

OAK KNOLL KINDERHAUS MONTESSORI / BOARD MINUTES 10-5-05

Board Attendees: John Barrone, Jonna Dennis, Lisa Vigil Ruelas, Dorothy Chambless, Hannah Holland, Peter Dimopoulos, Nina Powell. New Members: Alana Steele, Standrea Williams.

CALL TO ORDER

WELCOME NORM

DISCUSSION ON SCHOOL CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES:

Reminder - discussions among the board are confidential and should not be shared with other non-board members. Reminder - when staff is out for any reason, the explanation given to parents should be stated as "personal" and without detail.

Report from Lisa from the parents in Miss Lisa's class – Parents concerned about Miss Lisa's future at the school and request that she finish the school year with us.

DISCUSSION ON COMMUNICATION POLICY: Hard copy of Communication Policy distributed to board. Please read and review and submit any comments via email. Policy is to be distributed and discussed with staff next week.

ACTION REMINDER: Staff handbook needs to be reviewed and discussed with teachers/staff ASAP.

BRIEF OF MEETING YESTERDAY (10/4) WITH ELIZABETH: Discussion included the goals and responsibilities of the Executive Director.

- Problems need to be resolved in a timely manner
- Being aware of body language and inflection when speaking to staff
- Getting back on track with grants
- Asking for help and/or delegating when necessary

Concern from Dorothy that these issues need to be discussed in a long range/planning meeting and not at regular meetings or "sub-meetings". Dorothy proposes that committees are formed to solve problems and that each board member read and internalize a "board non-profit handbook." (For exact title see Dorothy)

DIRECTORS REPORT: Submitted via written letter.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS: Alana Steele and Standrea Williams arrive and introduce themselves to the board.

VOTE FOR NEW MEMBERS.

Alana – 7 yes / 0 no

Standrea – 7 yes / 0 no

Report from Standrea on September work party – Attendance was good, wood chips were turned, etc. Not everything on the list was accomplished but everyone seemed happy and worked hard.

ACTION – Dorothy needs to provide new board members with board packets. New Members need to sign confidentiality agreement.

OTHER BUSINESS: Question from Nina if bylaws have been officially changed? Minor changes have been made to the bylaws (per a previous meeting), but have not been submitted to the state.

Jonna suggests that we need to get the books together for auditing purposes.

ACTION - Review old minutes for completed action items. Note - Gwen has already begun this process.

ACTION – Please update your email list to include new members

MEETING ADJOURNED

NEXT MEETING: Weds, Nov 3, location TBD

- Sara and Andrea's letter to the Board

Common Sense Guidelines to Staff/Staff and Staff/Parent Relations

All references to Staff should be understood to include members of the Board of Directors.

The primary goal of the Staff of Oak Knoll Kinderhaus is the creation of a safe and healthy learning environment for the children. In attaining this goal, Staff must always maintain a professional relationship with each other and with parents. This requires approaching parents with sensitivity and courtesy and instilling confidence in parents that Oak Knoll is a nurturing and open community.

Under no circumstances should a Staff member criticize or discipline a peer or subordinate in front of or within hearing distance of other Staff or members of the school community. This should not be confused with open constructive critique. Solution oriented discussion and friendly communication should be encouraged, especially during Staff meetings.

Staff must maintain a united front in support of the school when interacting with parents and the community in general, if a parent approaches a Staff member with a problem, s/he should take the following steps:

- Listen carefully and understand the issue.
- If the issue is an existing issue and is being addressed, let the parent know.
- If the issue is new or is not being addressed, assure the parent that it will be looked into immediately. Let the parents know with whom they need to address the issue and then **facilitate this meeting**. Within a reasonable amount of time, follow up with the appropriate Staff member. If no action has been taken, bring the issue to the Executive Director or to the Board of Directors if that is appropriate.

Under **no circumstances** should Staff “commiserate” with parents or have a “gossip session” about the school, its policies and/or employees. Nor should Staff discuss the discipline or inappropriate behavior of a student with anyone other than the child’s parents, except to reassure the parent of an offended child that the offending child’s parents have been spoken with and appropriate action is being taken.

If you have a disagreement or other issue with another Staff member, we encourage you to try to resolve it privately. If the issue cannot be resolved privately, discuss the issue with the Human Resources Director, who will attempt to resolve the issue. If s/he cannot resolve the issue, s/he will act as your advocate if the matter needs to be brought to the attention of the Executive Director or Board of Directors.

If Staff members have an issue of personal concern regarding employment contracts, salary or other concerns specific to the individual Staff member, s/he should take that concern to the Human Resources Director. If the concern involves any school policies, Staff should address the concern with the Executive Director. If the Executive Director cannot resolve the problem satisfactorily, the matter may be taken to the Board with either the Executive Director or the Human Resources Director acting as the Staff member’s advocate.

Staff should not address these issues directly to Board members. The primary function of the Board of Directors is oversight and long-range planning. While the members of the Board are available to Staff and the parent community to hear problems, the Executive Director and Human Resources Director are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school, including dispute resolution. However, if an issue arises that requires a policy decision or a decision involving legal issues, the Board may be the appropriate body to resolve the issue.

Staff members may also be parents. As representatives of the school, these parents should be particularly diligent in following the guidelines set forth in the Family Handbook. This will ensure that all parents are held to the same expectations and will contribute to a more cohesive Oak Knoll community. Timeliness and community participation are especially important.

Parents need regular reassurance that their child is being nurtured and is a vital part of the school community. Lead teachers should be present and visible during all drop off and pick-up times. An effort should be made to regularly comment on student progress both socially and academically. The Lead Teacher should make it clear to her assistant which aspects of the student progress he/she should discuss with the parent. Anecdotal reminiscences about the child’s daily interactions are an excellent way for the assistants to let the parents know how their child is doing.

****Remember – United Front – Best Face Forward – Open Friendly Communication****

DIRECTORS REPORT

Dear Board,

I wish I could be at this meeting, [REDACTED].

First of all, I wanted to report that we have been using the school staff and family calendars, and it has been very helpful for our day-to-day work in the office; for instance, we produced both Staff Handbooks, Parent packets, and other information for the beginning of the school year in a more timely fashion than ever. All of the information came out in time to give the individuals involved time to digest the information before our orientations, in the case of the Family Handbook. However, the staff handbook was poorly digested by the staff and we will be therefore going to a system of reviewing the handbook with all staff as a means of orientation. For new staff, this process will occur as they are hired. For existing staff, I will be conducting the staff meetings as a review of the handbook. In the future, we will review the handbook in the preparation week for school, generally the last week of August. In addition, we will no longer allow the salaried staff to set up their classrooms at their convenience; we will require them to maintain school hours for that week, as is our right according to their contracts. We will then be able to devote more time to reviewing the revised handbook prior to the beginning of every year.

Aliete is giving tours regularly. We have had one enrollment since the last meeting, with several more potentials in the pipeline.

The [REDACTED] family withdrew [REDACTED] from our Orange Grove site. I will be preparing a full report on this situation, now that the dust is settling. I need advice from the board on this issue.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

While some of their other concerns were strictly cultural, others were justified. For instance, they did not receive a written report when their son [REDACTED] was injured, which upset them greatly on many different levels. They also had concerns about cleanliness of the classroom. This last issue I believe is correct; specifically the mother cited the snack area as being a potential problem, with children handling and sometimes mouthing food and putting it back for others to eat. The scarlet fever/strep epidemic at Orange Grove may very well be a result of this snack issue. I spoke to Lisa last week about it, asking her to modify her area (move it away from the restroom, and move the communal plates away from the children who are eating) [REDACTED]. I will write her a formal letter this week asking her to reconfigure her snack area and the change her policies.

I believe that if we try to enforce the contract, we will create an enemy in this family. At this stage, they have said that they "may be back", and that they hope that the school will improve so that they can be confident in us. While I have doubts about this, I don't think it's a good idea to make them hostile toward us, since [REDACTED] is very loud about her opinions to say the least. I would propose that we ask them to either make a donations to the school, or pay the 30 day notice and release them from the contract. They have said that they cannot pay the year contract.

In reviewing their files, I also could not find the contracts for the younger children. This is a separate issue which I will address later, but we may have only one contract actually signed.

As mentioned before, I will prepare a chronological report. While the school has problems that this series of events brought to the surface, I believe that even if we had acted perfectly we would have lost the family sooner or later, because we are not the academic "Montessori" that they are looking for.

Related to the above issue, while dates for contracts being returned were given to the parents, the compliance has been very poor. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. I am asking for advice on how we can get the forms in. Should we give the teachers more responsibility to ask the parents about them? I believe that when Nakitas was at Eagle Rock the teacher reminded me when I owed them a form. Or, someone could stand by sign in and talk to the families. I know that Glendale Montessori has someone at their welcome table. Maybe we could do something similar and remind people as they sign their children in.

Again, I am sorry I am unable to attend the meeting and I hop that this partial report will help out.

Talk to you soon.

Elizabeth