

Special Meeting of the Governing Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 14th, 2015 - 10:00am

In Attendance: Russell Erickson, Sierra Wilson, Julie Baker, Brian McVickers (phone in at 10:25am)
Faculty: Jennifer Roderick, David McNelly, Anna Barnum, Beth Cottle
Public: Caitlin Fitzgerald, Tonya Nida, Natalie Bedell, Salli Maxwell

AGENDA

I. Call to Order 10:00am - Russell Erickson

II. Consent Agenda

1. Sierra made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Approved 3-0-0.

III. Community Forum/Public Participation

● Introductions of the public in attendance:

- Sallie Maxwell: Founding Mother and mother of a soon to be seventh grade teacher. Salli's daughter, Sophie, joined LTCS its first year of operation as a privately run one room school 5 years ago with the understanding that Sophie would complete her schooling through eighth grade at LTCS. She hoped that we would choose to maintain this program but would support the intentional process and ultimate decision of the team.
- Natalie Bedell: Mother of a first grade LTCS student. Interested in the process and was present to listen and support LTCS as a parent community member.
- Tonya Nida: Moved her daughters (currently in 5th and 6th grade) to LTCS this year. She was present as she wants a space for her children and does not want to move them again.
- Caitlin Fitzgerald: Present as she is hoping to have a space for her son who is going into eighth grade next year.
- David McNelly spoke briefly on behalf of the teaching faculty at LTCS. From the perspective of the teachers; there has been a large contribution of discipline issues from middle school grades on campus this school year and the experience has been that in general, there have been more negative interactions than positive from the upper grades down, teachers have implemented a variety of learning experiences and shifted schedules to embed character education blocks and increased service learning to instill these ethics into the children, he explains that we are working collaboratively to foster a group of children who can exclaim, "I want to be a leader and show you what it is like to be a responsible citizen." Natalie Bedell chimed in that her daughter, in first grade, says the big kids are a little tough. David continued to explain that these are our children and our job as educators is to help them grow, no one is doubting that this is a hard age and they are a little hard around the edges. Russell chimed in to exclaim that he completely knows the grade level and challenges as his last post as a teacher was of sixth grade.
- It was noted that the integrity of our EL program and the rich character education embedded into the model, as well as specific protocols for collective learning have been visibly challenging for student who have transferred to LTCS in later middle school years. It takes time to learn our collaborative educational model and it is not a seamless transition for children who have exclusively attended schools with traditional education models. It makes sense that the school leadership team/board consider the students present and the programmatic effect of articulating up through the grades. Purposeful articulation will empower the upper grades.
- Caitlin Fitzgerald exclaimed that if things are dealt with appropriately, conflict can build empathy, teaching students how they should behave. It was noted that this is embedded in the LTCS daily CREW learning block that is dedicated to character education and explicitly teaching the character traits: respect, responsibility, integrity, compassion, courage and creativity.

IV. New Business

1. Board Policies Regarding Annual Budget

- a. Russell Erickson made a motion to adopt the board policy “The Governing Board and Director will develop the annual budget in April of each given school year and shall use the exact numbers at the close of Open Enrollment to project the FTE for the following fiscal year” as written. Seconded Sierra Wilson 3-0-0.
 - Discussion: Russell explained that he believed it to be a good idea because we are not counting unhatched chickens. Jennifer Roderick explained that historically the number of students enrolled at Open Enrollment is what we have at the start of a given school year with the ebb and flow of new summer enrollment and attrition.
- b. Russell Erickson made a motion to approve the board policy “The Governing Board and Director shall use the exact numbers at the close of Open Enrollment to make fiscally sound programmatic decisions that are directly related to staffing, and the development of the annual budget accordingly, for the following school and fiscal year.” Julie Baker seconded. Approved 3-0-0.

10:25am - Brian McVickers joined the meeting

2. Grade configurations for 2015-2016 - Review, Discussion and Possible Approval

- a. Review the fiscal and programmatic sustainability of maintaining a 7th and 8th grade at La Tierra Community School for the 2015-2016 School Year and beyond.
 - Considerations:
 - Projected student counts for SY16 & FY16. There are not the amount of students enrolled, necessary to sustain a viable class that would support the programmatic demands and fidelity of our Expeditionary Learning model as well as support the fiscal requirements to sustain a teacher salary for the class.
 - Physical Space and Programmatic Needs. Middle school demands a separate space in which they can thrive as an autonomous middle school, with a program focused on the needs of the adolescent learner. The middle school space will need to provide a social divide between the lower and upper grades as well as bridge the grades through particularly designed integration/learning opportunities where the middle school students join lower grades campus to act as ambassadors for our school and model learners and citizens of LTCS.
 - Staffing and Fiscal Sustainability. As stated above, having a 7th and 8th for SY16 is not fiscally sustainable.
 - Faculty and Community Feedback. Faculty feel as though it would be significant to suspend 7th and 8th grades for SY16 in order to allow time for the bubble of students in the upcoming 5th and 6th grade class to naturally fill the upper grades. This would create a sustainable class size and also allow time for the faculty to develop a middle school planning team dedicated to the intentional research, design, development and implementation of a structured middle school program modeled after successful EL middle school programs that have demonstrated high achievement in academic rigor and success across the country and Western region and have a demonstrated success rate of preparing students for high-school.
 - The Strategic Action Plan. Our Strategic Action plan will include a middle school development Action Committee tied to the ends written in the Strategic Action Plan.

- Brian McVickers moved to reduce grade levels offered at LTCS from grades K-8 to grades K-6 for the 2015-2016 school year with the intention of implementing a Strategic Action Committee committed to developing a structured middle school program accordingly:
 - 2015-2016 The Strategic Action Committee will
 - a. Research model EL middle school and K-8 programs
 - b. Vertically Align the Curriculum for grades 6, 7 ,8
 - c. Develop guidelines, policies and procedures for admissions into the middle school program
 - d. Establish a physical space for the program to succeed
 - 2016-2017 LTCS unfolds its 6th/7th grade middle school cohort
 - 2017-2018 LTCS continues to unfold its middle school program towards full implementation.

Motion to approve Brian McVickers. Russell seconds. 4-0-0.

V. General Announcements

VI. Motion to Adjourn Sierra, Julie seconded 4-0-0.