TO: Math and Science Academy (MSA) Board of Directors

 MSA Merger Committee Members

DA: April 2, 2023

FR: Dr. Mortensen

 Woodbury Leadership Academy (WLA) Executive Director

 Ms. Shelbi Pool, WLA Board Chair

RE: **DETERMINING KEY DECISIONS**

Greetings,

First of all, thank you for your ongoing commitment to MSA and investing your time and resources to ensure that MSA continues to have a bright future. MSA has been a top notch school due to the fact that as the years have gone by, people like yourselves, (leaders) roll up their sleeves to get the work done. We understand that you are diligently addressing the needs you have right now, and we respect your process. We all know it is not easy to undertake business in the public eye.

Secondly, Ms. Pool and myself have outlined herein, key points for moving forward with a merger process. Similar to MSA, our Merger Committee members, board members, staff members, and families have contributed to what we believe are “non-negotiables”, and/or “highly preferred” items. We are respectfully requesting that the MSA Board of Directors (BOD) and the MSA Merger Committee review the items, as well as generate a similar list for the WLA BOD and Merger Committees to review. I believe that we all want to avoid getting further into this process, investing additional significant time and energy, only to find out that there are some points for either school that are deal breakers. ***Due to your scheduled board meeting on April 17th, it would be appreciated if you could review our items, create your items, and respond to us by April 18th, ahead of our April 27th board meeting.***

Items that are of critical importance to WLA stakeholders:

1. Maintaining our Core Knowledge curriculum for grades PK-5 and a continued move to be recognized as a Distinguished Core Knowledge school for the elementary school level
2. Maintaining a balanced curriculum that includes the Core Knowledge humanities sequence through 8th grade, in addition to the science and math curriculum that MSA implements. (As you compare the CK literature and Social Studies content to MSA, we believe that you will see overlap with the curriculum being utilized at bot schools.)
3. Maintaining a rigorous curriculum with homework expectations that are reasonable for active families
4. Maintaining our Leadership program, which includes aspects of service learning, in grades PK-12
5. Maintaining small class sizes
6. Continued campus for grades PK-8 at the 8089 Globe Drive location, with a high facility built or remodeled for a high school campus at a second location. Also, that the new high school of course be designed with extensive input from high school staff members to best suit the needs of curriculum (science labs, robotics workshops, performing arts center, gymnasiums, art and music areas and so forth) I believe we can all agree that we would like to see high quality facilities for students in grades PK-12
7. Continued employment agreements with our current staff members, which are not cut due to a merger
8. Continued celebration of our diverse learners, with curriculum, programs, and activities that actively promote the inclusion of all learners
9. Quality and comprehensive programming for our special education, 504, remedial, and English Learner students in order that every student will have the support they need to thrive
10. Maintaining the WLA identity and school culture by celebrating families from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that all our learners thrive. Furthermore, and as previously mentioned, that the combined entity maintains leadership, and service learning projects, as we all work together to build well-rounded graduates
11. PK-8 students remain in uniforms, with considerations for up to grade 10 (modified uniforms for grades 6 and above)
12. No current or pending litigation
13. A combined “transition” board that includes members form both MSA and WLA
14. Be willing (just as WLA is willing) to be absorbed by the other school if the bondholders and/or lawyer(s) determine such to be the best course of action. This includes a willingness to change authorizers if/as the bondholders and/or lawyer(s) recommend such

Finally, since last fall both MSA and WLA Boards of Directors (BODs) have worked with various stakeholder groups, have gathered information from sources, conducted stakeholder surveys, and organized merger committees. Furthermore, we’ve listened to stakeholders in person, through emails, through staff meetings, and through professional learning communities, as our stakeholders have generated questions, and shared important feelings they have regarding the work we do here at MSA and WLA. At this point, when programming plans and staffing complements are being addressed for the coming school year, both MSA and WLA need to determine if we should continue to move forward with exploring a merger or not. Also, for your added information, I (Dr. Mortensen) presented to the WLA BOD last week, that we have four courses of action to consider as listed below, and after significant discussion, the board directed me, (in collaboration with Ms. Pool and Merger Committee team leaders) to develop the list of “non-negotiables”. I will also be developing a side-by-side plan to present to the WLA board, and I will provide a copy to the MSA BOD as well.

1. Develop a list of “non-negotiables”, present them to MSA, and consider their response. (Curriculum, Facilities, Surviving School…)
2. Develop a side-by-side comparison of WLA’s development over the next five years with and without a merger, gather stakeholder feedback, and present the comparison model to the WLA Board of Directors.
3. Table the merger discussions for one year, implement the strengths from both schools, and then re-consider a merger. For example, incorporate some of MSA’s math course content at WLA, and/or share Leadership/Humanities program content at MSA. The idea being to see how well the curriculums match prior to a full commitment. (This idea was shared by a merger committee member.)
4. End the exploration of merging.

Thank you~ Thank you~

Dr. Mortensen Ms. Shelbi Pool

Executive Director Board Chair

Woodbury Leadership Academy Woodbury Leadership Academy