

**Great Oaks Charter School - Bridgeport
Monthly Board Meeting
September 14, 2022**

Board Members Present: Bob Carlson, Corey Sneed, Christopher McMillan, Tenssie Ramsay

Board Members Absent: Eva Vega

GO-BPT Staff Present: John Scalice (Executive Director), Christopher Pellegrino (High School Principal), Latoya Hubbard (Director of Operations)

Foundation Members Present: Lauren Perkins, Ben Chan, Vanessa Ceas

Called to Order at 5:22 p.m. by Bob Carlson

Review of Minutes from the July Meeting

Bob noted they would be unable to review minutes from the July meeting due to an issue with being able to access the minutes via dropbox and proposed the board would review at the September meeting.

School Leadership Report

Principal's Report, Middle/High School - John Scalice, Christopher Pellegrino, HS Principal

Whole School Goal(s) Update

John introduced Christopher Pellegrino as the sole presenter for the High and Middle School Principal's Report, standing in for Denise Linares, who could not be present. Chris began with an update on school goals, presented at the July meeting.

Chris shared with the board that both schools focused on sending out a great deal of information to parents and families about the start of the year. The feedback from parents was that this was as informed as they've ever been ahead of the first day of school and they have been receiving less questions.

Chris reported that aside from needing to close the gap on a few spots, they are feeling confident with the school staff they've hired ahead of the start of school, and they were able to meet their science requirement at the high school.

Over the summer the principals did a huge revamp on their culture systems, ensuring it was extremely clear for families so they have all the information they need to make informed decisions.

Chris said they held new staff orientation ahead of the whole staff, which helped orient new teachers to what GO is and gave them an opportunity to build relationships with each other. This consequently helped

new teachers norm on language and ensure returning staff were not sitting through the same PDs year after year.

Chris said this year, they put an emphasis on curriculum and instruction, school culture and norms, expectation re-setting, new student supports put in place, rolling out culture systems, and gave teachers/fellows ample time to practice.

Chris said that the strong summer of planning and end-of-year work helped them start the year off better than normal, after returning from the pandemic. Chris reports that students have returned happy, excited to be here and craving learning/engagement.

High School Specific Updates

Chris shared that the high's school's big value focus this year is excellence in everything we do, including dress, how students approach the school, keep up our building, etc.

Chris noted that setting this expectation started with 9th grade orientation and 10th-12th grade community meetings; they also discussed accountability and shifting out of a pandemic together. Chris shared that given the shift in state expectations, they wanted to ensure students were clear and prepared to meet them.

Chris reported on the launch of the College Academy, a GO-BPT partnership with Post University. To-date, Chris reported 23 students enrolled in the college academy; they will take a series of AP courses (US History, Statistics), Honors Physics, and courses with Post including for now, College Success Seminar and English 101.

Chris closed the high school updates with a review of upcoming student events that students *want* to attend! Chris discussed plans for Back to School Night, the Great Oaks Tye Dye Event (linked to uniform design), the Homecoming Dance and this year's whole school experience, a science center visit aligned with NGSS standards.

Middle School Updates- Chris standing in for Denise Linares

Chris shared with the board Denise's sentiment that the start of the school year was "*One of the best first days of school of her teaching career!*"

Chris shared that the 6th-8th grade students also had community meetings to set the tone for the year and follow up on school-wide communications. Chris reported that the middle school has had no behavior issues since the first day and that the positive based incentive system used to track data, ***Class Dojo***, shows a 90% positive feedback on student behavior and expectations.

Chris reported that one of the shifts in the middle school this year was moving to a 90 min block for both math and english; English teachers are embracing this new instructional framework. Chris discussed the launch of the MidSchool math curriculum (including a video by John), a program that was piloted last academic year with solid gains for students in just a few short months.

Chris reported that they have started diagnostic testing for both the High School and Middle School to collect the beginning of the year baseline data through EdMentum, to assess students in Language Arts, Reading and Mathematics.

Chris opened the floor for any questions from the board. While there were no immediate questions, Bob expressed his excitement.

John adds that this is one of the first years that we've been able to stick with our assessment schedule and curriculum; in past years, for one reason or another, assessment had been pushed off at least a week or more. John noted the work of the ops team in ensuring everything was ready to successfully roll out testing and get baseline data, before it's no longer baseline data.

Bob asked a question about the metrics on the 90 minute blocks and how they were going to be measured.

John shares that assessments are also measured through observation; key indicators were explored during the 90 minute ELA and Math rollout, including how long teachers spend on the following frameworks: teacher driven instruction, exploration of learning, student independent work and group work. John reports that these frameworks were worked on with teachers during the ELA/Math specific professional development sessions ahead of the start of school.

Executive Director School Report- John Scalice

John opens up with his executive director's report with baseline data on attendance and behavior.

John shares that though they are still cleaning up data in their information systems, based on the day-to-day attendance in powerschool, we are at over 92% attendance for both the Middle School and High School, ahead of where they typically would be this time of year.

John reminds the board of Chris' point earlier about communication, and that we are seeing a lot more students coming in on time, prepared and looking forward to being in the building. John shared an anecdote about a teacher and his eager students, demonstrating deeper teacher-student relationships post-pandemic; John also noted teachers are utilizing those relationships to set expectations and foster student engagement.

John shared that the suspension rate is 0% and they are working hard to keep it there. John noted that one thing GOBPT has spent a lot of time on, (giving credit to Alberta in her new role, which shifted from Director of Climate & Culture to Director of Community Partnerships) is the development of school-community partnerships to provide community service opportunities to students, and service alternatives to suspension.

John shared that they are starting to develop these partnerships so should there be a suspension level offense, if it is appropriate, we might be able to offer students assistance and community opportunities, rather than removing them from a learning opportunity.

John reported the final GOBPT school wide SBAC data, as last reviewed in July, (ELA-24%, Math-12%); we reported at 23% in summer, so ELA went up a little bit and math stayed solid at 12% which was a 4% increase since last year.

John noted, our 6th grade students using the new FishTank learning curriculums in ELA and math for less than half a year (pilot) saw increases in growth and target scores (hitting their predicted score) that outpaced Connecticut State Averages. John shares that these curricula were adopted across the entire middle school. Our 6th graders coming in this year have relatively higher baseline scores that we usually see, so it looks like we are in a good position to make the gains we've talked about (10-15 pts. + on efficiency scores). John shared that Fishtank learning is also being utilized at the high school, with the correlating program for math as well.

Lastly, John reported on the SBAC data for Bridgeport comparison; relative to our host district, our Math and ELA percentages are at 24% and 12% respectively, compared to Bridgeport averages of 21% and 12% respectively. John shares that alongside school rankings, including BPT magnet schools (including interdistrict magnet schools), GOBPT would have placed 11 out of their 30 schools in ELA and 12th out of 30 in math against BPS in our first year of attempting this new curriculum.

John discusses Career and College Pathways. GOBPT received a \$200,000 renewal grant from the BARR foundation, who are interested in our Career & College Pathways and intervention model. One of the charges for our school this year was to develop the first Career and College Pathways for the 22-23 school year.

John shared the general framework for the Career and College Pathways, specific to instructional careers –students requested both Teaching and Health & Medical Technologies, but at the moment we are best equipped for the Teaching/Instructional Career Pathway, with the goal of establishing the Health & Medical Technology Pathway (2024-2025).

John reviewed the details of the instructional career pathway– a pathway that would prepare students to pursue many careers including but not limited to Human Resources, Social Work/Counseling, Communications, Project Management, Corporate Training, Sales, etc. John reported on the eligibility for students, including a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, attendance percentage of 90% or higher and a minimum of two teacher recommendations. Students would also engage in coursework specific to this pathway both through the GOBPT - Post University partnership.

Corey asked John a question about the three criteria, specific to attendance and teacher recommendations– he wanted to know if those were requirements by Post University or the school, and John confirmed that it was a GOBPT requirement.

Corey raised the concern about potential biases with that requirement (not to necessarily be addressed now, but perhaps offline at some point) and what would be put in place to ensure that doesn't occur. John said of course down the line, we will get more specific with processes as we present the final teacher pathway.

John presents the Great Oaks Prep - College Opportunities Pathway. He shares that through their partnership with Post University, students who engage with this pathway, will have opportunities from 10-12th grade over three years to complete college credits. In the 10th grade, or 1st year in the program, students take entry level ELA and Math prep courses in-school. Upon completion of these classes, in the 11th grade or 2nd year, they will have full access to in-school and online courses through Post University, using their entire course selection options for classes. In the 12th grade students can take courses in-school, online, and on-campus with Post University, using the entire course selection options for classes.

John shared with the board that through traditional funding streams, GOBPT will be able to fund cohorts of up to 25 students for a total of 30 credits during their enrollment in this pathway.

At current funding levels including teacher salary increases, we would still be able to fund a full scholarship at 30 credit hours, or half an associates degree before students and families would be required to pay anything for additional courses.

Additional support for enrolled students

John laid out the support for all students taking college courses that might be significantly more challenging to give them more success.

Students would have access to Americorps fellows for online classes between 5-6pm M/W/F through our LMS to assist with their classes, aligned with our after school program, which starts at 3:45-5pm, that's our traditional after school. 4-5 is online math tutorial online/social media that's open to all residents, not just great oaks. 5-6pm we are offering ESL services, and college assistant to that cohort of 25 students enrolled, and then from 6-7pm we have our after/after school program which assistant students as a tutorial.

Students would have access to teachers and Americorps fellows for in-school offerings during University Study Hall (in the high school) from 2:40-3:40 and typical After-School hours between 2:40-5:00pm daily.

Students can also utilize Post University resources including their library, writing center and math lab during enrollment.

John emphasized that Post University does not want students to try at college courses and fail, then feel as if college is not for them, so they also have access to Post University's online tutoring support, professor office hours, etc.

Bob inquired about Americorps fellows being supported by Post and if additional resources were digital or onsite. John informed Bob that teachers are also able to access the asynchronous coursework to better support their students and that the library and math lab are physically based.

John explained it's a three year pathway open to enrollment at any point in 10th-12th grade, but they start as a Year 1 student regardless of when they choose to enroll. It simply changes the options available to them, but it also ensures that every student has an opportunity to apply to the pathway.

To complete the 30 credits of college, students must before their senior year. Students enrolling in their senior year will only be eligible for those 6 credits from Y1.

John opened up questions about SBAC scores and the Pathway.

Bob and Corey said no, and Bob said this was encouraging.

John reiterated that this year they wanted to move from the school that we wanted to becoming the school we thought we were going to be—this is part of becoming that school. As we get towards the end of the year, it will be more solidified and we cannot wait to roll this out to parents for our students.

Bob asked if John is prepared in case they receive more applications than expected. John noted that based on the amount of teachers and space we have available, they can take 20-25 as the roll out numbers. John noted that if for some reason they're receiving more applications than that, they'll have to revisit the model, but for now these numbers are solid. Corey made a note that either you revisit the model, or you change the requirements. John noted that if it becomes hyper competitive it changes the nature of the program.

Director of Operations Report - Latoya Hubbard

Latoya opened her report with a few school start-up items. Latoya echoed the team's sentiment that this was one of the best first days of school. At a high level, she discussed feeling prepared for the first day, then reviewed all the work over the summer that went into preparation; this included completing repairs and cleaning, communication to families (mail, robocalls, email, etc.), Chromebook distribution for new students, and new family orientation (with the highest turnout yet- packed house), as well as staff training.

Parking, new within the building, where they can go to find things, human resources, PowerSchool and other EdTech training, IT Equipment, Emergency Protocols (new area of rescue locations) and New Teacher Certification—more of an extensive training for new teachers, to explain the various certification pathways, their goal/what they need to do to get there, etc.

Latoya then moved on to an enrollment update by grade (642 enrolled); there has been a drop since the start of school, but discovered a little over 20 students were not returning to GO and started to call people on the waitlist; Offers are out already as well to 15 new students, and shared that they are leaning on their usual modes of recruitment In addition to building community partnerships, Alberta is also out canvassing the community to support enrollment —which has helped our efforts in enrolling new students. Our additional recruitment efforts include phone banking and family referrals.

Latoya gave an update on certification- 60% of our staff have active certifications on file, 14% have pending applications for certification (submitted at end of school year over the summer). 26% of our staff

represent new staff, hired over the summer/recently that have pending applications or in the process of gathering documents so we can submit them.

Latoya opened the floor for questions. No questions from the board.

Bob asked about the date for reporting enrollment to the state—October 1st. Latoya reiterated that these first few weeks are crucial to meeting enrollment goals, including recruitment and supporting new enrollments. Bob asked why students are either not showing up or leaving; Latoya responded specific to the 8 students who they had not heard from but also informed the board about the variety of reasons they either might have a student registered and not hear from the student or families, or various reasons why a student might leave between their 8th/9th grade. Latoya informed the board that this could happen because students may be seeking a different experience, applying to technical schools, families move, etc.

Finance Committee Report - Corey & Ben

Ben reported GOBPT at \$2.7 million in the bank and they have submitted the EFS (education finance system for the state), meaning they have finished state reporting and end of year grant reports. Ben shares that they are now in the first full week of the audit cycle and he will be able to tell the board how well it's going soon, but expects it to go well.

The dashboard, at the end of August reflected \$1M, with an additional \$2M that came in for the 2nd quarter (October/November/December). Ben reports that the food account is still at 47; this would reflect the approved budget called for by the board, once we start serving meals.

Ben says the reserve account reflected \$143,000 at the end of August. Funded at the 3% the agreed to by the board to set aside each month, the account is currently \$200,000; the drop at the end of August reflects the funds taken out to pay off BlueHub. Ben notes that additional funding (since we are not paying BlueHub anymore) is going towards paying down the foundation loan aggressively; there are only two payments left. No loans against the school come November.

Ben reminds the board that the fundraising target set was \$266,000. So far, \$166,000 came in from BARR; which leaves a goal still of \$100,000.

Ben shares that the state has been funding us at the 661 mark (enrollment), which will be revised at the start of October depending on the final count of the year— the final count is fixed throughout the year once October 1st passes, even if there is attrition. There was a slight bump in the funding we received because of the per pupil rate increase.

The approved budget from July-August, we are expecting 1.3M and we've received 1.4M actual (per pupil rate increase); Ben updated the board on the material expense variances, to include/consider summer teacher salaries, facilities, personnel, etc. Everything is headed in the right direction and on track with the budget.

Corey asked if the over expenditures from facilities should taper. Ben said yes, because the spending was to prepare for the start of the year, and also included elevator repair along with other one-time expenses to get the school ready.

Corey mentioned the Bridgeport Rotary Grant, brought up during their finance meeting. They have an opportunity to apply for up to \$25,000 to hopefully be awarded to the school –to bump the \$100,000 standing variance. Application deadline is at the end of the month, and John and Lauren are working on it together now.

Lauren commented on the \$100,000 discussed in the budget noting that it was included because in the spring, they submitted a proposal to the Buck foundation for some work to be carried out this year in partnership with a 3rd party vendor; they booked the correlating expense for that grant in the budget. Lauren noted we did not receive that grant from Buck, so they removed the correlating expense so there's no hole in the budget. Lauren reminded the board of the importance for us to keep moving forward with our fundraising on the private side.

Corey gave a quick recap and opened the floor for questions.

Bob raised a question for Ben about a line item on the budget, but addressed his own question.

Ben noted that for context, compared to previous years, the team is starting the beginning of the school year with ESSER dollars still in the bank and with a much stronger balance sheet and cash on hand than in previous years. And no loans! Which will allow for more available cash flow.

Corey said if there are no more questions about the dashboard, that he would move on to the vendors. Vendors that we need to vote for at this time.

Corey requested a motion vote on vendors.

Corey noted he was going to present 3 vendors as a slate, Eastern University, Paper and CABA. After briefing the board on all three, Corey requested a motion to vote.

Eastern University- approval to enter an agreement with Eastern University. Reduced tuition for staff members who attend the university, staff PD, staff resources.

Paper - Tutoring program, 5 year contract; this organization offers online services; they're the only program in town that can offer this distinct level of support services to our students

CABA - CT associates of board of education - educational resource affiliate; policy updates for boards of education; update policies required by CSDE; CABA makes these available to review/edit; they also provide board training and live legal expert policy support

Corey asked if there were any questions about these three. There were no questions so Corey requested a motion on the floor to approve Eastern university, Paper, and CABA as a slate. The motion was moved by Bob and seconded by Chris. Vote passed unanimously.

Corey requested a motion to approve Distinction, Inc. as a potential new vendor for school shirts; while there is no quote and they may not be our chosen vendor, the motion to approve requested is to add them as a possible vendor for better pricing and their capacity to offer students and families an online store to purchase items directly. The motion was moved by Tenssie and seconded by Chris. Vote passed unanimously.

Lastly, Corey requested a motion to approve Pivot solutions, LLC as a teacher recruitment resource; the hope to approve as an additional vendor for the school to place and produce teachers. The motion was moved by Chris and seconded by Tenssie. Vote passed unanimously.

Governance Committee Report

Bob deferred because he didn't have time to talk to Eva and Tenssie. There is a need to name a new Vice chair and secretary, so Bob wanted to talk to them first.

Bob proposed another item, which is a resolution from the governance committee to the board for action and a vote; Given the change in the foundation's structure, Bob requested a motion to shift the responsibility of John's review to the governance committee for a report of John's evaluation to present to the board for vote.

The motion was moved by Corey and seconded by Chris. Vote passed unanimously.

GO Foundation Update- Lauren

Lauren had no items for the board/no foundation updates. Lauren said she wanted to double down on giving credit to Latoya and the team for the enrollment data. Lauren said she could not remember a fall where GOBPT had been in such great shape, knowing it was a huge lift and took a lot of effort. Latoya said a few years ago they worked with the foundation to put together a plan for enrollment and they're still using that plan, which is a team effort.

Bob also offered kudos from his last few visits to the school. Bob said the training of the new teachers was such a positive vibe/experience. Culture that was created is continuing at the school. Chris, Denise, etc. the enrollment and morale is great.

At 6:38, Bob noted there was no new business, and made a motion to adjourn. The motion was moved by Corey and seconded by Chris. The Vote passed unanimously.