the kids to work together on that day for collaboration (MC and EC).
6. **Mary made a motion** to move new business up in the agenda. Seconded by Suzanne. Passes.
7. **Mary made a motion** to create a task force around parental input and how parents are routinely involved in decision-making. Michelle seconded. Motion passed.
8. **Greg made a motion** to reconsider the board's vote on early dismissal.
 Discussion: Greg - Vote did not take into account the voices of the parents. Board should see community, teachers, and parents equally. Only listened to 2/3 of the constituency without considering parents. The vote was premature. This would not necessarily result in a different outcome but we need to take time to hear parents. Greg noted that the board vote for that issue was the closest he has ever seen.
Alice added a friendly amendment – reconsider weekly and yearly calendar as well.
 Discussion: Needs to be a separate motion. Amendment rescinded.
 Motion passed.
9. **Greg made a motion** to have the parent task force work together to come up with some alternatives to get the instructional time back and get teachers together for collaboration.
Grace made a friendly amendment to have board member on that task force.
Mary commented that she does not think this would be the task force she proposed.
Alice friendly amendment that the feedback from the task force happen at earliest in June and that the changes would not be decided most likely for the next year, but for the following year.
 Greg disagrees with this amendment.
10. **Rebecca – PTCA - made a request inserted PTCA report here.** Board agreed.

Comments: Sees growing disaffection from parents. Problem is not teachers, not administrators and staff, not parents, not board's leadership. Problem is failure to communicate and collaborate together as a community. There is a concern about the speed of decisions about the calendar and schedule. These decisions were not transparent, didn't consider parents and families. Strategic plan draft was emailed out too late prior to the parent meeting. Some parents felt the strategic plan itself further divided them from the school. Many parent/PTCA goals were not met or addressed, including teacher-student ratios, associate teachers to return, increased accountability for academic performance at the MC, band, return Spanish to EC. Parent involvement was not one major goal of the plan. Parental involvement needs to be more than photocopies and cookies. Parents got no comment about CRCT results. They were left to interpret the results themselves. Scores were not good in social studies and science. Wants parents involved early on and in meaningful ways when decisions are being made.

Three specific recommendations

1. Put strategic planning back on track with parent input,
2. Subcommittee of PTCA (alluded to by Mary – task force of parents) “parent advisory council”
3. Teacher/Parent contract signed at the beginning of each year – parents agree check homework, read courier, etc. Teachers will agree to provide things to increase parental involvement. Would need to go through a collaborative process to create this contract.

Greg commented - Section 3 bylaws of the board state that the role of the PTCA is to develop the school calendar with the principals and executive director.

11. **Back to Greg's motion to reconsider the board's vote on early dismissal**

12. **Suzanne made a motion** to have the task force to bring ideas on or before June board meeting.

Friendly amendment – The task force to be led by Greg.

Discussion:

Mary– be clear that while we are taking parent ideas into consideration, it doesn't now mean that decisions are taken out of the teachers' hands.

Alice clarified – the task force would bring ideas, the board would vote yes or no. If no, task force would go back to planning.

Comment – Rebecca, PTCA president – Parent advisory committee should not be tied to this task force.

13. **Michelle made a Motion** to appoint a task force led by Greg Parent, an administrator, a teacher, and a parent to be named by Rebecca Earnshaw, PTCA President, to look at teacher collaboration/early dismissal with final recommendations to board by June board meeting. Mitch seconded. No discussion. Passed.

14. **Alice made a motion** do the same thing with the calendar as the board just did with the weekly schedule. Alice clarified - the Motion is to reconsider the school calendar. Second by Suzanne. Motion passed.

Discussion – Mitch feels like it is too late to revisit this. Either go with what we have now or go with the APS schedule.

Alice agrees.

Clarification – the motion is to revert to the previous ANCS calendar that was based mostly on APS calendar, the one that ANCS has previously employed with the understanding that some final calendar decisions would still have to be made.

Sarah asks what communication has been presented to parents.

Grace – parents think we are voting on final calendar at this meeting.

Mitch would like to hear from Matt.

Matt reported that the planning of the calendar was done with every intent to include parents on the decisions but perhaps it did not appear that way in the end. He and others talked with other districts and schools about the benefits of the balanced calendar. The parent survey feedback indicated that they don't want to start school in July.

Alice commented she voted for the calendar change last time. Her concern is that board needs to collaborate more with the community and make the decision for the next year.

Mitch friendly amendment to put the calendar back on the board agenda in September to consider a balanced calendar for the next school year.

Suzanne – the board has a priority to begin to address budget issues and dedicating the amount of time that is needed for that.

Mary – regarding the strategic plan, wants to emphasize the importance of getting parents in discussions early – while also balancing the need for respecting the teachers who put a lot of time and effort into the decision.

Suzanne – communication vehicles need to be considered because there are parents who do not have regular internet access. Need to make sure we are reaching the parents who are really going to be the most effected by the calendar changes.

Michelle adds that we have had a lot of fast decisions to make, quick processes – budgets change every year, etc. in the past. Board needs to think in terms of decades, not in months. Board feels rushed because of history of the way the board has worked in the past. Decisions need to be made with the next group of students in mind rather than our own children.

Grace – organizational changes probably need to take at least 5 months.

Motion to revert to the previous calendar with reconsideration by the board no later than September passes

15. Gabe has new business to present on the budgeting process.

He presents a motion to create a committee to keeping the auction going. Proposes a lower bar on revenue to 60k and for the budget committee to come back in April Board meeting with more of a plan.

Discussion - Gabe understands the difficulty of the auction but it is approximately 120k in revenue. Wants to get previous auction committee members together to talk about how to make it work better rather than doing away with it.

Grace – clarified that she wants to remove it from the budget so as to reduce the pressure on the parents to raise 120k but doesn't want to actually kill the auction.

Kari is willing to take on the task force – She also misinterpreted the request to remove the item from the budget as a proposal to do away with the auction. Taking the goal back to 60k may be a good idea to take the pressure off. She also has other ideas for making it easier on future auction planners.

Michelle comments that it has become too much and needs to be dialed back.

Greg – request for guidance on prioritizing fundraisers so as to limit or at least understand the competition for vendors, etc.

Grace amended for the auction committee to be led by Kari and report back by May with recommendations.

Suzanne seconds.

Mitch amendment to add “no less than 60K”, rather than just “60K” to the wording.

Motion for creation of an auction committee, let by Kari with a new auction revenue goal of no less than 60k. passes.

16. **Gabe makes a motion** to discuss possibility of rescinding the snow days vote that were added to the end of the school year. Motion passes.

Discussion: Sarah – This ties into the calendar discussion that people already have planned vacations. Also wonders how relevant will those days be to instruction if they are tacked in on the end. A downside to changing the decision is that we may look a little loosey-goosey if we are changing our mind on all of the decisions.

Matt – agrees that board is “walking a fine line.” There are pros and cons to snow days but feels that if we put forward proposals that we have to be careful about then taking them back a month later because of a vocal minority.

Mary – Doesn’t think the process was flawed on this decision because of the nature of the decision is that it has to happen fast and without a lot of input.

Alice – Doesn’t see any reason to revisit this at this time. Feels that it is reasonable to expect that there may be snow day make-ups and therefore it should be understood that families may need to avoid taking vacations the first few days of summer. Feels that the makeup days are meaningful days for the students.

Matt – We need to balance the needs of the community and parents with the needs of students and teachers.

Suzanne – These days were added because we lost instructional time. People are concerned about instructional time. We are still losing days in the long run for the year.

Greg – Would like to consider planning for the future exactly where those days would come from when we have snow days so that those decisions doesn’t have to be last minute.

17. Principals Open Forum - The principals declined to comment.

18. New Board Member Nomination Committee Update: Grace Burley reported that 12 very good candidates applied. Interviews this weekend with the first round. Greg wondered if they were allowed information on the candidates. Grace reported that the information about the applicants could be found in a dropbox file shared with the board. Grace continued, Mary Campbell will stepping down after this year. Four spots will be available after this term. She will have a slate ready next month.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

19. Accountability and Compliance: Michelle Newcome

- a. Strategic plan update – Michelle’s committee has been meeting and drafted a plan on seven key objectives. Made clear that this is a draft. Feels that the committee needed to include more historical background on where the objectives come from. They didn’t give background into why each objective was important from a historical perspective. Parents reported that they didn’t have due time to give it consideration. Now collecting feedback by objective from parents. Parents really want to know the outcomes but the outcomes have not been created yet. Matt has been asked to create a draft of the outcomes for the board to understand. No time to get it officially done by today but a brief draft was distributed.

Matt shared a brief outcomes draft. Very much a draft. Michelle asks everyone to research the Torrence test or any other test under consideration. Comments that the board does not need to look at the details of this draft at this time since it is still very much a work in progress.

Michelle would like to make some adjustments to the strategic plan and then present a new draft.

- b. Policy revision update

Michelle reported that the Policy Manual will probably be ready in June.

20. Business Operations: Gabe Damiani and Kari Lovell. Gabe referred to the business operations dashboard. Mitch discussed the focus group in place for technology plans.

See slides shared/presented on business operations

Gabe – see Slide 17 – We will come out of March knowing what the surplus will be. Be cautious in thinking about how much money will really be available. Wants to defer discussion on spending money we don't know if we have to the next board meeting.

Kari – applying for grant money to make improvements to facilities and make us greener.

21. Fund Development: Sarah Wilcox

- a. Final auction update: Thank you to the committee. Sarah shared that the annual campaign is just over 100k for year. No final on auction revenue but estimates it to be roughly 100k. She will continue with calling people to ask for contributions. Looking at getting percentage of families who have participated to share with board at a later date. Some ideas for MC fundraisers – Food trucks, (gets kids/families from EC too). They will be sponsoring the April Principal coffee funding.

22. Personnel and Governance: Mary Campbell

- a. Executive Director review
- b. Teacher evaluation and open positions

Mary Campbell shared that for Matt's review, he will complete a reflection following the next round of surveys that goes out. Mary and Grace meet with Matt to discuss goals. Suzanne requested that the board have access to that prior the board's feedback on Matt.

23. Executive Director Report (30 mins)

(see slides shared by Matt)

- a. 2014-15 SY Enrollment – class sizes will remain the same next year.
- b. 2013 Georgia CCRPI Update – The score reports that went out from the state were incorrect. They (the State) are working out logistics in getting info communicated from the school to the state.

Matt asks that we be mindful of the outcomes of our decisions. If we use funding for one area, another area will not be funded.

Regarding Foreign language – They are interested in looking at how different schools handle foreign language. In an ideal world, we would have at least 2 full time teachers at each campus but that is a big commitment in funding. Examples of how other schools address foreign language: KIPP schools don't offer language until high school at all. Paideia doesn't offer it in elementary but do in middle. Maybe we do look at comprehensive language k-8 or maybe we look at it differently. Hiring three more language teachers is not currently a high priority. A higher priority would be to decrease classroom sizes, continue the associate ratios, and then add programs back in.

24. Executive Session – Minutes recorded by Alice