

**FOLK ARTS-CULTURAL TREASURES CHARTER SCHOOL
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

1023 Callowhill Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123
Wednesday, November 18, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Via Zoom Meeting (Zoom Invitation posted on website)

MINUTES

Present: Pooja Agarwal, Heather Davis-Jones, Xu Lin, Tim Matheney, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

Board Members Absent: Kenzo Sung

Staff Present: David Brown, Pheng Lim, Ellen Somekawa

Public Present: Pratima Agrawal, Thierry Saintine

- I. Call to Order:** Selina Morales
- II. Introduction of Prospective Board Member, Thierry Saintine**
Introduction of Others Present
- III. Honor our Elders Activity** Selina Morales
Share about an elder you would like to honor tonight: go around
- IV. Executive Director's Report** Ellen Somekawa
- Principal's Report** Pheng Lim
- Qigong Movement Class started for all students, K-8; it emphasizes wellness practices of breathing and movement
 - Career Day: over 20 people are joining to share with Middle Schoolers
 - Family Literacy Night had 95 participants, higher than anticipated
 - ELD Family Night is next Wednesday
 - National Association of Asian American Professionals donated hand sanitizer to FACTS. FACTS will share with local child cares.

[Thierry Saintine departed the meeting]

V. Discussion of School Reopening

The Ad Hoc Committee met. Since that time, conditions in the Philadelphia area have shifted considerably, for the worse.

Information and Perspectives Gathered

Student Achievement and Attendance Data

Pheng Lim

Discussion:

- Attendance Data: Number of students who have missed two or more days per month is a more useful piece of data than % attending. This is a good working definition of problematic attendance.
- What kind of intervention is planned for those students who are regressing?

- FACTS is offering targeted support through small group instruction. “What I Need” Sessions are happening three days per week. Different approaches including building relationships, social/emotional support, as well as academic supports.
 - FACTS is also emphasizing accountability. We are basing grades on the data that we have, for example, for students who are not submitting work. This is also teaching a necessary life skill of accountability.
- Is there a big difference between conducting the DRAs in person versus remotely? Is there something we need to be adjusting with the next round of testing?
 - We are still learning. An example is one student being tested who could not be heard. Also distractions when students are in a daycare or Access Center. We are not sure how to address this problem; we are learning as we go. Also, students are getting more used to using online forms.

Teacher Perspectives

Tim Matheney

- Board members met with seven K-3 teachers, including general ed as well as ELD, SPED, and interventionists and also got some feedback from an online survey.
- Key Themes:
 - Positives:
 - Effectiveness of using small groups. able to connect with students and monitor students more closely
 - Even virtually it’s been possible to build community. Morning Meetings have worked fairly well. Students are still excited about seeing their teachers and each other. Many were excited about a red shirt day
 - Progress Monitoring: Virtual world has forced us to be more deliberate and this has led to stronger efforts at systematic monitoring of progress
 - Challenges:
 - Teaching writing is hard but teachers are trying different approaches.
 - Individual tech issues, also environment challenges. Imagine the challenges of explaining to an English Learner about how to use Zoom remotely.
 - Students who were vulnerable before March are more vulnerable today. This is also reinforced through the data, e.g. in one class, none of the 14 on level students are EL or SPED. And teachers are mindful of that.
 - The schedule. The schedule when you’re all virtual and trying to stay ambitious is challenging. Pheng told the group that she is thinking of possibilities of tweaking the schedule.
 - Summary:
 - What Tim has heard from FACTS is consistent to what he’s hearing from others.
 - Impressed by teachers. The conversation could have gone negative, but it was a positive conversation. Staff did not

hold back on challenges but were solutions-oriented. We have a lot of work to do; we will be in virtual learning for the foreseeable future.

- Teachers were concerned about the consistency of the schedule (different schedules on different days of the week).
- Social skills concerns: students online have been exhibiting less control and less maturity. There will likely be a need to rebuild social skills when we return to the school building.
 - That is developmentally appropriate given the stress students are under.
- Encouraging to hear of the supports that students have gotten from their caregivers.
- Impressive participation in Family Literacy Night.

Parent Perspectives

Parents Present

- Every day it gets better. Fourth grader is excited about writing and published her first piece. First grader is maturing, every day is getting better. It feels like school. Pleased with what my children are getting in virtual learning
- First grader has a positive attitude. At the beginning it was rocky. Parent was more stressed than the student. The student is more comfortable now and is able to navigate to classes. Making progress in reading and writing. Four days a week at a daycare. Has connected with their teacher and is excited to see her.
- Don't know much about what is going on with the fourth grader. She has made a lot of Flipgrid stories. Loves writing and is producing a lot of little books. First grader is loving reading and is reading a lot. He is sneaking in reading when he is not supposed to be reading. Enjoying school more than expected. The long days seem too long.
- My kids are happy at school. Had an issue with my child watching Youtube during class. Parts of their personalities are coming out. I can see them growing. For both students, emotions are big; when something small goes wrong, it brings on tears.

City and County Data

Ellen Somekawa

Discussion: Perspectives on Returning to the Building

- Knowing what we know now, if the building were ready, we might have opened in September and would be shutting down now. We should be preparing now to bring students in during whatever windows are possible for bringing students back. If things improve dramatically in the spring, we should be prepared to go back using our hybrid model. We should not give up on the idea of going to the building.
- It was hard at the beginning of the year, but now things are getting into a rhythm. If I were told now I had to go back to work, it would be challenging. It is a transition for staff and students and families to get into a new routine. If the spread of Covid remains severe and we aren't talking about returning to the school until the spring, we should look at if it's worth the disruption to return to the building if we only have x weeks left.

- We heard from some of the teachers that they want to shift the schedule around. Wanting longer class periods, with content. The centerpiece of the current schedule is to create space to be present with each other; it was not created to maximize 100% remote learning. We may be spending the year holding space for the ideal of being in person in exchange for being able to deliver a more excellent online curriculum. If we are going to be online for the remainder of the year, what is the best way to do this for teachers and students?
- We have to think of both scenarios; either bringing back students for in person learning but also figure out how to build robust online learning. My bias is that students learn best face to face with their teachers. Want to hold this as what we strive for, especially in the youngest grades.
- I come at this personally: five colleagues have contracted covid, one is on life support. This is a real threat. In-person learning is best for children, but we need to balance safety and academics.
- Has the school looked at the ventilation system?
 - If we don't know if masks on inside would provide protection if there isn't enough air flow.
 - Only a third of the SDP schools have adequate airflow.
 - What does define a safe space for people to be in?
- Would the Board consider returning to school while Philadelphia County is at a substantial level of community spread (using the PDE and DOH measure)?

Communication:

- The world may change a lot in the next several months. We have to watch the data carefully. It is important to bring students back. We need to communicate to parents, to plan for virtual learning until at least January 19 or whichever date we decide on.
- We want to aim for clear concise communication with as much advance notice as possible. It will create stress if going back and forth between announcements that we're opening/not opening.
- Communication is also important with students. We should have open communication with students.

Agreement and Next Steps

1. Admin will continue to work quickly and diligently to prepare for reopening the building.
2. Communicate the following to staff and parents:

“The City of Philadelphia has now moved into the category of ‘substantial level of community transmission of Covid-19’ for the third straight week.

The FACTS Board of Trustees has decided that FACTS will remain 100% remote until at least February 16, 2021. We urge FACTS community members to be cautious in their holiday travels and holiday gatherings.

FACTS will send more information about a future opening date in early January. We will review a variety of metrics provided by City and state education and health authorities and will also consider school readiness before making a decision on reopening. Please remember that, as a

charter school, FACTS makes its own decisions and is not governed by decisions of the School District of Philadelphia.

When we do return to the school for in-person teaching and learning, we will be using the FACTS hybrid plan, with students learning remotely 4 days per week and coming into school one day per week (either a Wednesday or a Thursday). All families will have the option to remain 100% online”

VI. Approval of the Minutes

1. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of October 21, 2020.

Moved: Neeta Patel

Seconded: Heather Davis-Jones

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Heather Davis-Jones, Xu Lin, Tim Matheney, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan

Abstain: Allaire Wohlgemuth

VII. Finance Report

Finance Committee Report

Neeta Patel

FACTS is in good shape as far as cash flow, expenditures, and revenues. The Audit Committee will be meeting next month.

Approval of the October Financial Statements

David Brown

2. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves the October 31, 2020 Financial Statements

Moved: Pooja Agarwal

Seconded: Heather Davis-Jones

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Heather Davis-Jones, Xu Lin, Tim Matheney, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

VIII. Committee Reports

- Development Committee

Alan/Allaire

Revisiting end of year fundraising. Meeting the first Thursday of the month at 4 pm.

Reminder to turn in your pledge form. Email your commitment to Ellen.

- Nominations Committee

Selina/Heather

The Nominations Committee recommends that the Board appoint Thierry Saintine to the Board of Trustees. Thierry’s Curricula Vitae has been circulated to the board.

3. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves appointing Thierry Saintine to the Board of Trustees.

Moved: Allaire Wohlgemuth

Seconded: Heather Davis-Jones

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Heather Davis-Jones, Xu Lin, Tim Matheney, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

IX. Other Action Items

4. BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School approves contracting with Innovageous for the provision of IT and networking support services in an amount not to exceed \$21,000.

Moved: Neeta Patel

Seconded: Allaire Wohlgemuth

Voted Yes: Pooja Agarwal, Heather Davis-Jones, Xu Lin, Tim Matheney, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth

X. Adjournment

Moved: Heather Davis-Jones

Seconded: Neeta Patel

Voted to Adjourn: Pooja Agarwal, Heather Davis-Jones, Xu Lin, Tim Matheney, Selina Morales, Neeta Patel, Alan Phan, Allaire Wohlgemuth