

Executive Director's Report to the Board

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Community Engagement on Proposed Expansion

Over the past couple of weeks, I've been actively working to build community support for our proposed expansion project. We met with representatives from the APT apartment complex within the last two weeks, and the Victoria Park Apartments shared that they will not oppose the project and are likely willing to provide a letter of support. I met today with Councilmember Noecker, who represents Ward 2—where Nova is located—and serves as the president of the St. Paul City Council. Gaining her support will be vital to our application to the city for conduit bonding. In addition, I will be meeting with several leaders from the Shalom Home on Tuesday. Securing support from adjacent neighbors is a critical step in obtaining the city approvals needed to advance the project.

Expansion Project Update

We are entering the final stages of the Design Development (DD) phase. As part of this process, we will be sharing the current plans with key stakeholder groups, particularly those who are most likely to utilize the new or renovated spaces. Their feedback will help ensure that the design reflects practical needs and priorities. We are hopeful that the DD package will be ready for presentation and discussion with the Board in June, along with recommended next steps.

In addition, we have begun work on two required applications: the conduit bonding application with the City of St. Paul and the Review and Comment application with the Minnesota Department of Education. Both applications will include a "not-to-exceed" financial number. This figure will be higher than our anticipated project financing to allow flexibility. If the total cost exceeds the approved number, we would need to return for further approval.

Special Education Program Monitoring Outcome

Earlier this school year, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) conducted a formal review of Nova Classical Academy's special education program, as part of its regular compliance monitoring process. The purpose of this review was to ensure our program aligns with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

I'm pleased to share that the final report from MDE has determined that Nova is in full compliance, with no findings issued and no corrective action plan required. This is a noteworthy accomplishment and a reflection of the strong systems and practices in place. MDE specifically commended our administration and special education staff for their commitment to providing high-quality, compliant services to students with disabilities and their families.

We extend our appreciation to our special education team for their work leading up to and throughout the review process, and we thank the Department of Education for their collaborative approach in this important accountability work.

Leadership Team Development Update

As part of our ongoing commitment to team development and organizational effectiveness, we partnered this past year with The Intevation Group to support the continued growth of our leadership team. This work began with a two-day offsite retreat last summer and included follow-up sessions and individual coaching throughout the school year. The focus of this engagement was *The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team* framework, which emphasizes trust, healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and results.

We recently concluded our final session under this contract. To evaluate progress, team members completed anonymous surveys in both August and April. While no domain currently falls into the “high-performance” category, the data reflects measurable progress in all five areas. These improvements are encouraging and affirm the investment made by the team over the past year.

It’s worth noting that the leadership team includes 12 individuals across multiple functional areas. The team structure operates more as a cross-functional working group—sharing information across sub-teams such as the Strategic Leadership Team, Instructional Leadership Team, and Communications Team—rather than as a singular unit focused on a single project. This distinction has become clearer through the year’s work and presents an opportunity to align our team structures more intentionally going forward.

Areas of Greatest Improvement

Survey item analysis highlights meaningful gains in the following areas:

- Addressing issues directly when conflict occurs
- Supporting group decisions even when initial disagreement exists
- Expressing differing opinions openly, even if it may lead to disagreement

These changes point to a growing culture of psychological safety, trust, and collaborative problem-solving.

Opportunities for Continued Growth

Areas with smaller gains include:

- Questioning one another’s current approaches and methods
- Willingness to make sacrifices in one’s own area for the broader team

These areas typically develop as trust and shared ownership deepen, and they will remain focus points in our continued development work.

Other Highlights

- 9 out of 12 team members reported the team is functioning better now than before the training
- 10 out of 12 noted that the team has become more productive

While continued growth is needed to reach ideal performance levels, the progress made this year lays a strong foundation for the future.