

Yinghua Academy Board Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2008

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Cindy Moeller, Luyi Lien, Kristina Schatz, Margaret Wong, Michael VanKeulen, Doug Parish (through speaker phone), Larry Yan, Joe Yang, Clark Liu

BOARD MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Sandy Doubek

DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE

Betsy Lueth

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

None

Meeting Called to Order at 6:30 P.M. by Ms. Moeller.

AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was forwarded by Mr. Yan and seconded by Mr. VanKeulen. The motion was approved unanimously.

01/14/08 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes 10/29 was forwarded by Mr. VanKeulen and seconded by Mr. Clark. The motion was approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Enrollment Update

We currently have a total of 150 students enrolled for 2007-2008 school year.

We have 79 new applicants for 2008-2009 school year. 70 of those applications are for Kindergarten. 17 of the Kindergarten applications have sibling preference, because of having an older sibling who is currently enrolled at Yinghua Academy.

Curriculum

Currently there is a focus upon preparation for the Chinese New Year. There will be a celebration that will be open to immediate families only on Feb. 8th at 1:30. Student performances and food are planned. There was a discussion to ensure that families have been given this information in a timely manner.

1st through 4th grades have completed Chinese language mid-terms. 1st and 2nd grades have also completed math mid-terms, which have gone well. We are making a concerted effort to prepare for the next round of NWEA tests.

Two staff (Dr. Lien and a teacher) will be presenting at the CAIS (Chinese-American International School) Conference in San Francisco.

Facilities

Ms. Lueth shared with us the proposed building layout for next year that requires the addition of two walls, two windows, and a door. Ms. Schatz made a motion to approve the plan Ms. Lueth had proposed. Mr. Yan seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Other ideas were discussed regarding additional facility needs in the future. The board also agreed that we will investigate providing busing to students who live in St. Paul.

Financial/Grant

Ms. Lueth shared with the board her proposal for how to spend the remaining \$73,000 from the Federal Charter Schools Program grant. The board offered several additional suggestions, including an outdoor sign. Ms. Lueth is going to continue to explore the most effective way to expend these funds. All funds must be expended by February 28, 2008.

Reporting

Ms. Lueth noted that the STAR report, which describes the current staffing at the school, has been completed and submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Staffing

Ms. Lueth shared that she had attended a meeting in Minnetonka regarding the development of “fast track licensing” programs at Hamline and St. Cloud State University for teachers coming from China who are seeking licensure in Minnesota.

Ms. Lueth also mentioned that the Minnetonka schools have submitted a “test case” to the INS to determine if it is possible for experienced teachers from China to obtain an H1B visa directly, i.e., without participating in the H1B lottery.

Family Leave Policy

Ms. Lueth proposed a Family Leave Policy in conjunction with Yinghua Academy’s existing Paid Time Off Policy. After discussion Mr. Parish made a motion that 1) Yinghua Academy provide employees of Yinghua Academy, who have been employed for six months or longer, with up to eight weeks of unpaid family leave time and 2) employees who are taking unpaid family leave must first use any PTO time they have accrued before taking unpaid leave. Mr. Clark seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Reduced Cost Yinghua Care for Exempt Employees:

Ms. Lueth asked the board to consider offering Yinghua Care to exempt employees of Yinghua Academy at a reduced rate. Since Ms. Lueth and Dr. Lien are two of the employees who could benefit from a reduced rate, they excused themselves from the meeting so that the other board members could discuss.

After considerable discussion of implications and various other considerations Mr. Yang made a motion that, as of February 1, 2008, exempt employees be allowed to pay 25% of the going rate for Yinghua Care (both before and after school), while still paying 100% of the going rate for enrichment classes in the after school program. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wong and was passed unanimously. Ms. Lueth and Dr. Lien then rejoined the meeting.

Summer School Program:

- Two half-day, three+ week sessions for students who are entering K-4th grade in fall 2008
- One half-day, three-week session for students who are entering 5th-8th grade in fall 2008
 - The focus of this program will be on learning about and comparing Chinese and Latino cultures and Chinese and Spanish languages.

We are placing an ad in the MN Parent summer camp catalog to advertise our summer program.

UPDATES/OLD BUSINESS

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. Parish shared his tentative plan for an auditor RFP so that we can solicit proposals from several different audit firms for doing our audit for this school year. The board agreed that we will make a decision no later than our March 24th meeting; and, if the proposals have been received in time, we will make a decision at our March 3rd board meeting. We are tentatively planning to send our RFP to three firms.

FACILITY UPDATE

In anticipation of needing more space for the 2009-2010 school year, we are going to meet with a representative from a charter school development company. Mr. Yang is familiar with this organization and will arrange a meeting. Ms. Moeller, Mr. Parish, Ms. Lueth, and Mr. VanKeulen expressed an interest in joining Mr. Yang at this meeting, schedules permitting.

YACA UPDATE

Ms. Moeller shared with the board that YACA is beginning its direct fundraising drive. Ms. Moeller clarified that YACA is focusing on parents and other known supporters of Yinghua Academy. The board needs to develop a strategy for working with foundations and other potential major donors..

MARKETING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The “marketing master” that is being developed by the Marketing Committee should be completed this week and then will be presented to the director and board for their review. The content of the marketing master will be used as the content for various publications, including a flyer that the Marketing Committee is developing.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Yinghua will have a booth at the St. Paul School Fair on Saturday, February 2. We will also have a booth at the FCC New Year’s event.

6TH GRADE AND BEYOND

Mr. Yang reported on a trip he had taken to Milwaukee to see the Milwaukee School of Languages, which is a magnet school in the Milwaukee district for children from language immersion programs as well as children who want to start studying a language. Mr. Yang was impressed by how this school has developed over the past nine years; and his visit led him to conclude that expanding Yinghua Academy is a better choice at this time than trying to start a new charter middle school with a focus on languages.

The board then continued to discuss the three options we have been considering for “6th grade and beyond” and realized that all of us had come to the conclusion that expanding Yinghua Academy to at least K-8th grade seems to be the best way to ensure that we meet our objective of ensuring that our students, when they enter 6th grade, have the option of attending a school with an excellent academic program and where they can continue to study Chinese at their level.

The board agreed that, before we make a formal decision to expand, we want to:

- Understand the financial challenges
- Understand what is required to get the approval of the MN Department of Education to expand
- Seek additional input from our parents.

The following people have offered to research the following topics and provide information to Ms. Lueth in a week:

- State requirements to expand – Ms. Moeller
- Draft of program, staffing needs, material needs – Ms. Lueth
- Financial considerations in expanding – Ms. Lueth and Mr. Parish
- Developmentally-appropriate curriculum – Ms. Lueth and Mr. VanKeulen

- _ Facility needs – Mr. Yang
- _ Licensing requirements for middle school teachers (and how they differ from requirements for elementary school teachers) – Mr. VanKeulen

In addition, the board has scheduled the following meetings for Yinghua parents who are interested in further discussion of “6th grade and beyond”:

- _ Monday, February 25th, 6:30 – 8:00
- _ Saturday, March 1st, 3:00 – 4:30

The board is hoping to make a formal decision at the March 3rd board meeting about the future direction of Yinghua Academy.

NEW BUSINESS

CHINESE NEW YEAR’S CELEBRATION

Yinghua Academy’s celebration will be held on the afternoon of Friday, February 8, at the school and will be for immediate family only due to space considerations. Ms. Lueth reported that we are seeking financial sponsors for this program.

ENROLLMENT LOTTERY

The board discussed at some length how to handle twins who apply for a grade for which we will be having a lottery. All of the options discussed had both pros and cons.

After discussion Ms. Schatz made a motion that:

- _ Twin children will be given one “ball” in the lottery.
- _ The number of balls drawn will equal the number of slots available in that grade, e.g., if there are 50 slots in kindergarten, 50 balls will be drawn in the lottery.
- _ If the twins’ ball is one of the 50 chosen, both twins will be admitted and there will be a total of 51 children admitted to the kindergarten.

Ms. Wong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Parish made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Wong seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Moeller adjourned the meeting at 8:55PM.