

**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2015 – 6:00 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Liz Coenen, Kristen Campbell, Andrea Galdames, Juliann McDermott, Jane Reilly, Julie Richards, Melissa Santrach, and Liesl Taylor

Board Members Absent: Eve Lo

Other Attendees: Chris Bewell, Dr. Charles Speiker

AGENDA

Public Comment Period: No public comments were offered.

Approval of Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Liz asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda.
 - Melissa asked that a Board review of the marketing brochure be added to the Development Committee report.

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE EVENING’S AGENDA WITH THE SUGGESTED ADJUSTMENT; MELISSA SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- Based on the approved agenda, Liz asked if anyone had any conflicts of interest with the evening’s agenda. None were disclosed.

Acceptance of Minutes

- Liz asked if anyone had changes to the August meeting minutes. None were offered.

JULIANN MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST MEETING; JULIE SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Head of School Report – Liesl Taylor

See report; additional comments follow:

- Liesl presented a review of Cornerstone’s Special Education program, which included a look at the process for referral, internal and external staffing, and the flow of the communication among all parties.
- Liesl commented that the enrollment is looking very good – of the 16 students in the 5th year, 14 returned for 6th year. And Liesl shared an anecdote about how the 6th years are fully embracing their leadership role!
- Liesl referenced the MCA testing results and noted they are in the Annual Report for the Board to review.
 - She acknowledged that the scores are lower than they should be and though it wasn’t a surprise, it is a concern that is being addressed in a deliberate way.
 - She also noted that CMES received its first MMR score, which put us in the “continuous improvement” category. Liesl will be going to a workshop soon to learn of any supports being made available to help us in our efforts to improve the test scores.
 - Liesl added that we have clear indications that the work the literacy specialist did with students last year made a positive difference so we will continue to build on that foundation.
- Liesl noted that the Executive Functioning testing with Dr. Steven Hughes will begin this year; it’s a nationally-normed assessment that will begin by establishing a baseline for the 6-, 9-, and 12-year-olds.

- Liesl offered a number of reflections that show the changes that are making a difference:
 - The whole school is taking a reading break at the same time every day to show the importance of reading. This is an adaptation that will be in place only as long as it's needed.
 - We now have 2 special education teachers, which is making a big difference.
 - Though last year was the first year our students did the science tests, they did very well, which shows they have good critical thinking skills and are able to apply these to the science questions.
 - Staff has increased communications with families and the Board. Teachers will each do a newsletter article once during the year and Liesl will do something every other month. Eventually, Adam may transition into managing the newsletter. And Lourdes is doing the Spanish translation.
 - Teachers will also begin doing monthly blogs, and Chris and Liesl will be looking at ways to enhance the website.
- With regard to staffing, Liesl noted that all waivers have been approved.
 - Liesl is waiting to see if another assistant is needed. So far there hasn't been a need and the funding could be used to support the school in a more comprehensive way.
- Liesl asked Board members for their feedback about the value of the Vital Signs report now that Board members are being copied on many more of the staff-level emails.
 - Board members said they value the anecdotal stories in the Vital Signs and perhaps those could be shared in another way – maybe the Board could read the teacher blogs. The stories are a good way for the Board to understand what's happening at the school so they can share Cornerstone's stories with prospective families and potential funders.
 - Liesl will think through this and see how best to address it.
- Liesl next introduced the topic of school-based mental health services and said she has been doing some research into this and will be continuing to look at it.
 - Liesl commented that she very much wants to be able to shift away from the reactive/crisis mode and put in place the appropriate services to best support the needs of the children we serve. She wants to be sure we are giving students with mental health disorders the support they need.
 - Liesl wants to look at perhaps using the funding for the unfilled assistant position to support this. She will explore this more fully and bring it forward to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will bring it back to the Board in October.
- Liesl announced that our AMI consultation of all 4 classrooms will be January 27 – 28, 2016, with Carol Hicks. Liesl is very pleased to have Carol review our programs as she is very familiar with schools such as ours and will have lots of wisdom to share.
 - Liz asked Liesl to let her know of any ways the Board could support this.
 - Board members also showed interest in receiving a presentation from Carol, if appropriate. Liesl will check on this.
- Our VOA site visit is coming this fall – Liesl will schedule a day with our representative, Stephanie Olsen.
- Liesl offered an update about the activities of the Parent Involvement Committee this year. She, Eve, and Liz met and agreed that it isn't a Board Committee so it will be supported through the school administration.

- The first activity will be after school, with a snack and childcare. The people who attend will be asked to reach out to those for whom the time/place doesn't work and see what other time/place works and what activity is a good fit.
- Liesl noted also that many parents are coming forward in response to a call for volunteers!

Director of Business Operations – Chris Bewell

See report; additional comments follow:

- Enrollment has exceeded 130 students so if attrition occurs we will still be within our budget.
- The new food service provider is working well – the meals are served on time and the children are enjoying the new foods. With the addition of the “hot box” food stays hot and there seems to be less food waste! They are also working with Hastings Creamery to bring in milk a couple times a week. A little tweaking is still needed but it's going in the right direction.
- The bus company switch has been phenomenal. The drivers are very nice and really care about the children. Several families who had longer bus rides now have shorter rides and are very HAPPY with the changed routes!

Board Chair Report – Liz Coenen

See report; additional comments follow:

- Liz commented that she continues to connect with people and work on transitioning into her new role.
- Liz reminded Board members that our Joint Board Meeting with the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) is September 30th at 6 pm.
 - Liz will meet with Molly and Nancy Lee (the new MCM chair) to determine content and format. Then Liz will meet with Liesl to talk through the CMES presentation portion.
 - Neither board has another meeting afterward so it's meant to be a time to build relationships between the Boards.
 - The meeting will be in the training room and CMES is hosting. The meal will be catered so all can focus on the meeting.
- Liz thanked the Board for providing lunch for the staff; Liesl said the staff were very grateful!

Governance Committee Report – Liz Coenen

See Governance Committee minutes; additional comments follow:

- Liz will reach out to the parent who expressed interest in becoming a Board member.

Development Committee Report – Julie Richards and Melissa

See report; additional comments follow:

- The Development Committee did not meet in July but did meet in August to review preparations for the upcoming meeting with Molly and Carleen of MCM.
- The committee is looking at changing its meeting schedule to provide more time for in-depth conversations regarding a tagline, the CMES “elevator speech,” and getting a school tour program started. The next meeting is Saturday, September 26 at 1:30 pm.
- Melissa shared the first draft of the one-page brochure; Board members offered feedback.
 - Melissa asked Board members to send any additional comments to her for further consideration.

Treasurer's Report – Melissa Santrach

See Finance Committee minutes; additional comments follow:

- Melissa reviewed the August financials and noted that two months into the year, we are on track.
- We are, however, over our deposit limit because of the way MDE has disbursed our funding; we received funds due earlier than expected and have exceeded our bank's \$250,000 deposit limit.
 - Melissa explored options and has found a credit union, Hiway Federal Credit Union on the East side, where we can open an additional account.
 - The credit union insures funds up to \$250,000 (NCUA), there is no monthly fee, no fee to transfer money in, no inactive account fee, and the wire transfer cost is \$20.
 - Melissa noted that the Board must pass a resolution authorizing CMES to establish this new account. Melissa offered the following resolution.

RESOLVED, THAT MELISSA SANTRACH, TREASURER, AND LIZ COENEN, BOARD CHAIR, BE AUTHORIZED TO OPEN A SAVINGS ACCOUNT FOR CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT HIWAY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION IN ST. PAUL.

RESOLVED, THAT HIWAY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION WILL BE AN ADDITIONAL DEPOSITORY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016.

RESOLVED, THAT MELISSA SANTRACH AND LIZ COENEN ARE SIGNERS ON THIS ACCOUNT AND ARE AUTHORIZED TO MAKE TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING HIWAY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION ON BEHALF OF CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

THE RESOLUTION WAS SECONDED BY JULIANN; THE BOARD ADOPTED IT UNANIMOUSLY.

- Board members thanked Melissa for finding a bank on the East Side with whom we can build a good relationship.
- Melissa returned to the August financials and asked if anyone had questions. None were asked.

MELISSA MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE AUGUST 2015 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS; KRISTEN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- Sandy, our financial services provider, advised Melissa that the Board is to approve the price of school meals each year.
 - Board members indicated that they want to be sure no child is denied a meal for lack of payment.

MELISSA MADE A MOTION THAT CMES ESTABLISH THE FOLLOWING PRICES FOR SCHOOL MEALS FOR 2015-16 YEAR: \$1.75 FOR BREAKFAST AND \$3.50 FOR LUNCH AND THAT CMES WILL NOT DENY ANY CHILD A MEAL. JULIE SECONDED THE MOTION; THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Other Business

- Liz brought forward the Draft Annual Report and thanked Chris and Liesl for their work. She said it is an exquisite document and it was a privilege to read.
 - Chris is updating as she receives additional information and edits from Board members. Chris asked that all edits/additions be sent to her by next week.
 - The document will be ready for Board approval at the September 30th Joint Meeting.

- Liesl noted that the World's Best Workforce document has a good deal of the same information as the Annual Report and she sought feedback from Dr. Speiker about how to present the two documents without being repetitive.
 - Dr. Speiker offered advice about how to meld the two documents.

Next month's agenda

- Report about school-based mental health

Adjourn

KRISTEN MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:09 PM; MELISSA SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Jane Reilly, CMES Board Secretary

Next meeting: Joint Board Meeting with MCM – September 30 at 6 p.m.