

Regular Meeting of the Yinghua Academy School Board
1616 Buchanan St. NE, Minneapolis, School Library
Monday, January 10, 2011, 6:00 pm
final

Board Members in Attendance

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

Interim Executive Director in Attendance

Ursina Swanson

YACA Liaison in Attendance

Ruth Straub

Public in Attendance

Becky Hoffman (parent and Red Lantern Gala Project Lead)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Pribbenow called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

II. AGENDA APPROVAL

The MOTION by Ms. Shadowens to approve the proposed agenda, was seconded and passed.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public commented.

IV. BOARD APPROVALS

A. Minutes From the Regular Board Meeting, December 6, 2010

The MOTION by Ms. Moeller to approve the December 6, 2010 minutes with corrections, was seconded and passed.

B. Minutes From the Special Board Meeting, December 15, 2010

The MOTION by Ms. Shadowens to approve the December 15, 2010 minutes with corrections, was seconded and passed.

V. BOARD ELECTIONS

The Board conducted elections for calendar year 2011.

A. Board Secretary

The MOTION by Mr. Jax to elect Ms. Choy as Board Secretary was seconded and passed.

B. Board Treasurer

The MOTION by Ms. Swenson to elect Mr. Parish as Board Treasurer was seconded and passed.

C. Board Chair

The MOTION by Dr. Li to elect Ms. Pribbenow as Board Chair was seconded and passed.

VI. INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Pribbenow welcomed Ms. Swanson. Ms. Swanson extended her thanks to the Board for the honor and privilege to be part of Yinghua. Having been on the job for less than a week, Ms. Swanson shared her initial impressions and identified priorities.

1. Ms. Swanson recognizes Yinghua's strengths and will take direction from the school's Mission statement. A clear, strong vision and focus are needed. Initial efforts will focus on academic programs, particularly at the Middle School level.
2. They are interviewing teachers to address hiring and filling positions for the next school year. Establishing competitive teacher compensation is critical, particularly in a tight market for effective Chinese immersion teachers.
3. The issue of teacher salaries has led to the question of where Yinghua might gain efficiencies with staffing and personnel. When asked, Ms. Swanson said, Parks Spanish immersion school, although different in that it is a district rather than charter school, had approximately 610 students with 55-60 staff. Yinghua has 373 students with 50-60 staff.
4. Ms. Swanson recommends establishing a core, stable staff working in teams and developing teachers' ability to teach differentiated instruction (teaching at different levels) in both content and language. In their staff meeting, Ms. Swanson heard teachers say, how hard they work. She responded to the teachers, "We will work smarter, not harder."
5. Ms. Swanson is in conversation with FLAP grant administrators in D.C. regarding what might be some alternatives next year to the addition at Yinghua of a "dual track" 6th grade class.

VII. ACADEMIC DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Pribbenow will add *Academic Director Report* as a standing report at the regular Board meetings.

1. Dr. Lien reported that K through 7th grade first mid-term assessments for ELA and Math have been completed. The QComp team is interpreting the data to develop lessons to "re-teach" content that is insufficient.
2. Hiring a 4th/5th grade English teacher is in process with two candidates scheduled to do demo lessons this week.

3. With Groves Academy's limited funding, the Orton-Gillingham teacher training has been reduced. Other options for using the O-G program more efficiently, are being pursued.
4. All staff have been working on the Chinese New Year program. Teachers were asked to integrate lessons into the performances. Confucius Institute granted \$5,000 for the CNY celebration. Dr. Lien will send the Confucius Institute a DVD copy of the performances. The Board asked for a written assessment of the CNY performance to include budget, costs, lessons learned, what went well, and what can be improved to be presented at a Board meeting following CNY.
5. Yinghua is on track with the two main FLAP grant deliverables. 1. Increase the number of students, as mentioned in Ms. Swanson report and 2. In Year Two, increase Chinese instruction to 600 minutes per week. Currently, the middle school has 300 minutes of CLA (Chinese Language Arts) a week; 60 minutes of media class, 60 minutes of Chinese culture and humanities and 180 minutes of morning meeting and clubs. Dr. Lien is revising the MS schedule to increase Chinese instruction time.
6. Sister school communication has been challenging given the time difference and parents' scheduling concerns. A letter explaining the sister school relationship will go out to 5th-7th grade families.

VIII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Enrollment Policy

1. The 6/15/10 Enrollment Policy was approved at the August 23, 2010, regular Board Meeting with clarification to separate sibling lottery where space is limited and to include enrollment of multiples acknowledging the subsequent potential of over-enrollment in a grade.
2. The Board discussed Friends of Education (Friends) recommendation of limiting enrollment to K, first and sixth grades per Friends Executive Director Beth Topoluk. Mr. Jax clarified that Friends is strongly recommending but not requiring current schools to adopt these entry points. New Friends schools are required to limit enrollment in certain grades.
3. The Board also discussed Friends's recommendations of examining class size, attrition rates and competitive teacher pay.
4. Given the timing with enrollment lottery scheduled for February 10, the Board decided not to make any changes at this time to the enrollment policy for school year 2011-12. Further discussion during Yinghua's strategic planning will help guide changes to the enrollment policy.

B. 2010-2011 Revised Budget

1. Mr. Parish shared November's and December's financial reports. Discussion focused on the more recent month of December. A working budget column was added as several assumptions have changed since the original budget was approved in June. The working budget shows a break even budget.
2. Expenses that have been revised include: \$8,000 for Marketing, \$10,000 for facilities expansion legal fees and an additional \$5,000 for PowerSchool licensing. The building fund was reduced by \$5,000.

3. Legal fees do not include immigration fees. Administration is agreeable to this with the understanding they will propose an amount when it is known.
4. Payroll includes two one-time stipends, totaling \$4,000, recognizing two administrators' increased responsibilities during the Executive Director transition.
5. Yinghua Academy received most of the State holdbacks except for the \$17,000 expected in January - May.
6. Fund balance goal is 15% by June 30, 2013. Mr. Jax said Friends expects a 20% fund balance when applying for an expansion, if that becomes necessary for Yinghua.
7. Yinghua needs to re-evaluate the Spring Carnival purpose, budget and fund-raising capabilities and align its control accordingly.

The MOTION by Mr. Jax to approve the revised budget was seconded and passed.

C. Recommended Changes to the Bylaws

Given the limited meeting time, discussion on changes to the Bylaws was postponed until the next regular Board meeting.

D. Strategic Planning

1. Ms. Swenson and Ms. Pribbenow have yet to connect with the Prouty Project staff to see if they are interested in facilitating Yinghua's strategic planning.
2. Ms. Swanson will find out who is facilitating St. Paul's school district planning.
3. The Personnel Committee recommended to the Board that we suspend the Permanent Director search temporarily. When the Board defined the search process, it did not expect to have a candidate with the experience that Ms. Swanson brings. After one week of working with her, the Board recognizes the value Ms. Swanson can bring to strategic planning discussions.
4. The Board asked Ms. Swanson to consider extending her employment agreement beyond 2011 school year, as Interim Executive Director and will discuss this at the next regular Board meeting on January 31.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD REPORTS

A. Chair

1. Ms. Pribbenow shared the Open House Board sign-ups for January 15 and January 22.
2. Nominating Committee: Staff member Karen Calcaterra is willing to serve on the committee, and Ms. Pribbenow is pursuing two other potential members who are not on the Yinghua board.

B. Treasurer

Mr. Parish said, during the transition, many staff took on additional tasks temporarily. Ms. Norell commented on the work well done by all, as it appeared to be a smooth transition. The non-exempt staff who were eligible for overtime were paid, as such within specified limits.

The MOTION by Mr. Parish to approve a stipend of \$1,000 for the Director of Student, Family and Community Relations and \$3,000 for the Academic Director was seconded and unanimously passed. Dr. Lien, abstained from the vote.

C. Secretary

Ms. Choy is working to clarify procedures for public access to non-private communications between board members. Board members should use their Yinghua email accounts for all school business and should write "Confidential" in the subject line of any communication which includes private data restricted under MN data privacy laws.

D. Committees

1. Personnel.

- a) Ms. Swenson negotiated minor changes to Mrs. Swanson's employment letter. Mr. Parish budgeted a 30 hour work week and an additional \$5,000 allowance for hours worked beyond the norm.

The MOTION by Mr. Jax to change the hourly rate from \$60 to \$65 an hour for hours worked beyond the 30 hours a week and are mutually agreed upon with the Personnel Team was seconded and unanimously passed.

- b) Ms. Swenson researched and found no evidence that Board members completed financial background checks. Ms. Swenson asked each Board member to complete a financial background form and submit \$15 fee to Rob Tebandeke at their earliest convenience. Ms. Swenson will confirm with McDowell agency via Mr. Tebandeke if McDowell has record of financial background checks. Ms. Swenson also suggested that Board members renew their financial checks at the start of each term.

2. YACA

Ms. Straub thanked Mrs. Swanson for attending YACA's First Friday Coffee to informally meet the parent community. The next General meeting is January 22, and Mr. Schlueter will speak on safety. YACA is changing its Bylaws to make the Liaison consistent with the School Board liaison language that the School Board has discussed. They also agreed that the Volunteer Coordinator will be an *ex-officio*, voting member of YACA.

3. Marketing

- a) Ms. Shadowens recognized Eric Johnson, Mel Chaput, Sandy Doubek and Karen Calcaterra for helping with Marketing functions, including the preparations for the charter school fair. She also thanked Becky Hoffman, Coley Murphy, and Cindy Moeller for manning the booth with her and thinks three volunteers per shift are adequate for booth staffing. Ms. Shadowens noted a turning point for Yinghua at the fair this year, as this was the first where parents were seeking out Yinghua for additional information as they already knew about the school, in general. Yinghua

should assess the costs versus benefits of participating in this fair for next year.

- b) Ms. Shadowens prepared test results of Yinghua students in comparison to the State and School District. As a Marketing tool, she would like to post this data on Yinghua's website. Ms. Moeller suggested that it might be better to compare Yinghua with immersion schools and the State since many of our students are from the entire metro area. Ms. Shadowens will not post this data for now.
- c) Yinghua placed an ad in a charter school brochure produced by Center for School Change, that was mailed to about 34,000 households. Yinghua was included in an advertisement coordinated by MACS (Minnesota Association of Charter Schools) in the Jan/Feb edition of Family Times, a free publication with 60,000 circulation.

4. Facilities

- a) Mr. Jax is waiting on survey work that is expected to be completed by the first week of February.
- b) CSDC wants to have an active role in the development of Yinghua's future expansion.
- c) The architect parents, Carl Gauley and Karen Lu are assisting the Facilities Committee on contingency planning and will review the needs assessment again with Mrs. Swanson in February.

5. Fundraising

- a) Ms. Choy is helping Ms. Pribbenow with data to prepare the Red Envelope appeal. Ms. Pribbenow tried to send out appeal letters in November to take advantage of year end contributions but was side-tracked with the transition and China trip. Red Envelope appeal will start after the CNY.
- b) Logistics of where donations will be deposited needs to be defined.
- c) Lantern invitations are being sent this week.

6. Misc.

Ms. Pribbenow asked, what kind of presence the Board should have at the CNY performances, as there has not been any in the past. Ms. Pribbenow asked that any Board member present, to stand with her during the introductions where she will thank our donors and share highlights of their China trip.

I. ADJOURN

The MOTION by Mr. Jax to adjourn at 9:12 PM was seconded and passed.

Minutes drafted by MaryAnn Choy, Board Secretary

Approved by vote of Board on: January 31, 2011