



Strategic Planning Steering Committee
Myron Dagley, Committee Chair
Minutes of the January 28, 2010 Meeting of Strategic Planning Steering Committee
Approved April 27, 2010

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee met in the Kennicott Building on the campus of Prairie Crossing Charter School located at 1531 Jones Point Road, Grayslake, Illinois 60030 on January 28, 2010 at 7:00 P.M. The meeting was convened by Chairman, Myron Dagley, at 7:06 P.M. Those members of the committee present constituting a quorum included: Geoff Deigan, President; Dr. Barbara Provost, Vice President and Excellence in Academic Programs Advisory Committee Chair; Steve Achtemeier, Treasurer and Finance Chair; Elizabeth Stearns, Chair Communications, Public Relations & Fundraising Committee; Dr. Eric Hebert, Chair Human Resources; Mark Dybas, Board Secretary; and Myron Dagley, School Director. Members Absent included: John Wylie, Chair of Governance Committee (Schedule conflict) Mary Burks, Chair Maintenance and Operations Committee (illness) and Peggy Boyle, Chair Nominating Committee (illness). Also present for the meeting were guests: Stacy Gavin, Business Manager and John Rizzo, LLC Representative to the Board.

President Deigan addressed the committee and explained the purpose of the steering committee. In addition to a coordination vehicle for strategic planning, the committee will provide oversight to the function of the Board's Committees and the Administration's Committees. We will guide continuous plan development and revision when necessary, provide periodic evaluation of plan progress, and will report Steering Committee actions and results to the Board of Directors and the PCCS Constituency.

It was agreed that each existing committee will have "smart goals" or actions plans developed not later than the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in March, 2010. The committee would seek to meet at least quarterly thereafter.

Following a brief conversation among members about process for proceeding with the agenda, it was agreed the EAPAC Committee would report progress first. Dr. Provost reported that the EAPAC Committee had developed a definition of integrated curriculum which will now serve as a guide to the further development of integrated units of instruction as curriculum development and refinement continues. Therefore, the committee has determined three areas of priority for work during the next several months as follows:

The committee will seek to archive all existing integrated environmental units of instruction that may serve as best practice guides for our teachers and can be exported elsewhere.

Prairie Crossing Charter School is a public school that transforms our children through academic discovery and interaction with our unique natural, ecological, and community resources.

The committee will examine along with other groups models of middle school service delivery which would effectively and efficiently prepare students for their transition to secondary education.

The committee will continue to monitor and discuss the ongoing curriculum mapping and skill set mapping as the current curriculum is further developed and refined.

Dr. Provost reported that the committee membership was adequate to fulfill the assigned goals and that no particular budgetary allocations were needed to support the work of the committee.

Chairman, Steve Achtemeier, then reported on the work progress of the Finance Committee. Progress has been made in refining financial reporting measures and the committee has discussed but not yet established targeted reductions in operating costs to enable long term financial underwriting of the corporation and the school it seeks to operate. Targeted work scopes for the remainder of this fiscal year would include:

Determining the feasibility of creating and implementing a separate Foundation as the fundraising arm of the School.

The committee, working with the administration, will establish targeted cost reductions necessary to enable financial underwriting of the corporation and school for FY-11 and estimates of same for FY-12.

The committee, guiding the administration, will oversee the development of a balanced budget to support School operations for FY-11 for adoption by May, 25, 2010.

Chairman Achtemeier felt is committee was adequately constituted and that no particular budgetary allocation was necessary to complete the work of his committee.

Chairperson, Elizabeth Stearns then reported on the work of the Communications, Public Relations, & Fundraising Committee. Considerable work has been done on the development of the new Web Site, a Brochure to help market the school and for use with Fundraising, and the new branding initiative. The only of these three that is substantively complete is the Brochure and work remains to be achieved on the other two. The Director of Development has created and delivered a fundraising/development plan to guide those processes. The plan has been accepted by the committee, but has not been forwarded to the Board of Directors as a finished product. Tentative goals or targeted work priorities for the remainder of this fiscal year would include:

In collaboration with the Finance Committee, the committee will determine the feasibility of the school creating and implementing its own Foundation.

The committee will develop a diverse fundraising plan for each of three fiscal years.

The committee will review and streamline internal communications with emphasis on enhancing communications between the board members and the administration.

The committee will guide the administration in the development and implementation of a public relations and marketing plan.

The committee will provide oversight to the Corporation's Outreach Strategies.

Mrs. Stearns reported that her committee needed a budget allocation of approximately \$2500 to complete work on the Web Site and the Branding Initiative. The Steering Committee also discussed the potential need for more time per week on the part of the staff assigned to PR and Outreach Activities since only ten hours per week and only during the school year are allocated to these functions.

Chairman Dr. Eric Hebert then reported on the work of Human Resource Committee. Given his recent appointment to this role, Dr. Hebert had produced a listing of activities which the committee had undertaken over the past year or more as recorded in the minutes and other records. He also then referenced a listing of activities/priorities he foresees as important to the role of the committee. The listing included:

The committee will review health and dental insurance coverage and determine budget allocations for FY-11.

The committee needs to review former Closed Session minutes of the committee to achieve compliance with OMA.

The committee needs to review current practices and policies regarding teacher performance evaluation.

The committee needs to review the current practices used to formally evaluate the performance of the School Director.

The committee needs to review current practices of the agency regarding both student and staff exit interviews.

The committee needs to review and implement strategies which recognize staff accomplishment and offer rewards for same.

The committee needs to complete the review and implementation of the performance compensation study initiated during fiscal year 2009.

The committee needs to identify and make available plans for succession in the event of key personnel leaving during the term of the year.

The committee needs to review current practices and policies regarding staff development which would support learning by teachers necessary to assure integration of the environment into our curriculum at all levels.

Dr. Hebert expressed his concern that the work load of the committee is excessive to expect current administrative staff to complete all these priorities in addition to their duties in running the school. No specific budgetary requests were made for consideration in the FY-11 budget.

The Steering Committee then discussed the work load impact that our committee structure is having on the agency. Geoff observed that given our staffing pattern, it is expected that committee chairmen/chairpersons really have some work duties which are more management responsibilities and some which are purely at the policy level where Board work is and should be focused. During this discussion it was also observed that it appears that the management team does not see the strategic planning goals as their responsibility, the staff does not own these priorities. It was also observed that there are three overarching goals that must have constant top priority. These might be expressed as follows:

PCCS must attend to all aspects of its charter agreement with ISBE to assure compliance.

PCCS must perform within the confines of an approved and balanced budget as deficit financing is not an option.

PCCS students must continue to demonstrate excellence in performance as measured on standardized assessments provided by the state.

At this point, Myron Dagley requested permission to review with the committee the history of goal setting and work assignment since he came to PCCS, or at least the last eighteen to twenty four months. He observed that as he was employed the board introduced a discussion with him about strategic priorities as determined by the board. He was then asked to prepare a set of Director Performance Goals for the Board to review with him. During the review process, some adjustments would likely occur. The board then adopted those goals and publicly established for the corporation and its constituents the work expectation/focus. He then met with each administrator and crafted with each a work performance plan for that fiscal year of goals/objectives which reflected the Board's priorities and which also supported the Director's goals. That format remained operable until July of 2009.

On July 24 and 25, 2009 meetings were held with the board and administration. The management team heard that they were not doing the work expected of them. Members of the management team left the meeting confused and feeling devalued and unable to determine why they were being so characterized. This dysfunctional state has existed from then to the present. Myron asserted that in his opinion every member of the team does support the board, its strategic goals and priorities, and is pulling as hard as possible to first meet the duties contained within their role descriptions and then to accomplish the myriad of duties that are perceived as additional emanating from the committee work undertaken by the board.

Geoff Deigan asserted that this explanation had clarified a great deal. He asserted that the Board does not perceive the team collectively or individually in a negative light. He requested that the staff inform the Board when work loads are perceived as unmanageable and that committee chairpersons make requests of individual team members through or with the advance knowledge of the School Director.

Consensus was reached that each committee chair would identify for the School Director the top priority work focus area or goal for that committee to be accomplished by June 30, 2010. The School Director was asked to then draft "Smart" goals which would reflect the priorities and bring them back to the Steering Committee for review and adoption. Essentially the plan would be to restore the former process under which the School Director and team had been operating with apparent success. Team member objectives could then be crafted by the team members and the School Director.

Listed below are the highest priority work areas under each committee as determined by the committee chairpersons and reported in the Steering Committee Meeting.

Excellence in Academic Programming Advisory Committee:

By June 30, 2010 the Instruction Staff will have identified and archived at least three ways that environmental focus has been integrated in the curriculum.

By May 1, 2010 the Administration will have integrated environmental considerations into the curriculum to be implemented during the Virginia Trip.

By June 30, 2010 the Instructional Staff will have continued to map the curriculum content and incorporate the skill sets into those maps for preservation on the School's central network server.

Human Resource Committee:

By June 30, 2010 the Administration will have assisted the HR Committee in reviewing for acceptance the district's plans for teacher and teacher assistant performance evaluation.

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have assisted the HR Committee in developing strategies designed to retain annually at least 85% of its instructional staff.

Finance Committee:

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have assisted the Finance Committee establish cost savings strategies necessary to balance the FY-11 Budget.

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have assisted the Finance Committee project the financial condition of the School for the Sept. 2012 refinance deadline.

Maintenance and Operations Committee:

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have developed for committee acceptance a Maintenance Manual for the School and the Campus to guide maintenance on an ongoing basis.

Communications, Public Relations, and Fundraising Committee:

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have assisted the committee in completing the redesign and transition to the use of the new web site.

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have provided leadership to meet fully the fiscal year 2010 fundraising goals established within the FY-10 Budget.

Governance Committee:

By June 30, 2010 the administration will have assisted the Governance Committee in revising necessary Board Policies to assure legal operation of the School. These policies may emanate from various sections of the Board Policy Manual.

During this discussion it was agreed that the goals established by the current Strategic Plan under the aegis of Governance are more appropriate for the Executive Committee of the Board. No specific goal priority was established for the Executive Committee.

There being no further business to come before the Steering Committee it was resolved by consensus to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

Myron T. Dagley,
Steering Committee Chair