

Paul Cuffee School

Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting

March 20, 2008

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Paul Cuffee School was held on March 20, 2008 at the Paul Cuffee Lower School in Providence, Rhode Island.

Present: Russell Carey, Elizabeth Colon, Stefano Crema, Shivohn Garcia, Mary Sylvia Harrison, Barrett Hazeltine, Sandy LeClerc, Kay Lisle, Geanise Love, Keith Mathews, Robin Y. Miles, Maria Monteiro, Joop Nagtegaal, Martha Newcomb, Esq., John Patrick, Betsy Pollack Shimberg, Fraser Preston.

Excused: Su Almeida, Luz Alvila, William Clifton, Sr., Joan Canady Countryman, Philip Gould, Gilda Hernandez, Ana Cecilia Rosada, Babak Taleghani.

Paul Cuffee Staff Present: David Bourns, Jonathan Conklin, Nina Giannotti, Paul Graseck, Julia Karahalidis, Nell Sears, Suzie Shaw.

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. with a welcome by President Joop Nagtegaal and the introduction of new member of the board Stefano Crema. Joop noted that Cade Tompkins has stepped off the board following several years of distinguished service and that she will be missed and there will be an opportunity to thank her.

Betsy Pollack Shimberg has ably taken on the role of chair of the committee on institutional advancement.

In his comments opening the meeting Joop spoke about the importance of math education. He noted a recent report from the National Mathematics Advisory Panel which highlighted the manner in which the United States is falling behind in the number of science and engineering professionals. The report spoke specifically to the critical importance of Algebra II in preparing young people for careers in science, technology and engineering. He further referred to a recent op-ed in the Providence Journal by Ron Wolk in which the author commented on the NECAP test and its relationship to math and technology and the necessity of finding “ways to awaken and nourish a passion for [math and science] in elementary school so that [students] will want to study them in high school .” Joop concluded by noting that the Panel report stated that a major goal for K-8 education should be proficiency in fractions, understanding of which is a critical skill in life.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of January 17, 2008 were approved. The motion to approve was made by Martha Newcomb and seconded by Betsy Pollack Shimberg.

Head of School’s January Report

David Bourns referred the Board to his written report and asked if there were any questions from the Board. There was brief discussion.

NECAP Scores, School Performance

Nell Sears and Suzie Shaw provided the board with an update and discussion on the recent NECAP test scores and school performance data. Nell began with an overview of the testing process and reviewed a sample score report for an individual student. The tests and standards connect to established Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). Nell and Suzi commented that although the scores overall had not gone up in the way we would like there has been progress and much information which is beneficial to the teachers and the administration is being gleaned from the NECAP data and applied to the curriculum. The school receives information from the testing process for all students by grade and demographic group and can then identify areas of concern and that analysis informs instruction.

There was discussion of the comparison of Paul Cuffee School scores to Providence Public Schools, Times2, and CVS Highlander in reading, math and writing. Suzie also reviewed data from the past three years and indicated that the teachers were working on addressing areas of need based on the analysis of the test results in writing, math and reading. There was discussion of the impact of the summer recess on student performance (given that the NECAP tests

are administered early in the academic year) as well as the general issue of television, video games, TVs in students' bedrooms, etc and the impact of those external factors on students ability to perform homework and learn and retain information tested by NECAP. Mary Sylvia Harrison commented on the culture of the Paul Cuffee School of constantly assessing how well we are doing and striving to do better and the admiration she has for that ethic. Sandy LeClerc spoke positively about the efforts teachers are undertaking to evaluate, understand and respond to what has been learned from the tests and how much she valued the collaborative, community effort in that regard.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Education Committee

Mary Sylvia Harrison delivered the report of the Education Committee. She reported that the process of planning the high school is on target for completion by the end of the school year and the committee feels very positively about the preparation underway for going forward. David Bourns noted that a topic still under discussion by the Education and Human Resources Committee is the appropriate policy regarding bumping and appointments to teaching positions. Teacher input is currently being garnered and this topic will come to

the Board at an appropriate point.

Strategic Planning Committee

David Bourns delivered the report of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Planning for the High School

It is the recommendation of the Committee that the school proceed with the goal of opening a high school in 2009 or 2010 if financing and a site can be resolved. There was discussion among the Board about the impact of this recommendation on fundraising and campaign planning. In this regard Betsy particularly noted the importance of adequate development office staffing and the potential of hiring a campaign consultant. There was also discussion of the potential sites for a high school and some members of the Board compared the high school decision to the challenges and opportunities the school faced with the Middle School.

Following discussion Kay Lisle moved that:

The Paul Cuffee School continue taking the steps necessary to open a high school in 2009 or 2010, including the initiation of a search for an Academic Head for the High School, recognizing that funding,

planning for fundraising, and identification of a site for the high school are critical issues that need to be addressed and resolved.

Keith Mathews seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by the Board.

Admissions Lottery

David Bourns reported that the school, and other Rhode Island charters, had been advised by the Rhode Island Department of Education that the lottery process they Department had instructed Charters to follow in prior years was “possibly illegal.” The Strategic Planning Committee had discussed this issue in two meetings prior to the Board meeting and was recommending that the School employ an open lottery for this year unless RIDE advises otherwise between now and April 2nd (the date of the lottery). There was substantial discussion among the Board about this issue and the critical importance of sustaining and promoting a diverse – in the broadest possible sense – student population at Paul Cuffee School. Doing so is essential to the mission and success of the school.

Following extensive discussion, it was moved that:

- Paul Cuffee School conduct an open lottery this year only unless RIDE recommends otherwise between now and April 2nd;**
- That the staff be directed to create a new lottery process that honors**

the Rhode Island statutes prior to the 2009 admission season, and that this process include an aggressive admissions recruitment outreach plan to reflect the demographics of the Providence community, and that the staff provide regular and timely updates to the Board on this important issue in the process of developing such a process and outreach/recruitment plan;

- That the Head of School inform all applicants of the changes in the lottery process prior to April 2nd;**
- That should RIDE advise the School that an open lottery is ill-advised, the Board President is authorized to convene a meeting of the committee(s) he deems to be most helpful to determine how to proceed with the admissions lottery on April 2nd.**

The motion was seconded and approved by all members of the Board with abstentions recorded by Keith Mathews and Fraser Preston.

The discussion of school enrollments was deferred to a later date due to the time.

Finance Committee

Joop and Jonathan Conklin reviewed the recommendations of the Finance Committee requiring approval by the Board.

On recommendation of the Finance Committee, Martha Newcomb moved that \$5,000 be transferred from operating funds to the Capital

portion of the Board Designated Reserve and that \$11,200 be transferred to the Wiggins portion of the Board Designated Reserve. Sandy LeClerc seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

On recommendation of the Finance Committee, Mary Sylvia Harrison moved that the current amount of the Wiggins portion of the Board Designated Reserve be transferred to the Rhode Island Foundation for the purpose of establishing the Rosalind C. Wiggins Fund, and that receipts sent to the School in the future for this purpose be forwarded to the Rhode Island Foundation. Betsy Pollack Shimberg seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Institutional Advancement Committee

Betsy Pollack Shimberg gave the report of the Institutional Advancement Committee with great aplomb and in the spirit of Purim. She reiterated to all present the importance of Board giving at a rate of 100%, being at the school for events and activities, the Annual Fund, and inviting your friends to visit the school.

Due to the time of the evening the discussion of other items on the agenda were deferred to the next meeting.

New Business

No new business was brought before the Board.

Adjournment

**Mary Sylvia Harrison moved to adjourn. Martha Newcomb seconded.
The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.**

**Respectfully submitted,
Russell C. Carey, Clerk**
