

State of the School
November 7, 2014
Strategic Growth Task Force Panel Q&A

The following questions were presented to a panel consisting of members of the Board of Directors and the Strategic Growth Task Force. The Q&A was moderated by Ms. Powell.

Q: What will happen if Eagle Ridge Academy is not awarded the Charter School Program grant by the MN Department of Education?

A: Speaking from a financial perspective, the Academy currently has a \$1,000,000 fund balance, so we could proceed with expansion. However the grant would provide up to \$225,000 for three years and that would be significant funding, putting us in a better financial position. Why is a fund balance important? The definition of a fund balance is how much money (savings) the Academy has to pay its bills, and while \$1,000,000 sounds like a lot of money it would only cover expenses for approximately 10-12 weeks.

Q: When you say “we” in terms of setting priorities, are you referring exclusively to the task force or were the results of the community survey used to set the priorities regarding the expansion?

A: The “we” refers to the task force, the board, the administration, or some combination thereof. The survey results indicated that location was a significant factor. And past experience with two schools, and the survey results themselves, reveal that having one campus increases collaboration amongst staff, promotes mentor/mentee relationships between younger and older students, and is more convenient to transport students. With one campus, the school may share resources, reduce duplication of programs, and reduce the need for shuttle busses.

Q: Follow up question about how the location(s) would work.

A: Currently we do not know what it will look like. Much of this will be determined by what is available in the current real estate marketplace. Ideally we would like to have one campus for K-12. This could be multiple buildings at one site (i.e. across the street), but we may have to have two sites. Because of available property within proximity to our current location, the most likely scenario would be that the school would be split between two sites; most likely with one location being K-5 and the other 6-12.

Q: Which school upper or lower would most likely stay at the current location?

A: The current site presently holds 864 students. Ideally we would envision at least one site having a gym, theater, and media center. For the current Flying Cloud Drive location, we would like enrollment to be around 600 students. Grades 6-12 would fit comfortably in this site. However, we will not make a decision to place students in a specific site until we narrow down our facility options.

Q: How does expanding benefit Eagle Ridge Academy and how does it support ERA's mission? Will this expansion distract current ERA's goal of betterment?

A: Expanding the enrollment would result in more academic opportunities for our students. For example, currently, due to space constraints, we are not able to add many more elective

classes for the upper school. We currently have some courses that are offered every other year, but we would be able to offer those every year (i.e. Anatomy, AP Physics, AP Chemistry, higher level math). Additionally, growth would permit us the proper space for grades that are progressing higher. Also, with a larger staff, we would have more people available to offer extracurricular activities before and after school. The School board would like to bring offer a high quality education, like Eagle Ridge academy, to more students. ERA has a wait list of about 700 students.

Q: What would happen to our current structure and enrollment if ERA does not expand?

A: We would need to start limiting enrollment in 9-12 to an average of about 57 students per grade. We currently have 70 students in 9th grade, 55 students in 10th grade, 49 students in 11th grade, and 51 students in 12th grade. We are projecting about 60 students per grade in grades 9-12 next year.

Q: Are there adjustments to the growth chart used in the presentation that represent the Academy's current enrollment numbers?

A: We took into consideration the Academy's past attrition rates. However, those rates may not be applicable, as the Academy's attrition has significantly decreased (nearly by half) in the last two years.