

School Board Recap for March 26, 2015

State of the School

Board members were introduced and an announcement was made about the School Board election coming up May 15, 2015.

TCGIS is proud to have completed our new school building in 2015. The school is in the final stages of setting up the "Affiliated Building Corporation" so TCGIS can acquire the facility from the project management company in the coming months.

School Board Strategic Planning - in the fall of 2014, the School Board outlined three categories of strategic direction with subcomponents to guide the Board's work:

1. Category 1: School Identity
 - a) Healthy communication and trust (between Board, community, PTO, administration, faculty, etc. - open communication, transparency)
 - b) Serving broader community (west campus, busing, increase diversity)
 - c) Vision implementation (increase school pride/spirit, be the premier school for German speaking teachers, serve students/parents)
2. Category 2: Optimize Infrastructure
 - a) Community building (clarity for volunteers, new ways to interact between different groups)
 - b) Governance (clarity in moving forward, annual Board calendar of events and decisions, create infrastructure planning process)
 - c) Personnel Development (focus on staff retention and respect, master plan for staffing differentiation, establish equitable compensation plan)
3. Category 3: Marketing and Fundraising
 - a) Long-range planning (West campus, review of school policies, master transportation plan)
 - b) Stable finances (establish fundraising policies, diversify fundraising resources, understanding the "life cycle" of a charter school)
 - c) Marketing (manage what we can afford vs. our expectations, develop signature marketing events, public relations materials review)

Highlights of 2014-2015

1. Student life, 4th grade parade of states, robotics, history day, streetball tournament, ski day, K-8 social hours with families
2. PTO - thank you for raising over \$30,000 to date
3. Amity Intern Committee - thank you; please consider hosting
4. Capstone Committee - thank you; Benefit coming this April 12
5. Parent Volunteers - thank you
6. May 16 Grand Opening and 10 years celebration

Financing

1. Audit results - TCGIS had a clean audit for FY14

2. Fundraising: Our Final Move to Excellence this Spring (landscape, playground, Aula)
3. Comments/Fragen
 - a. Parent said they were interested in seeing the different financial analyses regarding the transportation options and seeing their impact on the budget
 - b. Concern was expressed about \$271 per child for transportation and if that is enough for public transportation. Board says it isn't, which is why the Board is also trying to see how willing parents are to donate for transportation

Regular March School Board Meeting Followed Immediately

Call to Order 7:32pm

Consent Agenda was approved

Open Forum

- A parent talked about the possible west campus - it is exciting and an interesting dream; the parent wishes the Board will spend a lot of time thinking about this. The parent urged Board to wait until the new Board is elected in the next months before acting. It is a big decision and shouldn't be rushed.
- A teacher spoke about the west campus - she brought up questions from other staff members. How do we move ahead without consulting parents about this? Why haven't teachers been informed even before asking potential families? How will this affect current schools? Teacher salaries are lower than at other schools. If we can't afford to pay teachers correctly, how will we then staff a second school? Would a second school affect high teacher turnover? How does high turnover affect the kids? If we struggle to staff the current site with trained teachers, how will we staff a whole separate school? If we aren't settled in this home yet, how will we balance two homes?
- A parent spoke about the western campus. The parent was concerned it will set up both sites for failure. TCGIS does not have a good track record with turnover.
- A parent expressed concern about the enrollment letter that is in the Board packet. The parent is concerned that Kinderstube children have not been accepted into TCGIS, nor have the German speaking families - there is no priority. The parent wants the school to accept Kinderstube children and German speakers at a priority.
 - A Board member mentioned charter law only states TCGIS can not have such priorities and still receive state funding. The only allowable priorities are sibling and staff priority. The GAI is the School's authorizer, but the funding and official regulations come from charter law and public school law.
 - Another parents seconded desire to have German speakers and Kinderstube families prioritized
 - Another third parent agreed.
 - A Board member reiterated saying that it is the charter law and therefore non negotiable if TCGIS wants to receive state funding as a public school

Board Matters

1. **Possible Vertiefungsdeutsch:** Two staff members came to talk about the DSD1 and the German proficiency of the students
 - a. The teachers read a letter from a third teacher
 - b. Anka Fehling (ZfA) visited and said our German proficiency was still much higher than in other schools
 - c. Many students are doing really well, but some are still not proficient enough to fully understand subjects such as science and social studies in the German language - a *Vertiefungsdeutsch*, or “deepening German” class for these students may be beneficial
 - d. The teachers brought up that maybe using materials to teach German as a foreign language would be a good and helpful addition to the curriculum for this *Vertiefungsdeutsch*, rather than only classes taught in immersion practices
 - e. The topic can be discussed with the TCGIS Advisory Committee, made up of parents, teachers and community members
2. **Library dedication** - It was stated at this time, this would be the only dedication and for one of the two founders only; the dedication could coincide with the May 16 Grand Opening. The Board would like to pass this dedication motion on the stipulation that no further dedications will be made, except possibly to the other co-founder. *The motion to dedicate the library to Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh was approved. A second motion about limiting future dedications to co-founders only was postponed.* The Communications and Development Committee can formulate any policy on building dedications for the future.
3. **A general update on the Amity Intern program** was given by parent Amity committee member, Jessica Gallo. The School is recruiting Amity Intern families for the 2015-2016 school year and is accepting applications for the fall until April 30 with home visits conducted in May.
4. **The policy on renewing health benefits** to comply with HITA law was presented. *A motion to approve the policy passed.*
5. **A policy on combining classes when there is attrition** was presented for a first reading. This will be readdressed at the April meeting for discussion and potential approval.
6. **MCA testing philosophy statement** -- a recap of the statement that had gone out to all families in the Elternbrief was made and the statement has been posted/archived on the website under the Elternbrief section. TCGIS does not teach to standardized tests, but rather the teachers teach to the curriculum and if that is done well, TCGIS should do well on MCAs and German standardized tests.
7. **Strategic planning: Exploring a West campus.** It was explained that TCGIS could consider a west campus, and that the school is just at the beginning of discussing the possibility. The Board seemed to think and agree that this was a “monumental task.”
 - a. The first step would be to look at an expansion plan, which has to be completed by the October prior to the school year TCGIS would like to expand.

- a. The demand is there, now is the conversation is *does the School want to expand?*
- b. Questions were posed - what have we done for Minneapolis families? - Is this really about shortening someone's commute or about creating the best education for our children? Are we ready to take on something else after all of the turmoil to move into our current site?
- c. Another Board member stated not entertaining the idea of a western campus would be a shame/mistake.
- d. A Board teacher representative said that the larger we get and the better we get, the more potential we have to attract the best German teachers. He is excited to see where the research could take us.
- e. Another Board member thinks two campuses could have stronger communities and greater opportunity for community building. Families are scattered between the two cities. The western campus could create opportunity for both sides, opening spots for St. Paul families. The demand is there: waitlist, Kinderstube, folks we've canvassed. Do we need to spend time surveying? Maybe we should take a look at a proposal to take a look at all of the different angles.
- f. Another Board member wondered if a waitlist for our current school means demand for a western campus.
- g. Another Board member addressed concern about what committee this topic falls under. It isn't under a single one. The Board member suggested a working committee.
 - i. The Board will look at this idea at the Governance committee.
- h. A final comment questioned whether adding a KG section now would irrevocably create a commitment to a second campus we will have to follow.

Director's Report

1. **Hiring update:** the Director made two hiring recommendations - Esther Neu was recommended for the tech integrationist position and Alexander Bier from Checkpoint Charlie for the third 3rd grade teacher position. *The hires were approved.*
2. **Proposal for Curriculum and Instruction Director:** A motion was made to add this position. *Approved.*
 - a. A Board member expressed concern about the lack of understanding about the staff and staffing needs, and how this affects the budget. The Director explained this is currently in the budget and no new monies are needed. Teachers currently in stipended curriculum leadership roles would no longer have some of these duties. The Curriculum position was discussed with teachers at the Teacher Professional Learning Leadership Committee and there was agreement the position would be a valuable one.
 - b. The Director explained that if right candidate does not come to the fore, the hire will not be made; this is about getting the right fit; internal candidates are welcome to apply

Finance Committee Report

1. The Treasurer talked about budget deficit
2. Budgeting goals have been made for next year, but factors such as transportation and salaries negotiations
3. TCGIS is switching banks for better financial services
4. Kara Gaffy (the finance manager from our accounting firm BKDA) intends to podcast some general financial information about how the School is funded.
5. TCGIS plans to implement a 403b retirement fund for employees currently with no cost to the School - the Board was asked to approve going with Horace Mann, recommended by our accountants. *Approved.*

Personnel Committee

1. **Negotiations continue to be cordial.** The Union proposed their contract, the School countered and the Union is countering the counter. Negotiations will ensue through April.
2. **Committee Update:** Parent Ken Kniebel has joined the committee. Kent has experience in HR. The committee is working on the Annual Survey.

Governance Committee

1. A proposal brought forward to the committee was reviewed using Highbar criteria for Board work (contained in the Board packet) and deemed not within the Board purview at this time.
2. Nine candidates have applied for the School Board election (bios are contained in the Board packet as part of the Governance report. The candidates were certified by the Board.

Communications and Development

The May 16 Grand Opening is coming up soon

A policy was presented for corporate sponsors for the Grand Opening event based on the National Council for Nonprofits guidelines. The policy is event specific given the short time frame for approval; the hope is to have a more general sponsorship policy reviewed for future sponsorship opportunities. One suggestion was to move section 12 up to the preamble, as it stated this was specifically for May 16. *Motion approved.*

Parent Liaison Report

The Parent liaison informed the Board about topics at the last PTO meeting, including upcoming Board elections and status of the parent proposal to the Board.

Adjourned at 9:59