Strategic Planning Committee Board Report

Report Submitted: April 19, 2022 | Respectfully submitted by: Ryan Hill

Board Report Summary

The committee heard from each area director on the continued work being done, accomplishments celebrated and thoughts on the path ahead. Additionally, we discussed the status and expected timeline of continued work toward AMS Accreditation. The details below should be read by the board to help understand the passion, hard work, mindset, and determination of our school’s leadership team. Each areas shared the improvements of improved consistency in materials, lessons and practices. There continues to be a focus in the direction of integrated curriculums and the inclusion work of EC.

As we continue the efforts of pursuing AMS Accreditation which drives each of our Strategic Priorities, I am pleased to report that we remain on the expected timeline as outlined. While this is encouraging, our directors and experienced AMS staff are quick to caution us of the hard work ahead. As it was stated by Cathy Constantine in our meeting, “this is deep work, this is long work, this is hard work”. It was also stated that this work brings forth many questions that reveal the data for the final process. We will learn and grow tremendously in this process and will not be able to do this work without our parents and staff involvement. This fall we approach another milestone in the process, Step 7 - the application to AMS. We will begin the process of developing committees directed by the new head of school with representatives from all stakeholders groups, our students, parents, teachers, staff, leadership team and board. This engagement will need to be an area of focus as we have struggled in the past to garner robust participation in this type of work. We were encouraged greatly by our team members that have been through this process that we should begin strong outreach efforts to build knowledge of and invitation to this work.

In our final minutes of the meeting we discussed and heard from our admin team regarding the search for a head of school. Through our search, we will need to ensure we drive consistency and stability through the messaging and decisions. Rightly stated, staff, teachers, students and families feel uncertainty and angst more heavily if it is felt in our leaders. So our leaders need to remain informed, involved and clear as we continue forward. Our focus remains on our Mission, Vision and Values and Strategic Priorities.   
  
For anyone that missed this meeting, I want you to know that this report can’t reflect the passion, commitment and strength that we have in our leaders. Their candor, courage and expertise is clear. I am encouraged and proud of what’s to come.

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Meeting Date: April 1, 2022 | Attendees recorded at end of report.

Agenda.

1. Current Status Review
   1. AMS Accreditation - On track for Application Submission Sept 22?
2. Discuss any preparation for Executive Director Search
   1. Summary Document of Progress and Status for EOY?

Minutes and Discussion Items.

* Status Overview
  + Josie provided update for Fay. Children’s House status is still working but in a good place and ready for the AMS work.
  + Josie: Whole School
    - Working on scheduling, specials schedule is tight and EC work moving to the inclusion model will take several months to a year. Much work to be done for that transition.
      * This would be flagged with AMS and is priority work
  + Cathy: Lower Elementary team is well on the way, working on a few changes to be ready. Philosophy and practices are well on the way.
    - Lessons happening and children using materials
    - Big work is bridging the K to 1 - knowing about materials that are crossover and making sure that this is successful for K to 1
    - Reading program that started in CH transitions well for consistency and continued work in level meetings.
  + Liz: Upper El - Digging deeper into the practices. After covid delays, getting
    - Lesson studies with key pieces of materials and refreshing use of materials.
    - Continuing with consistency - Every child that leaves UE has had a consistent experience.
  + Justin: MS -
    - In the coming fall all lead teachers will be fully Montessori trained!
    - Fully furnished with new furniture
    - Fully stocked with tech needs on a 1 to 1 program
    - Last two years have had 2 hour work cycle
    - Inclusion model, have an EC teacher just for middle school students to be more integrated into the curriculum
    - First year de-tracked math program to have a more integrated curriculum which follows the integrated humanities program.
  + Rownak: EC
    - Balancing law, inclusion, etc makes evolution complex
    - First and foremost have to look at the schools schedule
    - Complexity of students is due to it being individualized and making sure inclusion serves individual needs and fits rhythms of the whole school
    - Taking time to really prepare ourselves.
    - Teacher training and certifications are moving forward, specifically in Montessori
    - Montessori Classroom vs. EC Classroom - working on the best way to make it as helpful/as close as possible.
    - Inclusion model, EC students work primarily in their classroom with other students. The EC
* AMS Status: Step 7 is submitting the application and saying we are “ready for
  + AMS would actually do our site visit likely the following year 2023-2024
  + This will allow the space for continuous work/improvement toward the AMS review.
  + Head of School will oversee each of the committees and pull in different stake holders.
    - Focus work: We still struggling with teacher and parent participation - We should focus on recruiting and involvement.
    - This is deep work, long work and hard work
    - The committees will need commitment.
      * This work brings many questions and data that informs the final report.
    - Commitment level is changing for teachers and we would likely see more participation.
    - Stephanie: when she was part of the MSR process, she was invited and felt it was a good method of having parents/teachers join.
      * We should strongly consider formal invites to parents/teachers that are already engaged.
      * Presenting expectations in a clear way so that parents know how much is required/asked and how they can contribute
      * Marketing: “sprinkle the seeds” of what is to come and informing the community.
    - June report another way to plant seeds for parent involvement.
* Search
  + Search and retention go hand in hand, there can be some overlap with Search and Strategic planning
  + What are actionable steps to set this up for success
  + Fay: Feeling that Sterling hasn’t settled with an ED, felt we are on a path. “Always unsettled”. We’ve picked this way, so what’s going to happen.
    - Retention
    - Initiative fatigue is a concern
  + Cathy: Board work to make sure the ED feels supported and builds longevity and consistency. Making sure that the head of school is not underwater
    - Are these interviews including experience with Accreditation in general
  + Elizabeth: Townhalls emphasis on what change looks and feels like. Being able to change effectively and support through that change. Hoping no additional initiatives.
    - Helping people know how connected the work is to the strategy and to AMS accreditation
  + Fay: Consistency and messaging. The comfort comes from the leaders that they work with on a daily basis, leadership change brings angst. “Its not about the board for the teachers - it’s about their leadership” They feel any angst that their leaders have.
    - Liz: Feeling is consistent across levels. Anytime new leaders, “what are we going to be asked to do now” - staff/parents need to hear and feel consistency.
    - Josie: New staff really important to know that our mission/vision/priorities will continue.
  + Josie: Very important that as a new head of school comes in, they are likely to hear many different perspectives and for them to know that we are moving forward with this. Every communication needs to be consistent with mission/vision/priorities.
  + Fay: Teacher retention is a question from prospective parents. While this often comes up as a concern, leaders listen at the highest level to know what is really being asked.

Respectfully submitted by Ryan Hill

Reference Staff Feedback and Summary of Efforts.

* [AMS Accreditation Timeline](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N_4Ba_8MDH5MtG9-Nzbh27PmUAtMk7Bg/edit)
* [Strategic Priorities update continued Oct. 1, 2021.docx](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c8QPqUrwoFEHso21SVM822QHq7frL1uo/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=116909788934459823596&rtpof=true&sd=true)

Attendance:

