

HAMMOND URBAN ACADEMY, INC.
School Board Meeting Minutes Noted

February 19, 2014

In Attendance:

Board Members:

Kris Sakelaris (Board President)
Sheldon Cutler (Board Member)
Owana Miller (Board Member)
Heather Cook (Board Member)
Jerry Gomez (Board Member)
Janet Venecz (Board Member)
Tom Dabertin (Board Member)

School Representatives

Dr. Sean Egan (School Leader)
Mahdee Iqbal (Business Mangager)
LaTysha Sanders (Vice Business Manager)
Mira Projovic (Staff Member)
Bill Hutton

Not in Attendance:

Mark McLaughlin (Board Member)
Dave Ryan (Board Member)
Howard Cohen (Board Member)
Kris Kantar (Board Member)
Rick Calinski (Board Member)
Kevin Smith (Attorney)

Board meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m by Board president Kris Sakelaris.

Motions Approved by School Board

- *Motion to approve January 22nd, 2014 meeting minutes-* Sheldon Cutler motioned; seconded by Janet Venecz. All in favor motion approved 7-0.
- *Motion to approve finance report-* Tom Dabertin motioned; seconded by Sheldon Cutler. All in favor motion approved 7-0.
- *Motion to approve teacher contracts for Josh Grawlewski and Jessica Walker-* Tom Dabertin motioned; seconded by Sheldon Cutler. All in favor motion approved 7-0.
- *Motion to adjourn meeting-* Sheldon Cutler motioned; seconded by Tom Dabertin. All in favor motion approved 7-0.

New Correspondence

- *None*

School Leader Report

HAST Board Meeting

3/19/14

Human Capital Management

- Key staff duties: James Borom (discipline and state compliance reports for DOE), Business Manager: Mahdee Iqbal (budget, purchasing, payroll, accounting reports, grant reimbursement), Mark Sienicki (technology infrastructure maintenance and support), Traci Davis (Students with special needs), Eric Arcella (Athletics), Leslie Otero (student registration, transcripts, enrollment and withdrawal), LaTysa Sanders (student fees, supplies, PowerSchool progress reports and report cards), Gloria Valdez (student attendance, front office support)
- Weekly/daily collaborative team planning time for grade level teams

Instructional Leadership

- Meetings with PATH, Parent Team, Senior Planning Committee
- Use of software programs for student-based academic interventions, with focus on Middle School ISTEP and High School ECA requirements (Study Island and IXL)
- Response to Intervention program instituted across all grades, providing daily 20–30 minute periods devoted to ELA and Math at all performance levels (remedial, general, accelerated)
- Direct supervision of staff development organization and implementation, including off-site PD selections for staff
- Indiana Department of Education reporting requirements for Focus/Priority Schools timeline
 - Analyze school data (NWEA, ISTEP, ECA)
 - Identify Primary Areas for Improvement (minimum 3)
 - Math and ELA, middle school grades
 - Algebra ECA, grade 10
 - 2/14: Student Achievement Plan (submitted)
 - 3/14: Public Hearing (Board meeting) regarding SAP
 - 4/14: Submit public hearing notice to IDOE
 - 4/14: Ensure Strong Leadership notification to IDOE
- Dual Credit and master schedule planning for 2014–15
- Meeting with PUC Dean and Provost
- African American History in the classrooms
 - Literature selections in ELA
 - Diversity studies in GS
 - African American rising stars: looking to the future
 - Inventors and scientists in history
 - Sociology: urban studies, literature, and film

Building Relationships

- Regular email communication with HAST stakeholders
- Partnerships: PUC (teacher mentoring, curriculum design/implementation/retooling, dual credit program, student teachers and observers), Ivy Tech(dual credit PLTW), Jewish Federation of Northwest Indiana (adult tutor volunteers for students with learning needs); ICHE grant with PUC, Ivy Tech, Hammond, Hobart, Crown Point, Merrillville, East Chicago schools to review college readiness at the high school level; multi-year DOE grant with PUC for Science Education (SUNRISE: Students using New and Real Life Initiatives in Science Education) in collaboration with Challenger Learning Center of NWI, BP Amoco, Bishop Noll, Charter School of the Dunes, Neighbors New Vistas, and Thea Bowman, JUMP mentor program (The Caring Corner), After School Dance program (Hammond Arts Center)

Culture of Achievement

- Effective discipline program based on respect for all
- Effective use of Friday afternoon detention and lunch detentions
- Balance of high expectations and support for struggling learners
- **College admissions rate: 84% of anticipated graduates (2 and 4 year institutions)**
- **Anticipated graduation rate >90% Class of 2014 (93%)**
- **\$962,000 in scholarships for 2014 Seniors, not including College Bound and 21st Century Scholars programs**

Organizational, Operational, and Resource Management

- Multi-year strategic plan needed to address financial, curriculum, staffing, and facility needs
 - Bond refinancing (2015)
 - Second floor science lab completion
 - Stipends for all extracurricular sponsors, athletic and academic
 - Learning portfolio for students
 - Curriculum for digital citizenship
- **Air Quality Testing completed in gym and the school building**

State Reporting update

Real Time Report: The collection of the Real Time data is to obtain and maintain information that accurately determine where a student is enrolled and attending classes. (Submitted Weekly) RT reports are submitted every Thursday.

STN Report: general student demographic information, submitted monthly (Accuracy of this data is key for testing and state reporting purposes)

NWEA Report: Student information for BSU testing purposes, submitted quarterly

Membership Report: Students who attend our school, used for Average Daily Membership (ADM) to determine student tuition payment from State DOE to HAST, submitted twice a year

Title I Report: Students receiving Title I services (for designated at-risk students), submitted yearly

Enrollment: 541, March 17, 2014; 546, February 17, 2014

Discussion Notes

- The board met in an executive session at 3pm with all current board members present, Tom Dabertin arrived late. Subject matter included pending litigation in personnel matters.
- Dr. Egan asked the contracts for Josh Gralewski (7th grade Global Studies) and Jessica Walker (6th grade Science) be approved.
- Dr. Egan introduced and thoroughly explained the Student Achievement Plan the school created as a requirement for our School Improvement Plan, which the DOE has instructed us to have as a school receiving a D or F letter grade.
- Kris Sakaleris appointed Dave Ryan and Mark McLaughlin to begin the vetting process for finding new Board Members at large.
- Kris Sakaleris and Dave Ryan will be continuing their yearly visits with the staff by coming on March 28th during PD. This year will be slightly different. They will place a box in the office where faculty and staff can put in their questions anonymously for Kris and Dave to answer publicly.

Board Financial Inquires

- Sheldon Cutler inquired on the following:
 - \$1,500 in Stipends, up 285%. Mahdee Iqbal explained that we have 1 student who is home bound and we are required to provide instruction at home. 1 teacher visits daily for 2-3 hours.
 - \$1,400 in Substitute Teachers, up 121.4%. This covers the Spanish teacher, the 6th grade Science teacher and the 7th grade Global Studies teacher .
 - \$6,153.47 in Unemployment Compensation, up 277.8%. Mahdee Iqbal has changed where this cost has been placed in the report. He wasn't sure where this cost was showing previously. We had several claims last year but none so far this year.
 - \$1,980 in Grass, Tree & Snow Removal, up 1000%. This was due to the abundance of snow in the last 2 months.
 - 7,851.1% increase in Other Facilities & Utilities Expenses. Mahdee Iqbal explained this was repair work for plumbing, the gym scoreboard and the backflow pipe in the gym. Last year they spent \$75 total. This year we are close to \$6,000 but that is for the entire year.
 - 1,437.5% increase in Printing. Mahdee Iqbal has moved all printing expenses to one category on the report. Previously repairs to the copy machines were listed elsewhere and he is now combining all printing costs.
- Mahdee Iqbal explained that our cost cutting methods have resulted in an almost \$5,000 savings in our NIPSCO bill alone. He and Dr. Egan have been working with vendors and the staff to cut expenses wherever possible. There is no more color printing and paper/cleaning supplies have been limited. He says our 6-month projections at this point are showing us as \$6,000 ahead of where we should be. This barring any new and unexpected bills.

New Business

Public Comment

- Mrs. Linda Randolph, our region supervisor from the DOE assigned to our school in regards to the School Improvement Plan the State is requiring we implement, spent the entire day at HAST observing various classrooms and meeting with several teachers and administrators. Mrs. Randolph said she had a most delightful day and found the climate and culture at HAST to be very positive. She couldn't share her full report (she has to forward that to her boss first) but she is looking forward to great things happening at the school in the future. She was very impressed with all that she saw.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

The email Mrs. Gray sent to the staff & school board accusing HAST and its teachers of a lack of participation in Black History Month not only angered me but, as one of her daughter's teachers, insulted me personally as well.

Last semester I taught Government here at HAST. This semester I teach Economics. Regardless of what class, month, day or hour it is, I teach equality, tolerance, civil rights and civil liberty. These are the underlying standards that I incorporate into all of my lessons. And I use countless examples of inequalities & the mistreatments of the past as resources.

Last semester alone we covered:

- The road to equality for African-Americans from the beginning of suffrage in 1800, to the Emancipation Proclamation, to the 14th amendment, through the Jim Crow Laws, to the formation of the NAACP to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Students watched videos on:
 - the effect Uncle Tom's Cabin had on black & white society
 - Little Rock Nine
 - Formation of the SCLC
 - MLK's March on Washington
 - Rosa Parks & the Montgomery Bus Boycott
- They read:
 - Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet"
 - MLK's "I Have a Dream"
 - Zora Neal Hurston's article on school segregation
- They analyzed the following court cases:
 - *Dred Scott v. Sanford*
 - *Plessy v. Ferguson*
 - *Brown v. Board of Education*
 - *Regents of California v. Bakke*
- Students analyzed photos taken during the protests in Birmingham, AL
- They watched a week long Documentary "Freedom Riders"
- I also organized an extra credit field trip to the U of Chicago for a panel discussion "From Birmingham to Barrack".

As a teacher, I refuse to be shamed or bullied into "Black History Month". I have a teaching degree as well as a history degree and I am more than capable of creating effective curriculum for my students. I teach Black history all the time. To save it for February and February alone is a slap in the face to the black community, my current students and especially those who have suffered in the past.

Displays that are carted out every February 1st and then taken down at the stroke of midnight Feb 28th, are not honoring black history. I'm sure there are some schools that need to do this. I assume they're doing so because that's the only time they're going to teach the subject. I along with my fellow colleagues teach Black History as well as tolerance and diversity daily. Just look into our classrooms and hallways. Or better yet ask our students. I compare Black History Month to Valentine's Day. If you need a man-made holiday to remind you of something you should already do (like tell your significant other that you love them) than I guess they serve a good purpose. Thankfully in our case we don't need reminders. HAST doesn't need reminders. We do what's right everyday.

I have been on the HAST School Board over two years. Each year Mrs Gray comes before the School Board voicing her outrage with the school's lack of observance of Black History Month. HAST, nor the School City of Hammond, has a designated celebration for Black History Month. There are no school wide assemblies or displays related to any observances or holidays. If a teacher or student or club, wish to acknowledge a holiday or observance they organize the observance and enroll those who wish to participate.

From the Office for Equity and Diversity website I found the following monthly observances:

January

Diversity in the Workforce Month

Crime Stopper Month

National Blood donor Month

February

Black History Month

American Heart Month

March

National Women's History Month

Irish American Heritage Month

Greek American Heritage Month

American Red Cross Month

April

Holocaust Remembrance Month

Celebrate Diversity Month

National Autism Awareness Month

May

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

Judaism American Heritage Month

National Cancer Research Month

June

Gay & Lesbian Pride Month

Caribbean American Heritage Month

National Safety Month

July

Celebrate Freedom Month

Mental Illness Awareness Month

August

Equal Opportunity Month

National Immunization Awareness Month

September

Hispanic Heritage Month
Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
National Preparedness Month

October

German American Heritage Month
Italian American Heritage Month
Polish American Heritage Month
Filipino American History Month
National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

November

National American Indian Heritage Month
Alaska Native Heritage Month
National Alzheimer's Disease Month

December

World AIDS Awareness Month
National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month

These are just a few of the observances celebrated in one way or another in our country, state, city or home. Each one of these observances touches each and every one of us in one way or another. Most of us choose to celebrate or acknowledge these observances in our own way.

As an American of German descent, with a husband of Hungarian descent whose family came through Ellis Island, a Puerto Rican son-in-law, German/Puerto Rican grandchildren, children with an African American stepmother and a gay cousin, I can speak to the celebration of diversity in my own family.

While Mrs Gray's pride in her heritage is commendable, I do believe her attempt to bully the School Board and threaten us with communication to Ball State is a disgrace.

As a Councilwoman for the City of Hammond, I am all over the city.

The only events I've seen Mrs Gray attend are public meetings where she again attempts to bully to get her way – to the point that she was escorted out of a meeting by the Hammond Police. Never once have I heard Mrs Gray utter a compliment - Thank you to the City of Hammond for College Bound – Thank you to the teachers for their dedication - Thank you to HAST for the outstanding education my child is receiving.

Our city and schools and country, for that matter, are diverse. Most of us coexist with one another in a respectful and dignified way. I was told that our teachers and students at HAST

say it best: “We don’t have to take one day or one month to celebrate specific peoples, because we do it every day at HAST, through our curriculum and our environment of respect, dignity and value of all individuals”.

We ARE being the change.

Janet Venecz