

Board Q & A's

Questions are from the February Board Meeting and correspondences to the Board.

- Q.** I am wondering if the person or group of people who are drafting these policies can explain to the community the model or process by which they are writing these policies?
Submitted by Joan Mellor 2/14/05
- A.** The process of preparing polices for recommendation to the board involve the following ongoing steps:
A determination is made about which policies need to be addressed. Sources have included the mediation agreement, input from the Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA), and the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS). Need for additional policies can also be identified through input of the school community. When the need for a particular policy is identified, sources for language of a draft is obtained through review of MSBA model policies, existing or similar policies for other schools, community input, legal input, and committee discussion focusing on the mission and needs of the school.
Once a draft is prepared for recommendation to the board, the process for board and community input and discussion takes place per the policy on Development of Policy.
- Q.** I wonder though, what exactly is the process to write the policies, and how was the process researched before implementing it? Submitted by Joan Mellor 2/14/05
- A.** The process for writing policy is intended to follow a traditional model of policy writing. The possibility of other governance models such as the Carver Model had been discussed and concluded.
- Q.** Why is the completion date a whole year away, 'Spring of 2006' as stated on page 10 of the 'Plan for Growth'? Submitted by Joan Mellor 2/14/05
- A.** The completion date is set for Spring of 2006 due to the fact that there is an immense amount of work that goes into researching, drafting, reviewing and approving policies. Policies will be drafted and approved throughout the year and for the next several years.
- Q.** As it stands now, we are still wondering how firing Dr. Nunneley was in the best interest of our children? He carried out his job responsibilities as outlined in the only document he had to work from, his job description. And even if the firing was warranted in the minds of every board member, why mid year? How did that timing serve our kids?
Submitted by Joan Mellor 2/14/05
- A.** Deliberations regarding this matter were extensive. As always, the board's job is to act in the best interest of the long-term viability of Nova, which included considerations of students, staff, faculty and parents.
- Q.** Truly, can there be any reason for the board or failing the board, the sponsor--to not take advantage of this offer to help the board perform more thorough quality checks on its decision making and consider more effective ways to foster openness and communication in this school community? (Regarding Joe Nathan) Submitted by Paul Purman 2/12/05
- A.** The Board and school are working with a number of people to improve communications. If additional help is needed, multiple options would be researched and proposed to the Board.
- Q.** Is there an updated version of the following list of mandated policies and if so, may I have a copy? Has the status of any of these policies changed since the September Board of Directors Meeting? Submitted by Greta Wenzel 2/17/05

- A. A current set of policies is still being completed, and copies will be at the office once completed. Copies of drafts are available at the office now.
- Q. What were Dr. Kalnin's reasons for leaving? She mentioned something about teachers not having a say in what they were teaching. What does that mean? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A. The Board never received a copy of Dr. Kalnin's original resignation. The only reasons of which the Board is aware were those stated in Dr. Kalnin's letter to the community, which was printed in the Nova News in January. The board has asked the staff about this question of having a say in what they are teaching and they were unclear about what the statement meant, because they have been very involved in the building of the curriculum and the implementation process.
- Q. How should I expect my child's day-to-day experience at Nova change now that Drs. Nunneley and Kalnin are gone? Will the curriculum change? Will the children still have fun at school? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A. Our reality is that the student experience has not changed, and this is borne out in the survey done by our search consultant. The chief ingredient in how students experience Nova or any school day-to-day is the teacher, and he/she remains the same. Of course, it is the hope of the Board, administration, faculty and staff that the children have fun. Learning should be fun!
- Q. Does the curriculum committee feel that the curriculum as it stands now is too 'progressive'? If so, what does that mean? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A. It is hard to know what this question means. Like many popular terms, "progressive" is used so often in so many contexts, that it often means less, or not exactly, what is intended. Perhaps we can clarify this question in future discussion.

The Committee and the Board continue to focus on providing the resources—financial, human, leadership—to realize the educational potential of Nova's classical model, as we are chartered and legally obligated to do, and we believe that the educational strength of the classical model lies in large part in the richness of its texts in depicting, understanding, and offering insight about humanity and human potential in its entirety.

At the March Board meeting, Bob Kreisler asked the board to adopt his Curriculum Process Suggestion dated 02/17/05 (attached). The final outcome desired is to have for the Board in June 2005 benchmarks and a curriculum review process. The Policy and Networking Subcommittee will meet on March 15 to define the essential elements of a classical education. They will do this by looking at other schools and at Nova's grant proposals and previously written materials. Bob Kreisler will guide this process. (The above is taken directly from the draft March minutes)

- Q. If the curriculum committee's function is to set curriculum policy (vs. write curriculum) what is an example of policy? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A. An example of policy would be policies on grade skipping, early graduation, early admission, and curriculum review.
- Q. Are volunteer parents the best individuals to be doing this? Could/should it be outsourced? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A. The entire idea behind charter schools is that groups of people who may be outside of the education establishment can form a public school around an educational idea or

philosophy and offer it to families who may then choose to affiliate. Nova was started by parents, and that founding board has now evolved to include community members and, with the upcoming election, will further expand to include teachers and new parent members.

The important thing for any Board to keep its focus on a policy level—we're pursuing a public education alternative built around the classical model—while the actual and successful execution of this in the classroom and program of the school will include many, many people who share an affinity for this model.

- Q.** Can the board fire teachers? If so, under what circumstances? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A.** Yes, but this is by no means the practice. As a practical matter, that responsibility is given to the School Director. The Board's only employee is the director of the school. The director is responsible for the staff. The only possible circumstance would be if there were some illegalities.
- Q.** Is the board going to go forward with the training by Andrew Kern? Why or why not? Was Dr. Nunneley fired because he didn't agree with the decision to use him in the first place? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A.** Because of concern expressed by the community, Andrew Kern will not be coming to Nova.
- Q.** How will board elections be conducted? Submitted by Amy Thelen 2/12/05
- A.** Please see the letter sent to each Nova family March 10 from the Governance (Nominating) Committee. Further communications will be forthcoming. This is an open election and all of those nominated (including self-nominations) will be offered for election if they complete the few required steps outlined in the communications.
- Q.** What happened to the modern foreign language that we were promised? Submitted by Valerie Jardin Sterzinger 3/1/05
- A.** As discussed at the March '05 Board Meeting, Ms. Marchand and Mr. Kreisler will work with the faculty to evaluate the possibilities regarding the placement of Spanish into the current curriculum. They will present their recommendation to the board.
- Q.** Only 25 minutes total for lunch and recess (with no afternoon recess). How can we expect our children to have a decent meal and some fresh air in such a short amount of time? (reference is to the sample schedule for the '05-'06 middle school) Submitted by Valerie Jardin Sterzinger 3/1/05
- A.** The sample schedule provided at the Middle School meeting is a work in progress. No definite decisions have been made. The Administration and faculty are working together to create the schedule for next year. Parental input is welcome and appreciated.
- Q.** When did this decision take place and who was involved with the discussions? Also should the decision to add a new board member be voted on by the BoD during a public forum? If we increase the board by one, should we not vote on one more position to make it more even for this year to next (five this year five next year)? (re:adding tenth seat) Submitted by Paul Sterzinger 2/28/05
- A.** See March '05 Board Meeting Minutes for review of the discussion surrounding this question.
- Q.** What is the BoD of directors doing to make sure issues are addressed with the proper amount of time for transparent discussions prior to the deadlines? Submitted by Paul Sterzinger 2/28/05

- A. The board chair (with the assistance of the board clerk) sends out board packets with relevant meeting information a week prior to the board meetings. An agenda of the meeting is posted on the board bulletin board. On occasion, information is distributed to Board members via Email after board packets have gone out, but that is not the practice and is discouraged.
- Q. Tell us, in what way was this action, with this justification, respectful to children, parents, teachers, staff and Dr. Nunneley? (Re: midyear termination) What miscommunication, lack of respect, or failure to follow through with what he had agreed to do was employed by Dr. Nunneley in his work with the Board? Submitted by Paul Purman 2/12/06
- A. Deliberations regarding this matter were extensive. As always, the board's job is to act in the best interest of the long-term viability of Nova, which included considerations of students, staff, faculty and parents.
Employers generally may not comment publicly on individual personnel matters. As has been discussed, the board has been advised not to speak specifically regarding Dr. Nunneley's termination. The Board training session (see the PowerPoint from 3/7) is instructive in this regard. Also see January 20 Q & A.
- Q. What are the arguments to the contrary? What are the arguments that led to the recent adoption of new Nova bylaws that allow any committee for any reason to close any meeting to the public? That the requirements of the open meeting law are too onerous on an already stretched volunteer corps? Submitted by Paul Purman 2/12/06
- A. See Board Training Power Point dated 3/7/05
- Q. From whom is the mission being guarded against? Asked by Chad Long, February Board meeting
- A. Any board of directors has both a legal duty and an ethical obligation to pursue and advance its charter in ways consistent with its by-laws. Nova Classical Academy is a charter school with, quite literally, a charter from the State of Minnesota to offer to the public a form of education based on a classical model. The school and its board are legally obligated to pursue the classical model, and not simply to be, say, like any public school, only better. The way in which any charter school differs from most public schools (recognizing that Saint Paul has many good magnet and special focus schools) is that families choose to affiliate, or not, based on the program Nova offers. If we do it well, families will enroll. If not, they will pursue other options. In this way, families in the marketplace ultimately decide the viability of the classical model. The Board can only try to make Nova the best expression of classical education possible. Board discussions and decisions concerning the academic program do undergo an informal test which, simply asked, looks like this:
"is this decision consistent with the classical model of education we are legally and ethically obliged to provide?" If the Board is doing its job, the answer will always be "yes."
- Q. Composition of Board not adhere to mediation agreement until January, 2005. What is being done to fix that? Asked by Lizabeth Renken, February Board meeting
- A. Correspondence that took place between the nominating committee and Dr. Nunneley reveal that he was apprised (and agreeable) to the progress, although delayed, of the nominating committee to try to meet the deadline stated in the mediation agreement. Moreover, after nominees were approved at the Oct. 12 Board meeting, one of the nominees did not accept the position (the committee learned this in November). The committee resurrected its search in December with a list of potential nominees from the faculty. Jim Day was approved by the board at the January board meeting.

- Q.** What changes will be made from what has gone on before? What is going to be done? And who is going to make those changes? Asked by Bob Holton, February Board meeting
- A.** Day-to-day experience for the students should remain the same, both from a curricular and teaching standpoint
- Q.** Status of - The schedule of the classes and terms of office for all seats on the Board maintained by the Secretary (see BL, Art. III(7) Submitted by Rick Stempkovski 3/05
- A.** The governance (nominating) committee is working on classifying and defining terms for all seats to be filled in '05 and '06.
- Q.** Status of - The offer from Joe Nathan of the Center for School of Change of the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs to assist the Board made at the community meeting in January 20, 2005. Submitted by Rick Stempkovski 3/05
- A.** The Board and school are working with a number of people to improve the communications effort. If additional help is needed, multiple options would be researched and proposed to the Board.
- Q.** Identity of an “acting” Curriculum Specialist who is serving as a member of the Curriculum Committee pursuant to BL, Art. VI(1)(c) Submitted by Rick Stempkovski 3/05
- A.** As stated at the March board meeting, the acting curriculum specialist is Bob Kreisler.
- Q.** Attendance records of Board members with regard to the regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Submitted by Rick Stempkovski 3/05
- A.** See board minutes.
- Q.** The reviewed and approved annual goals established by the Academy for years two and three of the CSK (i.e., 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 school year) pursuant to CSK &6.2. Submitted by Rick Stempkovski 3/05
- A.** An annual report was filed with the Department of Education and Bethel in accordance with state requirement that it be filed by October 1st. The report five academic goals and six nonacademic goals for the 2004-2005 academic year - more than the required number of 2 academic and one nonacademic goals (answered by Louise Wilson)
- Q.** The Sponsor’s annual review plan, and its findings consistent with the review plan pursuant to CSK &6.3. Submitted by Rick Stempkovski 3/05
- A.** The goals for 2004-2005 will be reviewed and reported on in next year's Annual Report. There is a board accountability committee whose task is to oversee this process. I also participate on that committee. We will be meeting this spring to plan the current year's review, and begin work on next year's more thorough evaluation and contract renewal process (answered by Louise Wilson).