

**Marine Area Community School
Board of Directors Special Meeting
July 28 , 2018 – 8:30 AM
River Grove Commons**

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Mission - Marine Area Community School will utilize the natural resources, history, arts, and civic stewardship of the community as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art, and other curriculum subjects. The place-based learning environment will be student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community.

Call to Order 8:30 a.m.

Roll Call: Jon Dettmann (via phone), Jessica Hansen, Jackie Henschen, Dan Miller, Glen Mills, Kristina Smitten, Lisa White

Not Present: Lisa Dochniak

Also Present: Administrator Drew Goodson, and Teachers Luke Hallbeck, Jody Dick, Renee Anderson, Heidi Dettmann

Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities

The teaching team requested a meeting with the River Grove Board, in order to present their request to alter the roles and responsibilities of the teaching team and school administrator. The teaching team presented an outline that clearly describes their proposed changes to the roles and responsibilities at River Grove. This outline can be found on the following page.

Audio from the beginning of the special meeting was not recorded, so a complete set of minutes are not available. Written minutes are provided beginning with available audio.

Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities at River Grove - July 28, 2018

Our Challenges

1. Time
2. Money
3. Curriculum
4. Student Population
5. Spaces
6. Limited Staff
7. Project Based/Place Based
8. Unique Model:Teacher Powered

Our Structure:Teacher Powered

1. Multiple Definitions
2. Unclear Roles, Responsibilities and Processes
3. Ambiguous Authority - Teachers? Board? Community?
4. Decision Making? 5 W's

Resulting Problems

- Disorganization and Unclear Expectations
- Inefficient Use of Time/Resources
- Conflict and Staff Turnover
- Lack of Accountability/Imbalanced Workload
- Lack of Teacher Power

Key Areas of Need, Critical to School Success

- Behavior
- Curriculum/Instruction
- Personnel/HR

Solutions Requested By Teaching Staff

- Clear Definition of Roles, Responsibilities, Expectations and Processes
- Clarify Areas of Teacher Autonomy
- Focus on Autonomy 6: Onsite Educator Leadership

The teaching team is united in our desire for an on-site educator leader who uses a collaborative process, coordinates tasks and identifies and capitalizes on the strengths of each member of our team to make decisions.

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Audio transcription begins here

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Director Smitten explained that the board tried to step back and give the teaching team decision making authority, but acknowledged that the committee structures weren't in place to make that decision making successful. She acknowledged that the teaching team was overwhelmed with the classroom and student management aspects of a first year school. Expectations that the teaching team would have time for committee work related to other areas was an overreach. The facilitator brought in to help with team and committee work was not wholly beneficial. The 20+/- teacher powered schools in Minnesota are all willing to help and share their experiences. All have experienced the same struggles regarding roles and responsibilities. Directors Smitten and White encouraged the team to continue researching how other teacher models succeed by talking to other schools. Heidi Dettmann asked about other teacher powered elementary schools to use as resources. Molly Dandelet is the director at Level Up Academy, a K-5 school in White Bear Lake. She is a community member who would be happy to help River Grove with their teacher powered questions. Great River School in St. Paul would be another good resource. Director White will create a database of teacher powered school resources.

The board affirmed that they are not opposed to the request by the teaching team for a leader. Director Smitten asked what resources were used by the teaching team to inform the request. Did the team reflect on the original plan for the school when formulating the request? As a teacher powered school, are the teachers best empowered by designating a leader? The teacher team roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Is a leader the most efficient and effective way to accomplish the responsibilities? Director Smitten encouraged the team to reach out to resources at other schools, in order to develop efficiencies and best practices.

Director Miller proposed that the role of teacher leader could be a temporary role. He wants to see the roles and responsibilities of the teacher leader clearly defined, quarterly reviews and discussions with the board on successes and failures, and define benchmarks for whatever teacher powered model is chosen for River Grove. He shared that we need time to developed the culture at River Grove, and if the teacher leader role is a helpful role for the teaching team, he is very supportive. But Director Miller will expect further development of the teacher powered model moving forward.

Teacher Renee Anderson affirmed that the goal of the teacher leader is to support the teaching team in the building of the structures within the school (curriculum, behavior, assessments, etc), but then step away from a leadership role once those structures are in place and the support is no longer needed. Administrator Goodson stated that the teachers all have to have the competency level to take on those tasks when the time comes, but he is on board with stepping back when his support is no longer necessary. He stated that eventually, any of the teachers could become teacher leaders.

Administrator Goodson shared his proposed position description. The areas in white or highlighted in yellow are currently the School Administrator's duties. The areas highlighted in yellow will become the duties of the Office Manager or another position. The areas highlighted in green will become the duties of the School Administrator. The large areas that would become part of the School Administrator's job are Student Discipline, Instructional Leadership, and Human Resources. Administrator Goodson spoke to the need for instructional leadership - the need for a curriculum map, the importance of incorporating the community into the curriculum, upholding the mission and vision of the school, and getting evaluation tools in place to allow teachers to determine best practices. As instructional leader, Administrator

Goodson would build consensus, facilitate the setting of expectations, holding teachers accountable to this expectations, but also motivating and supporting them to get to those goals. The teachers will remain the leaders of their classroom and their curriculum. All of the creativity will come from the teachers. Administrator Goodson will take the lead in teacher evaluations.

Student discipline would also be supported by Administrator Goodson. Using a single person for discipline would allow consistency for students and for parent communication.

Many of the areas in yellow have been, in Administrator Goodson's experience, the duties of an office manager. A part-time receptionist could be used for some of the front desk duties. Other yellow areas will be distributed to members of the teaching team.

Director White encouraged all of the staff to reflect on how some of the words (create, develop) used in the School Administrator position description give a great deal of authority. Acknowledging that Administrator Goodson is a consensus builder, but a future Administrator may be more authoritarian and not a consensus builder. Words like facilitate or coordinate might be better words to use.

Teachers Renee Anderson and Jody Dick gave examples of how Administrator Goodson acts as a resource for the teachers, provides them with avenues to share their ideas, and helps them with goal accountability.

Administrator Goodson believes that we need to provide opportunities for the teaching staff to evaluate each other, but feels that it is beneficial for a single person to lead evaluations for consistency.

Director White acknowledged that Human Resources was not a part of any position description in the 2017-2018 school year. She thanked Administrator Goodson for doing that important work all year long. She applauded Administrator Goodson for his open door policy and willingness to help anyone, anytime, but encouraged him to be more protective of his time.

Director Miller requested a quarterly review of the Administrator's position description and job performance, in order to frequently assess the workload and ability to accomplish duties.

Director Smitten voiced concern about the workload of Office Manager Ele Anderson, due to the shifting duties. She is not comfortable relying on volunteers to help manage the work of the front office, and suggested hiring a second person to help. Administrator Goodson suggested shifting .5 of the Office Manager's duties to another employee, but also shift some duties to the teaching team. Director Smitten suggested a pay increase for the Office Manager position, given the level of responsibility. Director Mills questioned the ability to fund a pay increase and a second office position, given the tight constraints of the budget. Director Dettmann shared concerns for the budget and anticipates revising the budget in fall 2018. Administrator Goodson suggested that if the teaching team is requesting additional staffing, the teaching team be tasked with how to make up a budget shortfall. Director Henschen offered to forgo a paraprofessional in her classroom in order to free up funds in the budget. There was general agreement that the Office Manager position at 205 days should be paid \$32,000, and an additional .5 Receptionist position would receive \$12 per hour. Directors Mills and Dettmann expressed concern about the budget, and about making decisions about salary before understanding the larger budget ramifications.

Director Smitten provided Minnesota charter school salary comparisons (2014-2015 school year). Director White shared that, during the formation of the school, the board built the budget around a robust salary

schedule, and reached out to several different advisors for their thoughts on appropriate employee salaries. The goal was to pay River Grove staff at the high end of expected salaries and this is reflected in the salary comparisons provided by the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools. For the upcoming 2018-2019 school year, Administrator Goodson's budgeted salary is \$68,850 based on 210 days. Administrator Goodson explained that 210 days is not a sufficient number of days to effectively accomplish his duties. He suggested that an addition 20 days would be appropriate (total of 230). Director Miller was supportive of more days, but suggested a results-focused contract, without a number of days in the contract. Administrator Goodson was supportive of that type of contract, and there was general support by those present for this approach. Director Smitten requested a structured office schedule. She stated that the expectations of the Administrator's role needs to be confirmed so that all staff understand the position description.

Director Smitten offered Administrator Goodson a 210 day contract for \$75,000 in late June for the 2018-2019 school year. The approximate 11% increase was in acknowledgement of the change in roles and responsibilities expected for the next school year. Administrator Goodson requested more clarity surrounding his job expectations and the contract was not executed. Director White stated that the Administrator's proposed roles and responsibilities were mostly in line with her understanding of what was needed for the next year, but the need for an increase in the number of days associated with the contract was not clear to her. If she had known about the need for an increase in days, she would have not changed the offer of \$75,000. Given the change in the roles and responsibilities, the shift in leadership, and the expected increase in the number of days, Administrator Goodson would like \$80,000. Director Dettmann was not supportive of \$80,000. Director Henschen expressed a concern that if we are not able to meet Administrator Goodson's salary request, we could lose him. Director Hansen proposed that the first few years are the development years with a considerable amount of work. This work will hopefully lessen after a few years. Director Dettmann acknowledged that, but also reminded all that we are a second year school and don't have the budget to support market rate salaries. He hoped that Administrator Goodson will be able to grow the school and his position, eventually getting to a salary that he needs, but that we can't immediately make the jump to the desired salary. Director Henschen proposed that the Administrator position be evaluated and reviewed quarterly and at the end of the school year, and that a bonus of \$5000 be given if expectations have been met. Director Smitten shared that we can't promise an amount now and can't guarantee a bonus, but a bonus structure could be considered. Director Miller was supportive of that approach, with bonus possibly based on teacher, board, and parent satisfaction, and budget successes. Administrator Goodson stated that he would accept \$75,000 with a potential bonus, but is uncomfortable moving forward without having specific criteria for the bonus. Director Smitten and Miller stated that specific bonus criteria can't be set yet, but they are not comfortable tying a bonus to enrollment. He also recognized that the teaching team has requested that the roles and responsibilities of the Administrator position be changed. Director Smitten suggested that a bonus structure shouldn't be just for the Administrator, but for the teaching team as well. Director Dettmann did not believe that a bonus structure was advisable at this time, and see if we can get to the salary that the role justifies not this year, but maybe next year. He wanted the board to remember that the vote does not need to be unanimous, and that it is ok for board members to disagree. Director Miller stated the importance in offering Administrator Goodson an amount that he would accept, as it is important that we keep continuity in his position for the morale and benefit of the teachers and families.

Director Miller moved to offer Administrator Goodson a one year contract of \$75,000 plus a potential bonus based on teacher, community, and board satisfaction, and budget success that is comfortable to the board. Director Hansen seconded the motion. Motion carried by a vote of 5-2.

Marine Elementary Letter of Interest

Director Smitten explained that the City of Marine on St. Croix is currently in negotiations with Stillwater School District to purchase the vacated Marine Elementary School building. The board reviewed a draft letter of interest, expressing the board's desire to have River Grove occupy the building, should the building be purchased by the city. With current enrollment growth expected to continue, River Grove will outgrow the current Wilder Forest facility in a few years. And ownership of the Wilder Forest facility is uncertain. Any occupancy by River Grove of the Marine Elementary School building would be contingent on the MDE granting River Grove permission for site expansion. Any site expansion application must include two years of longitudinal data, so the earliest River Grove can apply for site expansion is August 2019, making July 2020 the earliest that River Grove could occupy Marine Elementary. The board has been working on the details of a lease agreement, but a lease won't be completed until closer to occupancy. The letter of interest is in lieu of a lease agreement. The board expressed their support for the letter.

Giving Expectations

Director Miller shared that playground construction volunteers are in short supply. He would like to schedule a conversation surrounding expectations surrounding giving - either through funds or volunteer time.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn. Motion carried.