

Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Retreat
Charter District 4152
August 29th, 2009, 9:00 a.m.
German American Institute
301 Summit Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Opening Remarks

Andrew Oxenham called the meeting to order at 9:11am. Board members Mary Zellmer-Bruhn, Andrew Oxenham, Rebecca Hauth-Schmid, Holly Wiste, Debra Haessly, Susanne Grimm, Juergen Konczak, Ken Greener and Kimberly Kompel were present. Board member Gretchen Nessel was absent. School Director Annika Fjelstad was also present.

A. Board training

Sandy Schmidt from School Business Solutions, Inc. presented information pertaining to Board financial oversight responsibilities. Michael Dorneich, Nancy Bostrom, Mary-Fred Watkins, and Michael Sampson presented information regarding Board roles and responsibilities, Roberts Rules, conflict of interest and open meeting laws.

Ken Greener left at 2:00 p.m.

B. Strategic Planning

1. High School Research Group Update

Ms. Hauth-Schmid reported the high school research group had an initial meeting and brainstormed several avenues in which a high school complementing the current TCGIS curriculum could be developed. The research group realized the first step should be determining if the desire to pursue such a high school exists.

Ms. Hauth-Schmid moved, seconded by Ms. Wiste that a parent survey be conducted to determine parent interest in a high school option.

The board discussed the need for the survey and that both internal and external stakeholders should be involved in the discussion if the survey shows sufficient interest to continue the research.

Mr. Oxenham called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed, 8:0.

2. Teacher Assessment

Director Fjelstad updated the Board on her plan for teacher assessments. She indicated that her goal is to have a two-tiered presence in the classroom, both formal and informal. She will prioritize doing formal assessments on all new teachers this fall. It was discussed that goals related to assessments should be clear with a procedure for follow up. A merit pay policy was discussed, and although it is something the school would like to pursue, pressing operational matters require that the Director postpone bringing such a policy to the board until sometime in the Spring of 2010.

3. Third Language

Mr. Oxenham reminded the Board of the history of this project. A parent survey had been conducted which resulted in the top choices of Spanish and Chinese as the offered third language. The Board had been surveyed to prioritize criteria used to select the language and an analysis of how well French, Spanish, and Chinese met the criteria was done. The results of the analysis showed Chinese and Spanish outperformed French and were similar in comparison to each other. The Board had previously decided to begin the third language in the 6th grade as a required part of the curriculum, allowing for exceptions based on IP requirements. In order to give the staff enough time to prepare for the introduction of a third language into the 6th grade curriculum, the Board should decide on the third language by its October Board meeting.

Mr. Konczak moved, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn, that a task force research the operational feasibility of offering Chinese vs. Spanish as the third language in 6th grade, update parents and provide opportunity for feedback, and report back to the Board at its October meeting.

There was discussion regarding the funding opportunities for each language, ease of hiring teachers, and availability of teaching materials. It was generally agreed that speaking with schools that have programs in these languages would be beneficial. The Board had previously been provided information on research related to third language acquisition by Joan DeJaeghere and she was mentioned as someone whose expertise would benefit the task force.

Mr. Oxenham called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed, 8:0.

Action Item: Mr. Oxenham will contact Joan DeJaeghere to discuss the formation of the taskforce.

4. Board and School Committees - roles, responsibility, and communication

There was discussion related to the role of committees in general. Committees are not decision making groups, but rather responsible for making recommendations to either the Board (if a board committee) or the Director (if a school committee). All Board

committees are required to meet the open meetings law as they are a subset of the Board. The open meeting law also pertains to information that can be shared by e-mail.

Ms. Wiste moved, seconded by Ms. Zellmer-Bruhn that the Facilities Committee's status change from a Board Committee to a School Committee.

The actual work being done by the facility committee is different then the original committee purpose of looking for a new facility. Most of the issues discussed are things that the school director should decide vs. the school board. In addition, a lot of committee work is conducted between meetings due to timing issues and the fact that it organizes work projects. Being a school committee would allow it to operate more effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Oxenham called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed, 8:0.

Ms. Kompel moved, seconded by Ms. Hauth-Schmid that the Technology Committee's status change from a Board Committee to a School Committee.

It was discussed that the Technology Committee runs itself similarly to the Facilities Committee and would also benefit from the change in status.

Mr. Oxenham called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed, 8:0.

The Board recognized the hard work done by all the School and Board Committees and encouraged all school volunteers to sign into the volunteer log.

After the change in status of the Facilities and Technology Committees there are currently four Board Committees: Executive, Finance, Grants, and Governance. In the by-laws a Nominating committee that is chaired by the Secretary of the Board is mentioned. The Nominating Committee is now a part of the Governance Committee. The by-laws are currently being reviewed by MACS resulting in recommendations in changes that should be made according to the new charter school law passed this summer. Mr. Greener is following up on the by-law update process and Ms Kompel, as Board Secretary, will chair the Governance Committee.

There was also a discussion related to the role of the Parent Liaison. The Parent Liasion, currently Ms. Kompel, can help direct parent comments to the appropriate people, whether that be a classroom teacher, staff, the director, or the Board. It was agreed that the types of issues that the Board normally decides on should be further explained. Mr. Oxenham indicated he would address some of this during his remarks at the Meet the Board event, scheduled on September 24th.

5. Strategic Plan

There was discussion related to the benefits a strategic plan would bring to the school. Some concerns were expressed that perhaps the timing is not right due to the fact that there are so many new staff members. There was also concern expressed that unless it is clear what the goals are of starting a strategic planning process, it could result in wasting a lot of time without much benefit. It was discussed that the goal would be a guiding document based on our mission that includes our organization's core values and strategic objectives. Normally an organization relies on outside facilitators to help guide the process. Several options were discussed. It was decided to do some preliminary research into possible facilitators, estimated costs, and possible funding sources and discuss the topic again at a future Board meeting.

C. Adjourn

Ms. Kompel moved, Ms. Wiste seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 8:0. The meeting ended at 4:09 p.m.

Next Regular Board Meeting: September 29, 2009, 6:30 p.m.

Twin Cities German Immersion School Board Secretary

Name: Kimberly Kompel

Signed: Kim Kompel

Date: 10/5/2009

Date August 29, 2009 minutes approved by TCGIS Board: 9/29/2009