

Yinghua Academy Board Meeting Minutes
October 28, 2009

Board Members in Attendance

MaryAnn Choy, Scott Jax, Luyi Lien (until 6:45 p.m.), Cindy Moeller (Chair), Naomi Mueller, Keri Norell, Doug Parish (Treasurer), Joe Yang, Abigail Pribbenow (Secretary), Janine Trutna

Board Members Not in Attendance

Taoyuan Li

Director in Attendance

Betsy Lueth (by phone 6:05-7:05 p.m.)

YACA Representative in Attendance (Ex Officio, Non-Voting)

Coley Murphy

Public in Attendance

Denise Peterson, Friends of Education (authorizer of Yinghua Academy)

I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Moeller called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. Those present introduced themselves.

II. APPROVALS

A. Agenda: The agenda was approved with several additions. The Teacher Welcoming Strategy was deleted from the agenda. Discussion of the Innovative Special Education Services (ISES) discipline policy was carried over from the last meeting to be discussed under Old Business. The Minnesota Association of Charter Schools Conference was added under New Business.

B. 10/05/2009 Board Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes with changes. All voted in favor.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Enrollment/Students

Enrollment is 301.
K 75 (15 on the waiting list)
1st 75 (9 waiting)
2nd 50 (1 waiting)
3rd 45 (5 openings)
4th 23 (2 openings)
5th 22 (3 openings)
6th 11 (14 openings)

B. Curriculum

1. Approximately 125 people attended Curriculum Night. Surveys received are positive regarding the information presented. Appreciated in particular was the extra session with teachers.
2. NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) testing will be complete for all students, first through sixth grades, by the end of October.
3. The first formal teacher evaluations have begun. Teacher evaluations are being conducted by the academic and executive directors, and are based on the Q-Comp rubric.
4. All teachers participated in professional development over the NEA (National Education Association) conference days on October 15 and 16. Many Chinese teachers participated in the Minnesota Conference on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures teachers of Chinese meeting at the Confucius Institute. Other teachers attended workshops at the Excel Center.
5. Applications for "Q-Comp," (Quality Compensation for Teachers, a program of the Minnesota Department of Education) career-ladder positions were due October 15. Few applications were received and so additional candidates are being recruited, and November 15 will be the final decision date for career-ladder positions.
6. Mentor teachers from the summer 2009 Star Talk "Abacus for Kids" program joined the academic and executive director at the final Star Talk meeting in Chicago. Yinghua Academy presented its program through round table discussions and as an exhibitor at the conference.
7. Dr. Carol Ann Dahlberg, Concordia University, Moorhead, visited Yinghua Academy on October 22 in conjunction with the YACA general membership meeting. Dr. Dahlberg observed several classes in the morning and commented positively on the quality of immersion education. Based on her observations and reviews of assessment data, Dr. Dahlberg predicts Yinghua Academy students will reach pre-Advanced levels (similar to Advanced levels for adult students) in proficiency based on the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) scale. This is a very high proficiency level.

C. Facilities

1. The heat is fully functional and needs only a few minor repairs.
2. The snow removal contract has been signed and will be less than \$5,000 for the season.
3. Charter Schools Development Center (CSDC) will visit the building on October 29 for a final “close-out” review of the facility.
4. Outdoor and indoor signage is being reviewed and ordered.
5. Roofing repair, electrical repair in room 106, carpet repair in the music room, and Underground Storage Tank (UST) remediation are the remaining contracted facilities projects yet to be completed. The school may not need to do UST remediation.
6. On Monday October 18 offensive graffiti was discovered in several outside entry areas. A police report was filed, and the graffiti removed by a parent volunteer.
7. The school’s flag pole was stolen from the area near the UST site. A police report was filed. Lee Companies/CSDC will be able to make an insurance claim for the stolen flag pole.

D. Financial/Grant

1. The school currently is reviewing all its benefits packages with T.C. Field and Company: health, dental, life insurance and Flexible Spending Accounts. All forms are being updated and any changes reviewed and communicated between employees, Beltz, Kes, Darling and Associates (BKDA) (payroll) and providers.
2. Transportation options for the 2010-2011 school year are beginning to be drafted by the current carrier, Voigt Transportation. Hub stops are being considered as are Type 1 vans and other options. A first draft of transportation options will be available for the school board in February 2010.
3. The Star Talk grant application for summer 2010 is due November 5.
4. We have received the first Star Talk 2009 grant payment of \$39,000. Remaining to be invoiced is \$50,000.
5. FLAP grant funds are available in our GAP account. Based on completion of SF-1199A by the Yinghua Academy treasurer and Drake Bank, these funds can be accessed on an accrual basis. Yinghua hired a grants administrator whose first task was to find the grant money and deposit it into Yinghua accounts. Funding for this administrative position is covered through the FLAP grant.
6. Confucius Institute grant funds are expected to be available in full in November. This grant is expected to be a repetitive grant for up to five years.
7. Ms. Lueth recommends that Yinghua consider renting its gym and multipurpose room on weekends or evenings (not conflicting with school programming) to other non-profits as well as to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). She believes that CSDC should be consulted in the consideration of this idea.
8. Yinghua Enrichment programming has had requests from community members to allow elementary age children who are not currently Yinghua Academy students to participate in some of its classes. Classes for middle school students are of

particular interest as are Chinese language instruction classes. Such programming for middle school students may be a marketing tool for the middle school program and also could be a source of revenue for the school.

Mr. Yang has a call in to Susan Scuderi at CSDC to see if indeed CSDC does need to approve Yinghua Enrichment programs. In terms of insurance issues, Yinghua would be liable for any students who participate in the programs, and Mr. Yang asked Ms. Lueth if any language needs to be added to indicate this. All students would need to complete the Yinghua enrollment packet.

MOTION: A motion was made, seconded and approved to grant Ms. Lueth the authority to create After School Enrichment programming for non-Yinghua students and to open up certain existing After School Enrichment programs to non-Yinghua students.

E. Reporting

1. The Assurance of Compliance Update and Report are due November 15.
2. The STARS report is due November 9.

F. Staffing

1. As mentioned earlier, all of Yinghua's Human Resources forms are under review; this includes W4s, I-9s, health/dental/life forms, STARS forms, PERA/TRA, immigration and letters of employment. Follow-ups are being scheduled with individual employees if paperwork is incomplete or missing.
2. A music teacher has been replaced by a long-term substitute teacher.
3. Additional positions will be added to support the FLAP, Star Talk, and Confucius Institute grants. All costs for these positions are covered within the parameters of the grant objectives.
 - a. Grant Administrator (10 mos./0.5 FTE) – position filled.
 - b. Chinese-speaking Science Teachers/Educational Assistants (not to exceed \$40,000 in staffing allowance + benefits) – positions vacant.
 - c. Chinese-speaking Technology Administrator (10 mos./0.5 FTE)—position filled per grant guidelines.
4. The school has received eight applications for the Director of Students, Families position. The closing date is October 26. Candidates will be screened by phone, and first interviews are set for November. The start date would be December 1 or 15. Board members expressed interest in being involved in the interviewing process.

A discussion of staffing issues ensued. Several parents have reported that the school's response time on phone inquiries and emailed questions has been slow. Ms. Trutna asked what measures could be taken to help the staff shorten the time between inquiries and responses. Ms. Lueth will discuss this with staff.

5. In addition to the benefits review work, which was described earlier, Ms. Lueth also is working to align benefits so that all are due on the same date. The school's benefits advisor recommends that the official start date for benefits be the first day of the month after the hire date or the hire date itself if it is the first day of the month.

G. Students/Families

1. Parents have expressed concern regarding which books are featured in Yinghua's Scholastic Book Fair. There has been lively and engaging discussion about this on the Yinghua listserv. The Scholastic company's flyers and fairs include few books with GLBT families. In response to parental concern, and to affirm the many ways families are made, Yinghua Academy ordered for inclusion in the fair additional books which include LGBT families. In the past, the Scholastic book fair has allowed the school to purchase \$3,000-worth of books annually for the school.
2. The Story Book and Literacy Day, which includes the Story Book parade, was well attended by families. Sixth graders performed a modified Mother Goose nursery rhymes skit for students in K-4th grades. Throughout the day 4th graders read to Kindergarten students, and in the afternoon all students participated in a Story Book parade.
3. Several families have indicated their concern that Yinghua Academy is requesting too much financially from parents. Field trip fees, classroom donations, fundraising efforts, and rising costs in Yinghua care and enrichment are concerning. Currently we are looking for grants like the Target field trip grant, and other solutions to take the burden off families.

Fifth graders just returned from Camp Widjiwagen. Camp Widjiwagen offers students a week-long Minnesota history, biology, and survival skills program in Ely, MN. Students and families report it is an excellent addition to the curriculum both academically and socially.

V. UPDATES/OLD BUSINESS

A. Facilities and Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board

Mr. Yang sent a draft with revisions to the MPRB. The MPRB replied with questions about a basketball program they would like to offer, however, since that time the MPRB has decided instead to offer a wrestling program. MPRB reports that it has received many requests for the use of the school's gym. Mr. Yang and Ms. Lueth met with Huy Nguyen to discuss possible points of collaboration. Mr. Yang distributed to the board a page with proposed guidelines for MPRB programs in Yinghua space. Ms. Norell will do some research to see what might be the appropriate ratios of staff to students in each age grouping.

Board members suggested that only other non-profit groups be allowed to use the facilities for programming.

Both the gym and the multipurpose room may be considered for outside groups' use.

Mr. Yang will consider the amount of insurance needed and will provide certificates.

At the next board meeting, Mr. Yang will present a revised set of guidelines based on the board's feedback offered today.

B. Financial

Mr. Parish presented the financial report.

Yinghua is monitoring its cash position closely. At the end of the calendar year the school may need to borrow funds. A new line of credit in the amount of \$125,000 was approved at Drake Bank.

Currently the school is earning money through its food service arrangements but this is largely because of the timing of an invoice.

C. Fundraising

Ms. Pribbenow invited board members to supply the names of any contacts who should be added to a general list of friends of the school. The fund raising committee is trying to broaden the school's community of funders beyond parents.

D. Human Resources Committee

The Committee's first meeting is tomorrow.

E. Marketing

The problem with Google Maps has been resolved—the site was using the school's St. Paul address. Ms. Trutna distributed to the board the October 9 Marketing Committee agenda. Mrs. Van's husband will help the school to work with search-word triggers.

Ms. Lueth's husband is working on a sign for outside the school. Ms. Trutna will ask if the board may see designs before the project goes further.

Time magazine and a photographer visited the school.

The American Institute of Architects is looking for non-profit organizations to set up booths at their upcoming conference in Minneapolis. The school could use this event to recruit volunteers. Mr. Yang volunteered to attend.

F. Mr. Jax reported that he is recruiting committee members for the Policy Review Committee.

G. Technology

Ms. Norell delivered the Technology report in Ms. Lueth's place. Rebecca Kreitzer has updated the website. The committee largely has focused on the website. Some Drupal problems were reported. The group met with an outside web developer. Funds from the FLAP grant may be applied here.

H. YACA

YACA recently hosted the 2009 Kite Festival. 100 people attended. A speaker came to address a group. Mr. Murphy will ask if anyone involved in YACA would like to serve on the policy review committee of the board.

I. Ms. Moeller distributed a Board Retreat hand out with a proposed agenda. Board members are to email Ms. Moeller to let her know what topics they would like to cover at the retreat.

J. Charter School Law Changes and Yinghua By-Laws Update

The school needs to review its bylaws to be sure that it is in compliance with the charter school legislation passed in spring 2009. No clarification has yet been offered by the Minnesota Department of Education as to what bylaws changes should be made in order for charter schools to be in compliance. June 2007 bylaws are on the web.

Ms. Moeller asked committee chairs to submit committee mission statements to for future discussion.

A handout regarding Student Leaves of Absence was circulated and will be discussed at the next board meeting. It reads:

A student who has been enrolled at Yinghua Academy for at least one school year may choose to apply for a leave of absence for up to one year. The leave of absence may be for reasons related to foreign abroad study or any other condition approved by the Executive Director or the School Board.

K. Innovative Special Education Services is offering a conference. Discussion of the ISES discipline policy was tabled until the board's next meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. The Minnesota Association of Charter Schools is holding a conference on November 6. Board members are encouraged to attend.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: A motion was made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.