

Approved by the board of directors November 11, 2021

Mission Statement: *“We are a community of learners. We will do whatever it takes to learn. We are building a strong foundation by believing we can, working our plan, then feeling the power of success.”*

George Washington Academy
Thursday, October 28, 2021
7:30 p.m.

Board Meeting Minutes

Location: George Washington Academy
2277 South 3000 East
St. George, Utah
Library

The Board Training on GWA State-wide Assessment Data will be held at 7:00 p.m. prior to the Board Meeting.

The Board meeting convened at 7:30 p.m.

Board Welcome: Shannon Greer, President

Roll Call: Shannon Greer, President

Prayer: Holly Myers

Pledge of Allegiance: Jaycee Rogers

Board Members Present: Shannon Greer, Kevin Peterson, Blake Clark, April Paxton, Holly Myers, Shauna Mahoney, Rachel Stewart, Casey Unrein, and Jaycee Rogers.

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Steve Erickson, LaNessa Stevens, Aubrey Johnson, Chance Manzanares, Debbie Kuavaka, Linnie Lindsay, Christine Giles, and Spencer Adams. James attended via Zoom conference.

Approval of Minutes: Casey Unrein motioned to approve the minutes from the September 23, 2021 Board Meeting as presented in the board packet. Kevin Peterson seconded the motion, which passed by Shannon Greer, April Paxton, Shauna Mahoney, Rachel Stewart, Casey Unrein, and Jaycee Rogers. Holly Myers abstained from the motion.

Public Opportunity to Address the Board: None

Set time for adjournment: The time set for adjournment was 8:40p.m.

Teacher Representative Report: Teacher Representatives

Linnie Lindsay said that many grade levels reported that they participated in meaningful activities such as the Discovery Gateway lab activity in 5th grade, 2nd grade Olympic Greek field day, and the 7th grade moments which included a mock trial, digital escape room, and an Edgar Allen Poe reader's theater. Life skills has had many community outings and special visitors.

Christine Giles reported that the carnival was well planned. She reported that the action teams associated with the Leader in Me Program have encouraged teachers to have shared leadership in academic growth, student leadership, culture, and environment of the school. Action teams are meeting on Fridays, every other week, with a common goal. The teachers meeting are coming from different backgrounds and grade-levels and have had been able to create meaningful ideas.

Administration Report: Blake Clark, Executive Director, reported that every teacher is required to be part of a leadership team. He reported that all reports are complete. He said that the student count was 1,009 students. Shannon Greer asked where the administrative assistant was finding new students. The administrative assistant reported that there is no waitlist, so students are either new to the area or want a change from their current school. Blake reported that with the rollover land trust money not used last year, GWA is able to send teachers to a Solution Tree PLC conference. Blake expressed how well GWA is operating as he is mentoring other directors from other charter schools.

Financial Report: Spencer Adams, Business Administrator, explained that the school is a quarter of the way through the fiscal year. He said the state has not updated the allotment memo so we are in a holding pattern waiting for that information. August expenses are higher than most revenues, due to spending grants to get reimbursed. Expenses are good— items in red are related to beginning of the year expenses. He reported that cash is good and overall, there is nothing concerning. He explained that he added a column on the financial report that reflects bond covenants.

All reports are complete for the month of October.

Committee Reports:

- **Policies Committee:** Blake Clark, Chair, reported there is nothing new until next month. He reiterated the greatness of a charter school and how teachers feel empowered to make changes through committees.
- **Finance Committee:** Kevin Peterson said there was nothing new to report. He expressed the importance in looking at bond covenants on the financial statements. Rachel Stewart asked about the health and wellness center expense of \$1,000. Kevin said premiums will not increase above 3% as long as participation is maintained. Employees are participating in step challenges. The goal is to have 50% of eligible participants enrolled in benefits to participate.
- **Benefits Committee** – Holly Myers reported that benefits have maintained the 3% premium increase. She thanked the finance committee for the approval of health and

wellness incentive money. She reported that the dental and eye benefits were renewed at the previous rate. Casey Unrein asked about the deductible stipend line on the budget and where that money is coming from. Holly responded that GWA has decreased their health care premiums by increasing the employee's deductible. The money that is saved through the decreased premium is then given back to the employee.

- **Curriculum Committee** – LaNessa Stevens, Chair, reported that there was a video created to educate parents on new math curriculum for parent night. The curriculum committee is also looking for a new parent representative. Rachel Stewart asked about the parental concerns regarding the new math program slowing down students and asked for clarification. Shannon Greer expressed that because GWA has not completed one full year of the new math program, there is not data available to determine whether the math program is slowing down students. The new curriculum video will have school counselor explaining that there are options for parents to get their children in the classes that they need at the district when they transition out of GWA. Casey unrein expressed that from his experience his child is confused about what the correct way to do the math is with so many options. Blake said that in the assessment portion students can choose which way they want to do it. Holly Myers asked about the statement in the parent feedback that [Into Math] doesn't align with the Washington County middle schools which take an integrated approach. Blake expressed that Into Math is more aligned to state standards than the previous program, and if Washington County's curriculum is aligned, there shouldn't be a concern. Blake said if you look at math data from previous years, GWA's math trajectory plateaued where other schools who followed the state standards showed a continuous increase. Into Math is filling the needs of students, focusing on basics and helping students understand the why, not just the how of mathematics. A kindergarten teacher reported that Into Math is age and standard appropriate. Holly expressed there are more "ah-ha" moments in her home. Blake reminded the board that new curriculum implementation takes 3-5 years to show accurate data.

Kevin motioned to continue the meeting at 8:40, Holly Myers seconded the motion. The motioned passed unanimously (all present voted in favor).

- **Outreach Committee** – Holly Myers, Chair, reported that the committee will meet soon. Mr. Clark has been creating videos for social media.
- **Technology Committee** - Steve Erickson, Chair, reported nothing new. He said the Promethean Boards will be coming on November 4th.
- **LAND Trust Committee** – Kevin Peterson, Chair, said there was nothing new to report.
- **PTO Committee** – April Paxton, Chair, reported that day-of fall carnival earnings totaled about 22,000. All of the income, minus expenses, was approximately \$72,000. PTO is looking to fill secretary/VP position. Blake suggested sending out "what the carnival looks like" to parents to increase parental involvement. April suggested doing that at SEPS. Holly Myers suggested job descriptions to make the intimidation factor decrease and eliminate the barrier of the unknown. Shauna Mahoney suggested adding meeting times to accommodate working parents. Casey Unrein asked whether additional help from parents who are professionals in their careers could be used on various committees. Holly said that the more support the better, however there needs to be a balance to how many members are on committees. Kevin

Peterson expressed that Land Trust Committee could use more. He also suggested to make clear job descriptions for board committees.

- **Board Development Committee** – Shannon Greer, Chair, reported that next month is the finance training. Shannon asked the board to send questions to Spencer to include in the training.
- **Campus Management Committee** – Steve Erickson, Chair, said there was nothing new to report.

Discussion and/or Action Items:

- Expenditures over \$5,000—None.
- **Proposal for Board Action:** 2022-2023 Fee Schedule: Rachel Stewart asked how the fee schedule compares to other schools. The administrative assistant reported that in the past the fee schedule has been comparable to other schools.
- **Proposal for Board Action:** ELL Software: Holly Myers made a motion to purchase the year subscription to Imagine Learning with the grant of \$5,636.29. Rachel Stewart second the motion. Holly amended her motion to purchase the year subscription to Imagine Learning in the amount of \$7,800. Rachel amend her second motion. Kevin Peterson said the remaining fund leftover from the grant is coming out of educational software, and asked whether there was money for that in the account. Blake Clark assured that there would be money. The board unanimously approved the purchase of ELL software as presented in the board packet (all present voted in favor).
- **Accreditation Discussion:** Shannon Greer explained the history of accreditation process and why GWA chose to go through that process. She said the accreditation needs to be renewed this year, with the option of extending the due date due to pandemic hardships. She explained the cost of accreditation, which would include the accreditation fee and the travel and lodging of the accreditation team, would be approximately \$10,000. Rachel Stewart asked about the benefits of the accreditation. Shannon explained that it gave the school some credibility and it centered the school's mission and direction. Rachel asked if we didn't move forward with accreditation, how the school would be in touch with deficits found through the accreditation process? Jaycee Rogers explained that through the PLC process that has been established school-wide, if the process is done correctly, the school should be aware of its deficits. She expressed concern about a third party observing the school for a few days and gaining only a snapshot of the whole picture and then offering feedback. Shannon said that the school is not utilizing the services offered by Cognia (accreditation service) because the school has its own systems in place. She is wondering why the school would spend money on accreditation, when the school is already aware of it deficits and what GWA has is working. However, she expressed concern about the future when the current board and administrative team is no longer at GWA and who will continue to hold the school accountable. Holly Myers asked what interactions have we had with the company since completing accreditation. Shannon said none, other than the review. Jaycee asked Shannon why GWA hasn't utilized the services offered. Shannon felt that in the beginning the services weren't used due to lack of knowledge that they *were* being offered. Now, the school has never been on the state's "red flag" list to where we would need to use the resources. Holly asked if the \$10,000 is paid one time and good for 8 years. The answer was yes. Holly expressed concern that if

we weren't going to go forward with the accreditation, whether outsiders would misunderstand the school. Holly recommended that if the school were to not move forward with accreditation, that the reason for not renewing the accreditation and an explanation of why the school is still great be made known. Holly asked if there was an in-house evaluation, or other evaluation that could be used in place of Cognia's evaluation rubric. Shannon said that she found some other third-party options for evaluating, but she was not sure if those options were "school focused." Jaycee commented on the technology advancements since the initial accreditation (2016) and how GWA has recently utilized technology to our advantage in clarifying misconceptions about school and educating a large audience about what GWA is. She also questioned whether parents are looking for an accredited school and if the term "accreditation" is what sets GWA apart from other schools. Kevin commented that in 2016, accreditation was a way to control what people thought of GWA because there wasn't a large online presence. He expressed concern that if the accreditation would not be renewed, that there should be some sort of evaluation to replace it. April Paxton said the original accreditation served its purpose in establishing who GWA is, now people know. Casey Unrein expressed that the financial commitment for the accreditation process wasn't a concern, however the time commitment was. Jaycee asked whether the accreditation team brings their own rubric and voiced concerned about whether their rubric aligns with our current school goals. Rachel asked if the renewal would be less of a time commitment because it is not an application. Shannon said yes, however the school would still need to provide student data. Holly asked if GWA doesn't move forward with the renewal, if accreditation could be re-visited because of the unknown movement of the board/teachers. Shannon said that the board could establish a review process. Shannon said that it can be within the board's responsibility to establish a sustainable long-term accountability plan.

Blake Clark said that the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) already has checks and balances in place to keep our school on track and hold GWA accountable. He reported that on the recent school audit, GWA scored the highest in the state. He expressed that the state is already doing what Cognia provides and he can call USBE whenever he needs for help, versus calling someone out of state who doesn't understand Utah law, policies, and the culture unique to our schools. His concern was how many companies GWA will pay for professional opportunities that are not utilized. Blake said that the faculty and staff know the deficits of the school because of surveys, PLC meetings, and various other channels set up. He expressed that he doesn't have board vote, but his recommendation is to not move forward with accreditation.

Casey acknowledged that the state of Utah has improved over the past few years in school accountability, but questioned how far behind Utah is from other states and if Cognia's rubric is ahead of the state. Shannon said that one of the reasons GWA is successful now is because of the 2016 accreditation. Casey asked what piece will replace the accreditation. Blake reported that USBE gave the school feedback on the lowest scoring areas found on the recent audit and that the Cognia rubric is only "best practice" and not specific to the state standards. USBE provides what Cognia offers and he asked the board what holds greater value—input from the state or from Cognia? He expressed

concern that the time commitment of the accreditation process could interfere with the good things and programs happening at GWA. He said that people aren't coming to GWA because of accreditation.

Holly pointed out the 2022 performance standards on the Cognia website, and mentioned that GWA could do a self-reflection. Rachel pointed out that the state is auditing all schools in Utah, and questioned what will set GWA apart from the rest of the schools in Utah.

Blake Clark made a motion to *discontinue* the accreditation of GWA. A second motion was made by Holly Myers. Rachel asked if there was any benefit to extending it to a year to complete the accreditation. April said there would be no benefit. The board unanimously voted to discontinue the Cognia accreditation process (all board members voted in favor).

Closed Meeting – *None*

Reconvene — The board reconvened at 10:03 P.M.

Next Meeting: The next regular Board Meeting will be held on November 11, 2021 at 7:30pm.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted by Jaycee Rogers, Board Secretary