

Gathering Waters Board Agenda

January 20th, 2024 9am -11am

Lower School

98 South Lincoln St, Keene

Gathering Waters Board Meeting

Saturday, January 20 · 9:00 – 11:00am

Time zone: America/New_York

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/oax-rfoa-och>

Or dial: (US) +1 601-526-1294 PIN: 574 911 013#

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: Jamie, Tiffany, Dallas Welch, Katie Owwald, Dan Kutz, Elizabeth Hamshaw, Luke Goodwin, Justin Somma, Jan, Mark, Jan, Anny Hamshaw, Janet Gordon.

Non Voting Members: Doug Warner

Other Attendees: Jeonima Carral, Marcy Shepker

Welcome:

I. Approval of December Meeting Notes

Motion: Approved

II. Update on Background Checks for Board Members

- a. Reminder to anyone who has not yet completed

III. Faculty Hiring Process

- a. Review Draft and discuss

Took process from 2021 and added:

- the completion of a clean background check.
- Faculty chair position will have a 'community forum' with the full faculty of the section they will be working with.
- Board has final approval of full time hires. Similar to how NH Public schools work (Northeast Woodland's Charter).

- Resume, references checks, interview notes will be shared with Board members to review within 48 hours.
- Only offer feedback about the process, not a second interview process.

Questions and comments:

- Wording of this draft is like a second interview vs reviewing the process. Wording needs clarification as to the intent of the board to be a confirmation of process.
- State: Board **approval is for the process** of the interview.
- Does it need the full board to review or just HR or Executive.
 - Anny will check to see if we need a full board vote or committee report.
- Change wording of “Board approval of applicant process”.
- Who has the power to approve the new hire?
 - School principal with consultation from PAC.
 - For Faculty Chair hire the Principal and majority of PAC are needed for final hire.
 - Full faculty is meeting with Faculty Chair candidates in a ‘community forum’ as part of the interview process. Faculty are able to bring their input to PAC.
 - Luke will pull the wording from the Gathering Waters Governance Structure version 3 document to the faculty hire document.

Suggestion to streamline hire process with all hires.

This will be worked up more and brought back next month.

IV. Principal Report

- a. Update on PAC and Faculty Board Member:
 - Perin Ellsworth-Osanya will join the US PAC (30+ voted for).
 - Julie Ludvigsen will be the LS (and US) faculty board member.
 - Governance working group is refining the Faculty Board Member role. Suggestion is that they are a full voting member to the board. Not a representative that is voting on behalf of the level.
 - Voice of the full faculty should come through PAC to the Principal to the Board.
 - The Faculty Working Group will keep working on this.
 - Board ratify this nomination: _____

Voting in Julie Ludvigsen as Faculty Board member: All in favor

- Faculty Governance group is updating the this job description.
 - b. Update on Interim Faculty Chairs

- US Chair interim - Conversations with 3 US members about sharing the duties of Chair.
 - Position has not been offered with a stipend.
 - US faculty holds this work collaboratively.
 - c. Update on Proposed Governance Structure
- PAC process; is there a process to encourage that all faculty is represented by PAC?
 - Regular check ins at faculty meetings
 - Involvement of PAC members in Leadership work. This meeting will include PAC and Leadership team members. This will allow PAC to report out at faculty meetings. (Luke, Karen + PAC)
- Discussion of offering a stipend to the people who step up to this work.
 - Could follow the model of teachers who take on additional teaching due gaps due to lack of teacher retention.
 - Stipends are not part of this school year's budget. It is part of next year's budget. If it is less than \$5000 it can go to the finance committee.

Questions:

Update on LS Chair position- HR conversation

V. Strategic Planning

- a. Special Education status and proposals
- Luke, Dallas, Jan, Jed, Nell, Laura, Emily Sherwood. Met for 2 months to look at strategic plans 5 goals. Each took a goal and interviewed community members: teachers, parents, admin. Met last week to share and summarize. Second goal was not reviewed due to the reviewer being absent even so,
- Second goal: Innovative Pedagogical Program and Dynamic Special Education were highlighted as having areas that are not working and blind spot areas. This became evident from looking at the other four goals.
- Gap between:
 - What public special ed can support both financially and just what it does.
 - Social emotional behavior areas
- LG: This mid strategic plan check-in is so valuable and was thorough. In all of the goals minus the facilities goal (focused on upper school facilities), every other one, particularly around faculty and staff recruitment and attention, enrollment–blind spots kept coming back to our work with special education, social emotional/behavioral. How we bridge the gap between mainstream public education (support at Keene public schools) and Waldorf. Where we live in the

middle of that. The level of stressors our school experiences boil back to that point.

- Because this is budgeting season, this needs to be prioritized now with next year in mind.
- DW: where can we draw the line with services we're able to provide and what the process is to decide if we're doing a dis-service by allowing enrollment if we're unable to provide services
- JL: Umbrella issue is that we're creating an urgency on day-to-day processes because of how much energy it takes. And a child with an IEP means you know they need services, but a child without that documentation for whatever reason might need a similar level of support (parents aren't mandated to provide that info if they have it)
- Robust referral process through Eddie Team, frequent referrals. But that alone doesn't solve these challenges
- JM: do we have services provided like OT, PT, speech? LG: not by school employees, but through the district people come in to provide those
- Working to streamline the process of keeping everyone aware of the needs of each class (ALMA has helped), Tracy made a condensed packet for each class.
- When there are students who need 1 on 1, some have designated 1-on-1's, and then other students who need it pull the assistant/para's focus and attention
- EH: Tal before we started had indicated that there are places we can say we can't provide the services. If someone has an IEP that needs services and we can't provide it, then there's a tension point with the district about who provides those. Placement then becomes an issue: the district and parents have to agree that Gathering Waters is not the right place. We see places where students and the school are not being served being placed here.
- DK: how does this affect the budget? DW: $\frac{1}{3}$ gets reimbursed. $\frac{2}{3}$ we pay. This is because of the number of IEP hours deemed required, but we are providing far more than that because what the documentation specifies was simply not sufficient for the classes to function.
 - What time of the day are they working as a para professional, and what time of the day are they working as a teacher's assistant.
 - KO: Those assistants are working all of the time because the needs are so high. They are required to even ensure that some students are able to stay in the classroom. They effectively operate as the 1-on-1 for 3. We don't get funding for 504's, only IEP's which are academic. We don't get help based on behavior
- LG: To summarize, we created this incredible Public Charter School with a beautiful Waldorf Curriculum open to all. We have families who find us for that. We also have families who find us because we're not the local school, but

completely expecting us to provide the same services. We're funded at half the level of Keene Middle School. That's where these stressors come from. Amazing trained Waldorf teachers from independent schools, meeting whole new challenges. Teachers can barely do it at times, yet the parents are reporting that this school is changing and saving their student's lives and changing their view of what school is.

- As we raise the question of right now, we need to explore with the faculty and identify resource adds we need to consider. More special ed teachers, more school counselors, professional development for our teachers, consulting and support from BCBA. Some of it has grant funding.
- Looking at our budget and putting money toward pedagogical administration, the question is where the greatest need is, and whether it's for these assistants first.
- JG: practical arts work becomes ever more important to engage students in a way that can help their behavior.
- We need support for special ed (reading, writing, arithmetic) and we also need more support for the Waldorf pedagogical hands-on experiences that support these behaviors at a deeper level
- PAC makes a proposal for the budget that goes to finance committee, and ultimately the board
- KO: Luke has been covering oversight and making connections for all of the lower and upper school. That alone is a full-time job. Trying to create connections to create a culture, form, a place where the values we want our students to experience- it needs that connection to truly grow. Knowing when assistants are meeting, when teachers are coaching assistants, having a whole picture held from above, identifying areas to efficiently use resources. This needs the level chair role.
- MS: is there a lobbying coalition of charter schools going to the state? LG: yes, that's what brought about the per pupil increase last year. Possibly something to find out how to get board involvement into.
- JL: where do we go next? What does the board do legally and financially to support this? How to bring this out of long-term strategic planning and bring it into the work of today and now.
- School leadership will take the next steps by bringing it to faculty, building a level of support and consensus on what needs resources, and it will impact the budget

VI. Finance Committee

- a. Resolution related to the 403b retirement administration increase to cost \$11K if every employee enrolls. Richards group. (up from 6K due to

needing to benefit everyone). Full time teachers have 1% match. Support staff do not.

Motion to approve: 1st, 2nd motions and all in favor.

VII. HR Committee

a. Update on Richards Group

Met with Laura King who gave a proposal- will revisit because it does not meet our needs. Work necessary due to no inhouse HR person.

Will meet again next week.

- i. Vote to Retain services? (postponed to next month)

VIII. Committee Reports

Family Council Committee- Second meeting coming up.

This group is in our charter. Please encourage participation.

New family support, teacher appreciation support.

IX. Public Comment

Appreciation of the work that is being done.

X. 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:

Saturday - February 17th @ 9 am - Location: Upper School