

Executive Director's Report to the Board

Date of the Report: October 23, 2025

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Expansion Project Update

As you know, the expansion project was put out to bid earlier this fall. Over the past several weeks, we have been working with the low bidder on value engineering to reduce project costs.

Through this process, we have identified roughly one million dollars in potential savings. Most of these adjustments will not be noticeable in the completed facility and include changes such as selecting alternative vendors for certain materials, using PVC instead of cast iron for water drainage piping, and choosing products with equivalent performance for some exterior finishes.

There are a few changes from the original specifications in the RFP that someone might notice if they were paying close attention. For example, the solar light tubes in the shelter space and the overhead mechanical volleyball system were removed. These adjustments were made because they are more cost efficient and align more closely with the quality and appearance of our existing facility.

We are continuing to explore additional opportunities for savings while balancing cost reductions with the timing of bringing bonds to a favorable market. Our focus is now shifting from value engineering to drafting and finalizing the construction contract, which we expect to bring forward for Board review and approval in the coming weeks.

Committee Goal-Setting Update

In October, our leadership led committees are setting their quarterly goals. The Strategic Leadership Team has set as one of its goals a review of opportunities to implement an anonymous system for reporting threats, harassment, and bullying.

This priority emerged directly from the equity audit process, where it was rated as the second-highest recommendation by the working group. Continuing this work reflects our commitment to addressing areas identified for improvement and ensuring a safe and supportive school environment.

Federal Government Shutdown

With the federal government shutdown now in effect, the U.S. Department of Education has issued contingency guidance on how funding and program operations will be affected. Current allocations for Title I and IDEA that were awarded to states this summer remain available, and schools in Minnesota can continue to access these funds on the usual schedule. At this point in the fiscal year, Nova would not typically be drawing on these dollars yet, so no immediate disruption is expected.

At this stage, no operational disruptions are expected for Minnesota charter schools. However, some administrative processes at the federal level may be delayed until the shutdown concludes.

Review and Comment Approval

This week we received formal approval from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for the **Review and Comment (R&C)** submission related to the expansion project.

As you may recall, the Board approved the R&C submission in June. The submission included detailed documentation in the following areas:

1. **The Geographic Area and Population to Be Served**
2. **A List of Existing School Facilities**
3. **A List of Specific Deficiencies of the Facility**
4. **A Description of the Project**
5. **Specification of Project Financing**
6. **Documentation of Compliance with Applicable Requirements**

MDE approved the Review and Comment without any requested revisions, which means this required state approval is now fully in hand.

The **final significant procedural approval** still pending for the expansion project, aside from bonding, is the **Air Rights Vacation for the proposed skyway**, which has been submitted to the City of Saint Paul and is awaiting review.

Minnesota Classical Education Conference Update

Last week, 17 Nova staff attended the **9th Annual Minnesota Classical Education Conference** at the DoubleTree by Hilton Minneapolis Airport. This year's theme, **"Writing Across the Disciplines,"** focused on strengthening student thinking and communication through writing across all subject areas.

The keynote address, **"Full, Ready, and Exact: Becoming a Better Thinker,"** was delivered by **Andrew Pudewa** of the Institute for Excellence in Writing, examining how reading, conversation, and writing develop curiosity, creativity, ethical decision making, and meaningful communication in an AI era. Nova presenters included:

- **Becky Lund and Sara Seal** — *Writing with the Full Spectrum of the Trivium*
- **Laura Buri** — *Sentence Diagramming 101*

Also, a special thank you to **Dr. Missy Johnson**, who serves on the conference planning committee, and to **Friends of Education**. The conference provided focused professional development and valuable opportunities for collaboration with classical educators from across the state.

Modified Movement Safety Procedure

Following debriefs of several recent events at Nova Classical, the Safety Committee identified an opportunity to strengthen our building safety protocols. As a result, a new safety procedure called **Modified Movement** has been developed and will be implemented moving forward.

This procedure serves as an alternative to a **shelter in place, lockdown, or lockout** when a more limited response is needed. It will be used when it is necessary to control activity in one or more specific areas of the facility rather than the entire building. Examples include responding to medical situations or facilities-related concerns.

Modified Movement provides a flexible option that allows us to address urgent or immediate needs of staff and students while minimizing disruption to learning across the school. Staff and students will receive training on this new procedure as part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and responsive school environment.

