

Regular Meeting of the Yinghua Academy School Board
1616 Buchanan St. NE, Minneapolis, School Library
Thursday, February 17, 2011, 6:00 pm
final

Board Members in Attendance

Maryann Choy (Secretary), Scott Jax, Taoyuan Li, Cindy Moeller, Keri Norell, Doug Parish (Treasurer), Abigail Pribbenow (Chair), Jen Shadowens, Kristin Swenson, Dr. Ben Weng

Academic Director and Interim Executive Director in Attendance

Dr. Luyi Lien, Ursina Swanson

YACA Liaison in Attendance

Alison Krupa Parks

Public in Attendance

Ruth Hanson (teacher), Karen Lu (parent) and Ruth Straub (parent) attended the meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Pribbenow called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

II. AGENDA APPROVAL

The MOTION by Ms. Swenson to approve the agenda with one addition to the Approvals, was seconded and passed.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

IV. BOARD APPROVALS

A. Minutes from Regular Meeting of the School Board, January 10, 2011

The MOTION by Ms. Shadowens to approve the January 10, 2011 minutes with changes, was seconded and passed.

B. Bylaws

The MOTION by Ms. Moeller to approve the attorney-recommended changes to the Bylaws with two changes to Article IV, Section 2b Tenure to allow multiple terms and to correct a typo in Section 2c.ii.B Governance Model, was seconded and passed.

C. Funding for Classroom Page Security

Ms. Shadowens requested to expense a one-time fee, payable to Treefort, to set up separate passwords for each classroom page. Funding is available in the Marketing budget. Ms. Swenson reminded the Board that the FLAP grant supported the new website, and, possibly, monies are available for this feature. Ms. Shadowens will follow up appropriately.

The MOTION by Mr. Jax to approve up to \$1,000 to establish separate passwords for each classroom was seconded and passed.

V. INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

A. Mrs. Swanson reported.

1. Staffing changes were made in the front office to gain efficiencies. The Yinghua Care Coordinator has been combined with the front desk responsibilities. Marsha Andrews will staff the front desk as of February 16.
2. Dr. Lien will submit a letter of resignation to the Board because her spouse is an employee. This conflict of interest became apparent when reviewing the requirements for Friends of Education contract renewal. Dr. Lien will continue to attend Board meetings and present academic reports.
3. Recognizing there is a complicated set of circumstances in planning for a facilities expansion, Mrs. Swanson thanked Mr. Jax, Ms. Lu and Ms. Sebesta for preparing and presenting facility options to the Board tonight. Mrs. Swanson asked the Board to consider the following when reviewing these options:
 - a) For solid, long-term immersion planning, Yinghua should graduate enough immersion students to provide for adequate programming at the next level.
 - b) Consider adding another K- section to allow for attrition and sustained enrollment. 195 K-applicants indicate a strong interest in Yinghua.
 - c) Conversely, 17 sixth graders applied and were accepted at Open Enrollment. 25 students are optimal for programming an additional section. Given space limitations and program needs, Yinghua may not be able to support a dual-immersion sixth grade and questions its alignment with the school's mission. Dual-immersion requires new teaching schedules and instruction methods.
4. Currently, the school is recruiting 4-5 native-speaking immersion teachers who reside in the United States for a long-term commitment. Also, began conversations with key staff and grade level leaders to ascertain their intentions for 2011-12.

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Facilities, Mark Burgess and Edie Sebesta, U+B Architecture & Design

1. Ms. Sebesta presented three scenarios for 2011-12 school year.
 - a) With 3 K classes.

- b) With 4 K classes.
- c) With 3 K classes and two 6th grade sections including dual-immersion
- 2. Mr. Burgess said these three scenarios assume: 1) Configure within the same footprint to maintain the same floor area ratio (FAR), and 2) Design without degrading the value of the property.
- 3. Known space issues were highlighted during this process.
 - a) Lack of space for an appropriate staff lounge.
 - b) With its growing enrollment and programming needs, Yinghua may need to make the corner offices on the second floor more permanent.
- 4. For the 2012-13 School Year, space becomes even tighter.
 - a) Best case scenario would be to add 3-4 temporary units, but this option may not be cost effective due to the necessary site preparation. Permitting restrictions would require bathrooms in these units for those more than 500 feet away from the main building thus increasing the installation cost.
 - b) The City of MSP said, most charter schools are moving away from temporary units because of the high cost for a relatively short term and code requirements. If Yinghua decides to pursue this, Ms. Sebesta strongly suggests that we start discussions with the City very soon to understand the code requirements and to take the necessary steps to make it work. We also should check with MDE to find schools that have recently used temporary units under the newer code requirements.
 - c) Rough cost estimates and timelines are needed for temporary units.
- 5. Mr. Jax recognized Mrs. Swanson's expertise in immersion learning environments as invaluable to the planning process. In a short amount of time, she has assessed and is providing insights necessary for facility expansion planning that will sufficiently support programming. Mr. Jax now feels there are finally more realistic short term options on the table to discuss.
- 6. Next steps are:
 - a) The Board needs to make the necessary decisions on K and 6th grade enrollment to guide U+B's proposal, by next week. Tentative schedule for construction completion is August 1 as teacher in-service is mid-August.
 - b) Mr. Jax will discuss the proposal with CSDC, the owner of the building.
 - c) U+B will contact Building Assets for rough cost estimates. Using Building Assets, a firm which did previous work on this building, will expedite the process as they are familiar with the building and have worked well with U+B.
 - d) The facilities committee will continue to work with the necessary entities to understand feasibility and government regulations.

B. Lottery Follow-Up

1. Ms. Pribbenow said 17 sixth graders were accepted for 2011-12 school year at the Open Enrollment lottery. The target enrollment was 20. The Board questioned the cost effectiveness of adding a sixth grade section with lower than targeted initial enrollment. Attrition rates for the dual track are unknown and could be higher than in the immersion classrooms. It has been a

challenge to attract students to a new middle school program that functions alongside an existing program with continuing students. Mrs. Swanson suggested that a new non-immersion track may have negative effects on the school's ability to focus on its immersion mission. There was discussion.

The MOTION by Mr. Parish to not pursue the dual-immersion sixth grade section, contingent on confirmation of acceptable FLAP grant modification, was seconded and passed.

The Board discussed the feasibility of adding another Kindergarten section, to graduate a critical mass of students that a high school will agree to provide programming for and to increase revenue. The Board also discussed the pros/cons of increasing class size as is recommended by Friends of Education for the purpose of providing more revenue to increase teacher salaries (to improve retention). **The MOTION by Mr. Jax to increase K enrollment, was seconded and passed.**

The MOTION by Ms. Moeller to consider adding a 4th section of Kindergarten and to consider increasing all K class size to 28 students, effective Sept. 2011, dependent on finances that considers a full-time EA in the classroom, was seconded and passed.

2. Questions raised during the discussion, that need further clarification:
 - a) Kindergarteners qualify for only 1/2 day of State funding. What is the cost of increasing Kindergarten enrollment with full time EAs?
 - b) Should we limit entry points for 2011-12 (e.g., K, 1st and 6th grade) to reduce the stress on teachers of bringing a new student up to speed? It is difficult for teachers, as it requires not only differentiated instruction at the two levels of Chinese language and content, but also, by the student's academic levels since our curriculum builds on prior knowledge acquired (Core Knowledge).

The MOTION by Ms. Choy to cover the rest of the current meeting's agenda items tonight and then RECESS the meeting and continue the discussion on February 24, 2011, at 5:30pm, in the Library of the school, was seconded and passed.

VII. YACA, Liaison to the School Board

Ms. Krupa Parks reported.

1. YACA's strategic planning is finalizing.
2. YACA board members and key volunteers will meet with Park Spanish Immersion's parent teacher organization (PTO) to glean best practices.
3. YACA will prioritize activities that Administration is looking to transfer out.
4. A replacement Volunteer Coordinator for next year is being recruited.
5. Hosting a classroom coordinator meeting in March to discuss how the program will move forward.

VIII. SCHOOL BOARD REPORTS

A. Treasurer

1. Mr. Parish offered January financials as reported and welcomed questions. Ms. Swenson asked why Membership and Dues were over budgeted at 133%. Mr. Parish said this is due to Friend's sponsorship that is driven by enrollment numbers.

B. Secretary

1. Ms. Choy distributed a Board directory that lists members by term expiration, as FYI only.

C. Committees

1. Facilities, Scott Jax, Committee Chair
 - a) Working on multiple contingency plans.
2. Marketing, Jen Shadowens, Committee Chair
 - a) Received 51 responses from the on-line communication survey, which will remain open to additional responses through conferences.
 - b) Working with Mrs. Swanson on implementing a whole new "newsletter" system.
3. Fundraising, Ms. Pribbenow, Committee Co-Chair
 - a) Give to the Max Day and Red Envelope campaigns have raised \$35K to date. Fund raising goal for the year is \$74,000; a previous listing of a \$60,000 goal was in error. The annual fund raising goal of \$74,000 for this school was set when the 2010-11 budget was approved, and it has not been changed.
 - b) Approximately \$1,500 cash was received in hong bao envelopes at the two Chinese New Year performances.
4. Nominating Committee
 - a) There are currently two interested candidates.
 - b) There will be four or five open Board positions in June.
5. Information Technology, MaryAnn Choy, Committee Chair
 - a) Ms. Choy recommended that the IT Committee report directly to the school Administration. This committee will adhere to OML and will report to the Board via the Interim ED, as needed. The Board agreed to this approach.
 - b) Four parents with IT experience have volunteered to be on the IT team.

D. Chair, Ms. Pribbenow

1. Ms. Pribbenow observed that with the many recent changes that have taken place at Yinghua, staff and faculty have occasionally brought concerns and questions directly to board members without following appropriate internal channels of communication. Responding to community questions is a responsibility of board members, but staff and faculty should bring concerns to a supervisor and/or to Mrs. Swanson directly.
2. The Annual meeting has not yet been scheduled. Given last year's poor attendance, Ms. Pribbenow recommended changing the format to a business meeting on weekday instead of a picnic/potluck on a Sunday in June. The

Board agreed to this format change. Ms. Pribbenow will identify and recommend possible dates.

3. Strategic Planning. Ms. Pribbenow and Ms. Swenson will meet with The Prouty Project on February 25, and Ms. Pribbenow and Mrs. Swanson will meet with Team Works on March 22.
4. Dr. Myriam Met will be presenting to the staff at 4pm tomorrow. The Board is invited to attend to learn more from an immersion expert.
5. Tess DeGeest completed a first draft of the 501 c 3 application forms for the Yinghua Academy Foundation. The documents are being reviewed by Ms. Pribbenow, Ms. Swenson, Ms. Moeller, Mr. Todd Harmsen (YACA Board Treasurer), Mr. Phil Duran (an attorney from the Management Assistant Program for Non-Profits) and Mr. Parish. A second draft will be completed by Ms. DeGeest and Ms. Pribbenow and will then be circulated to the above group plus others including Mrs. Swanson. Once a final draft is agreed upon it will be reviewed by Ms. Topoluk, who is an attorney, from Friends of Education.
6. 250 tickets were sold for the Lantern Festival this Saturday.

IX. ADJOURN

The MOTION by Mr. Parish to RECESS at 8:35 PM and continue the meeting on February 24 at 5:30pm was seconded and passed.

FEBRUARY 24, 2011, 5:30 p.m.

X. FEBRUARY 17 REGULAR MEETING RECONVENES

All board members were present. Mrs. Swanson and Dr. Lien were present.

Public in Attendance: Ruth Straub (parent) and a prospective NE Minneapolis parent attended.

The Board reconvened at 5:37pm to continue discussion on enrollment and facilities.

XI. DISCUSSION

1. Mrs. Swanson reported her discussion with the Washington, D.C., FLAP grant coordinator. She is waiting for confirmation of FLAP's approval of Yinghua's proposal to offer an alternative to the 6th grade non-immersion classroom. Confirmation should come on Monday, February 28.
2. Ms. Choy explained the attrition rate calculations she was able to make by using the PowerSchool ADA/ADM data. Attrition was running an average of 15% and varied from 4% to 37% by graduating class. There were some students who enrolled in Yinghua and left within 30 days; these students are in the attrition rate but could be taken out.
3. The Board discussed reservations about adding a fourth kindergarten section—would this cause the school to lose its small-school feel? The Board

- agreed the school needs a larger enrollment base to survive. When Yinghua started, there was no other full Chinese immersion in the Twin Cities; now there is growing competition, most recently from the St. Paul school district. Friends of Education also could require its schools to restrict entry points. At this point they recommend but do not require it.
4. There are 120 students on the Kindergarten waiting list. Adding another kindergarten section would meet some of this demand and would help the school program for and make viable its middle school. In addition this would address the issue of having a critical mass of graduating 8th graders for which a high school might consider offering Chinese programming.

The MOTION by Mr. Parish to add a fourth section of Kindergarten, with the same staffing model of 1 teacher and one .75 Educational Assistant with 25 students in the class was, seconded and passed.

The MOTION by Ms. Moeller to consider, during the Board's Spring 2011 strategic planning process, enrolling 28 students per Kindergarten section no sooner than Fall 2012 was seconded but did not pass.

The MOTION by Ms. Shadowens to leave open the possibility of enrolling additional students in 2011 but table the discussion until we have an affirmative FLAP grant decision and until there has been conversation with Yinghua parents, faculty and staff during the Spring 2011 strategic planning process, was seconded and passed.

The MOTION by Ms. Moeller to adjourn at 7:50pm was, seconded and passed.

Minutes drafted by MaryAnn Choy, Board Secretary

Approved by vote of Board on: March 7, 2011