



Board Report – MARCH 2020

MWA CEO Report

Alton B. Nelson, Jr., MWA Chief Executive Officer

Coronavirus Preparation has been on everyone's mind for the past 3 weeks or so. Dr. Ward-Jackson has worked with the operation team to monitor recommendations and utilize resources shared from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Contra Costa County of Education. While schools can make the determination on their own to close, the CCCOE is encouraging us to follow their recommendation as not keeping schools open introduces other unintended consequences and concerns. MWA has a plan that details various communication protocols in case of closure. MWA operations staff have been increasing the cadence of communication with stakeholders as news of virus cases showing up locally have created concerns and a need to update stakeholders more frequently.

The Strategic Planning Process with *Bellwether Education Partners* is wrapping up. The program advisory and steering committees have engaged in a rigorous and productive examination of WHAT, WHY, HOW, and WHERE we might consider doing this work. The result of this work is more clarity on short-term aims and a longer-term vision for the collective impact of Making Waves entities such as MWA and CAP. Next steps include the sharing of some long-range financial modeling. These models can inform our programmatic priority decisions over the next 3-5 years.

The following four strategic priorities we have to agreement on are:

- **Aligning** programming (across MW entities, e.g. MWA and CAP)
- **Refining** existing MWA and CAP programming
- Ensuring the right **structures, decision-rights, and talent** are in place
- Developing a learning and growth engine – to spur **continuous improvement and innovation**

The MWA Board will approve the recommended Strategic Plan at the May meeting after providing some input in the process and reviewing the proposed plan.

The Senior School Director induction and launch is going well, from my vantage point. Dr. Ward-Jackson is following her launch plan (which includes 90-Day launch plan and listening campaign) and hitting many of her milestones. I completed my 60-Day evaluation with her, a step we instituted for all new employees and internal employees starting new roles. The 60 Day Evaluation provides and invites an opportunity to calibrate on the relative success of the launch in the new role and to invite open dialogue about how things are going. I am actively working with Dr. Ward-Jackson to highlight places where she is the Decider or the Recommender so she is more aware of what decisions she owns. So far, there appears to be a relief that there is a single person, that is known and trusted, is making decisions for the whole school.

The **proposed charter revision**, that would allow us to add 4th grade, is still scheduled for March 25th. There is chance this date could be pushed back due to ongoing review of a charter appeal for another charter school and the coronavirus (if the CCCOE Board cancels upcoming Board meetings).

The **2020-21 Budget** is nearly complete. There were a few questions the finance committee had for us to address as well as making some final staffing and programmatic decisions for the budget. Thus far, the budget includes relatively modest expense increases while adding a net, 60-70 or so students. The 2nd Interim budget is ready for review and approval this meeting. Next year will also mark the year with about 672 students in the middle school in grades 5th-8th. If 4th grade is approved by our authorizer we would be up to 840 students – 4th-8th grades.



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Goals for 2019-20

1. Improve feedback loops and communication systems for MWA staff.
2. Strengthen evaluation and goal setting skills of our leaders through the use of tools such as 15Five and specific management training.
3. Support the work of identifying key features of the MWA culture and strengthening it.
4. Work with the MWA finance leadership and the finance committee to develop operational models for budgeting and forecasting to help us better align funding needs with resource capacity.

Q3 Objectives (JAN-MAR)

1. Arrive at an MWA staffing model for the 2020-21 school year.
2. Work with the CFO to project expenses for various staff models beginning in FY2021.

Successes

- Successful **WASC accreditation team committee visit**. The community was at its best, implementing “normal” school practices the way we always do them. The visiting team agreed with many of our own self-assessments of our areas of success and challenge, as well as offering a few additional areas of strength and growth. Liz Martinez did an excellent job leading and facilitating this process for our school teams and the visiting team.
- MWA is being recognized again this spring by Innovate Public Schools as a Top School for serving Title I high school Latino students. This would make it 4 out of 5 years the school has been recognized with this award. Schools are recognized based on their SBAC English and Math scores for Title I subgroups for Latino and African American students. There are over 1,200 schools in the Bay Area of which nearly half are considered Title I (over 50% of families qualifying for Free or Reduced Priced Meals (FRPM)). The award recognizes school who well exceed the state standard for the aforementioned subgroups. Depending on the coronavirus, the award ceremony is scheduled to occur in April.
- Successful planning for the first ever recognition ceremony for Black/African American students attending west Contra Costa charter schools. This event is being postponed due to the effects of the coronavirus (limiting gatherings of people of more than 50 people), but the excitement around that event has been terrific.
- The strategic planning Program Advisory Committee meetings are showing that there is a strong desire and curiosity to collaborate to better serve our students.
- Initial management training for supervisors and leaders last month went very well. Leaders received and practiced effective practices related to preparing to hold effective one-on-one meetings and delegating projects effectively.

Challenges

- Coronavirus and all of the anxiety and uncertainty that is introduced into the community while trying to make sure everyone is safe.
- The cumulative effect of high numbers of faculty and staff being out sick (outside of coronavirus) and staff, faculty, and leadership stepping in to support is contributing to uneven morale, sustainability concerns, and lower energy levels. People are trying hard, but it is a lot to manage.