



AXL ACADEMY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT MINUTES

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

8:00am – 11:00am

AMD Conference Room

I. Preliminary (5 min)

In attendance: Pete Piccolo, Fran Sterling, Audra Philippon, Katie Gonzalez, Chris Gibbons, Melanie Ulle, Chris Watney, Theresa Peña, Barbara Atkeson, Cathy Bellem, Bill Bethke, Bart Skidmore

II. Strategic Planning Session

Introduction of Participants & Relationship to AXL

Organizational SWOT Analysis

Dr. Philippon presented the summary analysis of AXL's Leadership Team's SWOT Analysis of the school.

Strengths include:

1. Academic Growth & Achievement

- Academic Achievement in Reading
- Performance Rating
- "PK Alums" Performance 1 and 2 years into Elementary Grades
- Performance of Scholars enrolled at AXL 4+ Years
- New Math Curriculum
- 100% Independent School & Magnet Program Admissions for 8th graders who applied

2. Parent Demand

- 70% parents seeking Expeditionary Learning
- 492 applications to date for ~80 vacancies
- 300+ waitlist for PK, TK, K and 1st grades
- 100+ interested in AXL Childcare & Preschool Program

3. Innovative Model

- Enrollment Diversity
- True Economic Diversity
- Character Development
- Rigorous, Integrated Curriculum
- Single Gender
- Student Supports
- Integrated ECE and Full-Day Kindergarten
- Fieldwork

- High-Stakes Passages

Weaknesses include:

1. Facilities
 - Appropriateness of space (“functionality”), maintenance and neglect by landlord
 - Overcrowding
 - Units 16 & 17 unusable without expansion of water tap
 - No funding or other district support for facilities
2. Finance
 - Need to raise approximately 10% annually to deliver existing program
 - Too great a percentage of PPOR spent on facilities (ranged from 17% to 27% of operating costs in recent years)
 - No district support for Full-Day Kindergarten
 - No district support or CCAP reimbursements for PreKindergarten
 - Unequitable Mill Levy Distribution to Charters in 2008
 - Very limited Bond funds
 - No Title I Funds or At-Risk Funds or ELL Funds
 - Lack of philanthropic interest in Aurora to date
 - 15% of operating budget reclaimed by district for Special Education and other district “fees”
 - Operating Deficit two years in a row
3. Other
 - Delay in launching two critical components of Instructional Model (Adventure & Technology)
 - Highly dependent on Head of School for day-to-day operations and instructional decision-making
 - No succession plan
 - Limited Board of Directors
 - Lack of organizational bandwidth for Development

Opportunities include:

1. AXL ECE & Childcare Venture
 - Parent Demand for ECE and Childcare
 - Existing Human Capital
 - Closures of several area daycares
 - (\$150,000+ in potential revenues)
2. Space Available
 - Units 14&15 available (with water1)
 - Landlord eager to sell complex
 - Vacant adjacent land
3. APS
 - New Superintendent with apparent support for charters

- Recent cabinet support for AXL
 - Option to transfer to CSI
4. Sustainability
 - SB 213
 - Alternative Facility Option
 - New Staffing Model (less turnover)
 5. Communications & Development
 - Untapped resources
 - Corporate Sponsorships
 - Unique Instructional Model

Threats include:

- Limited Board of Directors
- Staff Turnover
- Financial Sustainability
- 5 more years on Lease

Creating Sustainability

Dr. Philippon then asked the group of committed stakeholders to consider the question: *How can AXL fully realize its mission while improving its financial sustainability?*

Next Steps

The group identified several next steps in order of priority:

1. Build the Board's Capacity (July – September)
 - Recruit 2 new members for September
 - Weight the Board membership heavily for fundraising, public relations and commitment to Aurora
 - Equip Board members with compelling collateral to get the word out about AXL's innovative educational model
 - Recruit an additional 4 new members by December
2. Fundraise for Operating Funds (August – June 2014)
 - Replenish TABOR within the fiscal year and meet all operating expenses for the FY14 school year, including the projected opening deficit
 - Pursue short-term loan options
 - Re-engage key foundations in AXL's model and achievements
 - Pursue grant funds specifically for ECE programming and student supports, and ideally pursue multi-year commitments
 - Free up Head of School's time to work on fundraising and sustainability full-time

- CPA estimates that approximately \$300,000 will be necessary to reach these goals in FY14
 - Consultant Katie Gonzalez will help recruit an experienced development/marketing person to join the staff in Fall 2013
2. Develop the financing solution to purchase the existing facility (November – March 2014)
- Decline offer by landlord to expand a year early in Units 11-13
 - Explore facility solutions with district authorizer
 - Re-open conversations with prospective lenders
 - Revise BEST grant application based on feedback from Capital Construction Committee and resubmit March 2014

Dr. Philippon thanked all participants for their long-standing support of AXL and for their candid participation in the discussion. Mr. Gibbons asked individuals to consider what commitment(s) they were willing to make to help school staff act on these vital action steps.

III. Adjournment

Meet adjourned at 11:20am.

Next Meeting: **August 16, 2013**
 10:30am – 12:30am
 At AXL Academy