



MINUTES for the Meeting of the Gateway Public Schools Board of Trustees  
Wednesday, September 15, 2021, 5:00 -7:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

---

**Board Members Present:** Therese Arsenault, Cynthia Billops, Sapna Boze, Sara Byrne, Dan Carr, Katie Colley, Mark Felton, Sharon Gillenwater, Susan Masto, Sharon Olken, Molly Orner, Mary Plant-Thomas, Kevin Rafter, Laura Spivy, Dina To, Valerie Toler

**Board Members Excused:** Elizabeth Colen, Harper Matheson

**Board Members Not Present:** Allison Bhusri

**Also present:** Danielle Ciccarelli, Chris Hero, Chanda Lockhart, Aaron Watson, Jazzlyn Burget

**Welcome and Announcements**

The meeting was called to order at 5:03. Sharon Gillenwater welcomed Kevin Rafter as new Co-Chair. Sharon began with a land acknowledgement to recognize that Indigenous peoples are the stewards of this land and to remind ourselves of the historical and systemic oppression of Indigenous communities that has shaped this land and community and to spur ourselves to new thought and action. The San Francisco peninsula is Ohlone land.

Sharon G. welcomed everyone and celebrated that students and teachers are back in person. She acknowledged September birthdays and announced that trustee Elizabeth Colen welcomed baby Evelyn this summer. Chanda is back from maternity leave. Matters of the Mind is October 28th at 11am, with speaker Heather McGhee, economist and author. When we do move to in-person meetings, all trustees will be required to provide proof of vaccination. Please watch your email for more information.

**Approval of Minutes from May 26, 2021**

Sharon Gillenwater asked everyone to review the minutes from May 26, 2021. Mark Felton motioned to approve the minutes, and Therese Arsenault seconded the motion. The May 26, 2021 minutes were approved, unanimously, without issue.

**Public Forum**

Sharon Gillenwater opened the floor for the public forum. No further discussions or motions were introduced.

**Mission Moment**

For the Mission Moment, teachers shared what they read and were inspired by over the summer. Molly Orner read *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, which lays out that race and racism in this country is part of a caste system. The book makes comparisons to the caste system in India and with what happened in Germany during the Nazi regime. She was inspired by opportunities to draw parallels between what students are learning in class and their own experiences. Mary Plant-Thomas read *Cultivating Genius* by Gholdy Muhammad, a framework developed by literary societies made up of free African Americans and abolitionists in the 1800's. She loves how these frameworks translate beautifully into the ways we are trying to change education today. Mary is excited for opportunities for students to think more about their own identity while also learning biology. Therese Arsenault is continuing her work with *Coaching for Equity*. She worked with Zaretta Hammond on understanding culturally responsive teaching, continued work with Elena Aguilar and took a *Coaching for Equity* class where she practiced having difficult conversations that come up around equity. She also spoke about *Cultivating Genius* and the complexity of identity. The middle school staff is doing a book study of *Cultivating Genius*.

## **Trustee Conversations**

The board engaged in small group conversations about why our work at Gateway is important to trustees.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Kevin Rafter gave the floor to Sharon Olken for the ED Report. She welcomed everyone back and expressed that the first week of in-person school was a rollercoaster of emotions. The first few days were pure joy and then it got hard. We are in the midst of the stress of reentering an imperfect world where things aren't the way we want them to be for ourselves and our kids. We are imperfect too, and grappling with that is hard. Looking at the big picture, she could not be prouder of the educators at Gateway right now, when kids are truly in all different places emotionally and academically.

Before school started, the leadership team of Sharon Olken, Aaron Watson, Chris Hero and Chanda Lockhart sat down and brainstormed how all of Gateway's big projects and priorities fit together. The projects and priorities fall under the following 5 categories:

1. *Supporting Gateway's People* - at the heart of what we do
2. *School Advancement and Support* - the real work happens in the classroom and in conversations among faculty and with families.
3. *Equity Culture and Anti-Racism* - As an organization as a whole, and within groups, we are really taking up and continuing the work of building an equity culture and anti-racist practices.
4. *Educational and Community Leadership* - How Gateway fits into the larger educational community
5. *Financial Sustainability and Revenue Growth* - very important to all our goals

Sharon spoke about the work that is going on in the context of those 5 categories. She noted that the hard work that was put into last year's hiring process paid off. Although there is a serious teacher shortage across the state and country, Gateway is fully staffed. New GMS principal Jai David hit the ground running. She is visionary, thoughtful, kind and passionate. She brings a lot of great questions and new ideas. Sharon looks forward to the board meeting her.

Schools were not perfect before the pandemic and closing everything down and starting over brought real opportunity in addition to challenges. Sharon shared a [video](#) in which Bettina Love talked about what the pandemic shutdown has taught us about schools. Love was amazed that things that were said to be impossible were suddenly possible once the pandemic hit and schools were shut down. We are not going back to the way things were before because what we thought was normal was not normal. Reflecting this thinking, Gateway Middle and Gateway High developed their *Rebound and Reimagine* plans. Right now there is a convergence of need, opportunity and funding. At the heart of the plans is a deep commitment to equitable outcomes for all our students, particularly our students who have been historically marginalized and oppressed because of culture and institutions that prioritize and privilege white dominant culture, ableism and classism. We are diving into the type of work that allows us to achieve equitable outcomes and change patterns.

Sharon asked Aaron Watson to share about health and safety. Aaron reported that we are doing well in this area. Together the strategies of vaccination, testing, staying home when sick, masking indoors, and improving air quality, are keeping our community safe. We have a 100% vaccination rate for staff. Students are not currently required to be vaccinated. Aaron gave a shout out to our office managers, student support staff and school leaders for coordinating and working with Lisa Geronimo, Gateway's Health and Safety Coordinator.

City data from UCSF and the DPH is really good. Data shows kids who get COVID are getting it from unvaccinated adults and non-school social events. We have had no cases of school transmission.

## **Committee on Trustees**

Kevin gave the floor to Cynthia Billops and Valerie Toler for the Committee on Trustees report on Board Survey Results.

Valerie Toler presented a summary of the survey of trustees, including feedback on Sharon’s leadership, Gateway priorities, and how Gateway handled COVID.

Cynthia Billops reviewed the priorities of the Committee on Trustees. The priority of the priorities is recruiting more board members. There are a few open spots and the goal is to bring in members who help the board mirror the demographics of the community. We also want to look closely at where we can broaden the board’s skill set and insight. There is a toolkit for trustees to use for recruitment and the committee is available to support in the effort.

The second priority that stands out is the need to build a sense of connection among board members. Every quarter you will receive a survey that will build personal stories and aid in board members getting to know one another. This will help us recognize the diversity that is already present on the board.

**Development Update**

Kevin gave the floor to Chanda Lockhart for the Development update. There are new faces on the development team. Alexandria Wyllie, our new Community Engagement Manager will be handling the operations of our fundraising events and helping us kick off the alumni council. Hannah Herbert, a 2010 Gateway graduate, is joining us as our Development Associate. Hannah has a background in public health but made the decision to switch to development. We are excited to welcome them both.

This year’s Matters of the Mind, on Thursday October 28 at 11am PT, is a livestream on Vimeo only. Chanda thanked Katie and Reed Collie for sponsoring our keynote speaker, Heather McGee. McGee is an economist and the author of *The Sum of Us*. This year’s Community Impact Award is going to ValueAct Capital. This year’s MOTM video will show how we created connection and community during school closure and when we returned to campus, and our Fund-a Need will feature the top 5 reasons you should support gateway. The development team is looking for folks to host small gatherings in their homes for home viewing. There’s also an option for classroom viewing.

The Annual Report is in the works and will be sent out in October.

**Finance Update**

Kevin gave the floor to Chris Hero for the Finance Update. Chris gave a brief financial overview. Students are back, faculty and staff are back, and financially, we begin this fiscal year on solid footing. The incredible efforts by our entire organization to serve our students while at distance and to make the necessary preparations to welcome them back feels very rewarded. Financially, the various forms of COVID stimulus funding have had a meaningful impact in two ways. 1) The funding has allowed us to invest substantially in incremental supports and resources for our students, including all of the health and safety preparations. 2) The funding has helped reinforce our financial position. While we know our future financial projections are in a rough place currently, short-term we can breathe a bit. Because of the upside in the CA economy, our cash position is improved. Investments and board designated funds are up. Being fortified with a larger reserve balance is helpful given uncertainty in the future. Our ADA numbers are better than expected, largely due to our health and safety efforts.

The audit is underway and is more complex this year because of the federal funding we received. We will provide a report on our fiscal year financials and the results of the audit in November.

**Adjourn meeting**

Kevin thanked everyone for being at the first board meeting of the year and adjourned the meeting at 7:03.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
DocuSigned by: Susan Masto 10/25/2021  
383068B8B9F4440...  
Susan Masto, Board Secretary