

# Nova Classical Academy



2020 in Review

# What Am I Going to Cover?



- **How I View My Role**
- **Work Since 2019 Board Retreat**
- **Highlights & Celebrations**
- **Response to COVID-19**
- **Focus Areas for 2021**





# How I View My Role

# How I View My Role



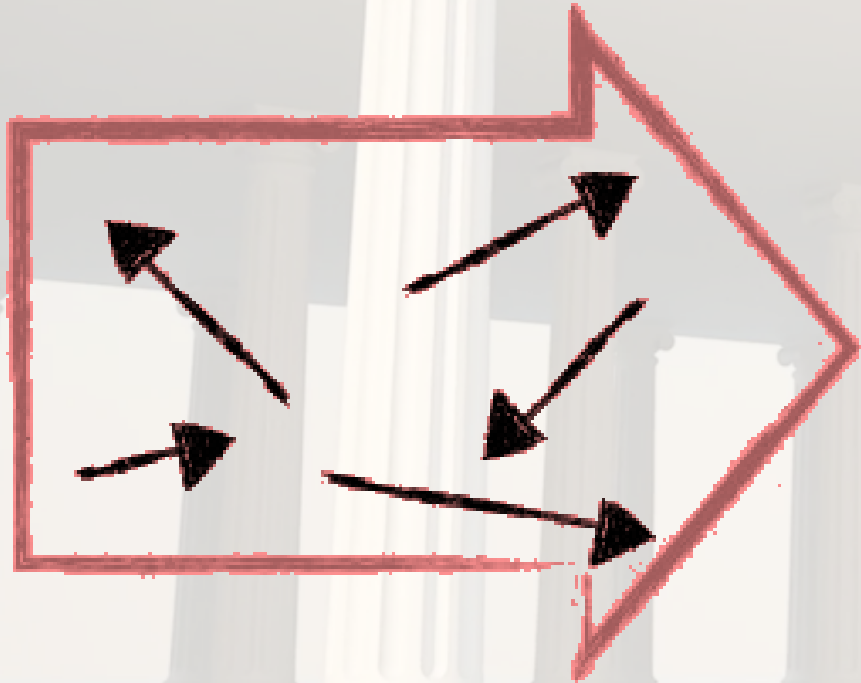
- Ensure the school is growing towards its vision  
(Response to Crisis)
- Supervise and develop our leadership team
- Be a calming presence and face of leadership
- Ensure alignment of resources
- Avoid almost everything else



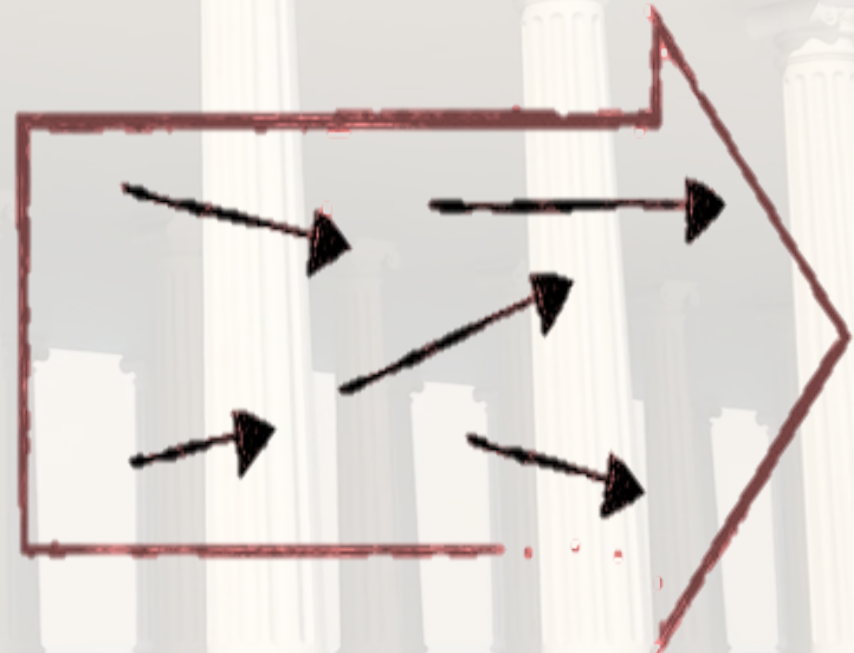
# Systematic Alignment



Unaligned Team



Aligned Team





**Work Since  
2019 Board  
Retreat**

# From 12/19 Presentation



- Focus Areas
  - Board Goals
  - Financial Vendor
  - Reorganization/Consistency of Leadership
- Additional Projects
  - Streamline Communications
  - Streamline Hiring & Evaluation Process
  - Process for Budget Approvals & Culture of Strategic Spending



Looking back

# Focus Area – Board Goals



- Major focus of the previous Board
- Sought to put measures to Nova's Vision
- Identified Priority Areas
  - Classical Education
  - Engagement
  - Academic Excellence
  - Sustainability
- Measures approved last spring  
(See Attachment in BoardBook)





# Focus Area – Financial Vendor



- Switched to Dieci School Finance in Winter of 2020
- Improved financial transparency
- Finished 19/20 with net income of \$427,332 (6/2019 Budget projected - \$122,045)
- Improved working relationship allows focus on strategic items (refinance, PPP, etc.)

Supplies					
01 E 010 201 657 000 401	Non-Instructional Supplies - Kindergarten	56.97	56.97	-	N/A
01 E 010 201 657 000 406	Software - Kindergarten	520.00	827.41	-	N/A
01 E 010 203 000 000 401	Non-Instructional Supplies - Lower School- Elementary Gen	-	8,220.23	19,000.00	43%
01 E 010 203 000 000 406	Technology - Instructional Software- Elementary Gen	2,632.50	8,773.05	10,000.00	88%
01 E 010 203 000 000 430	Instructional Supplies - Lower School- Elementary Gen	-	1,200.94	10,000.00	12%
01 E 010 203 000 000 460	Text Books- Elementary Gen	-	25,842.91	27,000.00	96%
01 E 010 203 000 000 466	Technology Devices- Elementary Gen	-	-	1,000.00	0%
01 E 010 203 000 000 470	Library Books- Elementary Gen	-	-	500.00	0%
01 E 010 203 000 000 490	Food - Lower School- Elementary Gen	-	-	500.00	0%
01 E 010 203 517 000 401	Non- - Uniform Fees- Elementary Gen	-	-	-	N/A
01 E 010 201 657 000 430	Instr. Supplies - Kindergarten- Elementary Gen	68.80	1,103.01	3,000.00	37%
01 E 010 203 658 000 430	Instr. Supplies - Grade 1- Elementary Gen	-	20.97	1,000.00	2%

# Focus Areas – Reorganization, Consistent Leadership



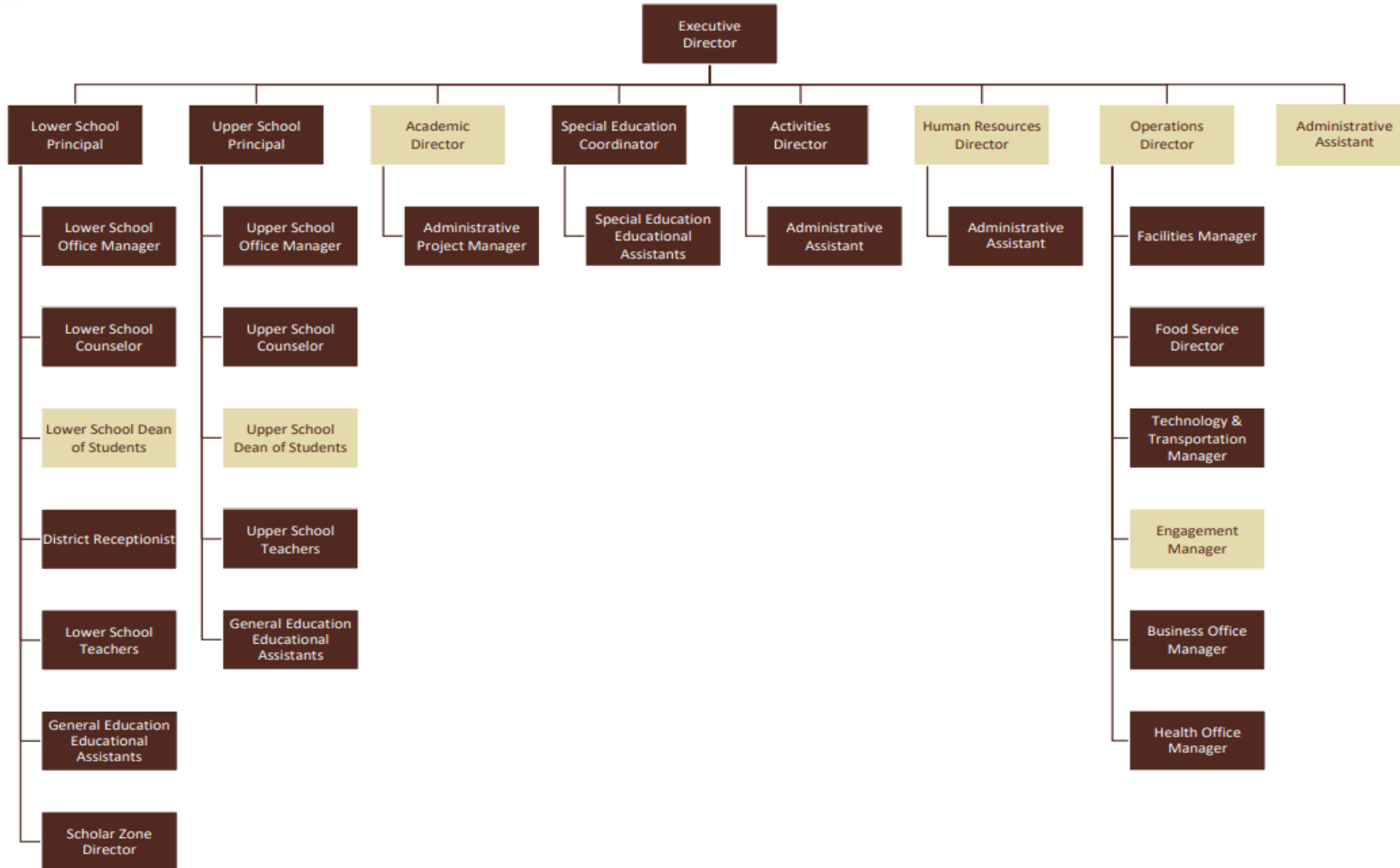
- Created a proposed Organization Chart – Prior Board “Approved” of Model
- Began the process of staggering employment terms of Nova’s leaders.
- Currently working on emergency succession plans and training



# Focus Areas – Reorganization, Consistent Leadership



## Organizational Chart



# Additional Project – Streamline Communication



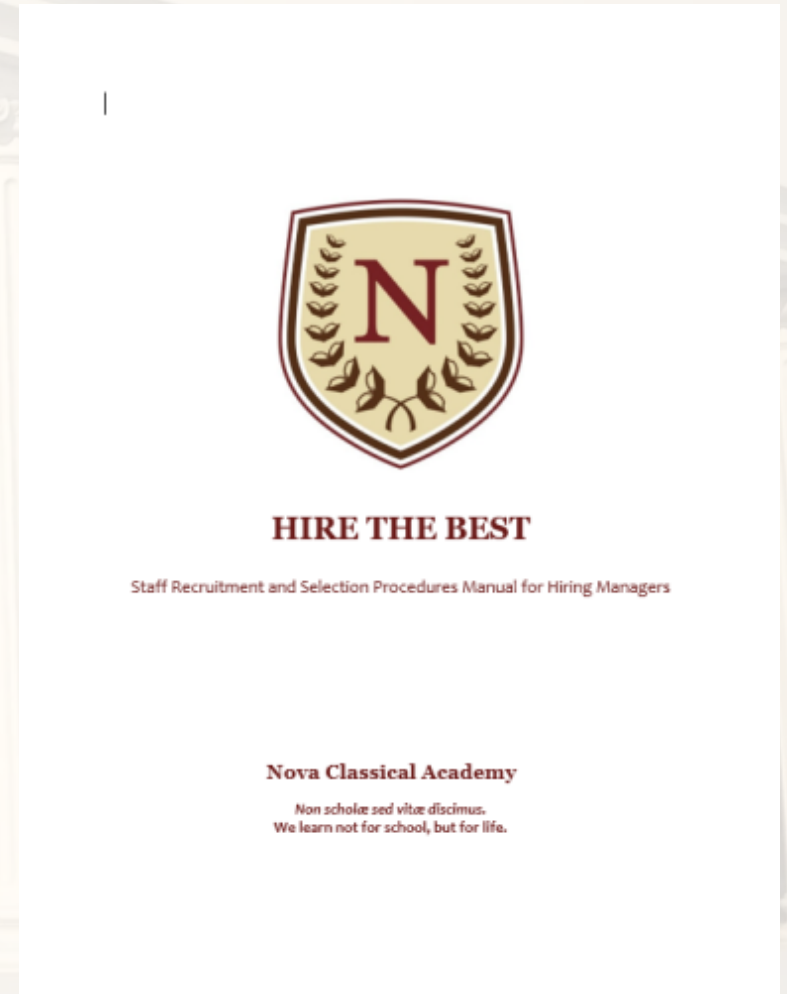
- Focusing on how we talk about ourselves and who we are
- Just beginning this process but already can see some actions
  - Super Nova Campaign
  - Online Nova Tour
  - Website



# Additional Project – Hiring & Evaluation Process



- Created & Implemented “Hire the Best” (See Attached)
  - In the process of reviewing the first hiring cycle utilizing this process
- Work was underway on the evaluation process
  - Currently halted to put together something more appropriate for the current distance environment



# Additional Project – Culture of Strategic Spending



- This was a major focus of prior Board Chair and an area where we spent a lot of time
- Asks “How can our resources most help us?”
- Alignment of Leadership Team Around Concept
- Switching to purchasing cards
- Seen in \$550,000 swing from projected to actual in 19/20 budget





# Highlights & Celebrations

# Lower School



- Since March, Nova has offered successful and reliable childcare to families with Tier 1 workers. The program has offered both social and academic support to students K-12 years old.
- The Lower School retention rate for Grades 1-5 is 97%. Only 13/405 returning students have not returned to Nova or have left since the start of school. Four of these were out of state moves.
- The daily attendance rate has been 97% for students in grades K-5. There has been overwhelming support and partnership from families and students continue to be engaged and active with school.
- We welcomed our new class of Kindergarteners in a few different ways to ensure a successful start to the year. Each kindergarten student was sent a care package including a welcome letter, a book, a bracelet, and a pencil. We were able to have a socially distanced, outdoor Meet the Teacher event as well as 1:1 teacher conferences at the start of the year.
- Morning announcements have happened daily since March. Ms. Tousignant compiles birthdays and jokes, performances and photos submitted by students into a daily announcement that is posted in students' Google Classroom. These announcements allow students to see each other and help to bring the school community together.
- Teachers have fully embraced distance learning, have acclimated to new technology and are delivering the Nova curriculum in creative ways. They continue to collaborate and learn from each other, even from a distance, through staff meetings, weekly grade level meetings, and weekly informal virtual gatherings.



# Upper School



- Nova's Choir went to the Region 4A contest and scored "Superior" across the board from all three judges. This is the highest praise a choir can receive.
- Nova's One Act Play received a "Starred" Performance for their production of "Eurydice" at the 2020 state tournament.
- Nova's Mock Trial team won the 2020 state tournament.
- The boys CC team won the state coaches association tournament.
- As we transitioned to the fall, we were able to successfully complete seasons in boys and girls Cross Country and Soccer, along with girls Volleyball. In addition, we continue to offer Debate, Mock Trial, First Tech Challenge, and a Fall Play as extra-curriculars throughout our shift to Distance Learning.
- We successfully produced an outdoor and livestreamed graduation ceremony in the midst of the statewide school closure. The Drive-In style ceremony was attended by all our families (including some from the community) in a way that kept everyone safe while celebrating their achievements - viewable from our site and across the country.
- Despite the disruption that came from the school closure last spring, we still had 86% of our 65 students taking part in CIS courses earn a C or better last year, with 261 U of M credits earned - equating to \$141,394 of U of M tuition.
- While many public schools have reported declines in enrollment as a part of this school year, often from parents seeking more in-person or hybrid instruction, Nova's Upper School enrollment continues to grow, from 522 to 538 in grades 6-12.
- Nova again was rated the #2 High School in the state of Minnesota, according to US News and World Report. We're also rated the #5 High School in Minnesota according to the Niche rankings site as well (an increase of 5 spots from the year prior).



# **Response to COVID-19**

# Approach to COVID-19



- “Protect Your Downside”
- Prioritize Sustainability & Consistency
- Whatever we choose to do, do it well (Chess Not Checkers)
- Organizations suggesting “Strategic goals don’t exist during a pandemic.”



# What Has This Allowed Us



- We have utilized 1 learning model during 2019-2020
  - Stable Enrollment
- We are in as stable of financial position as any charter school right now
  - Currently 37.5% Fund Balance
  - 31% of projected expenditures during first 1/3 of the year
- Learning model decisions being made at least 3+ weeks before they take effect

# This is Good, but . . .



- The sense of stability can cause us to try to stretch.
- We must remember we are facing a public health crisis.
- We must keep the focus on a model that can be implemented very well.





# **FOCUS AREAS FOR 2021**

# Long Term Financial Sustainability



- Ensure Nova can return to normal operations following the pandemic:
  - Decisions About PPP
  - Refinancing
  - Finishing 2020/2021 at, or near, budget projections
  - Decisions about credit availability to offset a potential state holdback



# Leadership Succession Planning



- We benefited from only turning over 1 leadership/management position during 2020 (which we have not filled).
- Pandemic has caused an awareness of being able to operate a person down
- Working toward a formal ED Emergency Succession Plan (policy)
- Develop areas of cross training among members of Nova's leadership





# A Last Thought



**“It’s a marathon, not a sprint;  
pace yourself accordingly”**

**Amby Burfoot**