



March 14, 2018
Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 4:30p.m.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: John Hanafee, Chair (arrived at 4:37p.m.), Ally Jakubicka, Vice Chair, G'anna Burke, Secretary, Sarah Sullivan, Rhoda Cortez, Becky Page, Tavia Pagan, Kim Crawford, Anh Nguyen (arrived at 4:55p.m.)

Board Members Absent: Joanne Ahola

Guests: Amala Easton, Caleb Buckley, Barbara Ames, Susan Gutierrez, Michelle Campbell, Rasa Nasr, Amber Cobb, Joey Chico, Rob Beltran, Brian Cary, Amire Hodgkinson, Matthew Hammond, Sarah Chase, Effrat Gubezskis, Jennifer Simmons, Yukiko Hagy.

Flag Salute/Quote/Moment of Silence – Caleb Buckley read the gentleness Virtue card.

Public Comment

Michelle Campbell thanked the board for hearing the community's comments. She requests that the BOT agendize oversight of firings at the Orchard campus.

Matthew Hammond read a letter.

Jennifer Simmons read a letter.

Efrat Gubezskis since Nov parents have brought concerns about Orchard. Nothing has been done yet. When will you look into hiring and firing the principal? There is something unhealthy and off balance in the community. This has gone on too long.

Sarah Chase read a letter.

John Hanafee read a letter from Jennifer Hoover.

Approval of the Minutes

The Board voted to approve the *February 14, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes*. (Ayes: 7, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

Approval of the Minutes

The Board voted to approve the *March 5, 2018 Special Meeting Minutes*. (Ayes: 6 Noes: 0, Abstain: 1, Allyson Jakubicka)

March 14, 2018

2018/19 School Calendar

The Board voted to approve the 2018/19 School Calendar with the following amendments: Nov 26-30 will be conference week. November 3, Festival of Light (River), Feb 9 Story Orchard (Orchard), (Ayes: 8, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

Second Interim Budget (Orchard)

The Board voted to approve the second interim budget for Golden Valley Orchard. (Ayes: 8, Noes: 0, Abstain: 1, Anh Nguyen)

Second Interim Budget (River)

The Board voted to approve the second interim budget for Golden Valley River. (Ayes: 9, Noes: 0, Abstain: 0)

Policy Discussion

The Board reviewed the *Code of Conduct Policy* and the *Grievance Policy*.

Code of Conduct: remove "please"

Grievance Policy: Clarify when the "conflict resolution committee" is formed; change "governing body" to Board. Need to revise the policy.

Student Behavior Policy will be agendized in May.

Reports

Executive Director: The Executive Director presented items of interest to the board.

Finance Report: There were one time funds available to Orchard. Caleb has worked with a parent on some upgrades for the 7/8 grade area on the blacktop. Last year at River we used one time funds on furniture at River.

Board Chair: The Board Chair presented items of interest to the board. Thanks to Rhoda and Anh for their help in the ED Evaluation.

Orchard Faculty Chair: The Faculty Chair presented items of interest to the board. It is play season at Orchard. They are getting ready for their spring concert.

River Faculty Chair: The Faculty Chair presented items of interest to the board. Teachers loved having time on Monday to do conferences. Festival Committee is meeting and still deciding how May Day will work. Eighth graders are learning the dance and ribbons have been ordered.

Community Reports

CCSA – No report



Golden Valley Charter Schools
Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
6550 Filbert Avenue
Orangevale, CA 95662

March 14, 2018

GVEF – Is scheduling a mixer to selectively recruit new members.

Closed Session

The Board went into closed session to review the leaderships' annual employee evaluations, according to government code 54957.

Closed Session

The Board went into closed session to consider the Executive Director's annual employee evaluations, according to government code 54957.

Recitation of the Motto of the Social Ethic

The healing social life is found
When in the mirror of each human soul
The whole community finds its reflection,
And when, in the community,
The virtue of each one is living.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Receive the children in reverence, educate them in love, and send them forth in freedom. - *Rudolf Steiner*

How do we thrive as both a school founded on the principles of Waldorf education as developed by Rudolf Steiner AND as a center of cultural renewal? What type of school leadership would it take to actively promote this kind of thriving atmosphere?

There is an old adage that goes something like this: "You get what you focus on." If your primary focus as an Administrative Leader is attendance, cutting down on tardies, micro-managing independent parent volunteer groups, and day-to-day operations then you are going to get a very limited and petty result that pales in comparison to the beauty and grandeur that is waiting around the corner for a leadership that fully understands and LIVES what a fully functioning Waldorf school brings to the community.

Nearly every family in the Golden Valley community that made the effort to interview and apply for their child's admission into the charter school was attracted on a certain level to the reputation of the child-centered, developmentally appropriate approach that Waldorf education is renowned for. We have world-class teachers here who devote their hearts, minds, and souls to the nurturing and growth of our children. I am a teacher and consider myself a very caring and effective educator -- but I worship at the altar of Waldorf teachers -- their level of devotion and regard for our students is unsurpassed in the wide world of education. We have incredible families and adult individuals among those student families who put blood, sweat, and tears into their volunteering for this school. And it's not because these parents have nothing better to do. It's because they love this community and want to support the teachers and staff in helping our school be a living, breathing entity - a vibrant community of individuals whose trajectory is as limitless as their souls.

Can we say the same thing about our Administrator? Can we in good conscience wax rhapsodic about how the Principal of Orchard inspires us as families to want to more deeply engage in the time-proven principles of Waldorf education and forge a vital congruency between our home life and our children's school experience?

You see, I feel this way when I walk into Mrs. Cortez's room or Ms. Sullivan's room (River teachers too). Many of the parents I have spoken to say that when

they enter these classrooms they feel an instant sense of belonging to something deeper that somehow frees them (for the moment) to be the best (unhurried) version of themselves. And that's what it feels like as an adult with all of the lovely baggage we've gathered along the way. Imagine what it's like for our children who are far less world-wearied and have these heroic teachers who are the daytime guardians of their innocence and endless possibility?

Now, you may be tempted to say, it's not the role of the Principal to inspire others in the community and be the exemplar of Waldorf principles. But isn't that precisely the role of leadership?

Don't take my word for it. I would like to quote from one of the premiere centers on the east coast for Waldorf training -- Sunbridge.

"The future of Waldorf education and the possibility that Waldorf schools can be transformative organizations rests both on the capacity of teachers to continue their good work out of a real creative impulse connected to anthroposophy and the capacity of administrative staff to do the same."

The past 20 years has seen a renaissance in the way we think about and train Waldorf Administrators and Leaders. In fact, at Antioch University of New England they have a specific training program called: Waldorf Administration and Leadership Training. It looks like a wonderful program and I was delighted to see Caleb Buckley's name on the list of Mentors for their program.

Marti Stewart, one of the shining lights in the world of Waldorf Administration says that she believes in the profound importance of administrative work in creating and maintaining health in our schools. "In the same way as the teacher guards and respects the unique gifts each child brings to the class community, it is the task of the administrative staff to honor and nurture the gifts of everyone in the adult community."

Christopher Schaefer Ph.D. -- Partnerships of Hope: Building Waldorf School Communities.

The schools with strong governance are also well disciplined when it comes to reviewing their work. They have processes in place for ongoing review of events, activities, decisions and mandates. **The social life and trust that is built up among community members life pays great dividends here.**

Those who are feeling concern know that they can express their perceptions candidly, and rest assured that the human connections built up over time will help them weather the discomfort of temporary disagreements about what is best for the school and its students.

The schools with successful governance have built into their very structure the collaborative approach that Steiner insisted was essential in building a unified center. Collaboration is emphasized everywhere.

Schools with good governance are recognizable by the broad level of happiness that exists with the form of its governance and with the individuals serving in various leadership roles.

3 years ago, the Orchard conducted an interesting experiment. It hired a Principal with no Waldorf experience whatsoever. After 3 years, this experiment has more than run its course.

I strongly urge you to assert your leadership – both the board of trustees and Caleb – and allow Orchard to move on during this current hiring season and hire an Administrator who is the equal of the amazing teachers we have here and is a proponent and ambassador for the deep values of Waldorf education.

From: jennifer simmons [REDACTED]
Subject: Letter of parental concern
Date: Mar 14, 2018 at 4:16:11 PM
To: Bot@gvcharter.org

March 14, 2018

To the Board of Trustees,

My name is Jennifer Simmons and I have 2 children at the Orchard School, both currently in first grade. I am here this afternoon to verbalize some of my concerns regarding the care provided to our children at the school. During our two years at this school, I have been confused by, what appears to be, a lack of any formal standard for student discipline. In my own review of the Golden Valley Charter School Student Behavior Policy, there are clearly outlined steps for "Due Process" "that may be taken prior to a recommendation for expulsion." What is unclear however, is whether these "steps" are meant to be followed in addressing all or any behavioral concerns. In speaking with multiple different families at the Orchard School site, we have found a consistent lack of parental contact and involvement in being alerted to student behaviors. Step 1 of the written Due Process is specified as a "phone call to parent." I, personally, have spent a considerable amount of time on the campus, both in my children's classroom and outside of it. The school appears to address problematic behaviors from students by first sending the student to a different classroom. I have witnessed students trading classroom assignments once sent out of their own rooms (so they are "picking" where to spend their "discipline" time) and have watched as students are sent to spend time in the first grade classroom, which adds to what is already a challenging and over stimulating environment. I have been unable to find any written explanation of this technique within the school documents.

While I have addressed my concerns regarding the specific culture and behaviors within the first grade classroom with the teacher, I have chosen not to bring any concerns to Mr. Baker. Unfortunately, I have heard from a number of other families who attempted to approach Mr. Baker with concerns in the past, and subsequently felt their lines of communication were cut off and they were no longer welcomed into their child's classroom. I did not hear this from only one or two families, but from multiple individuals. As I have real concerns with my own children's experiences at the school, I have been unwilling to risk my own access to my children and their teacher by approaching Mr. Baker.

Overall, I have witnessed a general disregard for student outbursts, including aggressive and defiant behaviors. Many students display a general disrespect for

authority from their teachers, the aids, and other adults on campus that is also often not addressed. The Waldorf approach to education does not encompass these attitudes. I have found myself questioning whether my children can receive the kind of education I was expecting from this school. I would like to request that the board further review, and possibly clarify, our school's Discipline Policy, along with what support our teachers can reasonably expect from their administration in attempting to impliment that policy.

Jennifer Simmons and Marc Olsen

From:
To:
Subject:
Date:

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: Sarah Chase <@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 8:54:32 PM
To: G'anna Burke
Subject: letter to the board

Members of the Board,

I felt it necessary to share my experiences as Parent Circle Chair (Nov 2016 - Feb 2018) and as a parent at the Golden Valley Orchard School due to the negative atmosphere we are experiencing at our school. I stepped down as PC Chair for many different reasons which concluded with how Mr. Baker dealt with the situation in the 2nd grade class. The following are incidents that lead to my decision to ultimately stepping away before the school year was out.

Mr. Baker required that I send the agenda to him every month which was not a problem in and of itself until he started editing the agenda and asking me to take out information.

2016-2017 school year I was often denied requests for PC, whether that was a room for a meeting, being able to facilitate the country store or a crafters co-op. This was very frustrating. I initially thought it was the office staff giving me a hard time but later found out they were directly instructed by Mr. Baker to deny all of PC's requests.

At the start of the 2017-2018 school year, I met with Mr. Baker monthly to discuss PC and upcoming events. As we were trying to fill positions within PC, such as teacher luncheon coordinator and country store leader, I was told directly by Mr. Baker that certain parents were not allowed to hold positions within PC. He gave me the names of these people "in confidence" and I had to look further for help.

When the office staff was being replaced I was approached by Mr. Baker and was asked directly "to have his back with this situation". He expressed to me that it was not because of him that the two ladies had left.

After the office staff was gone I was called in for a meeting with him and asked Anne Smith, my co-chair, to attend with me. When I arrived Paula Watson was also there to join us. I can't remember the exact topic of this meeting but I do remember that he said one or two things and let us go. It was a total waste of time for everyone there and it could have been addressed with a quick email.

I had requested a meeting to discuss the the turnover that the school has been experiencing since the end of the last school year. Anne joined me for the meeting and Paula also attended. It was very odd to me that Paula was all of a sudden starting to pop up at our meetings.

There were some tensions between the festival committee at the River School and our school. They felt that we weren't contributing our fair share to the festival and that we didn't have enough volunteers participating. They attempted to contact me as PC chair to help get volunteers to participate in the committee. I later found out from Sarah (festival committee chair), that she was told by Mr. Baker not to contact me directly and to send all communications through the office in order to reach me. She was also denied the opportunity to come to speak at the PC meetings by Mr. Baker.

As a parent, my kindergartener at the time and I were having issues with Mrs. Geoffroy. When I approached Mr. Baker about these issues, his response was to meet with Mrs. Geoffroy and try to work things out. I felt this was an acceptable first step. I did that and did not get what I felt we needed from that meeting. The situation did not improve in the classroom. When I went back to him, he pretty much told me it wasn't his job to fix the problems we were experiencing and that we needed to work on those issues with the teacher. We ended up moving my son into first grade prematurely because of this situation. There were also many other families who had similar issues or worse with this teacher who ended up either moving to the other campus or leaving our school. When I brought this up to Mr. Baker again this year when I was resigning from PC his attitude was the same. He feels like it is not his job to fix problems that are occurring between the teachers and the families. This has been detrimental for many families at our school.

Eowyn Cole was present when I met with Mr. Baker to tell him why I was leaving PC. He sat at the end of the table and Eowyn was across from me. She lead the meeting and asked all of the questions. Mr. Baker just responded to the answers that I gave. Eowyn was pretty direct and "grilled" me, for lack of a better term. It felt like an exit interview for a job. She kept asking me pretty much the same question over and over until I gave specific information as to why I was stepping away.

Lastly, for a principal and leader of our school to stand up in a room full of parents and tell them, "If you think that it is so bad then you should take your children out of the school and this is a school of choice", is utterly disgusting. The parents were already in distress because they felt that their concerns were not being addressed and their children were being mistreated. The tone was that of deflecting blame and placing it on the parents.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and taking into consideration all that I have experienced as a parent and as PC chair. I feel like these items noted paint a picture of the leadership of our school and to why we are experiencing such negativity within our community.

With gratitude,

Sarah Chase

E-mail correspondence with the Golden Valley Charter Schools for Educational Renewal or GVCS (and attachments, if any) may be subject to the California Public Records Act, and as such may therefore be subject to public disclosure unless otherwise exempt under the Act.

Dear members of the GVCS Board of Trustees,

My name is Jennifer Hoover. I am the Assessment Coordinator and Educational Support Specialist, and more importantly, a parent of a fifth-grade student at Golden Valley Orchard. There has been a lot of grumbling recently about what Mr. Baker has been unsuccessful at in the eyes of a few disgruntled individuals. I feel that I can no longer sit by and watch Mr. Baker take hit after hit without showcasing what is going well and the improvements that have been made at our school.

I have had a very pleasant relationship with our school principal. He is dedicated to improving our academic scores while staying true to our pedagogy. He has gone to great lengths to collaborate with staff, making sure to hear all sides. I do however, realize that as our administrator he is put in the position to make decisions when collaboration is not an option. Mr. Baker has found funding for and implemented programs and trainings that our staff have felt were vital to improving our educational experience. Examples of this are sending teachers to Making Math Real trainings, numerous professional conferences, trainings on classroom management, and implementing the iLearn math intervention program for the upper grades.

As a parent of a child that utilizes a 504 plan I have had the support of our principal. He has stepped in when the plan wasn't being followed to the letter and ensured that the needs of my child were being met while in school. He has been flexible and easy to approach.

I choose to see the good in all people that I encounter. I hope that the board can see that a few upset individuals do not speak for all parents or staff. Like any other person, Mr. Baker is not infallible, but he has shown (at least to me) that he is willing to work to strengthen himself to make Golden Valley Orchard School the best learning experience it can be for all students that walk through its doors.

Blessings,

Jennifer Hoover