

**Minnesota Early Learning Academy, Inc.  
Minutes of Thursday, May 14, 2015**

**Meeting of the Board of Directors**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Early Learning Academy, Inc. (the **Board**) was held on Thursday, May 14, 2015 from 3:00 to 4:17 p.m. (CST) at the 6717 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue N, Brooklyn Park, MN 55445

**Directors Present:**

Dr. Joseph Scherer	CHAIRPERSON
Jackie Gaare	TREASURER
Signe Anderson	SECRETARY
Deb DeVries	MEMBER
Kit Wilhite	MEMBER

**Also Present:**

Mary Stafford	President and COO, Distinctive Schools
David Sundstrom	Legal Counsel, Distinctive Schools

**I. Call to order**

Board Chairperson Dr. Joseph Scherer called the meeting to order at 3:06 PM CST on May 14, 2015; a quorum of directors was present, and the meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.

**II. Approval of the agenda**

Board Chairperson Dr. Joseph Scherer asked Board members to review the Agenda for accuracy and content; Jackie Gaare moved to approve the Agenda without change. Deb DeVries second the motion, and the Agenda was unanimously approved with no modifications.

**III. Review and Approval of Previous Board Meeting Minutes**

Board Chairperson Dr. Joseph Scherer asked Board members to review Minutes of the Board's previous meeting; Deb DeVries moved to suspend the reading, and to approve the previous Board meeting minutes without amendment. Signe Anderson seconded the motion, and the previous Board meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

#### **IV. Reports to the Board**

There were no reports submitted to the Board

#### **V. Board Chair Report**

There were no Board Chair reports submitted to the Board

#### **VI. Board Member Candidates**

Board Member Deb DeVries explained that she had recommended a couple of Board candidates; one, an attorney, Lee Novelli, indicated she could not take on the responsibilities now but may be able to at a future time. Another candidate, Donna \_\_\_\_\_, is also recommended. Mary Stafford disclosed that she had met with both candidates, and found both individuals impressive. She added that Donna has been on two boards already; her resume will be sent out to all members. The Board was advised that she would be at a social event most would be attending that evening, and Mary Stafford expressed hope that Board members could meet her and have an opportunity to talk with her.

Discussion ensued as to how the current number of Board members (6) could reasonably grow to eight. No motion was made relating to Board Member candidates.

#### **VII. Committee Reports**

Board Member Jackie Gaare stated that the Finance Committee had met, but that there were no reports to issue at this time. She stated that the Committee would be bringing materials for the Board's review and consideration at the June 2015 Board meeting.

#### **VIII. Finance**

Board Member Jackie Gaare also advised the Board that two budgets are being prepared: one based upon enrollment of 100 students, and one based upon enrollment of 150 students.

Ms. Gaare added that the Committee is looking at accounting services firm-- Clifton Larson Allen—that would possibly cost the Board approximately \$45,000 per year; without an outside firm, the Board would be required to retain a staffer/employee at higher cost. The firm has a strong reputation and come highly recommended.

Mary Stafford further noted that—ultimately—the organization will need an in-house team, but at this point in time, this is far more economical/efficient.

The Board inquired as to the manner of how it was bid, and Mary Stafford stated that she was not certain. She added, however, that the firm works with a lot of schools, and has substantial experience/expertise. She stressed that any agreement would be

between MELA and the firm—and the Distinctive Schools would not be involved in that arrangement.

Kit Wilhite inquired whether several bids had been solicited or received for this service. Dr. Scherer responded that they had not, but that Ms. Wilhite raised a good point. He noted that if the Board had to go out and hire an individual, it would cost us more. Mary Stafford added that before July 2015, the Board would have a Board Procedures Manual.

She stated that they do not provide lease aid funding supports, and that the Board actually does the *applying* for funds. She stated that the firm would likely do much of the reporting that is required.

Kit Wilhite moved to approve the recommendation of the Finance Committee and authorize the engagement of Clifton Larson Allen services for accounting services of the school. The Board members present unanimously approved the motion.

#### **IX. Budget**

Board Member Jackie Gaare explained she will be going over all of this in detail with the Board at its June 2015 meeting.

#### **X. CSP Start Up Grant Decision**

Mary Stafford explained that the Organization should hear more about the Planning Grant—and whether it has been conferred—by Friday, May 22, 2015.

#### **XI. Line of Credit Option**

The Board members present entered a general discussion about whether a line of credit should be pursued; no motion was made on the issue, and the matter is to be followed up on at a later date.

#### **XII. Facilities**

Mary Stafford explained that the meeting site is the Board's facility, and consists of over 15,000 square feet plus acreage upon which an addition or another structure could be built. She added that the existing day care service will be moving out on June 12, 2015; as of July, the facilities would be entirely the Board's, except for church usage Wednesday nights and all Sundays.

The Board asked whether the church would share the Organization’s classrooms for Sunday School, and Mary Stafford responded that it uses one classroom on Sunday that we do not use at all during our own hours of operation.

### **XIII. Lease Aid Application Submitted**

Ms. Stafford noted that the organization has a great relationship with the church/owners, and that the Lease Aid application had been submitted. Dr. Scherer inquired whether—if operations expanded—lease aide would expand as well. Ms. Stafford answered it would.

Deb DeVries asked whether lease aide is based on the number of kids projected to be attending, and Ms. Stafford answered it is.

### **XIV. Recruitment/Public Information**

Ms. Stafford provided the Board with an update on current recruitment and public relations strategies. She stated that Ms. Adrienne Leonard and Ms. Jessica Steltzer had made strong connections within the Spanish community, and that Ms. Ubi has indicated an interest in working as a canvasser. Ms. Stafford noted that, as of this morning, we are at 60 kids; we want to have 100 recruited by Monday. She stressed that recruitment has been her highest priority these past two weeks.

Ms. Stafford further noted that, because of the population we target and intend to serve, we need to build trust in the community. Many are immigrants, finding it hard to trust. She stressed that we’re working with social organizations and “blitzing” of postcards targeting families.

Dr. Scherer asked whether she was aware of any undocumented kids. Ms. Stafford responded that she was not. Dr. Scherer noted that most illegal aliens in fact *do* send their children to public school.

Mary Stafford noted that 100% of those who have visited the school have registered their kids.

Dr. Scherer asked if financing change as enrollment changes. Ms. Stafford responded that funding is based wholly on average daily enrollment. Unlike Illinois, which relies on only 2 count days. She added it’s going to be like the United Nations at the school site: “We are being intentional about reaching *all* kids.”

Dr. Scherer asked whether, when the Board meets in June, it will know the number of kids the Board will be anticipating to attend. Ms. Stafford responded that it would.

Ms. Stafford also provided information on efforts Board Member Dean Kephart was making, and distributed materials and explained that the packets for parents had substantial materials to assist parents in their consideration of the school.

Ms. Stafford also mentioned that Distinctive Schools' West Belden campus in Chicago had received a \$250,000 grant. She added that Dean Kephart's mother had been a teacher, and suggested that the Board may wish to consider in the future naming the campus—not the school, but the campus itself—after her. She noted that, in her experience, naming the campus after a member of the community can make a significant difference in community involvement.

Additional discussion occurred; however, no motion was made, and no action taken.

#### **XV. Enrollment Update**

The Board was provided with an enrollment update; discussion followed. No motion was made, and no action taken.

#### **XVI. Authorizer Report**

No Authorizer Report was submitted for Board review at this meeting. Mary Stafford stated that she had met with the replacement for Bob Wedl, in recent weeks, and is not anticipating any unusual issues arising. No motion was made, and no action taken.

#### **XVII. Distinctive Schools Report**

Ms. Stafford provided an update all Distinctive Schools activities relating to opening the school.

She explained that Ms. Whitney Frisch is the individual being retained to serve as Director of pre-k through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade; the candidate has performed similar work for 22 years; Susan Loomis visited her site, Ms. Stafford interviewed her extensively, and a decision had been made that she would be coming on board June 16, 2015.

Ms. Stafford also explained that there would be a recommendation for the hiring of a teacher named Ms. Clara Ashwood. Ms. Stafford noted that the salary for this individual would be recommended to be \$45,000 per annum, and that the individual had a diverse set of talents that included music and dance. She would serve, if hired, and a classroom teacher.

Ms. Stafford added that each of the candidates appears highly qualified, and had met with Chicago-based Distinctive Schools site leaders, all of whom provided her feedback on each candidate.

Dr. Scherer stated that the Board recognized that this was primarily a Distinctive Schools' responsibility, but that the Board appreciated the update.

### **Ready-to-Open Checklist**

Ms. Stafford spoke briefly about the ready-to-open checklist, and the need to ensure all items on the checklist itself are timely completed. She indicated that Board members should feel good about what is showing on the checklist. Dr. Scherer commented that it looked like the organization is in good shape. Deb DeVries asked if Board members also needed a background check, Ms. Stafford responded that everyone would need to have one, and arrangements were being made to ensure the process was the least burdensome as possible.

### **Kindergarten Policy Recommendation**

Ms. Stafford stated that Minnesota law requires children in Kindergarten to be age 5 by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the applicable academic year. She explained that we are requesting the ability to evaluate some prospective students, and possibly admit some who otherwise qualify but whose birthdate may be after September 1<sup>st</sup> and before October 30<sup>th</sup> of each applicable academic year. She added that this would follow the Osceola District, within which the site is situated.

Deb DeVries moved, seconded by Jackie Gaare, that the Board authorize proceeding on the issue in the manner outlined by Ms. Stafford. The motion was unanimously approved and adopted.

### **Staffing Recommendations, Community Outreach, and Network Update**

The recommendations and outreach efforts were previously discussed above.

### **XVIII. New Business**

Dr. Scherer asked whether there was any new business that the Board should be considering at this meeting. No member or Distinctive Schools' personnel responded that there was, so Dr. Scherer then asked where and when the Board would conduct its next—June 2015—meeting.

There was uncertainty of the precise location for the next meeting, but the Board agreed on June 17, 2015, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. CST.

Dr. Scherer suggested that the Board may wish to place—in each future Board meeting Agenda—a placeholder allowing for Public Comment. The remaining Board members concurred.

Jackie Gaare moved, seconded by Signe Anderson, that the Board adjourn. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

**XIX. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned on Thursday, May 14, 2015 at 4:17 p.m. (CST).

Respectfully submitted,

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Designated Recording Secretary

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that I served as the duly designated temporary recording secretary for the Minnesota Early Learning Academy Inc., non-profit Minnesota corporation, and that the foregoing Minutes reflect the events of the May 14, 2015 Board of Directors meeting of Minnesota Early Learning Academy Inc.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereto set my hand this 14<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

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Temporary Recording Secretary