

Board of Directors
Special Meeting Minutes -- APPROVED
Math & Science Academy
Monday, September 26, 2016

8430 Woodbury Crossing, Woodbury, MN 55125

Meeting called to order at 4:45 pm

Present:

Tim Tydlacka, Chair & Teacher Representative
Deb Ledvina, Vice Chair & Parent Representative
Mona Hayashi, Treasurer & Parent Representative
Noelle Haland, Secretary & Parent Representative
Jeana Albers, Teacher Representative
Jessie Heydt, Teacher Representative
Cheri Howe, Teacher Representative
Ken Thielman, Community Representative
John Gawarecki, Director (ex officio) attended at 6:00 pm

Absent:

Peter Irvine, Community Representative
Tori Szondy, Student Representative
Judith Darling BKDA, Contracted Financial Manager (ex officio)

Discussion on Strategic Planning was facilitated pro bono by Mr. Roger Hayashi. The purpose of the meeting is for the Board to review and revise MSA's Mission, Core Values, and Vision (which are posted on the MSA website). Mr. Hayashi asked Board members to express their views and points with openness and listen to others.

Mission:

A mission identifies our purpose - why does MSA exist? In general, the Board was comfortable with the current mission. The Board discussed the first statement of "... intense math, science, and technology experiences ...". The Board agreed that "intense" should be replaced with "accelerated" and "technology" be deleted. The Board felt that MSA was vigorous in almost all areas but wants to remain a small school. Additional language to add is "MSA is a college preparatory public charter school". The current second sentence needed no change.

Core Values:

The current ten core values were reviewed. Core values should guide all big decisions and are immutable. It was suggested that the number of core values should be limited and simple so that they can be cited and referred to easily. The Board discussed and tried to interpret some of the values. It was noted that if the Board had to interpret it, then it was not clear enough. It was mentioned that 6th and 7th graders use FIRE (Focus, Integrity, Respect, Excellence). This was simple and easy to remember but needed more explanation.

Some themes to add to the core values more explicitly were a sense of community, diversity (racial and economic), and innovation. Some current core values could be combined. Core values need to be reworded which will be done at a later time.

Vision:

The vision should be short and concise so that it can be easily recited from memory. It is MSA's long term goal of 5 years, asking how will MSA achieve our mission? It is figuring out where you are now and where you want to go and why. Vision should be concrete and will necessarily change over time.

The difference between mission and vision were discussed at length. Some of the terminology and focus were in both the mission and vision. Board members agreed with Mr. Hayashi that it was important to clarify these concepts now to aid in creating clarity in our strategic steps for MSA's future.

Following were key items identified for our vision:

- Innovation
- Sustainability
- Retaining small class sizes/small school feel
- Academics
- Community
- Lifelong Learners (Deleted from Vision after discussion.)
- Global Citizens (To be included in mission.)
- Well Rounded Students (To be included in mission.)

The Board agreed that MSA's number one priority is to achieve sustainability, financially and otherwise. All other issues support that priority. After further discussion, the above was crystallized into the following:

Sustainability

- Innovation
- Community
- Academics
- Student/Family Retention
- Teacher Retention

Strategy:

The Board was unanimous that finding alternative funding sources will be critical. One idea was to make MSA more visible in the community so that there would be more finance and fundraising opportunities, possibly with company sponsors or partnerships. Enhancing MSA's reputation as part of an overall marketing plan would be part of the strategy, with the possible additional benefits of better student/family retention for high school and better ability to attract high-quality teachers. MSA currently has a \$1.8 million fund balance that could help for 1-2 years to establish a fundraising strategy.

Options listed were:

1. Identify best practices from other charter schools
2. Hire a consultant or professional familiar with Smart Growth philosophies
3. Gather data to determine strategies
4. Need an accountable person to execute strategies
5. Legislative changes (MACS?)
6. Continuous survey of community for expertise in fundraising
7. Bring in grant writer
8. Expand campus to other cities (ie MSA Lakeville, MSA Eagan, MSA Blaine, etc.)
9. Utilize students and teachers as resources
10. Volunteer coordinator
11. Alumni
12. Corporate sponsors
13. Leverage students as a resource

Facilitator recapped two key points expressed repeatedly:

1. MSA needs money.
2. Up until now, no one has been able to execute and no one has been held accountable to raise the money.

Who's going to follow through once strategies are established? Who will hold this person accountable?

Board members discussed the fact that our former and current directors were both hired, in part, to establish fundraising, but other issues took precedence and fundraising was no longer their focus. The Assistant Director is focusing, in part, on fundraising, but otherwise, there is no in-house resource. The facilitator reminded the Board that if MSA's vision is to be sustainable, then we must focus on taking steps to make that vision a reality.

Board members cautioned that there should be no rash decision on hiring a fundraising specialist and embarking on one particular strategy without thinking through the options and reasons for proceeding in a certain way.

Next steps:

Before the next meeting, some Board members were assigned specific followups. Mr. Gawarecki will gather information about professional fundraising strategists from MACS (including Eugene Piccolo) and a MACS meeting he will attend this week. Ms. Ledvina will connect with contacts at St. Thomas. Ms. Howe will send the Board historical documents of MSA marketing and fundraising reports to get a historical perspective. Other Board members are encouraged to gather information about what other charter schools do for alternative fundraising.

Once the mission, vision, core values, and strategy are drafted, the Board will seek community review and input. Board members were reminded of why the Strategic Plan was being revisited. Besides being part of the Board's purpose, it is needed also for submission to our Authorizer which is due October 1. In lieu of an updated Strategic Plan, the current Strategic Plan will be submitted. The Strategic Plan is a living document and Mr. Gawarecki will share with the Authorizer that an updated Strategic Plan is in progress.

Special Board Meeting on October 3 will be to debrief. No decisions are anticipated to be made unless more investigation has been done and information gathered.

NOTES SUBMITTED BY ROGER HAYASHI AFTER THE MEETING:

MISSION STATEMENT

Here are two drafts for your review.

Draft 1 - The first sentence of the first draft comes from Tim's notes and the recorder's notes of our discussion. The second sentence was essentially left unchanged from the 2015 version of the Mission Statement. (Some Board members commented that the second sentence could remain the same.)

We are a college preparatory public charter school with an emphasis on math and science that provides accelerated curricula in all core subjects, including arts and humanities. We develop lifelong learning skills, including critical thinking, leadership skills, volunteerism, and collaboration with peers.

Draft 2 - During our discussion of the Vision Statement, we discussed including things like global citizens, community, etc. However, we then concluded that it may be more appropriate to include them in the Mission Statement. I included these things in the second draft.

We prepare students for college by providing accelerated curricula in all subjects, with an emphasis on math and science. We leverage our entire community to empower students to become lifelong learners, develop critical thinking and leadership skills, embrace volunteerism, and become well-rounded global citizens.

CORE VALUES

Board members generally agreed that the verbiage should be revised to enhance clarity. There was also some discussion about combining some values and potentially adding some values. The Core Values were placed in the "parking lot" and will be reviewed again on Monday.

VISION STATEMENT

Our discussion focused on sustainability. Other items included innovation, community, academics, student / family retention, and teacher retention. Following is a draft for your review.

Achieve long-term financial sustainability to support MSA's efforts pertaining to:

- **Community - growth of the MSA community while retaining the existing community**
- **Academics - continuous improvement of academic achievement**
- **Innovation - implementation of new academic approaches and programs to enhance the student experience**
- **Retention - maintain or improve the current retention percentage of teachers, students, and their families**

STRATEGY

Certain individuals will gather information to assist the Board with making strategic decisions to achieve the Vision. This information will be provided at the next Board meeting.

Next Board meeting is the second part of our strategic planning workshop series: Special BOD meeting with the topic of Strategic Planning and Vision, on Monday, October 3, 2016, at 4:45pm in Room 10A.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm

Submitted:

Ia Xiong, Board Recorder

Approved:

Noelle Haland, Secretary