

**Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School**

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, February 9th, 2022, 7pm

- Location:** HCCPS and Zoom
- Present:** In-person: Kate Saccento, Matt Dube, Sara Schieffelin, Kathleen Szegda, Kate Ewall, Daniel Klatz, Lara Ramsey, Tala Elia, Emily Boddy, Chris Korczak, Rashida Krigger,  
By Zoom: Marguerite Durant, Rich Senecal, Kathleen Hulton
- Regrets:** Joe Wyman
- Facilitator:** Kathleen S.
- Notetaker:** Sara
- Guests:** By Zoom: Anne Schlereth, Mary Price, Tiffany Ross, Elena Ten-Kate, Deb Ross, Anne Schlereth, Caitlin Browne, Emilie Woodward, Gina Wyman, Helen Korczak, James Boddy, Jeff Dan, Kerri Simonelli, Jodi Shaw, Nicole Grinaski, Melissa Flanders, Rebecca Belcher Timme, Patti, Dawn Graichen Moore, Stephanie and Jack Mattrey, Meredith Morrison, Zoe Klatz, Missie Casinghino, Polly Norman, Patti Mars-Senecal, Andrea Hermans, Andrew Sirulnik, Tamara Kupfer  
In person: Lily Newman
- List keeper:** Lara
- Timekeeper:** Matt
- Mission statement read by:** Chris

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Action (if necessary)</b>
<b>Announcements, appreciations, acknowledgements</b>	Shared agreements were reviewed. Acknowledgments/gratitude for Mary and Kate S for contact tracing efforts. All staff were acknowledged for what they've been going through this year and thanked for all they have been doing for our students.	
<b>Any Thank You Notes Needed?</b>	None noted	
<b>BOT Visibility This Month?</b>	Nothing mentioned	
<b>Minutes</b>	A few spelling/grammatical errors were corrected; the year on the footer was changed from 2021 to 2022	Sara motioned to approve the January meeting minutes as amended; Matt seconded; the Board approved the January

		meeting minutes as amended by consensus.
<b>Public Comment</b>	<p>Stephanie Mattry made a statement about supporting removing masks at school. Jack Mattry shared a statement regarding the detrimental effects of masking and its impact on children's mental health. James Boddy appreciated what Stephanie and Jack said. He supports following DECE/MA governor guidance to drop the mask mandate on Feb. 28th. He spoke about England where there has never been a mask mandate for children under 12. He wondered how we can support the community in feeling safe moving forward without masks?</p> <p>Letters were read (see letters in final packet) as submitted by David Boddy, grandparent of a Hilltown student, and Katherine Boddy, aunt of a Hilltown student. Both supported ending the mask mandate. Another email, which was not read but will be included in the meeting packet, expressing the opinion that there needs to be a plan for an off-ramp for masking.</p> <p>Jodi Shaw made a comment strongly urging unmasking for a variety of reasons.</p> <p>Tiffany Ross asked for a mask-optional approach at Hilltown. Deb Moran Ross, Hilltown Grandmother, expressed her opinion that masking is detrimental to students' wellbeing. Elena, a Green's student, shared a statement about the discomfort of wearing masks and wanting to see her friend's faces.</p>	
<b>Long Range Plan Update: (Update + Discussion) LRP Team</b>	<p>Surveys have gone out to teachers/staff and parents. LRP asked BOT to share their vision of the next 5 years for the school (see questions/prompts in LRP minutes included in BOT meeting packet).</p> <p>Suggestion to look at the leadership structure which was recently changed- is it the right plan now and the right plan moving forward?</p> <p>Reminder about discussion from BOT's summer retreat regarding LRP. Topics identified included: size of school; grade-level organization; statements of principles; how long the plan should be; how we are supporting the JEDI initiative moving forward.</p> <p>Comment made about the need for community building and rebuilding due to issues that have fractured the community because of COVID.</p> <p>Reminder was made that facility, school size, grade configuration were the focus of past two LRPs.</p> <p>Comment from Lara, as Director of Teaching and</p>	

	<p>Learning, that with new focus on equity, how do we offer equity to all students through research-based core curriculum initiatives and also continue to offer arts integration—are these endeavors mutually exclusive for financial reasons? Question about if these research based initiatives are about “teaching to the test” or if they really demonstrate equity in outcomes. Lara answered that the research shows that focus on core curriculum does increase equity.</p> <p>Question about if the mission of the school is lost if we lose focus on arts integrated curriculum? Response that we don’t have to choose—we could continue to do both if we think creatively (for example, suggestion made that we could have a committee that focuses on increasing arts opportunities with volunteers) –and if we change focus/priorities there needs to be a clear message to the community about the direction we are taking so people are not surprised/caught off guard and feel like something is being taken away. Comment that burden is falling on the teachers to do all of this—offer arts integration and teach with equitable practice—and this is a lot. Response that teachers have always done everything, and that they now have more resources. Comment that this school is not representative of the communities we serve—we don’t serve economically diverse students– and that this is wrong. Assertion that we need a representative population from the towns we pull from. Comment that there are historical and financial reasons that we haven’t prioritized this in the past and it is time to take a new approach. Questions about the reasons we don’t have a diverse/representative student body?</p> <p>Transportation? Lack of summer programming that would let the community know about the school? Lack of appropriate advertising/outreach? Question about if there have been improvements in diversity since moving from Haydenville to Easthampton and offering bussing in Easthampton. Answer is not really—most recent data is that we are at ½ percent of Easthampton and less than ½ percent of Northampton with regards to economic diversity. Comment that school doesn’t seem to be advertised well compared to other charter schools. Comment that people that live in communities with good schools don’t seek out other schools because they don’t need an alternative. Comment about people who have lower socio-economic status don’t always know there are other options, are not told about them, and don’t have the resources (time, money, energy) to seek out alternatives. Comment that there is another layer</p>	
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	<p>beyond advertising that we need to look into. Question about if we need to revisit how our lottery works? Answer that the lottery is regulated by the legislature, and thus the school can't make changes to how it works. Comment that priorities are generally measured by money, and that we do not currently spend money on increasing diversity to reflect our community.</p> <p>Regarding committee priorities: comment that GABS is working with JEDI on how to increase access to and diversify the BOT; is looking at the role of non-parent community members and how to make BOT involvement attractive to them.</p> <p>Conversation about structure of school leadership: Does the current structure make sense? Or does it make more sense to have a single principle-type figure at the top? Comment that the school has grown, so there is more work, and is the current structure sustainable given the work-load? Question about when growth happened. Answer that it started 7 years ago with adding more students and the school reached maximum capacity (218 students) 5 years ago.</p> <p>Conversation about configuration of BOT: Comment that 3-year terms is a big commitment for volunteers. Comment that 3 years seems like not enough in terms of getting members up to speed, developing group cohesion, maintaining institutional knowledge, and planning for successful succession, and that one-year membership is disruptive. Comment that BOT president and VP supervise school leadership, and that this is a lot of work. Administrators have new supervisors every year or two, who are two volunteers who are never in the school and are the bosses of the directors. Is this fair to the leadership? Comment that 3 year terms are important for sustainability and could we look for more flexibility at subsequent terms (shorter, perhaps). Question about what it looks like when/if there are less hands-on presidents/vice-presidents, and if the administration would get the support they need? Comment about the level of tension in the school in general due to COVID, and this has made being a school leader and BOT president and vice president more demanding than it has been in the past. Comment that job as a leader is to nurture your employees, and for the boss to not be on-site is a loss.</p> <p>Comment that at other charter schools, often the</p>	
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	<p>executive director is supervised by BOT, and the executive director supervises the rest of the employees. Alternatively, some schools hire a leadership coach. Lara commented that having a coach this year has been immensely helpful to her, and expressed appreciation for the investment the school has made in that.</p> <p>Conversation about barriers/obstacles to priorities: comments included money, volunteer time, volunteer use. response that money has never been an issue, and that it is more about attitudes toward changes and choices. Agreement that money is there.</p> <p>Comment that we need to look at the refrain “this is how we’ve always done it.” Comment that we need to bring that message to the community that we are changing priorities, as people sometimes feel like they miss the boat when changes happen without their knowledge, don’t want things taken away, and don’t understand the value of the alternatives.</p> <p>Comment that we could look for more volunteers.</p> <p>Questions/comments about reaching out to community members who can engage by being on the BOT and in other ways. Comment about the importance fostering more community ties.</p> <p>Appreciation expressed to the LRP team for attending the meeting and for all their work.</p>	
<p><b>Health + Safety Update: (Update) H+S Team</b></p>	<p>Update that 91% of the school community is vaccinated and all staff are vaccinated, and more students are expected to be vaccinated in the coming weeks. At home testing option for staff and families is starting. School is continuing with pool testing. No positive pool tests this week. 2 positive COVID cases in the school community identified outside of pool testing. Mask mandate, as announced by the Commissioner today, dropped on state level starting Feb. 28th. The H and S team met yesterday so has not had a chance to discuss this. Update about local numbers and factors related to COVID: cases and hospitalization are declining; the school is in a highly vaccinated community; there are now medications/therapeutics available that prevent severe disease and death. Thus we have more layers in the “swiss cheese” model of mitigation strategies. Yesterday’s H and S meeting included where we were moving in terms of mitigation measures. Moving</p>	<p>H and S will continue to meet regularly.</p>

	<p>toward in-person all-school. Comment that teachers and staff need to be involved in this planning and it will be important to help kids learn to be in a large group again. Discussion about allowing parents in school again, and that from H and S perspective we could move forward with this.</p> <p>Masking was discussed and the team is optimistic we can move in that direction. H and S team will continue to make these decisions in real time based on up-to-date research and data. Comment that there is nuance about what DESE recommended which needs to be looked at and discussed, with input from staff and administrators. Mary Price shared information from the DESE webinar she attended today (see copy of slides in packet) and shared that recommendation from DESE is for <i>less</i> masking, not <i>no</i> masking. For example, masking continues to be recommended when kids are coming back from having COVID, on buses (this is a federal mandate), for unvaccinated individuals, and for other respiratory illnesses such as a cold. Clarification that schools are now decision-makers with regards to masking policy.</p> <p>Questions about how many families and staff signed up for the home testing program. Answer is 120 students signed up, some aren't eligible yet because of the 90-day waiting period post-COVID infection but many of these students/families likely will sign up after the waiting period. Almost all staff have signed up for the home testing program.</p> <p>Question about silent lunch policy and if that will continue. Answer is it will be looked at when masking policy is looked at. Question about the rationale behind silent lunch policy. Answer that the highest risk of transmission is when masks are off and people are in close contact and speaking and this information is based on research/studies.</p> <p>Question about if there are good studies about transmission rates between vaccinated vs unvaccinated children. Answer is that a deep dive into research would have to be done before answering this.</p> <p>Comment about general vaccine efficacy, and that people are 30-70% less likely to acquire COVID if vaccinated.</p>	
<p><b>GABS Announcements: (Update) GABS</b></p>	<p>Update on JEDI and GABS's joint meeting, and that some JEDI members were interested in attending the next GABS meeting to help revise the application process. GABS is also looking at a check-list of procedures that people will follow in order to join the BOT to make the process more uniform and</p>	

	stream-lined. GABS asked BOT members to reach out with anything that would have been helpful to them in terms of processes or knowledge when joining the BOT.	
<b>Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion (JEDI): (Update + Discussion) JEDI Group</b>	JEDI update is that committee met with GABS last week.	
<b>Site Visit: (Update) Kate + Lara</b>	Site visit from DESE is happening March 8th. BOT members are invited to a focus group with DESE on Monday March 7 sometime before noon. If there is a quorum, it would need to be a public meeting. No more than 10 participants are requested at the meeting.	Kate will send an email to BOT members to invite them to this meeting.
<b>Board Member Public Responsibilities: (Discussion) Kathleen/Matt</b>	<p>Comment about the importance of how we show up as leaders of the school and how we are perceived by the community. We need to think about how we can best support the community through our leadership.</p> <p>Comment that we are at a disadvantage due to separation from others caused by COVID. Assertion that being collaborative and positive is important. We need to communicate with each other, and offer feedback with regards to how we present and are perceived as leaders. Comment that BOT members are employees of the state just as teachers are employees of school, and we have a responsibility to act in ways that support the school community. Remember that we are in multiple roles (as parents and employees), and we need to keep that in mind that we are representing the school. Comment that there is a subtext going on that a few BOT members are not aware of. Context provided that some members of BOT were perceived as being controversial around hot-topics in the community and this feedback came back to BOT leadership. Does the BOT need to develop some policies/guidelines around what appropriate behavior is? Suggestion that GABS could integrate this into orientation. Recognition that when you are speaking as a parent you are also a leader of the school.</p> <p>Comment that this is tricky because we are in multiple roles. Comment that when we are in the BOT meeting we are here thinking about the interest of the school, not our own interests. Comment that the more we diversity the BOT, the bigger the issue of not being one-minded will become, and the more we will run into these situations. We need to recognize that we as</p>	

	<p>BOT members have power, and this comes with responsibility. Comment that everyone needs to feel heard and respected.</p>	
<p><b>Masking Policy Waiver: (Discussion + Decision) Matt</b></p>	<p>The Commissioner announced today that effective Monday, Feb. 28th, the DESE mask requirement will be lifted, and thus the mask waiver is now obsolete. Clarification that the decision around masking policy is now local, not statewide, and is based on unique circumstances of each school/district.</p> <p>Reminder that in August the BOT made the decision that “in the absence of requirements from DESE related to masking and/or other COVID health &amp; safety protocols, or in case of conflicting recommendations, the Board empowers the Health and Safety Committee to make decisions.” (from Aug. 2021 BOT meeting minutes) Clarification that H and S make recommendations to the administration, and that administration always takes the recommendation. Question about what the BOT is deciding on in this discussion? Discussion about if H and S should make the decision regarding masking policy or if BOT should. Recommendation that BOT should as it places undue pressure on H and S. Concerns about it coming back to the BOT is the timing of it (will be delayed if we have to wait for the next BOT meeting). Response that BOT can meet again sooner so the decision would not have to be as delayed.</p> <p>From H and S perspective it has always been a when, not if masking would be made optional.</p> <p>Comment that logistical and operational factors need to be considered when determining Hilltown’s masking policy. Comment that staff should be a part of the process in planning and that it is important to have all stake-holders involved. Comment that the end result of this process will be unmaking, and we need to do it thoughtfully. Comment that H and S should make a recommendation and that the implementation of these recommendations be considered by the wider community who have valued input on how to best operationalize the recommendations.</p> <p>Emily read a statement (included in BOT packet) in support of making masking optional as of Feb. 28th. Assertion made that most BOT members are not experts in the medical or public health field, and that we should continue to rely on the H and S team—which includes medical and public health professionals— as agreed on in the Aug meeting, to make the best decision for Hilltown.</p> <p>Question to the H and S team about what kind of</p>	<p>H and S will bring recommendations around masking to a special BOT meeting on Feb. 16 at 6:30 and requests that the BOT make a decision about masking policy based on those recommendations.</p>



	<p>support/input they would like from the BOT tonight? Point made that this is more than just about COVID/health and there are larger social/political issues at play in this conversation which would make this a BOT decision. Comment BOT needs to weigh-in and take leadership–this would be a good sign to the community that we are listening and we are strong leaders.</p> <p>Point made that decisions needs to be based on science and data. Science is continually changing. Concern about how H and S can address all claims that people make regarding masking (some are not based in science) if we have an open forum-type meeting? Would H and S have to look up every study to respond to every claim? This would be very time-consuming and not a good use of H and S’s time. Reminder there is nuance in DESE’s recommendation for mask optional (for example, that unvaccinated children continue to wear their masks at school.) Comment that H and S know most about the medical side, and mental health concerns arising from COVID are well-known. Comment that social-emotional concerns are perhaps not being taken into account as much, and suggestion made that we add a mental health professional to H and S. Response that social emotional health has been part of the conversation–looking at the science includes looking at the social/emotional impact. Comment that masking was not arbitrary and was for physical and mental health reasons: for example masking is also for protection of caretakers, and there is a huge social/emotional/mental health toll of losing a caregiver.</p> <p>Comment that decisions need to be science-based, and implementation of policy should be led by admin and staff.</p> <p>Reminder that everything takes longer at Hilltown due to the consensus model, which includes hearing everyone’s voices.</p> <p>Comment that it is important for the community to know the decision/have the information before February break.</p> <p>Comment that BOT should to meet again soon.</p> <p>Suggestion made that BOT meets again in a week, and that we make sure staff voices are included in conversation. H and S will reconvene in the meantime to discuss recommendations.</p> <p>Proposal made to meet next Wednesday at 7:30 to discuss further and make a decision then. This will give space for more people to have input.</p>	
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	<p>Clarification/discussion about if H and S are bringing recommendations to the next meeting in order for BOT to create a proposal.</p> <p>Agreement reached that H and S will bring recommendations around masking to a special BOT meeting on Feb. 16 at 6:30 and that H and S committee request that the BOT make a decision about masking policy based on those recommendations.</p>	
<p><b>Personnel Proposal: (Discussion + Decision) Personnel Committee</b></p>	<p>Personnel offered a proposal (see text in packet).  Question about the financial impact of this proposal.  Question about increasing pay for all interns, not just those who have been at Hilltown as TAs, and concerns raised that there might be two interns paid at different rates and this would not be fair. Question about if there is a different job description between TA and interns. Answer that yes, there is a difference.  Concern that interns should not be paid different rates.  It was agreed that further discussion is needed so the proposal will be revisited at the next personnel meeting and revised proposal will be brought back to BOT in March.</p>	<p>Further discussion is needed so the proposal is sent back to personnel for revision and will be brought back to BOT in March.</p>
<p><b>Q2 Finances: (Update) Kate</b></p>	<p>Kate reviewed Q2 financials (see Q2 financial information in packet). Kate reports the finance committee has approved the report.</p>	<p>Matt motioned to approve the Q2 financial report as submitted; Kathleen S seconded; Q2 financial report approved as submitted by consensus.</p>
<p><b>Committee Reports -- Questions Only</b></p>	<p>none</p>	
<p><b>New Business</b></p>	<p>Mask policy</p>	
<p><b>Meeting Wrap-Up/ Evaluation</b></p>	<p>Next Meetings: (special meeting) Wednesday Feb. 16 at 6:30p.m. in person and on Zoom; Wednesday March 9th, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in-person and on Zoom  Facilitator: Matt.  Snacks: XX  Drinks: XX  Newsletter blurb: Lara</p>	

<b>Review Action Items</b>	Reviewed action items.	
<b>Adjournment</b>	Meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.	Tala motioned to adjourn; Kate E. seconded; the meeting was adjourned.

**Agenda Topic for Feb. 16th, 2022 Board Meeting: mask policy**

**Tentative Agenda Topic for the March 9th Board Meeting: revisit Personnel proposal**