

Board Q and A:

Originally submitted May 10, 2005; Resubmitted October 26, 2005

Q1. Who is the current “chair elect” among the Board of Directors’ membership?

Question submitted by Greta Wenzel.

A1: There is no chair elect. Please see board minutes for discussion on this issue.

Q2. I am requesting that the January 2005 Board of Directors meeting minutes be amended to include complete documentation of the final 20 open minutes of the meeting in order to be in compliance with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. Should you choose not to amend as requested, please fully explain the rationale. Question submitted by Greta Wenzel.

A2. The January 2005 Board of Directors meeting minutes have been amended to include the final 20 open minutes of the meeting and are available in the library.

Q3. As a point of clarification, I would like specific references to The Well-Trained Mind and its role and usage at Nova as noted in the “founding documents.” Please be particularly specific with reference to the 3 documents which hold some level of authority over the school:

- A. the state Charter School application
- B. the Federal Start-up Grant Proposal
- C. the Sponsorship contract with Bethel University

Please note that I ask this of the full Board of Directors after multiple, unsuccessful attempts to get clarification on this point at the committee level since September 2004. Question submitted by Greta Wenzel.

A3: This question was previously answered in a Question and Answer Sheet presented at the January 27, 2005 curriculum committee meeting. That answer is as stated:

3. Why does Nova cite The Well-Trained Mind and Classical Education: Retooling if neither is listed in the charter?

When the founders of Nova Classical Academy decided to start a charter school, they researched several curriculum models in their search for a program they felt was sufficiently academically rigorous, including International Baccalaureate and Core Knowledge. When they read The Well-Trained Mind, they knew immediately that this model was, in their words, "not only... the education we want for our children, it's the education we wish that we had received." The Veith and Kern book, with it's research on 20th century educational trends and profiles of successful classical schools in both secular and religious settings, convinced them that the classical philosophy and the goals articulated in The Well-Trained Mind could be successfully adapted for a public charter school. All of Nova's marketing materials, including the website, clearly credit the

influence of *The Well-Trained Mind* in Nova's beginnings. Also, those who attended an information meeting or parent information fair prior to May, 2003 will remember that this book was displayed and talked about, and that interested parents and potential staff members were encouraged to read it in order to determine if the educational philosophy of the school matched their own.

The charter school proposal submitted in September, 2001, was pre-formatted by the Department of Children, Families and Learning (now the Department of Education). It was a very practical document. The founders made it clear that the model which would be used would be classical:

"PURPOSE

A. Identify which of the following six purposes the charter school intends to meet and for each purpose identified, provide a paragraph or two describing how the school's philosophy and educational program meet those purposes.

1. Improve pupil learning:

By following the classical educational model of the trivium, we will be using a time-tested method of training the minds of children in preparation for life as thoughtful, productive, moral adults. The trivium builds on the natural proclivities of children as their minds mature, providing a solid foundation of essential skills and broad knowledge in the early years, giving them the tools to understand, see relationships and to think critically and analytically about information in the middle years, and, in the high school years, honing the ability to express and apply what's been learned with wisdom, clarity and creativity. The curriculum is broad, yet deep and rigorous. It encompasses subjects as ancient as Latin and as modern as computer science, but always seeks to impart the timeless skills of thinking, reasoning, logic and expression."

The proposal requested examples of curriculum in two subject areas at two grade levels.

Those who have read *The Well-Trained Mind* will recognize the 1st and 5th grade history examples as indisputably WTM-inspired. The founders also recognized that *The Well-Trained Mind* in and of itself was not a public school "curriculum." Their intention was to write a curriculum for Nova based on the framework of the classical model set forth in *The Well-Trained Mind*, but using an extensive set of resources for implementation. This was made clear in the Federal Start-Up Grant application. This grant application is now an integral part of the charter school application, but in 2001 it was a separate application submitted to the state after the school received permission to form.

Incentive planning funds were requested, and approved, to develop a classical curriculum, and the basis of that curriculum was expanded upon as follows:

"Project #2: Improve the design and planning of charter school programs

This project includes \$10,000 in additional planning year funding to contract for external assistance in developing a classical curriculum and assessment framework that is aligned with Minnesota Graduation Standards

Consulting fees for a curriculum expert to develop a classical curriculum and assessment framework \$10,000

Activities Detail

Curriculum Design

Nova Classical Academy needs a curriculum expert to develop a classical curriculum and assessment framework that is aligned with the Minnesota Graduation standards and which builds in acceleration and enrichment opportunities for highly able and motivated students. That expert would draw from existing successful classical charter school models, including, but not limited to, Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School in Massachusetts, The Classical Academy in Colorado, The Classical Academy in Wisconsin, and Arlington Classical Academy in Texas, as well as The Hillsdale Academy Curriculum Guide, published by Hillsdale Academy in Michigan and used by many private classical schools as well as public charter classical schools. The expert will integrate the highly regarded Primary Mathematics Series used in Singapore, and now being piloted or used in more than 140 schools in the United States, and a rigorous reading program into a curriculum that is grounded in the humanities, especially in the upper grades. The expert will also be well versed in the approach to education put forth in *The Well-Trained Mind*, a Guide to Classical Education at Home, by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer, a book which has provided a large measure of the inspiration for this school to its founders. The goal of the approach outlined by Wise and Bauer is to create "an academically rigorous, comprehensive and systematic education from pre-school through high school - an education that will train a child to read, to think, to calculate, to understand, to be well-rounded, and curious about learning." The goal of the curriculum consultant will be to pull all of these elements together into a clear, coherent curriculum and align it with the Minnesota Graduation standards."

This incentive planning grant provided the funds initially paid to Dr. Kalnin as a consultant to develop Nova's curriculum.

The following excerpt providing academic program information from Nova's Walton Family Foundation Grant application further demonstrates the intent of the founders to use *The Well-Trained Mind* as a curriculum framework:

"The classical model of education is very similar in philosophy and content to the Core Knowledge curriculum, the K12 curriculum and the curriculum Marva Collins developed, uses and licenses. There are many classical schools, charter, public, private and home, in existence and being started across the country. We have chosen to use as the framework for our curriculum the book *The Well-Trained Mind* by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer, adapted for use in a public charter school."

The importance of *The Well-Trained Mind* in the founding of Nova Classical Academy, as well as the founders' expectations that it would provide a logical philosophical and

practical framework for the classical curriculum to be developed at Nova, has been clearly articulated for most of the past 5 years to the state, other institutions, and to potential parents and staff. Not recognizing these facts is to deny the intent of the founders and to dismiss the foundation of the school.