

Valley Academy Special Public Board Meeting  
July 27<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm  
Hampton Inn Conference Room, Springdale, Utah

12:00-12:30.....Welcome and lunch for Board members

12:30-2:30.....Detailed Review of the SEI Climate Survey and discussion of surveys/appropriate survey questions that will guide our school-wide evaluations for next school year. (Alex Russell with Six Seconds will lead this conversation)

2:30-2:45....Break with snacks

2:45-3:45.....What is SEI and how does it work in the school on a daily basis? Review of Mr. Woodd's "State of Valley Academy" report and amendment request. Discussion with new Director (possible).

3:45-4:00....Break with snacks

4:00-6:15....Strategic planning and goals (Joshua Terry with US Synthetic with lead this conversation)

6:15...Close Retreat

6:30...Dinner with families at the Pool

Valley Academy Special Public Board Meeting Minutes  
7/27/13 at 12:00pm

In attendance: Lane Blackmore, Derek Lewis, Doug Beecher, Alisha Terry-Martin, Tonya Heyder, Jimmy Ashley, Ben Ruesch.

Alex Russell led a conversation about the climate survey that was done at our school last year and what the results mean to us. Alex is willing to continue to discuss this and help with other SEI training in the future.

We went through the State of Valley Report in detail, discussing possibilities for improvement.

**State of Valley Academy Year End Report**  
**July 1, 2013**

**Student Attendance, Retention and Enrollment**

*Projected enrollment for 2013-14 by grade:*

Kindergarten:	75	Wait list:	5
1st Grade:	60	Wait list:	0
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade:	36	Wait list:	0
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade:	51	Wait list:	1
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	52	Wait list:	15
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	50	Wait list:	4
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	50	Wait list:	2
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	50	Wait list:	1
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	46	Wait list:	0

*TOTAL:*            471

*Annual Daily Attendance Average 94.03% - Goal 95%*

Monday	93.31
Tuesday	94.64
Wednesday	95.26
Thursday	94.46
Friday	92.26

If we were able to bring Friday attendance up 2.5 percentage points we would have hit our goal of 95%

*Of the 430 students enrolled on the October 30, 2012 count – 333 are returning or 76%. The vast majority not returning are due to economic relocation*

**The Social/Emotional Learning Program**

Our school-wide social/emotional learning program is unique and being recognized as a workable systemic model for the future, which is why I was invited to present at

the NexusEQ conference at Harvard Medical Center. We are currently the only public school in the U.S. using such a school-wide model. Several private schools are using the model with tremendous results. There is a great body of research supporting this model and it points to improved test scores, safer schools and well-adjusted students. Our goal this year was to get the faculty trained and introduce the program to the students so the groundwork could be laid. Next year we will do more advanced training with faculty and introduce a workbook for students which will create a more even playing field from class to class. We will also do a pre-post assessment to measure student progress. We must also do a better job of selling the program to our parents and getting them involved. Working with the PTO will be one way to accomplish this task.

### **Climate Survey Results**

The positive results of our climate survey cannot be overstated. The survey was designed by Alex Russell, Six Seconds consultant and molecular biologist, Liz Goddard, former Board member and Accountability Committee Chair, Ed Woodd and Mike Killeen. The goal was to create a normed instrument which also measured the unique characteristics of our school. Stakeholder groups surveyed were: Governing Board, Administration/staff, Faculty parents and 4-7<sup>th</sup> grade students. With over 300 respondents, the normed scores indicated above average results in: Belonging, Accountability, Integrity, Involvement, Learning, Safety and Thriving. Significantly below average was motivation. Trust was slightly below average. Goals for next year are to raise motivation and trust scores.

The 21 unique questions designed to give us a broad and accurate picture of how stakeholders perceived the school had excellent results. On a scale of 1-5 possible rating points for each question, the over-all average was 4.2. This is a very high score, especially for a first year school and a strong indicator that what we are doing is fully supported by our stakeholders.

### **The Parent Teacher Organization**

After a slow start, the PTO gained momentum and provided some wonderful support for our students and faculty this year. In addition to fundraising activities, they hosted special events and boosted morale with brilliant ideas like decorating doors during teacher appreciation week and providing dinner during parent teacher conferences. The officers and volunteers are to be commended for their efforts. The new PTO leadership will certainly take the organization to the next level by exercising strong organizational skills and building membership by creating more opportunities to get parents involved. It is a building process and there is excellent momentum.

### **Extra-Curricular Programs**

Due to budgetary constraints, our extra-curricular programs were more limited this year than we would have liked. We were not able to offer the K-3 students regular

and organized arts activities. After school programs were also limited in scope to strings, drama and dance. Despite these limitations, our public performances were very well attended and involved nearly every student in grades 4-7. The kindergarten teachers held two performances which packed the multi-purpose room to overflowing. The Christmas show and end-of-year strings performance played to huge crowds.

Next year we have made arrangements to provide all students K-8 with formal weekly performing arts involvement. In K-4 the students will rotate through dance, music and art. Grades 5-8 will have electives in dance, strings, band, choir and more where they can pursue their passions. This will help boost our programs and community support.

### **Lunch Program**

Unfortunately, our hopes for the success of the catering program did not go as planned. Nearly 80% of our students brought their lunch to school which was not financially sustainable for Katering Concepts. Many of the parents stated that \$3 was too expensive for a balanced meal. When Katering Concepts left, two parents graciously stepped in and tried heroically to provide hot meals for the students. What they discovered was that they could not provide a hot lunch for \$3 even though they were not drawing a salary, just trying to provide food. We then came to an arrangement where they would provide healthy snacks and drinks individually for a price. That allowed students to either supplement what they brought from home or purchase a lunch that day. This arrangement worked out very well and we would like to continue it for next year. The only complaint we received was on the day that pizza got cancelled on short notice.

Much discussion has gone into considering the federal free and reduced lunch program. This program is a blessing for parents who find it difficult to provide their children with food from home and cannot afford to buy a lunch at school. We are very aware that there is need in our community for such a program. On the flip side of that coin, the program is very expensive to run and operate and I have first-hand experience. Despite the fact that the government reimburses up to \$2.95 per student, the costs of administering the program and compliance paperwork require a full-time cleric. In addition, our kitchen is not equipped to prepare food which would necessitate costly upgrades for which we have no budget. One of the reasons legislation exempts charter schools from mandatory lunch programs and transportation is because they can be budget breakers. We are eager to consider any viable options so students of financially struggling families can be provided with food. The only caveat is that we cannot afford to sacrifice teaching staff to provide that service, particularly when it is offered next door.

### **Accountability Committee Function**

The Accountability Committee met monthly last year until Liz resigned from the board. Committee members were Doug Beecher, Board member; Tara Freiberg, Teacher; Scott Smith, Teacher; Roline Capcsos, parent; Mike Killeen, Administrator;

Ed Woodd, Administrator. The committee was proactive, discussing and making plans for how to support the faculty and administration relating to school improvement. Shortly after first meeting, it was decided to change the name to School Support and Improvement Committee. The consensus of members was that the committee would be of greater value finding ways to support the school's success rather than acting as a watchdog. Finding ways to support literacy and numeracy training for younger students resulted in the hiring of aides in grades K-3. It will be next year before we see the results but we are confident that a significant improvement will result. Utilization of Land Trust monies for literacy support was also an item the committee discussed and is still on the table.

### **Challenges Moving Forward**

As I stated in my end of year self-evaluation, it has been an amazing, growthful and challenging year. In the start-up year of any charter school, a tremendous amount of energy is exerted hiring staff and teachers, establishing the structure of the organization, meeting the plethora of compliance requirements, helping people transition from their former situations into a new culture, dealing with the myriad unanticipated situations which arise and defining the organization to the stakeholders.

Reviewing what has been accomplished since the beginning of the year I can honestly say things have gone well. Our enrollment is good, we have an excellent faculty and the beginnings of a very healthy school culture. There are, however, several areas of needed improvement. We can do a much better job of communicating with the stakeholders about our vision for the school, what programs we intend to offer and celebrating all the wonderful things that are going on here on a daily basis. Keeping the website updated and vibrant will be a priority for this coming year, as well as more frequent communication from teachers to parents.

Our financial situation needs careful scrutiny and must be guided by a solid and sustainable growth plan. We are fortunate to have a beautiful new facility but we are also paying a heavy price. Keeping the school growing while trying to juggle staffing, meet the demands of our programs and provide more classrooms keeps us on the edge. We are very fortunate to have an outstanding business manager and a board member with an extensive background in fiscal management. We need to capitalize on those assets and spend significant time developing a viable growth model.

Another crucial area for improvement is to assure that communication between the board and the administration is always open, free flowing and professional. As with all other areas of the school, the board is feeling its way along and looking for ways to improve. The addition of work sessions prior to meetings will be of significant benefit. Additionally, the board must ensure that it always speaks with one voice so that personal relationships are subservient to the needs of the board as a whole. As is indicated in Dr. Carpenter's board trainings and in *Policy vs. Paperclips*, conflict is

inevitable and healthy for a growing organization. The critical matter is how conflict is handled.

I am very sad to be leaving Valley Academy at a time when the fruits of everyone's labor will begin to pay dividends. The school is still very young and will need to continue to change and modify as time goes on. To borrow a metaphor from Collins' best-selling management book, *Good to Great*, organizations are like a bus. You have to have the right driver, have everyone in the correct seats, and occasionally stop to let people off. Turnover and change are inevitable and, if handled correctly, will lead to excellence. As Deborah Kenny points out in *Born to Rise*, fit is all important. From the boardroom to the classroom, if everyone is on the same page and pulls in the same direction, the inevitable result will be excellence.

I love this school and will continue to support it by providing SEL training and any other types of assistance. Thank you for the opportunity to be at the helm the first year.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Josh Terry', written in a cursive style.

Josh Terry led a discussion on beginning to set goals for the coming year. We talked about who our customer is and the needs of our customer, then began to set the framework for goals for the coming year. This will be revisited at a future meeting.

Retreat closed at 6:00pm.