

Gathering Waters Board Agenda
November 12, 2023 9:00-11:00 am

Google Meet

Sunday, November 12 · 9:00 – 11:00am

Time zone: America/New York

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/bmg-npdd-aas>

Or dial: (US) +1 484-424-4773 PIN: 363 659 187#

The mission of Gathering Waters Chartered Public School is to offer students in the Monadnock region an education that enables them to discover their interests and capabilities; explore the surrounding world; and cultivate a lifelong love of learning, a sense of community responsibility and understanding of environmental sustainability. We carry out this mission by providing a rich and engaging curriculum that integrates the arts, meaningful practical work, outdoor education and service to the larger community.

Our vision is an inclusive school culture of compassion and respect where deep interest in others goes hand in hand with individual growth. The educational environment enables students to develop self-confidence, self-knowledge, intellectual flexibility, and the capacity for creative problem solving that supports ethical action in their local and global communities.

Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education

1. Image of the Human Being:

Public Waldorf education is founded on a coherent image of the developing human Being.

Each human being is a unique individual who brings specific gifts, creative potential, and intentions to this life. Public Waldorf education addresses multiple aspects of the developing child including the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual. Through this, each child is helped to integrate into a maturing whole, able to determine a unique path through life.

Rudolf Steiner's educational insights are seen as a primary, but not exclusive, source of guidance for an understanding of the image of the human being.

2. Child Development:

An understanding of child development guides all aspects of the educational program, to the greatest extent possible within established legal mandates.

Human development proceeds in approximate 7-year phases. Each phase has characteristic physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions and a primary learning orientation.

The Public Waldorf educational program, including the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment methods, work with this understanding of human development to address the needs of the individual and the class in order to support comprehensive learning and healthy, balanced development. Our developmental perspective informs how state and federal mandates, including curriculum sequence, standardized testing, and college and career readiness, are met.

3. Social Change Through Education

Public Waldorf education exists to serve both the individual and society.

Public Waldorf education seeks to offer the most supportive conditions possible for the development of each student's unique capacities and for engendering the following qualities to work towards positive social change:

A harmonious relationship between thinking, feeling, and willing;

Self-awareness and social competence;

Developmentally appropriate, academically informed, independent thinking;

The initiative and confidence necessary to transform intentions into realities; and

An interest in the world, with active respect and a feeling of responsibility for oneself, one's community, and the environment.

Such individuals will be able to participate meaningfully in society.

4. Human Relationships:

Public Waldorf Schools foster a culture of healthy relationships.

Enduring relationships — and the time needed to develop them — are central to Public Waldorf education. The teacher works with each student and class as a whole to support relationship-based learning.

Healthy working relationships with parents, colleagues, and all stakeholders are essential to the well being of the student, class, and school community. Everyone benefits from a community life that includes festivals, events, adult education, study, and volunteer activities.

Public Waldorf education encourages collaboration in schools, within the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, among all schools working out of a developmental approach, in conjunction with the broader field of education.

5. Access and Diversity:

Public Waldorf Schools work to increase diversity and access to all sectors of society.

Public Waldorf schools respond to unique demands and cultures in a wide range of locations in order to provide maximum access to a diverse range of students. Schools work towards ensuring that students do not experience discrimination in admission, retention, or participation.

Public Waldorf schools and teachers have the responsibility to creatively address the developmental needs of the students with the most inclusive possible approaches for all learners.

The Public Waldorf program and curriculum is developed by the school to reflect its student population.

6. Collaborative Leadership:

School leadership is conducted through shared responsibilities within established legal Structures.

Faculty, staff, administration and boards of a Public Waldorf school collaborate to guide and lead the school with input from stakeholder groups. To the greatest extent possible, decisions related to the educational program are the responsibility of those faculty and staff with knowledge and experience of Rudolf Steiner's educational insights.

Governance and internal administration are implemented in a manner that cultivates active collaboration, supportive relationships, effective leadership, consequential action, and accountability. A Public Waldorf school is committed to

studying and deepening its understanding of best practices of governance appropriate to its stage of organizational development.

7. Schools as Learning Communities:

Public Waldorf schools cultivate a love of lifelong learning and self-knowledge.

Public Waldorf education emphasizes continuous engagement in learning and self-reflective practices that support ongoing improvement. At the individual and classroom level, teachers reflect regularly on their observations of the students and of the educational process. Essential aspects of school-wide work and professional development include self-reflection, peer review, faculty and individual study, artistic activity, and research.

Rudolf Steiner is a primary, but not exclusive, source of guidance for developing an active inner, meditative life and an understanding of the dynamics within society.

Public Waldorf schools encourage all community members to engage in active and ongoing ways to enhance their capacities as human beings through self reflection and conscious social engagement.

In Attendance: Daniel Kurz, Justin Somma, Janet Gordon, Tiffany Mathews, Jamie Mahnken, Mark Stehlik, Jan Lyndes

Non Voting Members: Luke Goodwin, Dallas Welch

Other Attendees: Sarah Galligan

I. Welcome:

II. Approval of October Meeting Notes

Motion: Janet, second Mark, Passed Unanimous

III. Vote to approve DAF Financial Policy (Donor-Advised Funds)

a. Policy available in Drive agenda folder

DW: Template given to Dallas by Casey Silva who did our Federal Grant monitoring visit, and who approved the draft by email, Has been reviewed by the state, Has items about record retention and use, is a pretty basic policy. General overview of how we manage federal funding. Things that we already do.

JS: Would like these to be adopted more generally as financial policies,

DW: Good to post these online for public access showing that we abide by NH regulations. Some of these are federal requirements anyways, such as soliciting minority and women-owned businesses, which is also best practice.

We can pass it as the federal fund management piece with the explicit understanding that Dallas will use it for all operating practices as school policy.

Motion: Janet, second Janet. Passed unanimously

IV. Update from Dallas on Background Check Procedure

a. All Board Members required to complete this process

Board members are required to get background checks. Dallas will email board instructions for conducting fingerprint background checks.

JS: State kicked it over to local PD during Justin's time. Through the State Trooper Barracks, it was free.

DW: \$20 if you're a Keene resident, or it's \$40. Electronic fingerprinting, they do it walk-in 3 or 4 days a week. Board members get it done, then bring paperwork to Dallas.

Dallas has an employee tracker file, and will add board members.

Question of reimbursement– Dallas will look into the budget line item.

JM: Do we have employees now who haven't done these checks, then?

LG: The policy is that everyone needs the fingerprint background check, but not to have results prior to starting.

DW: This is common practice in public schools

TM: Is there a deadline for the return of the background checks? It's odd to have these people going without background checks to work with students.

DW: Not a policy now

TM: Will follow up with Anny about this as policy. Return was quick when Tiffany did it through KPD.

DW: From getting results from KPD to mailing it to Concord to getting it back can take up to a month

JM: Has a 24-48 hour turnaround check that she will connect to HR with.

JS: Fingerprints can expire within 30 days, so have had them expire in the state's custody and have to re-start the process.

V. Principal Report

[Linked here.](#) Luke shared a few highlights.

Zoe has been doing great work helping with Kindergarten. Steven's resignation and looking for a new eurythmist, but it's expected to be hard to find mid-year.

TM: Is there thought of continuing movement? If not, what does the Environmental Education Curriculum look like (will the kids still be moving).

There's a difference between outdoor education and environmental education– they'll be outside a lot either way, but it needs to be defined.

Zoe was hired part time, and has been doing creative movement, but there's some flexibility with her schedule.

TM: thinking about Antioch and NHD. Colonial fundraiser last night, with grants. There are folks in the community and other organizations who might help in the interim in the movement space.

LG: Posting in the environmental sphere would yield a lot of great people and resources. More to come— PAC meeting just happened Friday afternoon and full faculty haven't received that update yet. January is the target for the new courses.

Had an interview with an excellent Title I teacher (full time position fully funded by the grant, so budget neutral). Kelly Barker filled this part time last year, but this year has been full time marketing. Great interview, PAC gave thumbs up. Former MWS student from Kindergarten and middle school. Was in Katy Schwerin's class a little after Fiona was going through the grade. Will move forward with hiring this person.

MS: Does it cover benefits?

DW: Yes, covers with a 28% fringe written in. Dallas will review, and is in the process of rolling over some of last year's funding to this year.

JG: Thank you Luke for bringing this big full picture of programmatic things. Has there also been work for strengthening the academic high school work?

LG: HS planning is covered in the report referencing High School Planning Task Force, which is essentially all the high school members, a group of 8 or 9 meeting weekly to cover development of current makeup of courses (honors distinction, electives) to point toward academic based rigor. Teachers working together about how to create honors level classes within the context of their tracks or blocks. Feedback on how new electives are working. Additional opportunities from those electives (eg. Laura's astronomy elective for the juniors— went to Orchard Hill with astronomers and their equipment. Connection with MIT for Splash program to go down for Saturday & Sunday for seminars). That group has also spent a lot of time looking at 12th grade, curriculum development, who will teach, timing, as well as a new dual track of diplomas.

Greatest challenge in developing a high school curriculum is the broad range of interest, abilities, and why students are choosing the school. Related to attrition. There are students who chose us because we're a Waldorf high school. We also have some who have chosen us as an alternative to public high school. A number, if not half, the students have chosen us because either school has failed them, or they have failed school. Whether it's a warm loving place with food, or Waldorf. It's both challenging and incredibly fruitful.

Credit and diploma piece is finding that there are students who are either failing or absent a lot. Keene has three diploma tracks, ConVal has 4. Minimum credits

for a NH diploma is 20 (our school is currently 28). So by sophomore year, sitting down and choosing one of those potential tracks. We're bringing specialization to certain students to help with retention.

TM: IEP diplomas?

LG: Both Jed and Tracy (regularly there, special ed teacher at high school) and Joe Lemy (new college counselor, who's outstanding at researching and reporting back)-- there are students with their IEP's who could have adjustments to their requirements. But our goal will be to help students achieve the Gathering Waters diploma level. In some respects, their IEP supports us working with their accommodations to make that even easier.

Quick highlight on enrollment: we've recently seen an influx of tours and shadow days at the upper school level. New student joined 9th grade on Monday. Another coming for a shadow day who has a cousin who just joined 8th grade this year.

Recap of admissions criteria and preference/priority. First preference is new faculty, second preference is siblings, 3rd preference is board members. If for some reason there were more applicants within a category than spots, it would be a random lottery within that group.

While the faculty piece can be helpful, with so many full classes it's meant that new faculty's children wouldn't have space, so they might have better luck at another independent school.

JS: noting Luke's on every task force

LG: facilitation mostly, and it's exciting work.

VI. Committee Reports

Finance Committee

JS: Need a resolution from the Board to allow Dallas to open a line of credit for \$300,000 (similar to what passed last summer) to manage cash flow. It's a low interest, low output management way of managing that cash flow gap.

DW: RAN (bonds you can access throughout the school year, and repay them when you get your state payments) is concerning due to level of liability and overextending. Safest option is a \$300,000 revolving line of credit through SBW with repayment at every state payment, quarterly, which would cut down on our annual interest. Don't want to overextend us as a new school, and this is a safe amount to get us through crunch times with cash flow.

Can access this any time throughout the year, rather than scrambling in the month before state payment to make sure everything's laid out tightly to get us there. Summer when wages increase and everyone's doing purchasing, and this year's rent increase, makes cash flow tight in the summer. Had talks with Andrew at SBW is willing to line this up with a board resolution.

TW: Savings Bank of Walpole has been marketing local businesses lately, which is a great relationship.

DW: offering us a lot of things– fundraising and grant support for sports teams. There are some individuals there who are being really helpful.

Board passes the motion, and Dallas will share the resolution with Jan to sign as board secretary.

Also need lease renewal negotiating approval from the Facilities Committee.

Governance Committee

JG: Hoping to have a board retreat in the month of December if the December meeting can be a shorter meeting. Anny's house, Starfish Camp, Glen Brook, and GW Upper School are all possible options. Reviewing Bylaws, board responsibilities, goals, and looking at new membership, as well as social time together.

Currently scheduled December 16th

JS: Could it be in January?

Dan will email asking about December 16th availability. Once finalized, we will try to schedule a brief virtual meeting for voting items.

- Elizabeth is chairing an outreach committee.
- Anny is looking to biweekly Wednesday HR meetings. Anny looking into the services available from the Richards Group– couldn't get definitive info yet, but has a meeting upcoming.
- Strategic planning- Jan doing outreach. Jed on board, Jan, Dallas, Luke. Would like 1 more.

Luke will confirm cadence so that he can share to Faculty opportunities to volunteer to serve on board level committees, though possibly not Governance. HR could be valuable, knowing that there are at times confidential topics that faculty won't participate in.

- Development– Jamie will meet with Luke on Wednesday to understand the history, needs, and goals, and would love to connect with Dallas and some names that Janet has put out there of folks who could join the committee.

Tiffany & Family Council. Lots of researching so far– contacting other schools in the state (the other two public charter Waldorf schools), and once sharing on the parent facebook, a few parents who reached out to Tiffany.

Regarding councils at other schools– really hard time getting folks to step up and lead, or even attend and participate. One person shared that people seem to be doing their own thing and are busy. Not working.

Folks who reached out to Tiffany spoke about being burned out. Interest in raising money, but lacked clarity on what it was going toward. Had done work, adopted strategies from other schools, but perhaps the plan wasn't comprehensive.

There's a loss and gap without this council for community building and more so festival help and gifts (parent teacher conference day snacks, etc). Holiday season is approaching, and the parent council has been super helpful with that. Otter Brook potluck was missed.

Still in the research phase, with proposals to come for a slow start focused on major themes related to the needs. Year 1, 2, & 3 phased approach. Concerned nobody will want to lead it. Only a few families expressed interest so far.

Overwhelmingly people wanted to attend Zoom.

Starting over should be slow, but the gaps also need to be filled.

JG: goals and principles in the charter for the parent council as well that we should look at.

Dan copied [the relevant pieces here](#) in the shared drive under family/parent council

TM: people prefer "Family Council" because there are so many families who have main caretakers who aren't just parents. Would like a newsletter.

Meetup potluck? It's a lot before the holidays.

MS: With holidays coming up, is there another way to elicit support for faculty?

TM: Holiday bonus repeat?

DW: Not at the scale of last year– not budgeted in, last year it came out of a surplus, with \$50-60K going out in bonuses.

JL: in this period without family council, could board take up representing or finding a parent rep to facilitate gift giving?

DK: Reminder to the board to participate in fundraising and gift giving!

LG: Development strategy needed. Boosting the annual fund. This was some of the misunderstanding and lack of alignment with former parent council.

Hard to focus giving on teachers at holiday time when families aren't giving to the annual fund— we want to focus on a strategy that supports both, and not ending with class teachers getting better gifts than specialty teachers.

TM: What does the annual campaign look like?

LG: This time of year between Thanksgiving and the end of the year, then again at the end of the school year, Luke has sent out emails. We've had \$60K in the annual fund goals, including a \$30-40K anonymous single gift. We get \$20K from the rest of the school which has been a struggle. If families each gave \$20, we'd get there

TM: Have there been any fundraisers? Tiffany was at a fundraiser last night where lots of donated items made a tremendous amount of money.

JM: Those events can be successful but take a lot of people power and time.

LG: We intentionally moved staff members time away from that and toward enrollment and retention. Every new student is \$9K, which is hard to find in a gift.

DW: No physical mailings. Talked to Kelly Barker about making it happen.

Further discussion on annual fund ideas

JM: Is there a separate Faculty recognition piece?

JG: Last year the board collected money for sweets and coffee. We can continue that. Keeps things equitable so nobody gets deflated by a "smaller" gift than a peer.

VII. Approval of Line of Credit with Savings Bank of Walpole

To approve Dallas to obtain a line of credit up to \$300,000 to cover cash flow deficit due to delays in grant reimbursements and special ed. Payments.

Vote: Motion: Mark, Second: Janet. Passed unanimously

VIII. Public Comment

Dallas— feels like the middle school is feeling a bit lost or left behind. Seems like a gap in our outreach.

IX. Closing Verse

**You have been joined by fate together
To unfold the powers
Which are to serve a good creative work.**

**Wisdom itself will teach you as you walk on the soul's path
That greatest things can be achieved
When souls who give to each other spirit certainty
Unite and work towards the healing of the world in faithfulness.**

- Rudolf Steiner (From Benedictus, a character in the Mystery Dramas or also called the Portal of Initiation-thank you to Janet for bringing this)

Next Meeting:

Schedule Dec. votes via virtual meeting

Schedule Board Retreat