

**Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Meeting**  
**Charter District 4152**  
**February 23, 2010, 6:30 p.m.**  
**1745 University Ave.**  
**St. Paul, MN 55104**

**Call to Order and Attendance**

Board Chair Andrew Oxenham called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Board Members Kim Kompel, Holly Wiste, Susanne Grimm, Mary Zellmer-Bruhn, Debra Haessly, Jürgen Konczak, and Rebecca Hauth-Schmid were present. Board Members Ken Greener and Gretchen Nasset were absent.

Also present were TCGIS Director Annika Fjelstad, volunteer clerk and TCGIS parent Lisa Friedman, and other parents and guests.

**A. Approval of February 23, 2010 Agenda**

Mr. Oxenham indicated that Ms. Hauth-Schmid would provide an update from the High School Research Group under strategic planning (item e).

*Moved by Ms. Haessly, seconded by Ms. Wiste to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried 6:0.*

**B. Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Minutes
- b. Donation register
- c. Payment register
- d. School and Board Committee Reports

*Moved by Ms. Kompel, seconded by Ms. Grimm., that the consent agenda be approved. Motion carried 6:0.*

*Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn and Mr. Konczak arrived at 6:40*

**C. Financial Oversight**

**a. Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Haessly presented a summary of the most recent Finance Committee meeting. The committee has completed the process of annotating the budget and the resulting document will be a tool that can be used in the future during the budget process. The Finance Committee will be working with two different budget scenarios. The committee also discussed the proposed Site Administrative Manager position. A question was raised regarding library expenses shown on the financial statements. Ms. Haessly will follow up and provide details to Ms. Wiste as to what the particular expenses are.

**b. Approval of application for line of credit**

Ms. Haessly presented a resolution on behalf of the Finance Committee for the Board's approval that would direct the school to secure a \$150,000 Line of Credit (LOC) from Park Midway Bank. The LOC would be used to cover projected cash flow needs between now and October 2010. The LOC must be applied for annually and mature on October 31. There is a 1% origination fee and the current interest rate is 6.25%.

*Moved by Ms. Hauth-Schmid, seconded by Mr. Konczak, that the resolution be approved. Motion carried 8:0.*

### **c. Enrollment/Recruiting**

The Board reviewed the current status of enrollment for next year. Applications for both K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade exceed capacity. There was a request to reformat the enrollment chart so that it is easier to read and understand.

### **d. 2010-2011 Budget Guidance**

The Finance Committee had submitted to the Board a spreadsheet that indicates the estimated cost implications of the various ideas generated by the Board at its January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Board discussed the various items with the goal of providing the Finance Committee feedback on the Board's views on each, and some rough idea of priority. The Finance Committee will then use this guidance to develop two different budget scenarios.

The Board then engaged in a discussion of the information presented by the Finance Committee. It was acknowledged that several of the ideas are interrelated and a decision on one can affect the others. It was also discussed that if the Board wanted to increase class sizes (one of the options to be evaluated) it would benefit the school to make the decision now as the lottery for next year's enrollment would be happening in the next week. The Board discussed how small class sizes are valued by the community but that even with a small increase in the class size limit the classes would still be small compared to other schools. The Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers have indicated that small class size is important to immersion learning and have said more than 25 students would be challenging. There was general agreement that an immersion program has a unique challenge in dealing with natural attrition in the higher grades because children must know German to successfully enter in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade or higher. There was interest expressed in looking into adding a third section for Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to help with this issue, but the school does not have the space to accommodate new classes at this point. The ideas of combining some of the smaller upper classes did not seem as viable because the class size would then be closer to 30 students.

*Moved by Ms. Kompel to increase the class size limit from 22 to 24 students in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade only, provided that there be a dedicated intern in each class, seconded by Ms. Wiste. Motion carried 8:0.*

The Board moved on to other ideas. It was suggested that having split sections for English is a luxury given the financial challenges the school is facing. Because students begin English instruction in the third grade, it would be beneficial to continue the small class sizes allowed by the split sections but that in the higher grades the sections should be combined. The Amity program was seen as very valuable when compared to the costs and seen as a high priority. Several board members also mentioned that the cost savings gained by delaying the implementation of the third language did not seem worth it, after the community had put some much time into planning it. Although the specialists are valued and their complete elimination would be supported only as a last resort, there was general agreement that if need be, the hours of specialist could be reduced. There was also general agreement that the school should move forward on implementing Q-comp, a state-funded initiative which is aimed at improving teaching quality and accountability.

In summary, the ideas that were generally agreed to as having the least negative impact to what the school community values were combining English sections, slightly raising class size limits, reducing specialist hours, reorganizing teaching positions in middle school, accepting a negotiated lower cost for the Amity interns with the associated stipulation that the school would have a minimum of 20 interns, restructuring the administrative staffing positions, and implementing Q-comp. The ideas that were

generally thought to be least acceptable were cutting the Amity program, delaying implementation of the third language, combining classes (with the exception of English sections), not expanding the administrative staffing, not having a 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and cutting all specialists.

## **E. Strategic Planning**

### **a. First step toward the development of a “Talented and Gifted” education policy**

Mr. Oxenham referred to the Board packet and recommended sending the Director to a workshop on this topic to begin the process of developing a “talented and gifted” policy, which is legally required. Ms. Hauth-Schmid suggested that our best information might come from directly calling other schools with programs already in place. She will assist Ms. Fjelstad with researching this issue this summer. The Board directed Ms. Fjelstad to determine if the workshop will benefit her research or not.

### **b. Discussion of formal hiring process**

The Governance Committee is seeking guidance in order to propose a hiring policy for the Board’s next meeting. Mr. Oxenham referred to the sample policy in the packet from the MSBA (Minnesota School Board Association). Ms. Fjelstad indicated that she has been informed by MACS (Minnesota Association of Charter Schools) that charter schools may have more freedom in developing a hiring policy than traditional districts and that adopting the sample policy as written may be too cumbersome when it comes to making hiring decisions, mandating that she get full board approval before any hires. She suggested the establishment of particular criteria which would identify a hire as needing to come to the full Board. Discussion ensued over the board’s role in hiring and how it may be different with different kinds of hires (i.e. new positions vs. filling existing positions). The idea of having the whole board review new positions before they are advertised but allowing the executive committee to approve contracts was discussed. It was agreed that the current policy of allowing the director to hire part time or temporary positions without board approval as long as they did not exceed the budget was working. It was generally agreed that the Governance Committee should propose a policy that balances board oversight with allowing the director the flexibility and authority to hire staff as she deems appropriate.

### **c. Proposal for new office staffing plan**

Ms. Kompel briefly summarized the process that led to the proposed Site Administration Manager (SAM) position being presented to the Board. In response to a previous request for an assistant director position, it was decided that an analysis of the current administrative needs of the school should be done before any additional positions were created. The proposed SAM position was developed from information gathered from interviews and a timesheet analysis provided by the existing administrative staff. The SAM position will report to the director and will be responsible for supervising the other administrative positions. The school currently employs 2.3 FTE in administrative positions. The administrative needs analysis conducted recommends that the school have 3 FTE, the new SAM position, a receptionist, and an office manager. It is estimated that this change will increase annual administrative salary costs by approximately \$30,000. The proposal presented to the Board also included hiring the SAM position in this fiscal year, which would require an additional \$7,000 in administrative salary costs. Discussion ensued regarding the particular tasks and skills assigned to the SAM position and how it compared to the previous Director of Curriculum position.

(Ms. Haessly left at 8:25 p.m.)

*Moved by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn, seconded by Ms. Kompel to approve for the fiscal year 2011 the move from 2.3 to 3.0 administrative FTE’s which includes the SAM position at 1.0 FTE. Motion carried 7:0.*

*Moved by Ms. Hauth-Schmid, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn that in order to hire a Site Administration Manager, as outlined in the current administrative staffing report, in the current 2010 fiscal year the 2010 administrative staffing budget will be increased, not to exceed an additional \$10,000. Motion carried 7:0.*

**d. Report of results from High School Survey**

Nancy Bostrom presented the results of the High School Options survey to the Board. Referring to her written report, she noted a response rate of 62 %. The survey results showed that 73% of participants have already thought about high school options. A strong academic program is the highest priority for choosing a high school (mentioned by over 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of respondents). The opportunity to continue German was second highest at 28%. Also mentioned as important factors were extra-curricular activities and electives. Over 1/3 of participants have already done research on high schools and only 1/3 are satisfied with the current options available. Those who were satisfied were not overly specific. Those who were unsatisfied noted the lack of German, international focus, or concern about the larger size of school. A high number of people are still open to other options, indicating that they may not feel they have found a perfect fit. 83% would likely to consider the high school concept outlined in the survey. Only 4% stated unlikely. The vast majority of respondents (87%) are likely to stay at TCGIS through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. More follow up might be needed with those who feel less likely to stay, to understand what factors they are considering. One third of the participants reported that the existence of a high school would make them more likely to stay. Based on the survey results, the High School Research Group feel they should pursue the high school concept outlined in the survey. They are actively pursuing relationships with the other metro area immersion programs. The Board expressed their appreciation for Ms. Bostrom's work.

**e. High School Research group update**

Ms. Hauth-Schmid reported on the work the research group has done to date. In late January members of the group met with Ms. Tara Fortune of CARLA (Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition) to identify specific steps that would be needed to move forward on this project. Mr. Eric Hauth-Schmid presented these steps to the MAIN (Minnesota Advocates for Immersion Network) group and the ideas were warmly received. The next step will be to find funding to hire a grant writer for a FLAP or STEM grant to secure funding for a project manager.

**E. Academic Oversight**

**a. Approval of mid-year Director evaluation survey**

Mr. Oxenham asked for comments on the proposed survey. The process of how survey results would be tabulated and presented to the board was discussed. It was generally agreed that it would be more efficient if the executive committee compiled the written comments included in the surveys and then grouped them together in a summary that would be presented to the whole board in a closed session at the March Board meeting.

*Moved by Ms. Kompel, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn to approve the survey for the Director's mid-year evaluation. Motion carried 7:0.*

**b. Director's Report**

Ms. Fjelstad summarized her written report. There is a new representative for the school's payroll service provider and through discussions it has become apparent that some changes are required in how employee health insurance benefits are offered. The school can either enroll in a \$250 Premium only

Plan (POP) that would allow employees to avoid being taxed on their health insurance premiums or the school would receive this for free if they enrolled in Short Term Disability which would be an additional employee benefit protecting employees who are not able to work due to medical reasons. The Short Term Disability Insurance would cost \$165 a month.

*Moved by Ms. Kompel, seconded by Ms. Hauth-Schmid, to authorize the Director to enroll until the end of the fiscal year in short term disability with a maximum allowed amount of \$800. Motion carried 7:0.*

**c. FY 2011 School calendar preview**

Ms. Fjelstad reviewed a preview of the school calendar. In general, the proposed calendar closely follows the current calendar. Ms. Fjelstad asked for input regarding the timing of spring break as Easter is relatively late in 2011. The Board agreed it should be earlier (late March as is traditional for the school). Ms. Fjelstad is proposing that written report cards be separated from conferences allowing for more frequent communication on student assessment between the teachers and parents. The board discussed ways to elicit parent feedback on the calendar and it was agreed that it should be included in the Elternbrief and that parents would be given the opportunity to provide comments before the calendar is brought back to the board next month for approval.

**d. FY 2011 Staffing Plan/ Curriculum preview**

Ms. Fjelstad reviewed her written preview of next year's staffing and curriculum plan. Her priorities were meeting students' needs while being as fiscally trim as possible. Some changes highlighted were scheduling 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade in parallel blocks with each class studying the same subject at the same time allowing for interchange between the two classes and having a specialist rotation between the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades where specialists would teach in 2-3 week long blocks. Another component of the curriculum plan is to offer Spanish as an elective for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade with additional German instruction being offered as an alternative. In addition, English would be taught to the entire class in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and higher. Discussion ensued regarding the proposed curriculum plan and how it related to the proposed staffing plan. There was general agreement that next year's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students should be informally polled to see how many would take Spanish to ease planning. Some concern regarding how the specialist block schedule would impact Sport was expressed. There was also general acknowledgment that staffing decisions may be impacted by the budget process.

(Rebecca Hauth-Schmid left at 9:40 p.m.)

*Moved by Ms. Kompel, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn to approve two FTE 4<sup>th</sup> grade elementary certified German-speaking teachers for the upcoming year. Motion carried 6:0.*

*Moved by Mr. Konczak, seconded by Ms. Kompel to approve two FTE equivalents for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade for the upcoming year. Motion carried 6:0.*

**F. Other Business**

Mr. Oxenham announced that Herr Gert Wilhem, the Fachberater and representative of the German government, would be visiting the school on March 5<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the Consul General will be visiting the school on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and State Representative Mindy Greiling will be visiting on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Oxenham extended the Board's gratitude to Ken Greener for his additional year of service to the school by serving as a Board director for the past year. Ms. Kompel reported that the Graduate Volunteer Consultants (GVC) have notified the school that they will not be doing a survey as originally thought because they were able to gather sufficient information from past surveys. They anticipate presenting their report to the school in mid March.

**G. Adjourn**

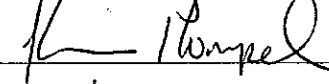
*Moved by Mr. Oxenham, seconded by Ms. Kompel to adjourn at 10:38 pm. Motion carried 6:0.*

**Action Items:**

1. Ms. Haessly will follow up on supplying details requested on financial statements.
2. Ms. Fjelstad will revise enrollment form.
3. Ms. Fjelstad will ensure that parents are provided with a draft of next year's school calendar for comments.

**Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Secretary**

Name: Kimberly Kompel

Signed: 

Date: 4/12/2010

Date February 23, 2010 minutes approved by TCGIS Board: 3/24/10