

**Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting**

August 15, 2011

Present: Sasha Wilson, Martha Andrews, Ariel Behr, Robert Jain, Ed Valeriano, Greg Lobo-Jost, Roo Rogers, Cynthia Rogers, Angel Crespo, Beverly Falk

Agenda: Recent ELA and Math Testing - 1. Scores 2. Assessment work prior to tests 3. Challenges and strategies for next year, and how does this impact the school's Charter renewal?

Scores: On the recent State tests 30% of students met proficiency standards on the ELA (English Language Arts exam). 35% of students met proficiency standards in Math. This year, students needed to answer 77% of questions correctly on the ELA to meet proficiency standards, a much higher level than in the past. 55% of BxC students scored at least 70%, but still did not meet proficiency standards. Eight students were one or two questions away from meeting proficiency standards. These results were lower than those of District 10 overall

Citywide, the majority of schools are in a similar position due to this year's new higher level for meeting proficiency standards. The state administered tests are about to change again in 2014. Board member Beverly Falk is involved in this work.

Martha and Sasha plan to talk with other leaders of charter schools to learn from their "best practices."

2. Assessment: The in-house assessments had predicted a better overall performance. However, the bar for passing was different (lower) than that of the actual test. Two factors heavily influenced this difference in performance: student stamina and inexperience with testing situations. BxC is incorporating more testing situations in the earlier grades to give students more practice without turning into a "test prep factory."

Board questions and comments:

Are these tests an evaluation of a child's intelligence?

These tests matter, particularly when comparing BxC with other District schools.

Exactly how is this test prep going to happen?

Part of how BxC is evaluated is by these test results; therefore it is important to improve the scores by next year's testing.

Is there a financial resource that the co-directors need to help with test improvement?

BxC students need to know that they have a vested interest in why they are taking the tests (presently they see it as an external prompt).

Is there an "action plan" for BxC parents?

How did other Charter Schools do on this test?

Are these test results being shared with our lenders?

Should the Board should show more involvement with the education at BxC as well as

Bronx Community Charter Board Meeting
Monday, October 3, 2011

Attended: Ariel Behr, Edwin Valeriano, Greg Lobo-Jost, Sasha Wilson, Martha Andrews Beverly Falk, Cynthia Rogers

Minutes: The minutes from the last meeting were approved

Progress Report: BxC received a Grade C on its progress report. This grade was based upon weak testing results, balanced out by strong parent and staff feedback, and attendance records. This progress report is one measure of accountability, but is not part of the rechartering process.

Site Visit Report: There was very positive feedback in the site visit report, based upon a full day visit by three reviewers. The lead reviewer was someone familiar with BxC, who came for the site visits in the 2nd and 3rd year of the school. This report goes on the DoE website where it exists in the public domain.

Test Scores: The Board reviewed the Test Preparation Plan (see handout). State Tests from prior years will be used for practice (three times prior to the actual test), using the cutoffs that were used for last year's state tests. It is hoped that this year's results will better mirror the actual test in Spring 2012.

Potential Board involvement in this process:

- Beverly is recommending practice exams for BxCC to use
- There will be a report/update for the Board
- BxCC is looking for funding for a math intervention teacher; someone specifically to work with students. This would be a part time, 3 day a week position requiring approximately \$30,000 for salary. A sub-committee may be created to address this.
- Beverly will assist with the upcoming Family Meeting in late October

Staff Evaluation: The Board needs to review this document and the summary charts. This should be part of the next Board meeting's agenda.

The next meeting will be Monday, November 7, 2011, from 5-7 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rogers

**Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting
Monday, November 7, 2011**

Attended: Martha Andrews, Ariel Behr, Angel Crespo, Beverly Falk, Robert Jain, Greg Lobo-Jost, Cynthia Rogers, Ed Valeriano, Sasha Wilson

Minutes: The minutes from the 10/3/11 meeting were approved.

Updates: See handout from 11/7/11.

- **Family Events:** Over 50 families attended the meeting about testing. Parents left with a better understanding of where students are and what is being done to prep them for this year's test. 3rd and 4th graders took a practice English and Math test. (This was the actual test from 2010.) These results will be shared with parents in the November parent/teacher conferences, and shared with the Board at the December meeting.
- **Staffing:** A question was raised by the Board regarding whether novice teachers at Bronx Community move on to head teaching positions. Some do, some might do another year of mentoring under a head teacher. Beverly mentioned a system that uses three levels of teachers – novice, lead, and master
- **Site Update:** Things are on schedule. Once the foundation and shoring up work is done, then the developer will begin building above ground. We are scheduling to have the Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) by June 1st, allowing three months of leeway before September 1st when we absolutely need to have it. Nothing has been signed with a general contractor for the build out at this point. The Facilities Committee will review proposals soon.
- **Finance Update:** See PDF of the Auditor's Report. BxC had a clean audit, with no significant findings. The Auditor pointed out the following: 1. There was improved documentation for credit card expenses, which had been a critique last year; 2. Escrow account had to increase; 3. General ledger maintenance should happen monthly; 4. Financial reporting to the Board should happen on a quarterly basis. Ed will work with Luis on a Board Report for the January meeting.
- **Questions:** 1. Could BxC hire a math intervention teacher? The Board is not sure we can dedicate the funds until we move to the new space and have a sense of our financial situation at that time. 2. When is the Charter renewal? This will happen next year; the annual visits help prep for this. Prep work will start in September 2012.

Vision Discussion: Beverly Falk gave a historic overview of public education, starting with early goals for literacy and pedagogy. She also spoke of the need to move from the “factory model” system to one that recognizes the cognitive and neuroscience of learning (which would include more activities and engagement in the classroom). The current testing system harks back to the old rote systems of learning. Now, NY State is moving towards a more performance based assessment.

Mission Statement for Bronx Community Charter: Sasha Wilson and Martha Andrews shared the school's mission statement and some examples of how the vision of the school lives now and how they imagine it when the school reaches 8th grade (see attachment).

Robert Jain discussed the need for Board members to have a quick way of describing the school (the Elevator Pitch). His wife, Carola Jain, works for Interbrand and may be able to help the Board think about these issues at an upcoming meeting.

Board homework: Look at some of the slogans for other charter schools. An example for our school might be: "Private school education in a public school setting"

Goals:

- a. Distill our mission statement into a one sentence statement
- b. Create longer pitches, thinking of the audience we are communicating with (potential Board members, families, donors, current students) in order to tailor the message

The next meeting will be Monday, December 5, 2011, at 5 pm at Credit Suisse.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rogers

**Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting
December 5, 2011**

Attended: Ariel Behr, Angel Crespo, Robert Jain, Greg Lobo-Jost, Cynthia Rogers, Roo Rogers

Non-Members: Martha Andrews, Sasha Wilson, Carola Jain

Minutes: Minutes from the November 11, 2011 meeting were approved.

Communicating the Vision of BxC: Consultant, Carola Jain, led the Board in an exercise on communicating the school's vision. She used four questions to help establish the "elevator speech."

- **Who:** who is the target audience?
- **What:** what do we actually offer?
- **Why:** what were students before, and what has been the impact of education at BxCC?
- **How:** what is the actual methodology/pedagogy and proof points to support it?

The Board was asked to identify **three** things that make BxC special. The ideas generated were:

- Independent, progressive education, educator led
- Choice-making, independence and child-centered education creates multi-dimensional thinkers
- Academically successful, raising amazing thinkers, empowering children
- An independent charter school, not part of a chain
- Turning children into change agents
- The poverty of the district, at risk students
- Tie the education to the specific community of the Bronx (important to keep Bronx in the school's name)
- Fewer choices; this is one of the most overcrowded districts; only charter in the district; poorest district in the US
- Everyone is invested in the process (parents, students, teachers, administrators, Board)
- Cutting edge of what American education should be (as a young organization, BxC needs to be more aggressive about getting this message out)

Carola Jain will write up a summary of the points raised in this meeting and get that back to the Board.

Upcoming topic: In what context will the Board do this outreach? Fundraisers? Capital Campaigns?

New Business: The Board will start using Drop Box to compile documents, therefore having a central place for everyone to refer to.

There was a suggestion for a morning Board meeting to be held at Bronx Community Charter. There was a suggestion that all Board members should visit the school at least once a year (during school hours).

Year-end appeals for donations will be coming out soon. The appeal is focusing on raising money for the kitchen at the new facility.

The next Board meeting will be a phone conference at 5:00pm on January 9, 2012.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rogers

**Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting
December January 9, 2012**

Attended: Ariel Behr, Angel Crespo, Robert Jain, Greg Lobo-Jost, Roo Rogers
Non-Members: Martha Andrews, Sasha Wilson

Parent Complaint

In late December, Ariel Behr received a complaint from a parent of a second grade student who expressed that she was being followed and that people were turning against her. Prior to this complaint, the same parent has reported similar experiences to Martha and Sasha. Ariel spoke to the parent on the phone and offered to hold a meeting at the school. Cynthia Rogers has offered to participate in a meeting with the parent once it is scheduled.

Facility Update

Sasha provided an update on the status of our new school facility. Regarding the construction budget, our owner's representative has reached a "handshake" agreement with our landlord regarding the cost to build out our space. This gives the school more clarity on the development cost for the school. The development budget will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

Regarding the construction timeline, construction is behind schedule and it seems likely that it will be necessary to remain in our temporary school facilities beyond the start of the 2012-2013 school year. Sasha plans to meet with Bronx Community's landlord in the next few weeks to discuss extending the lease in the school's current facility. Although there would be logistical challenges associated with staying in the temporary facilities beyond September, we would experience a reduced facility expense and would likely exceed our projected operating surplus for fiscal year 2012-2013.

Human Resources Consultant

Ed Valeriano presented a proposal to engage a consultant to manage the annual review process for our Co-Directors. The consultant has participated in the annual review process for Ed's employer in past years. The consultant would participate in the upcoming annual review process by supplementing the annual staff survey with interviews and follow up questions from a sample of staff members. The HR Consultant will present the survey findings in a more distilled format than in prior years. The fee for these services is estimated at up to \$2,000 dollars. The board agreed to engage the consultant for the next annual review process.

The next Board meeting will be a phone conference at 5:00pm on February 6, 2012.

Respectfully submitted by Ariel Behr

Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting
February 6, 2012

Present: Ariel Behr, Greg Lobo-Jost, Beverly Falk, Ed Valeriano, Angel Crespo, Roo Rogers, Robert Jain, Cynthia Rogers, Sasha Wilson, Martha Andrews

Minutes: The minutes from December 5, 2011 and January 9, 2012 meetings were approved.

Upcoming Board Meetings: The Board meeting scheduled for Monday, April 2, 2012, will address the Board's role in finance and fundraising.

A suggestion was made to change the current schedule of meetings from Mondays to Tuesdays. Ariel will survey Board members electronically.

Board members also committed to trying to make an on-site visit to Bronx Community Charter before June. Trustees will contact Sasha or Martha to set up visits.

Updates:

- The Annual visit from the Office of Charter Schools of the DoE will be Tuesday, March 6, 2012. This will be a full day visit, and Ariel Behr will join.
- Spring Break 2012: testing is scheduled for immediately following the vacation. As a result BxC has switched dates of the actual break. Days off will be staggered. 3rd and 4th grades will do testing and then go on break. K-2nd grades will have their break first. BxC will be offering child care for families that have children in both sections of the school and can't make other arrangements. Staff will be on spring break on a staggered basis as well.
- Facilities: Work continues on the site, and it is most likely that it will not be ready in time for September 2012. BxC is renewing its lease for its current sites. New classes will be added, and space will be very tight in the fall. The push will be to occupy the new site by January 2013 at the latest, and there will be financial incentives for the general contractor to get this done.
- The current Director of Finance is resigning.
- Congratulations were expressed for the Performance Arts Night that took place at Lehman College. There was an excellent turnout of students and families. Two Board members attended, and talked about what a wonderful performance it was.
- The Board expressed thanks to Carola Jain for her input and work with the Board.
- There was a discussion about the situation of a new BxC student who has been suspended multiple times already this year.

Parent Complaints/Concerns: The Board is working on a formalized process for responding to and investigating parental complaints.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 5, 2012 at 5 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rogers

**Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting
March 5, 2012**

Attendance: Ariel Behr, Robert Jain, Roo Rogers, Sasha Wilson, Martha Andrews, Greg Lobo-Jost, Angel Crespo, Beverly Falk, Cynthia Rogers

Minutes: Minutes were approved from the February meeting.

Updates:

- Department of Education team will be visiting BxC for a full day of observations in all classrooms. They will conduct interviews with staff and will debrief at the end of their visit.
- Practice Tests and Assessment: Students are showing growth. There is the expectation of improvement over last year's figures.
- BxC is following its action plan for testing.
- Over 100 resumes have been reviewed for the position of Director of Finance
- There was a good turnout for the Family Workshop last Saturday.

Facilities: Work on the foundation of the new building is proceeding. The school is renewing its leases with both current landlords for next year. Questions were raised regarding the timetable for the projected move. There will be many logistics to figure out with a mid-year move to the new space.

Topic for the next Board meeting: The Board will explore the role of the Board in Fundraising. It is hoped that the new Director of Finance will be present at that meeting to meet the Board.

Next meeting will be on Monday, April 16, 2012, at 5 pm at BxC.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rogers

Bronx Community Charter School Updates 3/5/12

- 1) Attendance: Attendance for the month of February was 96%.
- 2) Enrollment: We had siblings in 1st and 3rd grade transfer to a new school because they moved out of the area. We replaced them immediately and continue at an enrollment of 251.
- 3) Suspensions: A 2nd grader was suspended for two days for kicking a classmate.
- 4) Assessment: The practice tests (which were taken from past year's tests and reformatted to match this year's structure) show growth from November to January for the 3rd grade. On the 3rd grade multiple choice math, 50% of students scored a 3 or 4 in January, compared to 16% in November. On the ELA for 3rd grade, 40% of students scored a 3 or 4, compared to 34% in November. While the statistics for 4th grade are not as strong as the 3rd grade, they show some growth from the state exams in the spring and they highlight a cohort of children in the approaching category. These children have been receiving intensive instruction during the test preparation work as well as additional targeted academic support. The January 4th grade practice test shows that 44% scored a 3 or 4 on the ELA (compared to 30% in the spring.) The 4th grade practice math test shows 28% receiving a 3 or 4, which is lower than the last year's actual exam results for this cohort, but is based on a May test given in January and some of the content had not yet been taught. Both the 4th grade ELA and Math practice tests show close to 20% of students receiving a high two, within a few questions of receiving a 3. We will continue to work hard to ensure that this year's results on the state tests will show growth from our first testing year.
- 5) Staffing: Luis, our Director of Finance, had his last day on February 23rd. We posted the position on Craig's List, Idealist, and the New York Times, as well as the job sites of various business schools, Teach for America alumni, and returned Peace Corps volunteers. We received about 100 responses, screened about 25 on the phone, and have arranged interviews with five. We will then have a second round and involve the Board Treasurer.

One of our 2nd grade teachers resigned unexpectedly this past week, citing health reasons. We are very fortunate that we had a wonderful student teacher in the fall whom we were hoping to hire for the coming year, and she accepted the position and was able to start right away.

Our personnel committee, made up of co-directors, teachers, and parents, has begun interviewing candidates to fill positions for next year. We anticipate having six teaching positions to fill, four because we're adding a new grade and two because of teachers who will be remaining with us but growing into new positions.

The levels of the hiring process for teachers are as follows:

- a) Candidates send resumes, meet us at job fairs, or are referred by people in our networks.
 - b) We invite promising-looking candidates to come visit for a morning to get to know the school and to be screened by us.
 - c) We schedule those we're most impressed by for interviews with the personnel committee.
 - d) After interviewing candidates, the committee invites a select few to return to teach a demonstration lesson.
 - e) The committee makes decisions and makes job offers. (The committee is technically advisory and Martha and Sasha have the power to make all final decisions, but have always agreed with the decisions of the committee.)
- 6) Family events: The Performance Arts Night, already reported on in the last updates, was February's family event.
- The family-initiated chocolate sale has been going strong, and the school will raise approximately \$10,000 this year through the sale.
- 7) Other: The Department of Education Office of Charter Schools will come to BxC for its annual site visit on Tuesday, March 7th.

**Bronx Community Charter School
Board Meeting
April 16, 2012**

Attendance: Ariel Behr, Robert Jain, Sasha Wilson, Martha Andrews, Greg Lobo-Jost, Ed Valeriano, Roo Rogers, Cynthia Rogers

Minutes: Minutes were approved from the March 5th meeting.

Updates:

- Board member Robert Jain has offered to host a future fund-raising event.
- Testing will be three days the week of April 16th (ELA), and three days the week of April 23rd (Math)
- Board members were asked to start thinking of possible new recruits for the Board of BxC, and bring potential candidates to the school for a visit before June 22nd.
- Board Member and BxC parent Greg Lobo-Jost is working with a group of parents to set up a Transitional Committee to help think about issues related to the upcoming transition to the new facility.

Board Exercise: The “Elevator Speech”

The Board worked on refining points for communicating the mission of Bronx Community Charter School, based upon the draft contributed by Carola Jain.

Next meeting will be Monday, May 7, 2012, at 5 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rogers

Bronx Community Charter School Updates **5/7/12**

- 1) Attendance: Attendance for the month of April was 97%.
- 2) Enrollment: We remain at an enrollment of 251.
- 3) Suspensions: There were no suspensions during April.
- 4) Assessment: 3rd and 4th graders took the ELA exam April 17-19 and the math exam April 25-27. Each exam consisted of three days of 90 minute tests each day. Our students held up admirably well under the pressure and brought great focus to their work, but we will not find out the results until late-June at the earliest. (Last year we got results in August.)
- 5) Staffing: We are hiring for six teaching positions for the fall, four due to our new grade and two to replace teachers who are moving into new roles at the school. The committee has hired five of those teachers to date, and expects to hire the final teacher within a week.
- 6) Family events: We have formed a family and staff Transition Committee which will meet monthly to discuss and provide ideas about our facility situation in the fall and the move to the new facility.
- 7) Other: Our new building is finally visible above the construction fence!