



**Elm City Montessori School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
5 April 2018**

Attendees: Mira Debs, Fernando Muniz, Rise Nelson, Keith Krolak, Susan Clark Julia Webb, Eliza Halsey. David Low and ECMS Consultant John Freeman joined by phone. Jose Cuapio, an ECMS parent, attended the meeting.

Meeting was called to order at 5:38 pm. Rise Nelson was welcomed to the Board of Trustees.

**I. November Meeting Minutes**

- 1) The board voted to approve the March meeting minutes.

**II. Public Comment**

- 1) The Board President requested, moving forward, that Public Comment be added to the board meeting agenda. Anyone from the general public who attends the board meeting will have the opportunity to comment early in the monthly board meeting.
- 2) The board voted to approve the addition of Public Comment to the agenda.

**III. Consultant Report: John Freeman**

- 1) John Freeman, who has been involved in the founding and operations of three other public Montessori schools in Connecticut, has been acting as advisor and consultant to ECMS since school year 2016-2017.
- 2) Mr. Freeman presented via phone call, an evaluation of ECMS school leadership based on the *Marzano School Leadership Evaluation Model*.
- 3) Mr. Freeman reported that ECMS leadership is successfully meeting the Marzano criteria and that he has every confidence in the current leadership and future success of ECMS.

**IV. Principal Updates**

- 1) School Improvement Plan data for March 2018 was presented.
  - a) Stronger Community
    - i) Staff attendance remains at 87% with a goal of 93%
    - ii) Student chronic absenteeism was 15%. This exceeds the 20% goal.
    - iii) Recommendations for more family engagement, student attendance initiatives, and anti-racism work were outlined.
  - b) Safe and Productive Classrooms
    - i) Weekly removals from classrooms decreased to 25 per week.
    - ii) The ECMS goal for March was fewer than 25 removals per week.
    - iii) The ECMS goal for June is fewer than 20 removals per week.
    - iv) Recommendations for Conscious Discipline Implementation were outlined.
  - c) Academic Growth
    - i) March data shows the recent reading scores for the entire ECMS student population are currently short of year end goals, but students continue to make considerable progress since the beginning of the current school year.
    - ii) Students at the higher elementary levels are increasingly accessing their other learning curriculums, because of their advancements in reading and comprehension.
    - iii) Recommendations for elementary level improvement:
      - (1) Writing curriculum, instruction and assessment
      - (2) Elementary pacing
    - iv) Recommendations for primary level improvement: Planning and pacing revision

## V. Executive Director Updates

- 1) Finances/Fundraising
  - a) Average monthly expenses as of February 2018 were \$70,274.55 which is higher than the previous \$63,000 monthly average. Monthly expenditures for February 2018 totaled \$97,812.
  - b) Cash flow is currently \$193,870 on hand.
  - c) ECMS continues to receive quarterly payments from the State of Connecticut on schedule. The fourth quarterly partial payment of \$109,500 was received on March 28<sup>th</sup>. We are expecting an additional \$33,000 for FY18
  - d) Receiving payments on schedule from the City of New Haven continues to be a challenge. A payment due in January 2018 was received on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. The third quarterly payment, scheduled for March per the MOU, has not been received.
  - e) The Principal and Executive Director met with New Haven Public Schools Chief Operating Officer, Will Clark, and his team in March to discuss updated financials/budget details. Will requested that ECMS take a voluntary reduction in FY18 to help NHPS close its current deficit. The ECMS Board approved a voluntary reduction of \$143,374 in in-kind funding via email on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
  - f) ECMS received a small grant of \$800 from ARTE to provide after school enrichment programming for the remainder of this school year.
  - g) ECMS will participate again in the Great Give online fundraising campaign on May 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. We are asking ECMS board members to serve as peer fundraisers, setting individual targets for new donors and money raised. Executive Director will share further details in the coming week.
  - h) ECMS audit report has been completed and will be reviewed and discussed at the May board meeting.
- 2) Student Recruitment
  - a) School Choice and Enrollment reported receiving 528 New Haven applications for ECMS. Open Choice reported 106 applications for ECMS as of March 28<sup>th</sup> (Open Choice application deadline is April 11<sup>th</sup>.)
- 3) Partnership
  - a) Anti-bias, Anti-Racism work: An "Undoing Racism" training hosted by our community partners is scheduled for April 13-15, 2018 at the Yale Divinity School. ECMS Board President will attend the ABAR session at Yale in mid-April
    - i) ECMS will host its second Undoing Racism training for the ECMS community in late May/early June. As soon as dates are finalized, they will be shared with the Board. ECMS Board members are encouraged to attend.
  - b) May 7<sup>th</sup> Staff Professional Learning:
    - i) Kia Levey and Genevive Walker (ConnCAT COO), both Community Leadership Program leaders will facilitate our session on staff exploring race and identity and how it impacts their educational practice.
  - c) New Haven Public Schools:
    - i) Executive Director connected with Dr. Birks via email, but has not yet secured a meeting date to discuss school growth and the move to Blake St.; she aims to meet with Dr. Birks in the next two weeks
    - ii) Executive Director and Director of Operations, Che Dawson, met with Mayor Harp to gauge her support for ECMS's growth/charter renewal; Mayor Harp supports ECMS as part of the district portfolio and recommended that ECMS leadership meet with NHPS Budget Adviser Darrell Hill to discuss the implications of the Blake St. move on the budget

## VI. Committee Updates

- 1) Governance
  - a) Board members Fernando Muniz, Susan Clark, David Low, and Keith Krolak attended PCLB training sessions in March and early April. They shared the following take-aways from the trainings:
    - i) The importance of clarity and efficiency in board meetings and board goal-setting
    - ii) There were common themes and challenges expressed by the charter schools represented at the trainings
    - iii) Having a dashboard of school indicators would be helpful, particularly for new board members
    - iv) The trainings offered valuable, relevant scenarios on a range of topics including when to conduct business in executive session vs. the full board, how to manage public participation, etc

- v) Having a matrix that outlines the diversity of the board (skills, expertise, demographics) would be helpful
- 2) Capital Planning
- a) Capital Planning Next Steps timeline is on schedule with the exception of the meeting with the new Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools. The meeting with Superintendent Birks previously scheduled for March was postponed. The Executive Director is attempting to reschedule the meeting in April. ECMS is seeking support from the Superintendent prior to implementing plans to move ECMS to the Blake Street property by July 2018.
  - b) Discussion took place regarding the potential for ECMS to independently manage a move to Blake Street without the direct payment of rent from the district. Board requested financial scenarios/contingency plan options for ECMS to sign the lease without a third party rent payment agreement from the district.
  - c) The board recommended that ECMS should engage the Superintendent prior to making decisions on independent actions by ECMS to move the school. Key messages include:
    - i) Lack of space for adequate student population growth and the need for more expansive facilities.
    - ii) Shortage of adequate potential buildings available in New Haven for an ECMS move
  - d) The Board agreed to make a final decision about whether to pursue the Blake St. move by May 1 via conference call (date/time to be determined), so that families have information about our location prior to accepting seats by the May 4th NHPS deadline.
- 3) Board Development
- a) There continues to be an active search for new board members – especially those with experience in fundraising.

#### **VII. Action Items**

- 1) The board voted to approve the Finance Committee's proposed resolution: If ECMS is applying for a grant within the budget that is in line within the school programming, the Board of Trustees does not need to approve the grant proposal in advance of submission, unless required to do so by the grantor.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM

End of Meeting Minutes