

*Great Oaks Bridgeport Monthly Board Meeting  
Wednesday, April 13th, 2022*

**Board Members Present:** Susan Briggs, Corey Sneed, Leticia Sepulveda, Christopher McMillan, Bob Carlson, Selena Morgan, Diane Gordon

**Guests:** Tenssie Ramsay, Anthony West, Eva Vega

**Board Members Absent:** Pamela Fraser-Abder,

**GO-BPT Staff Present:** John Scalice, Latoya Hubbard, Ayanna Charles

**Foundation Members Present:** Ben Chan, Michael Duffy

**Called to order at 5:21 pm by Susan Briggs**

Susan opened the meeting by welcoming the guests. Michael had the guests introduce themselves to the board. Susan had the other members present on the call introduce themselves to the guests.

**Review of Minutes from the March Meeting (Leticia Sepulveda)**

Leticia asked the board to review the March meeting minutes. There were changes made to the minutes and these minutes will be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting. Susan noted a few changes that needed to be made.

**Executive Director's Report - John Scalice**

John opened the report by presenting the data from the bi-monthly update to the state by noting the attendance, discipline & academic performance of the school. John noted that the school is in the middle of another attendance challenge where students have the opportunity to win prizes. John informed the board of what went on at the State Board of Education Meeting on April 6th. John informed the board that GOBPT received a 2 year renewal with specific conditions. John had a meeting with the state to provide a better understanding of what is expected of GOBPT. John noted that the state is asking for bi-monthly reporting of academic improvement and monitoring as well as suspension data, year to date June 2022 data for suspensions must be submitted as a baseline, required to use CT Accelerate framework which focuses on increasing the speed of learning recovery through specific methods and systems and Dramatically reducing suspensions, improving student outcomes with plans focused on teaching

and reteaching expectations, developing interventions and identifying root causes for behavioral issues.

John went over the key components of CT Accelerate: online recovery, enrichment, and other opportunities provided through Apex learning/ EdMentum at no cost to schools, Strategies regarding Tier 1 instruction shifts aligned to best practices, CSDE Acceleration Cycle (Prioritize, Plan and Partner, Monitor and Adapt, Feedback to Engage and Evaluate and Sustain), CT aligned Priority Standards to SBAC Blueprint for Middle School Assessment (Connecticut Summative Assessment), Supplemental Instructional Curriculum through Achieve the Core for math and ELA, Technical and Implementation assistance and coaching, grant opportunities to fund summer school recovery and enrichment.

Corey inquired if there are different points of data where information is being captured during this process so that GOBPT can monitor, manage and inspect the progress. John replied that GOBPT previously used NWEA testing and now uses Exact Path and SBAC testing which is pushed out by the state every 2 months.

Susan inquired about clarification of what Exact Path is. John informed Susan that it is a formal assessment that changes the level of questioning based on student answers and it is predictive to the SBAC and it gives an idea of the key components to reading and math fluency and it helps assess and create a program for our students the data from Exact Path is used to create individual learning plans that are run by fellows.

John noted that a part of the process is developing a plan. GOBPT has a target goal to turn around a plan by April 29th for initial review, to submit by May 9th. John noted that it would get it approved by the end of May with 30 days to implement and put the school in alignment with summer work. This is also when the CSDE personnel are significantly more available to have them potentially be able to come and support small groups of teachers, administration team and operations team around implementation, development or combining of programs.

John also stated that the Academic Committee will be getting an initial draft of this plan prior to submission as well as Shakira at the State who is offering to provide feedback prior to May 9th.

John informed the board that GOBPT's will be doing a "5 Why" protocol for the academic corrective action to uncover the root cause for slow student growth. John stated that once the root cause is uncovered it will turn into action steps and then turned into SMART Goals that are specific, measurable, and obtainable and timely goals. As well as utilizing the inclusion of student voice and outside resources which have been shown to increase student engagement.

John informed the Board about the suspension reduction corrective action that GOBPT will be

utilizing the Fishbone Protocol since GOBPT has identified a lot of the root causes. John noted that GOBPT should be looking at suspension at a broader community lens with regard to how GOBPT will approach partner opportunities for proactive disciplinary strategies to see where they are going to be able to fit in in terms of helping the implementation of the plan. John stated that this will also call for student voice and outside resources since the students are the ones who engage in corrective restorative practices.

### **Director of Operations Report - Latoya Hubbard**

Latoya opened up the operations report by giving an enrollment update noting that GOBPT's current enrollment is at 586 students with 160 applications. Latoya noted that GOBPT still has 50% of seats open in the 6th grade. Michael inquired if any of the guests on the call had people they would like to refer GOBPT to and how would they do so. Latoya informed Michael that they would go to the GOBPT website and apply through SchoolMint to get the ball rolling on the application process and if they are having any trouble they can contact the main office for assistance. Bob inquired about the reason for the drastic increase in applications to which Latoya noted that once the postcard mailing went out to families the application numbers increased. Latoya informed the Board that after running the lottery on Friday April 8th 83 seats were offered and that there are currently 75 students on the waitlist. Latoya noted that the Operations team is calling the families of rising 6th graders in the district to offer them seats and walk them through filling out an application. Latoya noted that she will provide an update at the next board meeting.

Latoya informed the Board on the marketing efforts which include phone banking, multimedia campaign, postcard mailing and an Open House on April 27th.

Latoya noted that GOBPT completed the intent to return survey with staff with 80% of staff intending to return, 14% of staff replied maybe to discuss other opportunities or roles, and less than 10% replying as a no which were previously reported. Susan commended the number of staff intending to return. Bob inquired if there was a way on the survey to see why staff aren't returning. Latoya replied that there is an opportunity for staff to fill out why they are not returning. Latoya also noted that John & herself conduct mid-year check-in's to get an idea of how people are feeling and that a lot of the reasons are very positive such as grad school or other opportunities with the few staff members that are leaving due to GOBPT not being the best fit for them. Bob noted that conducting exit interviews is always best practice to use a source of information to benefit the school.

Latoya provided the Board with an update on teacher certification noting that 88% of staff is currently certified and the other 11% are pending approval from the CSDE. Latoya noted that 32% of staff have certification licenses expiring this summer, based on the CSDE 16 week turnaround GOBPT has a target date to submit applications for expiring certifications by April 30th. Latoya stated that applications expiring in the fall of SY 2022-2023 will be submitted by July 30th. Corey inquired about what the tracking mechanism is to ensure the process after applications have been completed. Latoya informed Corey that due to certification being a part of GOBPT's corrective action in the last charter renewal process John and Latoya have a bi-monthly check-in with the CSDE and that there is a shared spreadsheet with the CSDE. Latoya also mentioned that they keep a folder for each staff member with notes and copies of applications and emails submitted so there is a clear record of all communication with the CSDE who have been transparent in the fact that they have been behind in reviewing applications. Latoya noted that they also keep track of any changes such as the CSDE no longer accepting electronic transcripts due to them being behind they are asking for them to be mailed in. Latoya stated that instead of the past practice of the bi-monthly meetings that it will be up to her to ensure that this information is being followed up on a monthly basis.

Susan inquired if the CSDE is wanting GOBPT not to hire staff who aren't certified. To which Latoya replied that in the past there has been guidance stating that you can hire staff that aren't certified as long as they were able to be certified. Latoya noted that she and John met with the State today and that was a question that they asked and are waiting on a response to. However, Latoya noted that they are doing the best they can in this trying time coming out of a pandemic during a national teacher shortage and that they are doing their best to hire certified teachers or teachers that have the qualifications to become certified which will be made retroactive back to their start date. Bob inquired about the state possibly relaxing some of the rules around bringing back retired teachers to which Latoya replied that she believes so but that she doesn't have all of the details. Latoya noted that she is aware of the state making provisions for teachers with expired certifications to get recertified without having to go back to school and take additional courses or exams. Latoya also stated that prior to the pandemic when they would post a position they would receive 20-30 applicants and now they are only seeing about 2-3 showing that educators are leaving the profession, moving or not interested in working in an urban district school.

Latoya informed the Board that GOBPT received a call from Horizons Camp at Sacred Heart University to inform them that Great Oaks was selected and offered 6 seats for Middle School students to participate in Horizons Camp. Latoya noted that it is a very difficult camp to get into due to students being accepted in Kindergarten and then they stay with the program until High School. This program offers PSAT and SAT prep, college vVisit opportunities, academic and extracurricular activities, and a mentor that will work with them through college. These 6 seats

are offered on a first come, first serve basis, and parents will need to go through the application process and meet the qualifications which will include: qualifying for free and reduced lunch and willing to partner with Horizons throughout their middle school and high school experience. Horizons is also offering summer work opportunities for teachers and fellows.

Latoya provided the Board with an operations team update stating that GOBPT was able to hire Cally Tinley as a PowerSchool and Ed Tech Administrator and Brianna Baker as a Long Term Temporary Office Coordinator.

Latoya also showed the Board a couple of pictures of the Middle School students on their first field trip to Roller Magic as well as that they will be attending the Dave & Buster's Field trip tomorrow.

### **Executive Director's Report - John Scalice (continued)**

John resumed the Executive Director's report by noting the math changes for the 21-22 SY. John informed the Board that small group focus for math instruction is being implemented which is a targeted instruction on targeted instruction on high-leverage skills, station rotation (varied skills throughout the lessor standards), math fluency practice (fast facts), remediation and extension through Exact Path, after school tutorial and weekly data teams.

John noted that the changes to teacher support are content specific Professional Development, reading and implementing math scope and sequence, instructional framework implementation class support around curriculum implementation strategies. John highlighted that there has been specific growth in key areas in 7th and 8th grade. John noted that one of the highest leverage strategies is indicated through the blueprint for math and functions. John noted that functions is a highly tested area on the SBAC assessment for 8th grade which is where they saw the most significant drops due to pandemic and distance learning. John noted that at the beginning of the year GOBPT had 11% of students approaching proficiency, 80% of students were level 1 or significantly below level. As of last month GOBPT has 50% of students approaching proficiency or proficient, 16% of students proficient or above proficient, 34% of students approaching proficient, and 15% of students were still at level 1 but had made significant improvement. John stated that for 7th grade one of the key indicators for math is ratios, mainly fractional ratios. John noted that at the beginning of the year GOBPT had 27% of students approaching proficiency. As of last month GOBPT has 12% of students above or at proficiency and 45% of students approaching proficiency with the level 1 students still on the radar but are still making strides within that indicator.

John informed the Board that the math changes for the 22-23 SY are inclusion of Accelerate CT materials and resources, full-time math coach to be embedded in the classrooms at least 75% of the day working one on one with teachers in real time to provide in the moment feedback on instructional how to, Switching to MidSchool Math Curriculum grades 6-8, Student discourse oriented to allow students to talk about the math to assist the students in better understanding the math, Support reading fluency and application of math concepts , inclusion of STEM/Robotics Lab classes in middle and high school, creation of a math lab ,student support services during the day, Algebra 1A offered in 8th grade to get them on track to take Calculus by 12th grade, as well as offering Statistics, AP Calculus, AP Statistics, Foundations of Geometry, and Consumer Math courses all added to give students the opportunity to complete math requirements prior to going to college.

John informed the Board on the ELA changes for 21-22 SY being small group focus for ELA instruction, targeted instruction on high-leverage skills aligned to the SBAC Blueprint, station rotation (varied skills throughout the lesson aligned to core standards) vocabulary and curriculum aligned reading (fast facts), remediation and extension through Exact Path after school tutorial, weekly Data Teams.

John noted that the changes to teacher support are content specific Professional Development, reading and implementing more diverse and culturally relevant material, instructional framework implementation, In class support around curriculum implementation and teaching strategies. John highlighted that there has been specific growth in key areas in 6th grade is the application of vocabulary where GOBPT had 58% of students at level 2 and higher ELA were expected due to the 1% reduction in pandemic loss and 3% of students are at or above grade level. After a few months that number moved to 67% of students approaching proficiency and 10% of students at or above proficiency and only 23% of students in the level 1 area. John informed the Board that for 7th grade for reading literary text GOBPT had 37% of students at level 2 approaching proficiency, 5% of students at or above proficiency and after a couple of months by using the new approaches such as Exact Path which is embedded for an hour a week they have notice 54% of students approaching proficiency, and 64% of students total approaching or above proficiency.

Corey inquired if it would be possible for John to put together a spreadsheet to see these ratios so that this information could be shared. John noted that he already has that information and will have it readily available for the next meeting.

John informed the Board on the ELA changes for 22-23 SY which include : inclusion of Accelerate CT materials and resources, a full-time ELA coach (currently part time), Fish Tank curriculum.

Grades 6-10 teachers have found this to be very student discourse oriented, culturally diverse and responsive and easily embedded fellow stations throughout another change being embedded is a creation of a college writing lab (student support services during the day) that all seniors are taking that was recommended by graduated students that visited during winter break noting that they wished that they did more writing, increasing Reading support through Fellows certified in the Orton Gillingham which is a multisensory reading approach (year 2) with 6 fellows who are Orton Gillingham trained and 3 of them are entering certification programs next year and are staying with GOBPT and the other 3 fellows are returning as year 2 fellows with hopes to add an additional 6 fellows to be trained in Orton Gillingham so the GOBPT has a full cohort of staff trained in Orton Gillingham to assist the most struggling readers, as well as the expansion of Content Area Reading (CAR) program which came from feedback from the High School teachers about Middle School stating that students are having a difficult time and are not having the skills to read unique texts based on content such as social studies teachers noting that students are having difficulty with primary source documents, and science teachers that students are struggling to decode the academic vocabulary in science articles and it is getting in the way of them understanding the main idea. This CAR course has been developed to have teachers teach very specific content strategies around primary source documents, science articles and vocabulary which is being piloted in 10th grade this year and will be extending down into the middle school for next year. John stated that there is also a lot of room for student choice in the course with 2 of the days they will be working very specifically on skills and the other 2 days they are selecting their own reading material that aligns to the course allowing the students to get a say in what they are reading.

Susan commended the efforts of offering a full slate to the students in preparing them for college.

John provided the Board with this month's teacher spotlight focuses on our new Physical Education teacher, Irsia Jimenez. Irsia is committed to providing a space where students learn about lifelong fitness and how to set goals around being healthy. This is evident in her commitment to aerobics and non-traditional sports. These simple changes have led to amazing participation from all of our high school students with students consistently trying to get extra gym time. One game that our students have fallen in love with is called Tchoukball and was developed in Switzerland. The students, with the help of their teacher, held the first ever Great Oaks Tchoukball Tournament today. John also provided the Board with a video from the event.

### **Governance Committee Report - Susan Briggs**

Susan opened up the Governance report by inquiring about setting a date and time for the Board Retreat in July. John noted that Ayanna can assist in sending out a doodle to figure out what time works best for the Board. Susan noted with this date potentially being the 3rd week of July. Susan did note that the nominating committee will be working with the new potential board members.

Susan gave a shout out to John and Latoya for jumping in and getting everything taken care of with the state.

### **Finance Committee Report – Corey Sneed**

Corey opened the Finance report by going over the vendor approvals that have been vetted through the RFP Process for April: Lumos as well as another matter regarding annual resolutions. John introduced Lumos to the board which is a consumable SBAC preparation that is aligned with some of the changes to the SBAC as well as using Blueprint strategy. They are a new vendor for us however they have been around for a long time. Additional quotes were requested from 2 other vendors and Lumos was selected as their products aligned with what GOBPT was looking for as recommended by the Curriculum implementation specialists and they are the only vendor that can get the materials to us within the 2 week turnaround time and give our students 4-6 weeks of preparation with the Lumos materials prior to taking the SBAC test. Corey noted that the finance committee is in support of the Lumos vendor. Corey requested a motion for Lumos to be approved as a new vendor.. The motion was moved by Bob, seconded by Leticia. Vote passed unanimously.

Latoya brought to the Board's attention the that year over year that the National School Lunch Program requires that schools vote on the Healthy Food Certification and that there is very specific language that has to be read to the Board and then the Board would have to vote yes on this and then GOBPT would have to submit the minutes to the National School Lunch Program.

Latoya noted that the first motion is that 1. Required healthy food option vote for all BOEs The BOE must vote "yes" or "no" for implementing the healthy food option of C.G.S. Section 10-215f. The motion and board-approved meeting minutes must include the exact language below:

a. Motion language for healthy food option: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State



Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Corey requested a motion to approve the above in its entirety. The motion was moved by Leticia, seconded by Bob. Vote passed unanimously.

Latoya noted that the second motion is that 2. If the BOE votes “yes” for implementing the healthy food option, the board-approved meeting minutes and motion must reflect a “yes” or “no” vote on the exact language below. Motion language for combined food and beverage exemptions:

a. The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with Page 3 of 3 | Connecticut State Department of Education an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

Corey requested a motion to approve the above in its entirety. The motion was moved by Bob, seconded by Leticia. Vote passed unanimously.

Ben gave an update on our dashboard and noted the current cash balances through March. Ben noted that the school in general is in a strong position through three quarters of the year. Ben noted that the cash balance should be higher and that what happened was that the BOE funded the Great Oaks Foundation instead of Great Oaks Charter School Bridgeport and the funds have been moved in full to the Bridgeport schools account. Ben stated that the cash burn was on par with what was expected. Ben noted that the food account is low at this point because the meal claims have not come in for February and March. Corey inquired about if at the school level

there is a process in place to ensure that the claims are being inputted as soon as possible. Corey wanted to ensure that if the state is delaying in reimbursement that at least at the school level this is being addressed as soon as possible. Corey stated that what GOBPT does not want to have happen is for the account to run into a deficit and have to shift money from checking as it is intended to be completely separate on purpose and having to shift dollars means that it will have to be explained why in the audit and to put appropriate documentation with the reconciliation. Ben jumped in to state that the meal claim must be submitted 15 days after the end of the month and that information goes to the CSDE and Fionnuala Brown's office as well as the foundation and Ben's office should be notified so that it can be booked into revenue because once meal claims go in it can take 30-60 days to be funded. Latoya noted that February was late due to transitioning to a new food service manager.

Ben resumed the dashboard by highlighting that every month the loan to the foundation is being paid. Ben also noted the current position of the Bluehub loan and that the current position is remarkable. Corey also noted that they will be exploring the potential of satisfying the payment to Bluehub. Susan stated that this is a remarkable development and commended Ben and Corey on their efforts.

Ben noted that they need clarification from the state on the per pupil funding as funding was received for 648 students not the 651 students that GOBPT had on October 1, 2021 and Ben is waiting to hear back from the state on this. Ben went over the leeway in payroll with some of the money going into summer payroll for teachers. Ben noted that facilities is higher due to the estimated depreciation which will be fine tuned over the next couple of months, janitorial had additional staff hired to assist with the clean up during meals which wasn't budgeted for, and a lot of the maintenance contracts kicked in this year like HVAC and Elevators and as an unplanned against the budget expense and will be planned for in the FY 23 Budget with much greater clarity. Ben noted that the numbers are very healthy.

Ben went over the lease amendment which was signed by the landlord and has gone into effect exactly to which was discussed: monthly payments, 1% escalation starting in Year 3 which is this year and a payment only for this year. GOBPT is down 2% with a minimal hit and a huge help which increases the savings over the course of the Lease. Ben also noted that paying rent month to month as opposed to three months at a time.

Ben went over the Budget for FY 23 and the difference between FY 22. Ben noted that budget was built around careful spending where there are recurring cost with focusing very carefully on academics, school operations have increased and the increase is mainly in academic support and enrichment, facilities haven't changed much and that at the end GOBPT will be at a

breakeven point and that in this budget money has been factored in for the interest on the Bluehub loan. Ben informed the board that the revenue mainly comes from per pupil funding, the number of student enrolled in SPED as well as paraprofessionals, food service which has a separate budget in terms of meal claims coming in and costs going out, Title funds are place holders for what was expected for next year to be flat to next year and the ESSER funds that are being tapped into for completion of ESSER 2 and ESSER 3 as well, and lastly contributions. Corey mentioned the security grant which will be paid towards the Bluehub loan to which Ben replied that it will be a balance sheet transaction and it wont hit the profit and loss. Susan inquired about the amount and Ben noted that it is split between past expenses and future work and new projects. Ben noted that he put more detail than last year to show and give the board confidence that the plan that was put together by John and Lauren was focused on delivering very specific support to students and it is broken down into Middle School and High School.

Corey highlighted a point that Bob brought up of including the percentage of program usage in regards to administration salary. John noted that this is something that hasn't been included in past budgets and to keep in mind that GOBPT is a Middle and a High School and that is why this budget has been presented in a more district level view. John stated that this division of the budget also clearly shows and gives Chris and Denise the Heads of High School and Middle School more flexibility with finding teachers and discussing with John what salaries they can offer. John also stated that inflated salaries were put into consideration when determining this budget which puts the salary offers higher than they have been in the past; while also increasing the salaries of the teachers in the building so the GOBPT can maintain quality teachers.

Ben resumed discussing the non-personnel expenses by summarizing the key things: contracted services which are down due to projecting a lot more fellows. However, due to the teacher shortage they are expecting a fellow shortage. Ben noted that for operational expenses GOBPT has supplemental academics (summer school, extended school days, etc.) which is an addition to the budget as well as staff development having a big boost, and lastly a boost in student and staff recruitment. Facilities expenses haven't changed much due to clarity on what the costs will be for the upcoming school year. Fellow expenses fall in line as the lease hasn't changed there. Ben noted that there is a slight increase in expenses compared to the personnel side.

Corey requested a motion to approve the FY 23 Budget as presented by Ben. The motion was moved by Bob, seconded by Selena. Vote passed unanimously.

### **Nominating Committee Report – John Scalice**

John welcomed and extended a thank you to the guests Eva, AJ and Tensie for considering the GOBPT Board. Corey followed that up with offering support to the potential new board members if they need any clarification or assistance with understanding the finances.

Susan requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Corey, seconded by Bob. Vote passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:23pm