

Yinghua Academy Board Minutes
July 24, 2006
St. Anthony Park Public Library

Opening of meeting at 6:35 PM.

In Attendance: Board Members: Cindy Moeller (Chair), Kristina Schatz, Doug Parish, Michael VanKeulen, Larry Yan, Zhining Chin, and Sandy Doubek. School Director: Betsy Leuth.

Others in Attendance: Peter Avirom (Teacher)

Board Members not in Attendance: Margaret Wong and Jennifer Yan

Motion to Approve the Agenda

Motion made by Ms. Schatz. Seconded by Mr. Parish. Approved unanimously.

Director's Report

All positions are filled; and all teachers will be at the school this week starting tomorrow, though some have been in since last Friday.

First Grade will be split for the first several months because of work permission issues for one of the teachers. 2nd and 3rd Grade Teacher, Test Coordinator for Yinghua Academy, and the Mentor for the AFS teacher is Peter Avirom. There is a strong candidate for coordinator for the afterschool program. The Support Specialist would work from 11 to 6 so that they can also support afterschool hours.

Professional development for Yinghua Academy teachers was held last Friday and Saturday. The instruction was provided by two highly-experienced Chinese language immersion teachers from Portland, OR. Mrs. Lueth described this as an excellent experience for the staff. Cost for this training was \$1500. Next week, Wednesday through Friday, the staff will participate in Core Knowledge Training which will be held at the Minnesota Humanities Commission. Additional future staff development includes training in Singapore Math and consultation provided by Tara Fortune, an immersion expert from the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota.

Mrs. Lueth reported that she and the teachers are reviewing several reading programs and have not made a selection yet.

Mrs. Lueth reported that she has asked all teachers to submit to her lesson plans for each week. Mrs. Lueth has discussed with the teachers that all curricula and lesson plans they develop are the property of Yinghua Academy, with a possible exception of a game that Peter Avirom is developing and might want to market on his own in the future.

Mrs. Lueth reported that, as of today, the school has received 40 enrollment packets from the 97 one-page applications that have been submitted. The board discussed establishing a "drop dead date" by which parents who have submitted a one-page application would need to submit the completed enrollment packet, in order to "hold a spot" for their child. The board decided to establish Monday, August 14, as the date when enrollment packets must be in in order to secure a spot for a child at Yinghua Academy. Parents who submit completed enrollment packets after that date will have their children admitted to the school on a "first come, first-served" basis, regardless of whether or not the parent had previously submitted a one-age application.

Mrs. Lueth and/or Ms. Moeller will send out an e-mail update to parents which will include this information and will send a "snail mail" copy to parents who do not have access to e-mail. Mr. Parish made the motion to approve the "drop dead date" and process as described above. Ms. Doubek seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Events Scheduled

This Wednesday there will be an open house from 6:00 - 7:30.

Monday, August 28, will be Kindergarten Round Up (5:30 – 6:30) and Student Orientation (6:30 – 8:00).

A parent orientation will be held several weeks after the start of the school year.

Other Scheduled Major Events

October 6, the first Friday of October – will be Yinghua Academy's first social event, the Moon Festival/Carnival. The board has asked YACA to coordinate this event.

Chinese New Year (at the end of January) – Yinghua Academy will have a talent show during the day.

End of the school year – Event connected with the Dragon Boat Festival.

During parent conference time (third week of November), which coincides with the Kite Festival and honoring elders – Kids' art and writing will be done in preparation for this event. The Kite Festival is an honoring of family so it will be a time to bring character education into the classroom.

Parent Communication Strategies:

There will be weekly communication with parents between now and the opening of the school. Either Ms. Moeller or Mrs. Lueth will send out an e-mail to parents (with hard copies via regular mail to parents who do not have e-mail). There was a discussion of providing future information letters in English and Mandarin.

There was also a discussion of having a "teachers' corner" on the website that would include information about teachers and possibly also homework information. Mrs. Lueth will talk with one of the teachers about setting up something like this.

Financial Report

Ms. Moeller reported that she is almost finished with the Final Report for the Federal Planning Grant is almost completed and will be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education in the next week. When this report has been approved, the final \$30,000 of the Planning Grant will be released to Yinghua Academy.

Mr. Parish updated the board on obtaining a line of credit for \$50,000 from Drake Bank. Mr. Parish and Ms. Moeller are finalizing the paperwork for this line of credit this school year. Though Mr. Parish expects that Yinghua Academy will not need to make use of this line of credit, it is useful to have it available and he noted that Drake Bank might be willing to increase the amount, if necessary.

Employee Benefits

Ms. Moeller updated the board on her discussions with T.C. Field, which is working with insurance providers on behalf of Yinghua Academy. The benefits will be in effect no later than September 1; and T.C. Field is working with the medical provider, Health Partners, to try to have the medical benefits effective August 1.

Marketing Report

The most recent Open House was a huge success. It was "packed." There were a lot of new families. A journalist from MN Parent magazine was there. She expects that Yinghua Academy will be on the front cover of their September issue. The Open House included a "fashion show" in which several Yinghua Academy modeled their school uniforms.

Ms. Schatz informed the board that there is an article about Yinghua Academy on the webpage of the Target Asian Business Association.

Ms. Schatz also informed the board that Muree Larson-Bright and her family will host Yinghua Academy's visiting AFS teacher for her first two months in the US; and then the teacher will move in with Stephanie Olsen and her family in October/November.

Highland Villager is also working on article about Yinghua Academy. It should be in their next issue in early August.

Board Policies

The board continued to review and revise policies, so that Yinghua Academy will have all legally-mandated policies in effect when the school opens.

Mr. Parish made, and Ms. Chin seconded, a motion to approve the Minnesota School Board Policies (as amended) numbered 214, 402, 406 (form), 417, 418, 418 (form), 419, and 420. The board deferred making a decision on policy 410 until Ms. Moeller can follow up on some questions from the board. The motion passed unanimously.

YACA Update

Ms. Doubek shared some questions and concerns from the YACA board and from several parents. There was also a discussion of how well the listserve is working. After some discussion the board concluded that the current listserve is too public, that there is no real oversight over who is participating on the listserve, and that the listserve may not be serving its original purpose of fostering communication among people who are involved in Yinghua Academy.

The board made the decision to bring more focus to the listserve and to make it open only to parents who have actually enrolled their children at Yinghua Academy and possibly also staff and board members. The board agreed that Ms. Moeller would communicate this decision via e-mail.

Ms. Doubek also shared information about her research on mulch for the playground, which indicates that mulch for the playground will cost about \$1400, even just to have it all dumped at one end of the playground, requiring staff and parents to distribute it across the playground.

Ms. Chin made a motion, and Mr. Parish seconded, that Ms. Doubek contact Home Depot and some other companies that might be willing to donate some or all of the mulch and that Ms. Doubek be authorized to spend up to \$1500 to get the mulch necessary for the playground. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Doubek also reported that several families have done work on the garden at the front of the school and that they are donating their time and the plants. Mr VanKeulen offered to get for Ms. Schatz the phone number of Steve Mitrione, since he might be willing to support the landscaping for the school.

Ms. Doubek also shared that the YACA Board has agreed to be involved in fundraising throughout the year.

The board discussed again the offer from YACA to have someone from the Yinghua Academy board join the YACA Board. Ms. Moeller volunteered. Mr. Parish made, and Ms. Chin seconded, a motion to have Ms. Moeller be the Yinghua Academy representative on the YACA board. The motion passed unanimously; and the board thanked Ms. Moeller for her extra effort.

Ms. Chin made, and Mr. Yan seconded, a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.