

Board Spotlight February 2017

The Beacon Board of Directors met just before the long weekend and following is a brief summary of our lengthy meeting.

Next year's budget process has begun. The expansion at Crystal will cause some extra work and adjusting, but our business manager, Keith Johnson, and our Finance committee members are working ahead on these details. Next month, we will have a fairly developed draft of the 2017-18 budget to review.

We are pleased to have found our new 4-8 behavior and academic dean of students, Mr. Adams, who will begin his employment at Beacon on March 1st! Mr. Koster described the rigorous hiring process, which included getting input from a committee made up of current parents, teachers, and administrators. Help us in welcoming Mr. Adams to our school! There are several other open positions due to the expansion. Check the employment page on our website for open positions in case you can help spread the word. The greater the applicant pool, the more likely we will be able to hire exceptional educators to work with our treasured students.

The Minnesota Department of Education recently conducted our 5-year site review. Even though this is the last year in this building, they are recommending we create a lower elementary special education room in order to give these students the privacy they deserve when teachers need to work with them in a breakout setting. Our new facility in Crystal will be conducive to these suggestions, so to accomplish this in the near term, our elementary Spanish teachers are making the necessary accommodations.

Mr. Koster said marketing this summer is going to be important as we help the surrounding communities learn about our new school location. We are planning to have a presence at several farmer's markets and surrounding town celebrations.

We approved the master calendar for next year. As in past years, Professional Development days often fall after student breaks to help our families maximize their time off. There will be two weeks for winter break next year, which happens to mirror both Robbinsdale and Osseo school districts. This should be a great help to our families who have older children in those two districts. There will be a Professional Development day on Martin Luther King Jr. day in order to accomplish this. Our staff Leadership Council put much thought into this calendar and we are grateful for their investment of time. Refer to Mr. Koster's letter send on 2/23 for a copy of the calendar.

Regarding our enrollment report, we have 194 total new students who have already submitted their enrollment applications. We need about 78 additional students to enroll in order to meet our goal for next year. Mr. Koster pointed out that Kindergarten families tend to enroll before our February lottery, but many families with students 1st-8th grade wait until summer to enroll. Our numbers are actually looking very good in grade 4-6. Grades 1-3 need about 20 more each.

It's only February, but I want to go ahead and share this level of detail with you because it is the word of mouth of our current teachers and families that is most effective.

We spent some time hearing from our Technology Committee. They've been working on the budget outlook for next year and the year after. It is their recommendation to move to desktop computers for teachers because there will be a tremendous cost savings in both the purchasing of them and also in fixing them when there are issues. There are also benefits in terms of computing power and connectivity to the internet to be considered. The technology committee has worked hard to balance the desire to be progressive with technology and yet to not over-buy technology that won't be used. There will be some lap tops and their use is still to be finalized. Some of the middle school teachers shared that they do not find the mimeo boards to be effective and an elementary teacher shared that he doesn't use the document camera as much as the mimeo board. So the Technology Committee will continue to analyze this feedback.

The Employee Retention & Compensation Committee has completed its scheduled review of the Principal and Assistant Principal salaries. They researched salary averages in our region and also noted that our salary schedules at Beacon range from 10-20% below the average salaries in the traditional public schools. Until charter school funding is brought up to be fully equivalent to traditional public schools, this is what our pay structure will look like. There is word that specific bills are being introduced in this year's Minnesota Legislative session that will be favorable to more equitable funding for charter schools in our state. Stay tuned and get involved in you feel compelled. The Employee Retention & Compensation Committee's analysis will be going to the Finance Committee now for review.

On behalf of the Beacon Academy Board of Directors,
Heidi Sheard, Secretary