

Truxton Academy Charter School

Regular Board Meeting

March 14, 2021

Notice was provided on our website, www.truxtonacademy.org on Monday, March 7, 2021.

A quorum of 8 trustees out of 8 total number of trustees was present as follows:

Members Present: Tom Brown, Cindy Denkenberger, and Dave Amberg attended in person. Stuart Young, Krysta Austen, Sarah Stevens, Korinne L'Hommedieu, and Beth Klein joined remotely.

Members Absent

Others present: Patty Dawson, Sara Petit-McClure, Leaf Carmer, Courtney Harrington, and Betsy Soshinsky joined remotely.

President Stuart Young called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the Regular Meeting February 14, 2022 were presented. Having no objections, minutes were accepted as presented. Approved.

Community Comments

School Report

Sara Petit-McClure shared second grade teacher Jessica Fallon's presentation which is attached. Korinne L'Hommedieu asked where the virtual trip about Maple Syrup was. Sara replied Shaver Hill Maple Farm. She also shared how much the students enjoyed it.

Sara shared student academic data, which is attached for review. This data shows how students scored in the fall and projected growth by comparing individual student vs. grade level growth norms. It tells how students met or exceeded the norm.

MAP assessment chart is also attached. ELA goals are set at 60% - this information helps determine intervention plans for students. Sara and Jenny are creating small work groups based on MAP summary chart. Krysta Austen asked about Homer and Cortland comparison and Stuart Young asked for clarification with reading in kindergarten, word recognition vs. advance reading. Sara shared how this has been many of our Kindergarten students' first experience with school at all because of COVID. It is many students' first time on a computer or with any kind of assessment. This is why they are doing multiple assessments, partly just to learn what assessments are. Sara clarified how the tests are different at different grade levels and why.

Leadership Council

No Report submitted. Tom reported on three issues:

Issue 1 - teachers are asking for smaller class sizes - Sara shared attached data. The finance committee has worked up options based on estimated enrollment of 120 vs. 109 students. The per pupil amount is an estimated difference of \$120 vs. \$130k. Teachers voted as follows: Option 1 (3 votes) higher enrollment, Option 2 (1 vote) mid-level enrollment, Option 3 (6 votes) lower enrollment. Comments are attached. Sara wanted to note that Option 1 included the ability to hire a dedicated Rural Life Lab teacher which everyone agreed is needed.

Issue 2 – teachers and administration agree that a larger, more capable copier is needed.

Issue 3 – PTO changes and clarification are needed. This topic will be addressed later in the meeting.

The council asked for survey results to be shared with the board to help make the decision. Sara reached out to SUNY to ask if a material revision of our charter would be needed to make changes. SUNY responded no, as long as we stay within our collar number of 120 (96 -144) which finance has been discussing. Sara would like the board to consider making a decision tonight as the lottery is scheduled for April 4th, prior to our next meeting. Krysta asked about losing students and filling those spots. Sara clarified that we would not back fill to meet current numbers. We would maintain agreed upon numbers. Krysta shared that the concern over classroom behavior is not always about classroom size. If we can work towards changes in how kids behave in class, providing stricter guidelines sooner, it should help the teachers feel more respected and in control. Tom commented that our instructional staff to student ratio is comparative to neighboring districts. Courtney Harrinton stated as a parent, from what she has seen and heard, she agrees that stricter guidelines and/or consequences could be instilled. Sara stated that they are looking at different curricular options as well. Behavioral issues are not always “acting out issues” sometimes they are “acting in issues” and have to be handled differently. Krysta reiterated that stricter consequences are needed as well as more structured discipline. When the kids are not following school rules and know it is wrong, there needs to be a consequence. Courtney shared her personal experience with her child that has anxiety and how specifically the transition time is difficult. She shared that consistency and structure help her kids. Krysta shared that it is the reason they selected a different setting for her child. Extreme or violent behavior cannot be tolerated; i.e., biting, scratching, throwing furniture. If we have students showing this type of continued behavior, and have more needs than other students, then we should have funding to address these needs from their home district. If not, how much do we have to tolerate? We do not want to allow this to distract other students from learning. Sara shared that any extreme instances are handled right away and not ongoing. She would like to discuss further with appropriate data. It was agreed that we will continue this discussion at our next executive committee meeting.

Tom asked to continue classroom size discussion after the finance report. Beth shared that she feels the teacher’s comments are reflective of fear that open positions might not be filled. Sara said she felt it would be a split.

Board Committee Reports

Finance Committee

Treasurer’s Report attached. Korinne reported that our bank balance and P&L show our cash position remains healthy. We continue to have favorable revenue over expenses.

Finance Committee

Report attached. Leaf Carmer reported that tuition from districts is all accounted for minus 2 districts totalling about \$6,000. Good news!

Motion by Tom Brown, second by Dave Amberg, to approve Employee Handbook as amended, adding additional Holidays and combined PTO and Sick time to improve employee satisfaction.

Discussion, Sara asked for some clarification in verbiage, maintaining the same intent. All agreed to clarifications and that it is okay to approve pending clarifications. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion by Tom Brown, second by Krysta Austen, to approve the Efficiency Project and Lighting Grant for the cafeteria and gymnasium lighting renovations. Vendor is a NY state contractor via NYSERDA grant and approved installer. Install can be worked around April break. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion by Tom Brown, seconded by Dave Amberg, to approve a credit card with a \$1000 limit for Marketing to manage monthly cost for Facebook and Google Ads. All in favor, motion carried.

Personnel Committee

Report attached. Cindy reported that the committee is planning for evaluations for teachers and Head of School. They will have a progress report at the April meeting.

Facilities Committee

No Report submitted to date. Kathie Arnold reported that the builder blueprints for the small animal barn are still forthcoming. Once received, they will go to Levi Sutton for review and submission to NYSED with additional required information. Tom Brown reported that the upstairs bathroom repairs are completed and it looks great.

Curriculum Committee

Report attached. Cindy Denkenberger would like the board to consider a motion to approve the formation of a sub-committee to research Sixth Grade Curriculums for the purpose of recommending curriculums to the Board this coming Fall 2022 and authorize stipends subject to Finance Committee recommendations. Sara added that research would start over the summer and go into fall. Tom Brown asked about the cost of curriculum and if we are "using" it. Sara shared that some curriculum is used more than others. They will take this into account. Also, she wants to use assessment data in making choices, which of course is lacking due to COVID. They are looking for the best tools for teachers. Stuart Young asked if the stipend would come from next year's budget. Sara replied that it would and ball parked \$1000 for the project for staff involved, as it would be after hours work. Stuart tasked the Finance Committee with adding this expense into next year's curriculum budget and it could be approved then.

Marketing Committee

No Report submitted. Patty reported that Open House went well considering the snow. We will hold a second event on a weekday in the evening. Date to be determined.

Special Committee Reports

Nutrition Committee

No report submitted.

Professional Advisory Committee

Report attached.

Transportation Committee

No Report submitted.

Educational Excellence Committee (formerly Fundraising Committee)

Report attached. Dave reported that parent Erin Kelly joined the committee and shares good knowledge. They are happy to have her. He also reported that the Small Rural School grant has been applied for and they are hoping for \$20k.

Rural Life Lab Committee (formerly Agriculture Committee)

Report attached. Courtney reported that they may change some projects based on teacher feedback. They will be continuing with monthly themes.

With no objection to reports as submitted, reports are all approved.

Old Business

Cindy wanted to thank the Rural Life Lab Committee for the activities and curriculum they have implemented and the terrific bulletin board they have created.

Leaf reported that current enrollment stands at 96 students.

Tom Brown left at 8:55pm.

New Business

Motion by Sarah Stevens, seconded by Korinne L'Hommedieu, to approve capping all grade levels at 18 students for the 2022-2023 school year. This cap does not affect existing students, it would apply to spots available for incoming applications. This budget would allow for 6 classroom teachers, 4 teaching assistants and 1 social worker/social emotional support position. We want our teachers to know they are heard. None opposed. Motion carried.

Since discipline/student behavior needs further discussion, Stuart called for an Executive Committee meeting. The meeting was set for March 17, 2022 at 7pm.

Dave Amberg left at 9:10pm

School Events

MAR 18 Special Person Day – learning a dance in PE for hopes it will be an in-person event

MAR 24 Family Math Night – fun activities with SUNY Practicum Students

MAR 31 SUNY CSI Pre-visit documents due

APR 1 Transportation Requests Due to Resident Districts

APR 4 Application Lottery to be held at 6pm

Adjournment

Motion by Korinne L'Hommedieu, seconded by Beth Klein, to adjourn the meeting at 9:27pm. None opposed. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patty Dawson, Recording Secretary