

**Thomas Edison Charter Schools
Governing Board Meeting
November 4, 2015**

5:30 pm

In attendance: Tirzah Anderson, Holly Gunther, Emma Bullock, Danae Pruden, Adam Burris

Absent: Nick Jackson

Welcome/Conducting: Tirzah Anderson

Pledge of Allegiance: Danae Pruden

Charter Highlight - Holly Gunther: Parents are encouraged to come to the school and take an active role in their student's education.

Adoption of Agenda:

Motion to adopt agenda as written: Tirzah Anderson

Second: Danae Pruden

Unanimous

Public Comment:

Jamie Lewis read a written message from Nathan Cureton. He thanked the governing board and the administration. He appreciates the purchase of the new mobile labs. He is also grateful the teach 5, prep 2 structure of the middle school. It helps teachers be more effective and promotes student success.

Rory Anderson, Edison North kindergarten teacher. She has been teaching a parent Spalding class. It has been so fun to see the parents learn what the students are being taught and realize how the Spalding method incorporates many aspects of essential learning for their children.

Angela Barton is the data specialist. She will attend governing board meetings, and offered her services to the board.

Approval of Minutes: Tabled minutes from October and September.

Achievement Report - Scott/Melani:

Scott Jackson:

- Scott presented the reports for monthly testing at both schools. Emma would like to discuss more about what the numbers mean.
- The schools are working out the issues with the interim. One problem is getting the students to take it seriously. Teachers are learning about the testing.
- There have been huge gains in the figures for the third graders taking keyboarding. Third and sixth grade are now doing good, but Scott is concerned about fourth and fifth. Summer keyboarding classes were held at both schools last summer.

Jim Peterson asked if Spalding had made any changes with how they want teachers to teach in regard to multisensory. Melani replied that the philosophy will stay the same. Teachers spend a great deal of time with multisensory paper and pencil daily.

Tirzah asked about the opt out rates. Melani let the board know that some opt out because of their student's high anxiety about testing. More this year are opting out because they are upset about us administering the interim. They came here because of our philosophy of testing.

Cynthia Mikesell, parent and special education aide, is very concerned about the interim testing. It goes against why she chose TECS. She doesn't want teachers to start teaching to the test instead of doing their jobs. Her own children typically do well on end of year testing. With this interim, she had a child say they thought they were dumb.

Shem Smith - These are the same questions given on the end of the year test and students get immediate feedback. It was not clarified that they haven't been taught this yet this year. Melani added that since this is a new experience we are learning. Students will be given clear directions in the spring.

Tirzah asked if SAGE at this point is one of the most detailed measures we have to help in assessing content knowledge.

Angela Barton, parent, teacher and data specialist, stated that both SMI and SAGE show growth, but SAGE gives categories.

As a parent, Cynthia hopes that there would be more of an emphasis on instruction time in the classroom. If one test is better than the others, then decrease some of the other testing.

Adam, as a board member is concerned about outcomes. He doesn't mind dropping tests, but wants to see overall growth in multiple areas.

Jim, along with Nathan Cureton, expressed some concerns in the last board meeting about SAGE being treated as the end all, be all of tests. There may not really be gaps in existing instruction. It may be a timing issue, where the teachers teach the concept in the spring, but it is tested in the fall. He sees that SAGE is the mechanism that is driving the board on school philosophy and overall curriculum. Everyone is focused on SAGE setting the standard of excellence, when another group might come up with another test that might show that students are testing really well. The schools have seen that with DIBELS and the old Iowa test. Students here have historically tested really well.

When the board looks at it, they are saying, "Why didn't the school do so well"? SAGE has different standards than other tests such as SAT, etc. You can pick your own test and say that it will be your standard, but the state is saying that this will be the standard. In this high stakes situation, the school says they have to be like everyone else and jump on the bandwagon and teach to that standard. It is a philosophical question that we can ask ourselves, especially when parents express concerns about how much testing we are really doing and how much of the assessment we should be using to get that perception out in the community that we were the best tested. The state has decided how things are to be tested and what the standards of excellence are. That is one way of creating a situation where everyone becomes close to the same.

Tirzah expressed the importance of triangulation. You take qualitative measures and class assessments. Emma said you have to establish at a school something that help determine whether or not it is meeting the mission and vision. That can be a variety of things, but as some point we have to establish what it is. Sometimes it hasn't been particularly clear. As a board we are wanting to understand what our measure of excellence is, to hold ourselves to a standard that is shown through multiple measures so we can be accountable to parents, taxpayers and to the mission and vision. Whether it is SAGE or another test or something else. Maybe we need to stop taking some of them. Emma thinks there has been a little bit of a gap in having certain types of knowledge to helping us make important decisions on whether we are meeting our mission and vision.

Cynthia agrees with parts of what the board is saying, but is concerned that if the school becomes a test results school, they are not fulfilling the mission and why she and other parents came to the school. She remembers Eldon telling her that testing is a measurement we use to guide instruction. In the weeks taken up by testing, opportunities to teach are lost. She feels the instruction time would benefit the students and is concerned about amount of instruction time taken away to do testing. She feels like the board is changing what she felt was a fundamental philosophy of TECS.

Adam stated that the term philosophy is a little ambiguous. Different people think the philosophy is different things. Cynthia replied that it is spelled out in the parent handbook. Adam said that the handbook lays out the mission. Something may be tradition, but not be in the charter. The charter lays out the vision, the mission and the purpose of the school. There is a strategic plan that has quantitative and qualitative data. The board wants to see success in qualitative and quantitative data. The board sets the outcomes with the administration and parents. How that is achieved is determined by the administration. Whether or not interim testing is done, Adam trusts the decisions of the administration to achieve the necessary outcomes. He is concerned with the pushback on the board because we want to see greater measures of excellence.

Jim thinks what he is hearing expressed here, is the concern being raised, not only by parents, but also teachers. Nathan, last month mentioned SAGE is driving some changes in the school curriculum. There is a perception that the school philosophy is also changing and SAGE is driving the changes. A comment was made that the board trusts the administrators to make necessary changes.

Jim believes the administration is responding to some strong urging by the board to make changes in order to improve SAGE scores. That is very clear that it is going on. Administrators are not making changes in a bubble. They are being pushed to do so. There is a question of how many changes the school should make in order to get the A letter grade that the legislature has established.

This is a philosophical question which has been discussed in years past. The comment has been made that the school will do some things to increase scores, but how much will exterior forces be allowed to drive the changes. The question is, "Who are we?" Are we a school that is driven by SAGE and reacts to SAGE. There is recognition that the world is changing and technology is becoming more important. The schools responds to that, but how much should it allow high stakes testing control what the school does?

Emma invited anyone with concerns to come to the next achievement committee to see what is being done. At this point she is not aware of any changes to curriculum. New date is being studied. SAGE and other date are being reviewed.

Tirzah spoke for the board in expressing the opinion that none of them thinks that SAGE is most important or end all, be all, measure. They feel there is an excellent curriculum, excellent teachers and great students. All of the time and energy that is spent should be able to show up on some measure.

Michelle Yost - former TECS teacher and parent, expressed frustration at the testing. Spalding, Saxon and all curriculum TECS uses have built in assessments. The board seems to want more. Tests should not be used in that way. Tests are a snapshot. You never know what is going on with that students that day. Tests are imperfect. Teachers have tons of assessment tools. Her concern with the tests is that it is another time sucker. Here to ask you as a board to keep that in mind when you continue to ask for different things to test. In theory it sounds awesome, but tests take precious academic time.

Cynthia added that curriculum will have to change if an additional week is taken out of for testing.

Budget Contingency Percentage Goal - Adam Burris: Jim estimated the goal as 4.4% for Edison North and 5.5% for Edison South. The overall goal is 5.2%.

Motion to approve the goals of 4.4% for Edison North and 5.5% for Edison South with an overall goal of 5.2% : Adam Burris

Second: Emma Bullock

Unanimous

Participation at Boundary High Schools Policy - Tirzah Anderson:

Motion to approve the policy as written: Adam Burris

Second: Holly Gunther

Unanimous

Personnel Requests - Melani/Scott:

Melani has many new referrals for special education. She would like to start the hiring process for another special education aide.

Vendor/Contractor Approvals - Scott/Melani:

None

Finance Report - Jim Peterson: The budgets show the latest figures, but there are still some updates that will occur. For example, the USOE generally updates their revenue rated between now and the end of the year. Medical insurance costs are still estimates. The hiring of an additional special education teacher will also impact it.

Principal Reports - Melani/Scott:

Melani Kirk:

- The school is trying to reach out to the community. The mayor brought pizza to have lunch with two students who won a city competition. It was exciting to have him here.
- A nurses group performed a service project by putting on a class for parents.
- For the first time, we have a middle school student teacher. Their supervisor visited to arrange it and was very impressed with the school.
- CVTD held a hearing to talk about charging a fare for services. It would affect about 30 Edison South students. The vote is on the 18th.

Shem Smith:

- The sound system in the gym had to be updated.
- One last report needs to be approved in UCA. Everything else approved.
- Board members need to clock in volunteer hours.

Subcommittee Reports - Tirzah/Adam/Emma:

Tirzah Anderson:

- Tirzah's committee is looking at potential board members for an election later in year. Stakeholder surveys will be sent out in January.
- They are still working on policies.

Adam Burris:

- Adam asked if anything was done for Sunny Tuft's time on the board.
- Nick is spearheading looking into advisors for the 401k.

- They are purchasing the land next to the school and an appraisal is being done.
- A cursory review of internal controls was completed. Everything looks good.
- The audit is back and it was clean.

Emma Bullock:

- The last achievement committee meeting was spent looking at science scores. It was interesting to hear the teachers' perspective. At this time there are no measures for science except SAGE, with the exception of Explore for 9th graders.

Board Training Objectives - Tirzah Anderson:

Tirzah listed the training objectives and read from a Brian Carpenter article. She mentioned the legal and financial responsibilities of governing boards and highlighted the duty of loyalty, duty of care and duty of obedience.

Emma Bullock left.

Most boards fail to evaluate their own performance.

Motion to adjourn: Tirzah Anderson

Adjourn