

**Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**APPROVED Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 8, 2009 7:00pm**  
**School Library**

Attendance: Trustees President John Neas, Vice President Lori Clements, Treasurer Anna dos Santos, Clerk Richard Frongillo, Faculty Representative Gail Trotin, Nav Chander, Chuck Mayo, Cheryl O'Donnell, Cathy Tomaso, Tim Tracy, Thom Viveiros, Poh-Lin Yeoh; HOS Dr. Kevin O'Malley, Asst. HOS Heather Zolnowski

**Call to order, Comments by the Chair (7:03)**

John welcomes all!

**Recognition of the Month (7:08)**

Kevin recognizes the accomplishments of the Destination Imagination (DI) teams from BFCCPS as DI is an extension of learning into real world applications. Team Leader Anna provided an overview of the work done by the five BFCCPS teams including a kindergarten group. Topics included: finding something hidden using a story about otters, using simple machines to unblock the entrance to a cave, literature turned into music, Operation Cooperation, and animal communication. All teams were represented by student participants at the meeting

Other news: Fourth grader Surabhi Iyer was selected as the winner of the "Dear Mr. President" write-in contest. Eight grader Matt LeNeve entered a letter in a state competition and was selected to join Ms. Salley at the state house.

**Recognition of the Month 2 (7:20)**

Kevin introduced School Counselor Ms. Harrington who introduces her advising group. The group decided to join in on a national movement: "Spread the Word to End the Word". The students reviewed the website ([www.ourword.org](http://www.ourword.org)) and collected facts before embarking on their program to raise consciousness of the hurtful, abusive effects of using the "R word". The effects of the stereotype are very painful. On March 31, the group led the entire school in signing a pledge to not use the "R word".

**Open Comment (7:30)**

No comments offered.

**Clerk's Report (7:30)**

Minutes of the March 12 meeting were distributed for approval in April.

**Action Register (7:32)**

Lori reviews the Action Register handout. The Mission Committee needs a charter approved and meeting schedules need to be submitted to the state office. The Nominating Committee's candidate review process will be taken up in April.

**Treasurer's Report (7:38)**

Anna reports on the last Finance Committee meeting: no significant changes expected in current budget. In a discussion of 403b plans, the FinComm recommends hiring a third party administrator (TPA) which may cost \$750/year (money is in the budget this year). Also, the committee discussed whether to stay with Putnam or go to American Funds (more expensive to school) and decided it was better to stay with Putnam for now so that the school does not take on extra expense in this economically challenging year. Cathy is concerned about accessibility of TPA staff. Abacus is in Providence which may be too far (e.g. termination, hardship withdrawal)

Regarding next year's budget, two meetings have been held. The best case is 0% increase budget. Some other schools are looking at 10% reduction. The FinComm discussed trimming in a number

of areas following Kevin's recommendations. The committee also discussed accepting up to 434 students and keeping pay increase in 0% budget.

The FinComm wants the Board to approve the acceptance of 434 students leaving the specifics of the distribution to be determined by the HOS. Kevin has spoken to all staff about the slight increases in class size.

MOTION: By Anna/Lori to authorize enrollment to no more than 434 students for the school year of 2009-2010.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

All are awaiting word from the state regarding projections of funding for next year. It is now promised after February vacation. If that is the case the 4/15 budget meeting will not be held. The FinComm discussed where federal stimulus money will be arriving in Franklin (directly to BFCCPS and indirectly through Franklin's district schools in the following year).

Anna will distribute budget as soon as possible. She cautions that the delay by the state may force the Board into considering a special budget meeting. John is interested in the Board getting as much time as possible to review the details. Lori observes that approving a budget in June will make it difficult to distribute letters of agreement for next year.

Cathy wonders about the process for hiring outside agencies, should there be a policy that requires more due diligence? Anna states that current policy require three quotes for expenditures greater than \$5K which seems like a reasonable threshold. The Board could always require more stringent rules on a case-by-case basis.

### **Head of School Report (7:58)**

Kevin acknowledges the uncertain waters in these economic times. The state picture is very cloudy. BFCCPS's getting reimbursed for thirty more students next year (404 to 434) will help considerably as we try to close the gap. Notables:

- MCAS change  
A momentous change is taking place: up until now, a snapshot was taken of A GRADE which did not show progress from one year to the next. The change in the next reporting cycle is to show same reporting PLUS "cohort analysis" going back two years. This has very positive implications; Ben's Best strives to accomplish the same thing (looking at cohorts).
- BFCCPS participates in French Conference in Milton  
Led by the incomparable emcee M. Malouf ("the Goddess of French"), BFCCPS was the star of the recent show with terrific enthusiasm and solid French speaking! BFCCPS sent two buses; the performances are on the BFCCPS website. About 20% of Franklin High's group was former BFCCPS students.
- Charter Day at the State House is April 29  
This date is one of the most important days for charter schools in Massachusetts. A bus will be provided to leave at 9am. The statehouse responds to headcount.
- 9th grade placements  
Kevin notes that current 8th graders are being accepted at a wide range of spectacular schools, getting in at remarkable rates.
- Character Education Progress  
The BFCCPS Character Ed program continues to improve and evolve. With vehicles in place in all grades, a framework was sought. With Gail's leadership a model was found and presented to the staff. The next steps are within our grasp already. Gail shares her enthusiasm for "Character Counts" which has a lot of resources for BFCCPS to tap. She travelled to Arizona to learn more. She feels that the words and materials may not look exactly like what BFCCPS founders might have produced, but the spirit definitely matches. The resources would enhance what has been and is being done. BFCCPS is looking for a consistency in approach and language, not new thoughts.

Heather reports that the New Family Night was successful with all twenty-two kindergarten families and 23 of 25 new families attending. Thanks to Thom, Cathy, Lori, and PCO President Karen Peterson for supporting the event. Heather acknowledges the excellent work led by Mr. Duque and Mr. Buckley in the recent Rube-Goldberg competition. The group represented BFC-CPS fantastically well and repeated its winning of the teamwork/cooperation award. In the area of community service, the 8th-grade Bell of the Ball project collected and donated sixty dresses to Anton's Cleaners. Fifteen staff members will be going to Simmons College to help clients chose items for upcoming prom events. Such clients might not otherwise such events. The staff is participating in the Project Bread walk in May, modelling community service for students.

Joe notes that seven staff from grades 5-8 attended the League of New England Middle Schools conference which covered a wide range of topics for professional development.

Joe notes that the school is looking at kids making transitions (e.g. 4th to 5th, 8th to 9th). Franklin High School sent representatives to present to our 8th graders. The program was well received and thought to be very helpful. Advising groups are also addressing topics of transition. Beth Sharistianian has met with the FHS math department head in an effort to get aligned. BFC-CPS will look to do the same for ELA, science, and social studies.

John noted that the PCO Auction was a wonderful night. Kevin reports that the Red Brick School Committee will continue paying for utilities for the next year. The arrangement has worked well.

#### **Liaison to Special Education Department (8:32)**

Chuck re-distributes a document that he had distributed in February. He highlights his interest (and a change in the document) to recommend that the liaison be a member of the Board of Trustees. He feels that the Board-level representation is vital. There is a place for enthusiastic parents with an interest in advocating for the topic who do not want to be a Board member. Kevin observes that there already is a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) for parents to join in. He notes that the state reviewers were impressed by Board-level visibility of special needs issues. Anna wonders how hard it will be for the liaison NOT to be involved in day-to-day operations as desired. Chuck feels that being involved in dialogues has resulted in more dialogues leading to better decisions.

MOTION: By Chuck/Lori to adopt the description of Special Education Liaison as modified to insert the requirement that the liaison be a member of the Board of Trustees.

RESULT: Pass 11-2 (Nav, Poh-Lin)

John asks that the Governance Committee consider the documentation.

#### **Nominating Committee (8:55)**

The Nominating Committee did not bring any name forward to fill the Board vacancy. With the vacancy and year-end terms ending, the committee is looking for 4 positions and one partial term.

#### **Motion to Approve Policy No. 31 – Public Disclosure of Student Information (9:02)**

MOTION: By Tim/Lori to approve updated policy #31 as presented.

RESULT: Pass (unanimous)

#### **Charge to the Dress Code Task Force and Pink Sheet Notice (9:02)**

John distributes a draft of a pink sheet notice to set the re-consideration of the BFCCPS Dress Code in motion. The suggestion by Kevin last month had been that a small committee be formed to discuss and present in the fall and winter. John suggests that a task force is selected to include trustees, faculty, and parents. John's note suggests there are a small set of options range from uniform to no change. Considerable discussion ensues.

Several trustees are interested in getting the details collected last year by the group that had investigated dress codes. Even though all of the material was not presented as a decision was made last year, there was a lot of information collected which is still relevant for use in considerations for moving forward this year. Cathy believes she has minutes from last year which can

serve as a starting point.

Other thoughts: Gail notes that the goal of the Dress Code is to eliminate obstacles to social and emotional well being. She observes that this year's policy is almost the same as the old dress code and modifications have not added clarity. Cathy believes that there have been noticeable differences in upper grades. She notes one of her children has a school uniform elsewhere and has a lot of pride in wearing it. She is concerned about initial cost. Tim suggests we have an optional policy rather than legislate the policy. Nav notes that "the shirt" is the key thing when looking at uniform or uniformity. Thom wants to be sure we are making fact-based decisions using information about where people stand on this issue.

Several trustees wonder whether a task force is necessary. Lori and Chuck agree that if we can convene a number of trustees with the collected information, the Board could make a decision. Poh-Lin feels that any decision needs to be presented properly and Gail agrees that we should be introducing the dress code differently to leverage recent, heightened awareness on social/image issues.

Kevin notes that gym days interrupt uniformity. He is concerned that last year's ideas may not be relevant in the discussion this year. He is concerned about the cost of the "broken eggs" that will occur during the discussion of dress code which is often emotionally charged. Heather offers that she is aware of a school that made a unilateral choice of uniform and it turned out to be a very positive decision. The school worked with vendors and costs were actually less.

In the end, John agreed that there would be no task force formed and no pink sheet announcement. A straw vote of the trustees showed support for uniformity and/or a uniform. A small group from those that convened last year will gather information from last year's group. Lori will look to call a special board meeting to discuss findings and direction.

#### **Adjournment (10:00)**

With no motion to extend beyond the 10pm limit, the meeting was adjourned.