

Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Meeting
Charter District 4152
March 24, 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 6:34 p.m.

Board Members Kimberly Kompel, Holly Wiste, Susanne Grimm, Mary Zellmer-Bruhn, Debra Haessly, Gretchen Nessel, Jürgen Konczak, and Rebecca Hauth-Schmid were present.

Also present were TCGIS Director Annika Fjelstad and other parents and guests.

A. Approval of March 24, 2010 Agenda

Moved by Mr. Oxenham, seconded by Ms. Hauth-Schmid, to approve the agenda. Motion carried 7:0.

B. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of February 23rd, 2010 Minutes
- b. Donation register
- c. Payment register
- d. School and Board Committee Reports

Moved by Mr. Oxenham, seconded by Ms. Wiste, that the consent agenda be approved. Motion carried 7:0.

Mr. Konczak arrived at 6:37pm

C. Financial Oversight

a. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Haessly presented a summary of the most recent Finance Committee meeting. The Finance Committee spent most of its last meeting working on the budget scenario that will be presented to the Board tonight. The school has applied for \$100,000 line of credit as opposed to \$150,000 because the cash flow projections have improved from the previous months' financial statements. There is no penalty to the school if the line needs to be extended at a later date. The Board reviewed the current financial statements.

Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn arrived at 6:45pm

b. Budget for 2010-2011 (first review)

Ms. Haessly presented a draft budget scenario to the Board for an initial review. This budget was designed to present the Board with potential scenarios for feedback to use when putting together the first full proposal in April. The Finance Committee began this budgeting process by annotating the current the budget. Then a small work group came up with different budget scenarios based on guidance from the Board. A "baseline" budget scenario was presented to the Finance Committee. The baseline budget was meant as a starting point for the Finance Committee to discuss and tweak and was not as conservative as budgets have traditionally been at the school. The Finance Committee then made changes to reflect the tradition of conservative budgeting and to account for the uncertainty in funding from the State. The budget scenario being presented to the Board uses 225 ADM in calculating State aid, which is a conservative estimate, similar to estimates used in the past budgets. The budget

scenario built in a 5% cut in State aid (about \$60,000) to account for the fact that future funding is uncertain and cuts to K-12 financing are likely. The proposed addition of Q-comp, a state-funded initiative aimed at improving teaching quality and accountability (approx. \$54,000) was also included in the budget. In order to balance the budget, the proposal included the following changes to specialist education: Art and Sport would each be covered by a 50% FTE (full-time equivalent) position, and Music would not be offered within the regular curriculum. The Amity Intern program remained intact, with the newly negotiated reduced rate for the interns. The proposed budget also included a reduction in the lease that has not yet been approved by the landlord.

The Board discussed the current supply fee for materials from Germany and how it could be implemented in the future. The Board would like the Finance Committee, in conjunction with Director Fjelstad, to consider what the fee pays for and advise on the how to collect the fee. The Board also discussed the implications of including Q-Comp in the budget. The deadline to submit an application to the Q-Comp program for the 2010/2011 school year is July 1st. Based on the complexity of the issue and the need to do research on implementation and gather staff feedback, the Board felt that meeting the deadline for this year may be challenging, but that the research should begin as soon as possible, as implementing Q-Comp or some other version of a merit-based pay structure, is something that the school has been interested in for a while. The Board then discussed the reduction in specialist hours. The Board understood the financial pressures facing the school but asked the Finance Committee to look for other ways to reduce the budget without cutting hours for Sport (PE) and Kunst (Art). The Board values what the specialists add to the quality of our program and felt the loss of music from the regular curriculum was already a big sacrifice. The Board directed the Finance Committee to remove Q-Comp and the presumed lease reduction from the budget. The talks with the Landlord would continue but until an agreement is reached, the budget should reflect the accurate lease costs.

c. GIEF grant proposal

Ms. Fjelstad reported to the Board that GIEF has indicated its intent to dissolve and to disperse its remaining funds in the near future. GIEF supports not only TCGIS but also Kinderclub and Kinderstube. GIEF is asking all of the organizations it supports to submit grant requests. Ms. Fjelstad presented a document listing the costs associated with some of the things that could be included in a grant request and requested guidance from the Board on what should be included in the application. The Board directed that a grant be prepared asking for partial funding of the Amity Intern program and two desktop computers for every class requesting one from 3rd grade and higher.

d. Student Enrollment/Recruiting

The Board reviewed the current status of enrollment for next year. The Board directed Director Fjelstad to over-enroll the first grade by two students, in keeping with the school's policy in kindergarten, so as to plan for the fact that some students are likely to drop out between now and September.

E. Strategic Planning

a. Board elections

Ms. Kompel introduced a proposed policy submitted by the Governance Committee that would allow the Board to determine annually if the school board elections are to be held at an annual meeting, as it has been done in the past, or by having an election day. The motivation behind the change was to make participation in the election easier on the voting members. The Governance Committee would have a ballot box available at the school on the determined election day and would confirm voter eligibility before a vote was cast. The proxy vote process implemented last year would continue. In

order to allow for an election day some changes in the current TCGIS bylaws would need to be approved.

b. Changes in bylaws

Ms. Kompel explained that the main motivation for reviewing the bylaws was the passage of the new charter school law last June and briefly summarized the changes. The Governance Committee also submitted the bylaws to MACS (Minnesota Association of Charter Schools) for review and comment. In addition, the Governance Committee took the opportunity to clean up the bylaws so that they reflect current practice and incorporated changes that would allow the board elections to hold outside of an annual meeting. It was discussed that the wording in Article 4, Section 3, allowing the Board to be a teacher majority should be removed as, although it is allowed by law, it is not the school's intent.

Moved by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn, seconded by Ms. Wiste to approve the bylaw revisions as amended. Motion carried 9:0.

Moved by Ms. Kompel, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn to approve the School Board Election Process policy. Motion carried 9:0.

c. Hiring Policy

Mr. Oxenham reviewed the hiring policy that was included in the Board packet. The policy was revised based on guidance provided by the Board at its meeting in February and was reviewed by the Governance Committee. The policy allows either the executive committee or the board to approve hires, as long as the standards agreed to by the Board in the beginning of the hiring process are met.

Moved by Ms. Kompel, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn, to approve the TCGIS Hiring Policy. Motion carried 9:0.

d. Hiring update

Ms. Fjelstad reported to the Board that an offer of employment has been extended to Carolyn Cook Breithaupt for a 2010/2011 4th grade teaching position, pending board approval, and that the offer has been accepted. Ms. Breithaupt is an American citizen who has lived in Germany since she was 12 and has 17 years of experience. The salary was approved by the Board Chair and Treasurer. The hiring process included a hiring committee of teachers and 6 candidates were interviewed. Two job offers were made but one offer has been declined. There is a hiring committee in place for the 5th grade position.

Moved by Ms. Nessel, seconded by Ms. Hauth-Schmid, to approve the hiring of Carolyn Cook Breithaupt at 1 FTE as a 4th Grade classroom teacher. Motion carried 9:0.

E. Academic Oversight

a. Director's Report

Ms. Fjelstad presented her report to the Board. Ms. Fjelstad updated the Board regarding the purchasing of short term disability insurance, which was previously approved by the Board. Unfortunately, the cost of offering the insurance is higher than originally estimated and would cost \$400 a month for the entire staff as opposed to the previously presented figure of \$174 a month. Due to the budget constraints, Ms. Fjelstad will instead apply for the POP application to address the original issue of eliminating the employee taxation on medical benefits.

Ms. Fjelstad also indicated that two candidates for the Site Administration Manager position have been

interviewed but the hiring committee has decided to keep the hiring process open for a little longer. She also indicated that the school's teacher salary scale needs to be reviewed as our existing teachers are disadvantaged under the current system. In addition, the idea of implementing a merit pay system should also be addressed. It is her intent to bring a proposal to the Finance Committee and then to the Board at its next meeting.

b. 2010-2011 School Calendar

Ms. Fjelstad indicated that she had received only one comment from a parent since the calendar was last brought before the Board. The parent was concerned about having the days off right before or after a weekend, thereby creating long weekends. Ms. Fjelstad was under the impression that the school, in general, preferred to group days off around other days off. The 2010-2011 School Calendar has the same number of days as the current school year. The calendar also separates the parent/teacher conferences from the delivery of report cards. Report cards will be sent at the end of each semester.

Moved by Ms. Nesset, seconded by Ms. Hauth-Schmid, to approve the 2010-2011 School Calendar. Motion carried 9:0.

c. 2010-2011 6th grade curriculum (first review)

Ms. Fjelstad introduced the curriculum documents included in the Board packet. The first was a document (the Middle Years Program) that had previously been approved by the Board. The second was a more detailed plan of how the curriculum goals of the first document could be implemented. The second document (Addendum to the Middle Years Program) is being written by Mary-Fred Bausman-Watkins and Katie Stephens and they presented the first installment to the Board for further guidance. Ms. Bausman-Watkins indicated that she and Ms. Stephens had used the first document as a guide but wanted to create a more concrete and detailed plan that would be helpful to both teachers and parents and could be used to show what a typical day might look like.

Several Board members indicated that the previously approved Middle School Program document provided in the Board packet was not the most up-to-date. There was discussion related to ability grouping and its impact on children. The Board also discussed the relationship between the first document and the plans that Ms. Stephens and Ms. Bausman-Watkins were working on. It was also noted that not all issues related to problems in implementation can be addressed in a plan. Some possible ideas to help with implementation included creating guidelines and checklists.

The Board indicated that the first document should be updated to reflect previously agreed to working changes regarding ability grouping as well as changes that reflect what we have learned in our first year of implementing the middle school curriculum. In addition, the first document refers to language goals that need to be updated. In general, the Board was pleased with the information included in the detailed curriculum plan and looked forward to seeing the completed document.

Ms. Haessly left at 8:50

Ms. Wiste left at 9:25

F. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

G. Closed Session

Mr. Oxenham closed the Board meeting. The Director's evaluation survey results were handed out to the Board members and reviewed. The executive committee had met on March 21st and reviewed the

comments that had been included on the director's evaluation survey and a summary of the comments was distributed and discussed. The Board directed the Board Chair to summarize the points agreed to by the Board and present the information to Ms. Fjelstad.

H. Adjourn

Moved by Mr. Oxenham, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn to adjourn at 11:10 pm. Motion carried 7 :0.

Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Secretary

Name: Kimberly Korpel

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 5/3/10

Date March 24, 2010 minutes approved by TCGIS Board: 4/27/10