

## Chair Report for January 29, 2022 Board Meeting

*I apologize for the length of this report. Please do read it! The more I write, the less I have to talk during the meeting ... and the shorter the meeting!*

Highlights of what I have heard or seen acting as your chair this month:

- Across the board this year, **committee chairs** have been planning and talking about how to make board processes and reporting better. You can see the fruits of these conversations in the TENTATIVE board goals document later in the agenda. (Committee chairs did not know that I was going to include summaries of all the “extra” exceptional work they are planning for our school, but I think it makes sense to shed light on both their thoughtfulness and their future committee work for the board - and celebrate it! Plus committee work often represents the tangible goals the board achieves each year!)
- I was excited to hear that the board chair plays a role - in coordination with the Governance Committee - in determining what we do for **training** each year. My main goal is to open training up for ongoing feedback and suggestions from you. This month, I spoke with our Governance Chair Becky Lund and Dr. Wedlund, and compiled a list of potential topics to get us started. We'll all be discussing training later in the meeting.
- **Hats off! Dr. Wedlund and all his team have been preparing all summer** for the start of the school year and when I met with him earlier this month, the building was like a stage piled with props being prepared for the “welcome students” production that is starting now.
- **IMPORTANT: If you remember anything from this board report, I hope you hold on to this story of a little exchange I had with Dr. Wedlund.** Dr. Wedlund and I recently compared analogies we use for understanding our work with each other. The similarities of our separate analogy “tools” were striking - and think your knowing about this shared approach might be useful for all of us working together:

When I find myself itching to overstep into the school's operations, I picture an old fashioned sailing ship like the Mayflower. I imagine getting on the ship with fire in my belly about some sort of operational issue, and I see myself going up to the big ole wooden steering wheel. Then, I have a ridiculous image of me fighting for the wheel from Dr. Wedlund. And at that point, I laugh at myself. Of course, he gets to steer the ship - with help from his crew. That's what we hired him for. And he will do it differently from how I would because he is trained to steer this ship - and I am not. It is his job to come up with navigational strategies and implement them. That is not my job. My job is to stay up by the sails and blow gently into them to provide support as he navigates the ship toward the destination the board has chosen. And I definitely don't belong in the water causing turbulence.

I was embarrassed to share my analogy with Dr. Wedlund. Then, Dr. Wedlund laughed and put me at ease. Turns out, he has an analogy of his own. He said that he imagines that he is planning a vacation for a group of people. They choose the destination. He determines the strategy for getting there. They don't have all of the information or

training so they don't get to choose whether to go by plane or boat. That is his job. He was humble enough to recognize that he uses this analogy to remind himself to stay on course. He said that he knows that the board gets to ask him about why he might be off-course if that ever happens.

It is apparent to me that Dr. Wedlund knows his role. Every board - not just at Nova - needs to be careful to know their role.

**PS:**

**I have heard not once, but multiple times that school leaders often identify dealing with their school boards as the most difficult aspect of their jobs.**

**I ask you to please keep the analogies above in mind. Please be careful this busy strategic planning year to “stay off the boat,” “keep out of vacation planning,” and keep your sights on the horizon looking for the school’s perfect destination, because that destination choice IS ours to make as a board, and it is likely the most important thing we will be voting on this year.**