

**Holyoke Community Charter School
2200 Northampton Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
Board of Trustees**

Minutes of HCCS Board of Trustees Meeting – January 15, 2019

In Attendance: Jay Breines, Cynthia Dennis, Leona Florek, Jenna Gable, and Mark Lubold
Guests: Sonia Correa Pope, Ryan Meek, Tom Paquin, Lynn Spampinato
Not Present: n/a

I. Meeting called to order at 5:05 pm p.m. by Jenna Gable. Public comments/none.

II. **Membership**

Jenna Gable reports that Billy McBride has resigned from his position on the board. Janine Kent has submitted her resume and letter of intent to join the board.

Cynthia Dennis moved to nominate Janine Kent to the board for a three-year term. Seconded by Mark Lubold. The motion passed unanimously without discussion/comments. Sonia Correa Pope will send info through board management system.

III. **SABIS Evaluation & Contract**

Cynthia Dennis opened up the conversation by explaining that as the school is entering a renewal year, and as the board prepares to renew the five-year contract with SABIS it is the board's due diligence to conduct an evaluation of SABIS and review the proposed contract renewal. Cynthia mentioned that this will be the fourth contract the board has signed with SABIS. She then reviewed the template for the board's evaluation of SABIS, rating SABIS on a number of criteria. Lynn Spampinato provided the board a SABIS self-evaluation, which the board felt was valuable data in terms of academic data in particular.

The first criteria of the board evaluation is **Academics**. Jenna Gable expressed that SABIS is commendable academically. Cynthia expressed concern with Special Education, 3rd, 4th, and 7th grade MCAS data having shown historically poorer performance compared to the school's other grade-level performance. Lynn Spampinato spoke about initiatives that SABIS has put in place to address these concerns, including: a Fast Track ELA program for Special Education students designed to close gaps of up to two years; reassessing Special Education inclusion and pull-out services; the potential use of Lindamood-Bell; SABIS program coordinators conducting observations of teachers and providing them with support to ensure fidelity to the SABIS model in every classroom;

creating plans for each student who fell in the bottom quartile of MCAS scores including tutoring; conducting a Writing Workshop and further professional development to support student learning through writing and ensuring those strategies are being reinforced in the SABIS program; more training for ELL and Special Education teachers around reading.

The board agreed that they would like SABIS to create a targeted plan to address historical gaps and lower performance, particularly at the 3rd and 4th grade level and in 7th grade mathematics. There followed a short discussion regarding state-wide trends of lower scores at 3rd and 4th grade level and the difficulty the school has had in hiring an experienced and effective upper school math teacher (7th & 8th grade). Sonia Pope and Lynn Spampinato reported that the school has hired a math coach with multiple years of experience in the SABIS model at HCCS and the SABIS math program coordinator has been working closely with the new upper school math teachers. The school has restructured the SABIS reteach/retake process this year to better address gaps and remain on pacing. The board discussed some strategies to recruit an experienced math teacher, including reviewing salaries and offering competitive salaries for such a candidate with the Fair Employment Act in mind.

Board members again agreed that they would like SABIS to present a plan to address the deficiencies in performance in these areas including teachers, scheduling, and materials. The board will evaluate SABIS on a more frequent basis to monitor progress academically.

The second criteria of the board evaluation is **Fiscal Responsibility**. Cynthia Dennis led the discussion by reporting that there were no concerns or complaints in regards to SABIS in this area. The board discussed a need to understand short-term and long-term capabilities and agreed that the school needed to move into the 21st century by using electronic banking. Ryan Meek reported that Sonia Pope, Gene Ferrari, and himself had met earlier in the day with TD Bank in regards to this, however the meeting was not productive for a second time. The board feels that TD Bank has not been responsive to the school's financial needs in terms of this and would like to seek out a new financial institution and see what other potential benefits such a switch could bring. Ryan and the board discussed some of the possible benefits of electronic banking while also needing to ensure the safety and security of maintaining a system with checks and balances.

Jay Breines moved to put out an RFP for a new banking institution. Seconded by Cynthia Dennis. The motion passed unanimously. Ryan Meek will take the next steps and plan to have presentations by interested institutions at the regularly scheduled board meeting in February.

The third criteria of the board evaluation is **Board Relationships**. Jenna Gable led the discussion by indicating that she would like to see communication increase especially

between SABIS and herself as the Board Chair. She would like to see an open door policy of communication when issues or concerns present themselves. The board discussed the need for three-way ownership between SABIS, the School Director, and the Board Chair.

The board discussed that due to recent transitions (Anne Darcy's passing, Sonia Pope's medical leave, and Lynn Spampinato's recent appointment as SABIS regional director) there is a need to create new and strengthened lines of communication. Lynn Spampinato suggested the services of a lawyer, Matthew McAvoy, to conduct a confidentiality in communications training for board members.

With discussion of the recent transitions, the board decided there was a need to develop a succession plan and a plan for intermediate support/interim management for unexpected situations. Jay Breines also suggested that he would like to see SABIS include regular updates through the Director's Report at each monthly meeting. Cynthia agreed, but would like to maintain the integrity of the Director's Report and not diminish the school director's voice, but add SABIS' voice to the report.

The board briefly discussed the possibility of pursuing a K-12 expansion amendment through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and opening a dialog with the Holyoke Public Schools. The board members decided to revisit this topic as part of a board retreat and Lynn Spampinato suggested inviting Carl Bistany, President of SABIS Educational Systems, to the discussion.

The draft SABIS contract was reviewed. Cynthia Dennis indicated she has no concerns with the new contract. Schedule A updates have been reviewed by the school's insurance broker to confirm that coverage is fully in place and will remain so in coming years. In terms of the original language in the contract there is a potential conflict of interest because the lawyer originally crafted the contract when working for SABIS' lawyer. Cynthia requested to engage an outside attorney. The board members agreed that they will find a lawyer who understands Charter School law to review the contract before agreeing to sign it.

Cynthia Dennis moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mark Lubold. The meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Lubold, Clerk
Holyoke Community Charter School Board of Trustees
As prepared by Elizabeth Pawlowski

MEETING ATTACHMENTS

SABIS self-evaluation

Board evaluation template