

**Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS)**

**Board of Trustees Meeting**

**Approved Minutes**

**Thursday, April 8, 2010 7:00pm**

**School Library**

**Attendance:** Trustees President Lori Clements, Vice President Rich Frongillo (8:12 pm), Clerk Thomas Viveiros, Nav Chander (7:15pm), John Neas, Donald Tappin, Tim Tracy, Gail Trotin, Poh-Lin Yeoh, Head of School Dr. Kevin O'Malley, Assistant Head of School Heather Zolnowski, Cheryl O'Donnell (7:30pm), Director of School Operations and Student Activities Joe Perna

**Absent:** Treasurer Anna dos Santos, Stephan Katinas

**Call to Order, Comment by the Chair (7:07 pm):**

Lori opens the meeting by mentioning that Anna will not be here but she put a copy of the financial report in the packet. Lori reminds the board to submit their evaluations of Dr. O'Malley. Tim is thanked for bringing refreshments. Lori mentions that she is still interested in continuing as President, Anna is interested in the Vice President position, and Thom has indicated that he is not going to step away from his position as Clerk. Anna prefers not to continue as Treasurer but will gladly help with the transition. Lori asked everyone to consider this position.

**Recognition of the Month (7:10 pm):**

Dr. O'Malley recognizes members of the Destination Imagination (DI) team. BFCCPS had four teams participate in this year's competition. The team present at our meeting won the district competition in Medfield, qualifying them to compete in the state tournament in Worcester. Dr. O'Malley mentions that one of the features of this contest is that it forces kids to think and what makes this year's team achievements even more remarkable is that they had a change in team members between the district and state competitions. The team adjusted well to this challenge and ended up performing well.

DI team members were introduced; including the coach, Scott Schaefer. Dr. O'Malley mentions that our students were the youngest to compete in Worcester and asks them what they thought of their DI experience. Charlotte, one of the team members, mentions that it was challenging because the members of her team had to create a DI-bot and it had to change someone's life.

Lori asked about what was the hardest part of working in the group. The students answered that the biggest challenge was creating the story to go along with the challenge and making the props. Lori notes that adults are not allowed to help the children so if something goes wrong, the children need to solve problems pro-actively in real-time by themselves.

Voting to approve the minutes from the March 2010 Board of Trustees meeting:

**COMMENTS:** None.

**MOTION:** Tim initiates and Don seconds a motion to approve the March 2010 minutes.

**RESULT:** Motion passes unanimously.

**Amended Bylaws Discussion (7:23 pm):**

The Governance Committee made changes to the bylaws to reflect the recent decisions of the Board. Tim presented the highlights. The two most significant changes are the ones which limit the size of the board and the elimination of the Nominating Committee. Tim notes that the elimination of the Nominating Committee from the bylaws doesn't mean we are prevented from having one; it merely means that we are no longer required to have one. Tim mentions that most of the other changes were limited to document formatting. He reminds us that our bylaws state that the amendments aren't official until the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the changes.

The board prepares to vote for the changes and John asks for the vote to be delayed for a few minutes because he didn't get the packet in time for the meeting and wanted to review the new language.

**Head of School Report (7:25pm):**

Dr. O'Malley mentions that the eighth-grade is getting ready for their trip to Washington, DC on Monday, April 12. He notes that they will be leaving at 7 am sharp. On Tuesday, April 13, the seventh graders will be leaving for Quebec around 6 am.

The English Language Arts (ELA) portion of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is over and done. Everyone in the scheduled grades has taken this difficult test. During the middle of May, the students in the scheduled grades will be taking the math portion of MCAS.

Dr. O'Malley mentions that we received a report from a representative of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education which summarizes the one day visit to the school. The state representative's function was to monitor our record-keeping. The report gives the school a perfect score with no issues. Dr. O'Malley mentions that we have a very competent special needs staff and Pat Fairbanks gets lots of credit for creating the paperwork required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

We then learned about Letters about Literature (<http://www.lettersaboutliterature.org>), a national reading promotion organization that sponsors an annual writing competition. This year they received 69,617 letters nationally. The organization selected forty-eight (48) letters from Massachusetts and three (3) of these forty-eight (48) letters were from BFCCPS! The three BFCCPS students will be honored at the state house on May 11.

Next, Dr. O'Malley brings up the issue of the school calendar. He mentions that when we create our calendar, we use several inputs as a reference. Some of those inputs include the Franklin Public Schools calendar as well as all state holidays. This year, we will again begin before Labor Day. The week of August 23 has been set aside to have staff workshops; since these allow teachers to get ready for the school year. He discussed the fact that professional development days should be ½ days instead of full days. Also, in response to input from parents, Dr. O'Malley has decided to take off the whole day before Thanksgiving to accommodate families who either travel or need more preparation time for the holiday. These two modifications are probably the most significant changes to the calendar. Dr. O'Malley spends the next few minutes elaborating on more of the details of the calendar.

Dr. O'Malley says that every school should pick specific activities for professional development. This year, we picked the following three (3):

- 1) Differentiated Instruction.** We will no longer aim our instruction at the middle of the class. We will now try to teach to the whole class by not having the same strategy for all children.
- 2) English Language Arts activities**
- 3) Multicultural activities** to sensitize the BFCCPS community about the diverse population of its students.

Voting to approve the 2010 – 2011 school calendar:

**COMMENTS:** Tim asks if parents were involved in the process. Dr. O'Malley says that we take input throughout the year but there is not a lot of flexibility given the constraints of the state guidelines.

**MOTION:** Gail initiates and Poh-Lin seconds a motion to approve the 2010 – 2011 school calendar.

**RESULT:** Motion passes unanimously.

Dr. O'Malley talks about service learning and how we have codified it at our school by making Heifer International, a world-wide organization which fights against hunger and poverty, a school-wide initiative this year. Dr. O'Malley recommends that members of the board go to Heifer family night when it is held at the school. He would also like to have a single board representative attend. The date has still not been announced.

Gail mentions that Rachel Brown, a Heifer International representative was here previously and she will be coming back to make a presentation during the Heifer family night. There will be booths set up for each of the grades with photos to communicate what we've done. BFCCPS will also have a donation station and a learning center set up.

The school will also be introducing an initiative called “parent points” that will aim to encourage attendance.

Next, Dr. O’Malley goes over the numbers. He highlights that our low-income population is steadily rising; right now we are at about 3.5% of the school. He notes that we are almost in line with Franklin as a community. According to statistics, 32.9% of Massachusetts students are considered low-income. The Franklin Public School system is composed of 5.2% of students from low-income families. Our special needs population is at 32 students or 7.6% of the school population. By comparison, the Franklin Public Schools special education (SPED) population is at 16.4% which is in-line with the Massachusetts state population of 17%. Dr. O’Malley reminds us that BFCCPS operates on a lottery and we discriminate against no one.

The number of students categorized as having their First Language Not English (FLNE) is currently at thirty-one (31) at our school. Since most of these students are from India (where English is taught in the schools), the FLNE students do not usually have problems learning in English. Dr. O’Malley notes that this is the first year that we’ve had a student with English language difficulty.

Poh-Lin is concerned that we may be focusing too much on the percentages. She is concerned that the message of these numbers is that we need to try to conform to a state average. Dr. O’Malley recognizes Poh-Lin’s comments by saying that this was not his intent. He again mentions that we have a lottery and that we do not discriminate. He mentions as an aside that the State of Massachusetts has mandated an attraction and retention plan for SPED and low-income students, but that was not the intent of him giving us these numbers. He was merely reporting on the current composition of our school. Pat Fairbanks mentions that in this school, the SPED children may actually be getting more attention because there aren’t as many here. Dr. O’Malley adds that in some ways we are even more diverse than the Franklin population. For example, 16% of our population is either Asian or of Asian decent. In general, BFCCPS is representative of Franklin but not of the state as a whole.

Internationally recognized composer Robert W. Smith was commissioned to write a piece of music for BFCCPS. As the project progressed, the school decided it would be a good idea to collaborate with the Franklin Public schools. In fact, Ben Benjamin has already been conducting a group of 180 children with the town of Franklin and the premiere performance will be on Thursday, June 10. Lori mentions that the board meeting for that month will actually be on Wednesday, June 9 and that board members should be able to make the Thursday night performance.

It is then briefly mentioned that BFCCPS now has a new lunch menu. The school has contracted with a company that will be bringing hot food to the school.

Next, Dr. O’Malley briefly refers to the auditors report. He mentions that there was a comment about our staff having too much unused accrued vacation. To address this issue, the school administration has decided to shut down the school during the last week of every school year. This will be a mandated vacation time for the 12-month employees (ex. Central office staff)..

Dr. O'Malley informs us that the school will be participating in two (2) events as a result of two (2) small grants. The first event will be a promotion of healthy food week. The second event will be to observe mother earth on Earth Day by planting vegetation in our school garden. Gail mentions that the gardens are actually a community-wide endeavor. The board learns that the harvest from the vegetation will be given to both school families and the Franklin Food Pantry.

**Open Comment Period (8:27pm):**

Poh-Lin asks why the school does not have an honor roll.

**Faculty Representative Report (8:31pm):**

Gail mentions that neither Rebecca Harrington nor she got into the Heifer International study program. However they both got scholarships to a training seminar at Heifer's headquarters in Arkansas within their global village. Gail and Rebecca have both been offered tuition, room, and board as part of their scholarship. Gail says she's interested and plans on going whereas Rebecca will most likely be unavailable to go.

Gail mentions that a question came up in the faculty staff meeting: if the school gets level funding, does that mean the staff will not get raises? Lori mentions that the level funding is just one part of what the finance committee uses when trying to make salary recommendations to the board. Level funding will not necessarily mean a pay freeze.

Lori mentions that she and Anna attended a recent full-faculty meeting to explain the current thought process and issues concerning the decision making process with regards to salary planning. Lori also mentions that some of our employees are now earning within 85% to 100% or more of the Franklin Public Schools salaries at this point.

Voting to approve the amended changes to the **Bylaws**:

**COMMENTS:** Rich asks about the elimination of the nominating committee and he is concerned about getting push-back from the state. He is not against the motion, but he thinks we should elaborate more on the reasons for making the change. Tim asks if there is a cover sheet that we can send with our recommendation for the changes so that we can elaborate. John says that there was a specific format when he did it last time, but he can't remember the details. Lori says she will call and ask since she will be submitting the changes.

**MOTION:** Tim initiates and Nav seconds a motion to approve the discussed changes to the Bylaws.

**RESULT:** Motion passes unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report (8:42pm):**

Lori mentions that Anna was unable to attend this evening and that the board will get a full report next month.

**Action Register (8:42pm):**

- 1) Rich reminds members of the board to fill out, sign, and submit their Financial Disclosure forms.
- 2) Rich reminds the board that if they have an item they feel should be brought to the finance committee, they should get it into them now since the Finance Committee meets on the first Wednesday of each month (check the school calendar).
- 3) Rich reminds anyone interested in board officer positions to state their intentions.

**Annual Fund Update (8:46pm):**

Nav reports that this year the fund is going well. The school has collected over \$16,000 to date and most people on the board have contributed.

Nav holds the drawing for the prizes.

- The Knous family wins the Bruins Jersey. Nav says he will contact the family and inform them of their prize.
- The Burnham family wins a signed football. The football was signed by New England Patriots' offensive tackle, Matt Light.

**Workshop Follow-up Discussion (8:52pm):**

Dr. O'Malley mentions that he spoke to a state education official and he was informed that if BFCCPS wants to be a regional school, then there are two kinds of amendment requests in the charter world and one of them would require a major change. The major change has been described as similar to reapplying for a new charter. The state representative emphasized how significant a regional school change would be to their department and mentioned that it would require a full vote. Dr. O'Malley mentions that he was surprised to hear that.

We talked about partnering with the New England Center for the Performing Arts. Dr. O'Malley spoke with Raye Lynn Mercer, the executive director, and she is willing to have a meeting with some of the members on her board. . Dr. O'Malley also contacted someone at the New England chapel and he is still waiting to hear back from the pastor. He also spoke to someone at MassDevelopment (a potential source of financing). Dr. O'Malley mentions that there has been no movement on the lease negotiations because there has been a death in the family of one of the members of the local church leadership. Lori mentions that Dr. O'Malley and she met with a real estate agent and that the agent indicated rents are continuing to go down in Franklin. This data will be useful during our lease negotiations with the Archdiocese. Gail mentions that she is certain that the New England Chapel interested in discussing a partnership with BFCCPS.

Thom mentions that the board should agree on a new building plan and timeline to help keep us focused and accountable as a group. He mentions that board members should email him the items and timeframes that should be included in a timeline. Gail asks Thom to send an email to the board to remind them to solicit inputs. John suggests that Dr. O'Malley send an email to Marc Kenan asking him to solicit inputs from all charter schools who have either planned or executed on a new building plan. He mentions that it would be useful to get some feedback about the process and learn more about the success rates. Gail asks if we are going to write a vision statement soon. Lori says that we will be discussing this at the workshop on Saturday, May 1.

Voting to adjourn:

**COMMENTS:** None.

**MOTION:** Tim initiates and Nav seconds a motion to adjourn at 9:12pm.

**RESULT:** Motion passes unanimously.