North Oakland Community Charter School
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Head of School Report

Date: August 11, 2015

To: North Oakland Community Charter School Board of Directors

From: Stephen Ajani, Head of School

Staffing Update

New Administrative Team

David Bond, Director of Operations and Enrollment
Krea Gomez, Dean of Students & School Culture
Cori Belew, Dean of Instruction
Melissa Hawkins, Operations Manager
Lehi Dickey, Office Coordinator

I cannot imagine a better group of leaders to have in place for my entry year than this team, and I am confident in their ability to listen, learn, communicate, adapt, grow and excel throughout the year.

Teacher & Program Updates

Music (K-5 Enrichment and Upper School Elective)
Our Performing Arts Program this year will offer Music, taught by **Rita Lackey**. A multi-talented and experienced educator, Rita earned her B.A. in Music from UC Santa Cruz. She has taught music at Malcolm X Magnet Arts Elementary and Longfellow Middle School in Berkeley, and at St. Martin de Porres School with the Oakland Youth Chorus. Rita incorporates the Orff method that utilizes musical games, rhythm instruments and dance to teach concepts and encourage creativity. Her multicultural repertoire spans various styles of music from classical to contemporary.

Upper School Math (Grades 6-7-8)
Nick Musni's statement of teaching philosophy says it all: "I strive for collaborative, project--based learning that integrates each student's whole identity to foster critical thinking, communal responsibility, resiliency, and a life-long love of learning." Credentialed through the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute (BATTI), Nick is pursuing his M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction. His previous experience includes working as a Teaching Assistant/Intern at The San Francisco School, a Lead Teacher for Aim High and an Art and Science Instructor with Camp Edventure More. Nick has also been a substitute in a charter school special education classroom, a

tutor for a community college, and has an expressed interest in outdoor education. A graduate of UC Santa Barbara, he currently resides in Oakland and enjoys reading and playing guitar.

Response to Intervention / Special Education (RTI/SPED)
This new program has a new home—the former back office space, located off of the atrium just past the kitchen/staff room. Individual and small group instruction will take place here, supervised by our Dean of Instruction, Cori Belew, and our new Educational Specialist.

Speaking of which, I am thrilled to announce the hiring of **Christine Parker** as our full-time Education Specialist. Christine is coming to us from San Francisco Unified School District, where she served as a Special Education Teacher. Her credentials include a Master's Degree in Special Education, a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology with an emphasis on Child Development, a California Teaching Certification (Special Education Credential), an English Learner authorization and Autism Spectrum Disorder authorization.

Staff Departure over the summer
Ms. McMurdo (7-8th grade ELA and SS) will not be returning to NOCCS this year due to her accepting a position with a school in Berkeley Unified. She tendered her resignation on August 6. We are thankful for all the hard work Ms. McMurdo has put into our community over the last 3 years and wish her the best of luck in all her future endeavors. We have started looking for a permanent replacement for her and will utilize a long-term substitute in the interim, if needed.

Family Visits

I joined NOCCS on June 3 and began family visits on June 30. I've met with 53 of 174 families over the course of the summer and will continue to reach out to families I have not had the opportunity to meet yet. My goals for the family meetings are to hear what makes NOCCS special to our families; learn different ways families would like to see NOCCS improve; allow families to gain a better sense of who I am as an educator; and for families to experience me as being approachable and collaborative. Overall, I believe I have been successful in reaching these goals. However, I am not satisfied with the number of families I've meet with to date.

Highlights from family visits:
- Great students and families. I am enjoying getting to know everyone.
- Hearing about the early years at NOCCS, the multiple ways families contributed to the school and discussing ways to keep that going.
- Parents take great pride in being part of the NOCCS community.
- Discussing the race and equity work the FTO started last year and hearing thoughts about where parents would like to see it go next.
- Many parents are concerned about teacher turnover.

- Many parents commented on wanting to see improvements around classroom management. This was also reflected in the last parent survey.

<u>Goals for the 2015-16 School Year (Draft)</u>

My goals for the 2015-16 school year come from a combination of feedback received from family visits, The LCAP(Local Control and Accountability Plan), and the strategic plan. I would like the board to provide feedback and input on these goals. Once I have received feedback from the board, I will work with the leadership team to finalize the goals.

1. **Response to Intervention (RtI)/Special Education(SPED): In 15-16, 50% of NOCCS students receiving RTI and/or Special Education services will meet or exceed 50% or more of their individual RTI/SPED goals.**

Baseline: This is the first year NOCCS will have Response to Intervention (RTI) so there is no baseline data. We are also currently not aware of how many students with IEPs met their goals. We will get a better sense of this data when we start our IEP check-ins with families.

First steps to achieve RtI/SPED goal: We have all of the staff in place to support our RtI program. We have purchased Illuminate which will allow us to create common interim assessments and cut data in a variety of ways (by standard, ethnicity, IEP, FRL, etc.)

2. **Financial: By the end of 15-16 NOCCS will have a plan for a school model that can run its core program without raising additional funds.**

Baseline: We are currently raising an extra $167K annually over the state and federal money we receive to run our core programs.

First steps to achieve financial goal: This is an area were I am looking for a lot of board input. From my current understanding foundations are reluctant to fund us mainly because our Free and Reduced lunch numbers are under 50% and our enrollment is relatively small compared to other local charter schools. To become more financially sustainable a few options to explore are replication, increasing enrollment, or starting new programs that can attract funding (teacher training, blended learning, advocacy). I am looking forward to working with the development and finance committees, as well as the full board to develop this plan.

3. **School Culture: By the end of 15-16 families – including all significant subgroups – will rate the school at a 3.5 or higher in the annual family survey data.**

Baseline: Last year our parents rated us at 3.3 (out of 4) as a school, with little variance between the subgroups measured POC (3.26) and White (3.35). Other

subgroups we will monitor this year are ethnicity, special education, length of time at NOOCS, and grade level. The questions with the lowest over all ratings were:

School leaders encourage input and welcome parents' contributions: 2.9

It is evident from student behavior that there are clear expectations and consistency in the discipline policy. : 2.9

Conducting the family meetings is the first step in achieving our school culture goal. Once school is in session there will be a heavy emphasis placed on interactions, expectations and building effective relationships. An example is training teachers on Dr. Gottman's work on the Magic Relationship Ratio.
See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw9SE315GtA

4. **External Engagement #1: By the end of 15-16 NOCCS will double the number of applications of students who are zoned to Hoover or Emerson and qualify for free and reduced lunch.**

Baseline: We received 317 applications for the 2015-16 school year, for 40 open spots. Of those 317 applications 27 families self reported qualifying for free and reduced lunch and 27 families are zoned to either Hoover or Emerson.

For student recruitment the first step in achieving this goal is increased awareness of NOCCS with families zoned to Hoover or Emerson. This will be done by word of mouth mostly through the Head of School and parents who attend NOCCS and were zoned to Hoover or Emerson.

5. **External Engagement #2: By the end of 15-16 NOCCS Interview at least two high quality candidates for every open position.**

For teacher recruitment I feel our current application process is keeping many quality candidates from applying. By removing the essay section of the application process and placing a greater emphasis on how candidates perform and respond to feedback from their guest lesson our hope is see more high quality teachers enter the application process.

6. **Talent: By the end of 15-16 NOCCS will have piloted and codified our talent pipeline program.**

Baseline: N/A

The first steps in successfully creating a talent pipeline will be for Cori Belew, Krea Gomez, and Stephen Ajani to build and maintain effective coaching relationships with our teacher interns and AmeriCorps staff members

Successes

Response to Intervention
The Response to Intervention and SPED program at NOCCS has benefited from work done over the summer. We have secured a resource specialist Christine Parker to organize and support our students with IEPs. Christine comes with experience supporting students in meeting IEP goals, scheduling and updating annual and triennial evaluations, and many great ideas for providing timely supports for students.

The RtI program is fully staffed with 3 full-time and one part-time teacher intern. Teacher interns will be focused on small group reading instruction, co-teaching common core math lessons, and leading peace-making instruction across grade levels. We have also secured Americorp members to support students. All of these RtI support staff will be supervised, observed and coached by Cori Belew and Krea Gomez.

RtI and SPED work will be supervised and supported by our coordination of services team (COST). This team will be Stephen Ajani, Cori Belew, Krea Gomez, and Christine Parker. We will work to oversee all elements of the program and confirm that services are administered in an equitable way to serve all students.

New Admin Team
Administrative team members are all new in their roles and quickly creating a culture of feedback and support. I am excited to see how we all grow this year.

New SELPA and Special Education Compliant Outcome
Since leaving the OUSD SELPA due to lack of receiving consistent services for our students and joining El Dorado we have been very pleased with their level of responsiveness and the access we have to their leadership team. Shortly after the California Department of Education (CDE) confirmed NOCCS was part of the EL Dorado SELPA we were dropped from the complaint originally against OUSD and NOCCS.

Reputation of NOCCS
NOCCS has a strong reputation and is a school in high demand for parents who know about it. At the same time it is not well known to the larger community. This is an exciting opportunity for us to connect more with the broader Oakland community showing we are a school that serves all students and are looking to have larger impact on the quality of education in Oakland.

NOCCS' Systems and Traditions
NOCCS has many strong systems and traditions in place both in practice and on paper. (Thank you Carolyn!)

Potential Challenges

Financial Sustainability
Having to raise over 160K each year to run our core program. A large portion of those funds came from our parent community. With rising Free and Reduced Lunch numbers it will become increasingly difficult to rely on our parent body to raise these funds annually. Additionally, despite the great job David has done in improving how we fundraise, many of our parents are experiencing donor fatigue. These asks make us feel like a private school, not a public community school.

Increasing costs of contributions to the California Teacher Retirement System: This year we will contribute 87K in to the California Teacher Retirement System. Our projected contributions for the 16-17 and 17-18 school year are 102K and 120K. I would like the personnel committee to make reviewing quality retirement alternatives a top priority this year.

Middle School
75% of middle school teachers are new to the school. The middle school is still fairly new to NOCCS. Many NOCCS families consider leaving our school after 5th grade. It is important for the middle school to have a strong year.

Family Teacher Organization
FTO has little control over how the money they raise is spent. This could limit the participation and impact of the FTO. Currently, the money raised by the FTO has already been allocated to line items that are part of our core academic program. Ideally, the FTO along with the Head of School would decided how FTO funds would be spent.