

February 15, 2011

Dear Eagle Ridge Community,

Greetings from the Eagle Ridge Academy Board of Directors! Now that we are over half way through the year, it seemed like a good time for an update on a few topics of interest. I know the topic that is foremost on people's minds these days is the need for a facility for next year and beyond. However, since there are a few more pressing needs, I'll address those first.

### **Academics:**

If you attended the last Board Workshop or Regular Meeting, you heard several discussions around the topic of academics and some strategies for improvement. As you may know, the MCAs are one of the main yardsticks that the MN Dept. of Education and our authorizer, Friends of Education (FOE), use to measure our academic performance, especially in regards to our comparison districts – Edina and Eden Prairie.

At our workshop, Beth Topoluk, the Executive Director of FOE, made a presentation to the Board regarding our MCA scores and how they rate compared to Edina and Eden Prairie. While our reading results have been great and even increasing, they did drop a little last year, but still fare well with our comparative districts. More problematic, however, was our math performance. We saw a drop in 2009 and yet another drop in 2010.

As a board, we were challenged by Beth's statement to measure our academic performance more often. While the Board does well with monitoring our finances, policies, etc., we have not given our academic results the same scrutiny. As a result, we are now asking John Howitz to provide monthly updates at our monthly Board meetings and to let us know what resources he will need to make progress in this area. As we come closer to the MCAs, we'd like to ask all parents to talk to their kids and help them prepare for the tests. To learn more about the MCA tests, click [here](#).

### **School Governance:**

To be in conformance with state law, charter school boards must include at least one of each of the following: a licensed teacher under contract with the school, a parent of a student enrolled at the school, and a community member who is not either of the first two. In our case, we have the additional requirement of maintaining a teacher majority board as well. Due to a resignation earlier this school year, the Board had to appoint a replacement director to occupy that seat until our next annual meeting (in June), according to our bylaws. In addition, we have three terms expiring at the end of this school year that are currently held by non-teachers. So, this spring's election will include a total of four seats, one of which is to fill the remainder of the seat that was vacated by resignation. None of the five seats being held by teachers are expiring this year. As of this writing, it is unclear how many of the four non-teacher members will be running for re-election. After this year's election, the Board will be considering whether or not to increase the number of seats to eleven in order to bring more expertise to the group.

I mention this due to the ongoing challenges that charter schools face and the need for qualified, talented people to run for the Board. As mentioned last fall, if we are to fully embrace our commitment to Eagle Ridge, I believe it is imperative that we select board members that are passionate about our mission, committed to seeing it fulfilled, and unwilling to compromise on the principles upon which the school was founded. Serving on the board is not a privilege; it is an awesome and heavy responsibility. Looking at our future needs, the Board will need individuals with experience in finance, governance (legal), and human resources, to name a few. If you believe that this describes you, please consider running for the Board this spring.

A great way to get your feet wet for future Board work is to join one of our Working Groups. These groups were established by the board to help address much of the work that needs to be performed to

operate the school by supporting the staff and the board in some very key areas. Please read through the description of the groups on the [Eagle Ridge web site](#) for more information. If you have talents or experience in one or more of these areas and can commit the time, please notify the board liaison for that group.

**Facility:**

Several weeks ago, our investor group sent a Letter of Intent to Purchase to the owner of the building we've identified as the future home of Eagle Ridge Academy. After some very quick negotiations, they agreed on a price and signed the letter. Now both sides are conducting their due diligence, working through the contingencies, and going over the actual purchase agreement. Their goal is to have the deal closed by the end of March and then begin the remodeling necessary for us to occupy the building by the time school starts.

However, while much work has been done to get to this point, this is by no means a done-deal. There are still many steps to take over the next 30 to 60 days before this deal is finalized, any one of which could alter or jeopardize the deal. There is a logic and strategy to the sequence of events that are yet to unfold. Some of the work we've done on this project has required us to share specific site details with people outside of the Facilities Working Group. I need to remind everyone that, in spite of the milestones achieved, confidentiality is still of the utmost importance. As I stated above, there are still items that can derail this project, some of which could be caused by confidential information being leaked. Additionally, the reputation of the school could be adversely affected if leaked information interfered with the negotiation process.

These are exciting, yet challenging times for Eagle Ridge. I know I speak for the rest of the Board when I say that it is an honor to serve our students, staff and parents. As always, you are welcome to attend our workshops and meetings, as well as contact us via email with your input.

Sincerely,

*Pete Larson*

**Chairman of the Board**

**Eagle Ridge Academy**

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