TO: Stakeholder Update

DA: April 19, 2023

FR: Dr. Mortensen

RE: **MERGER UPDATE**

Greetings,

As you may be aware, at the WLA March board meeting, the WLA Board of Directors requested that MSA review our list of preferences and non-negotiables for a merger to move forward.

At this time, MSA has reviewed our list of merger preferences and non-negotiables, and they will be creating their list on April 24th. We should receive that list on April 25th. In the meantime, their response to our list is attached below.

On a similar note, I have been creating a “side-by-side” comparison of what is entailed with developing a WLA grades 9-12 program, as compared to what MSA currently has in place. I will be presenting this at the WLA board meeting next Thursday, April 27th, and posting it online on Friday, April 28th. Finally, I understand that this is a slow process, which it needs to be considering the magnitude of this decision, and I hope that we can all remain patient and clear headed as we move through this exploratory process.

Thank you~

Dr. Mortensen

**MSA Responses to WLA Non-Negotiables**

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| **Non-Negotiable** | **Response** |
| 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. | Supportive of Core Knowledge in PK to 5th grade. |
| 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 both schools.) | MSA’s 6-12 curriculum should be the primary curriculum, but we are always adding to our curriculum, and so balancing it with core knowledge is possible. 6-8th grade needs to  primarily be Math and Science’s curriculum for marketing purposes, and to maintain  our success at higher levels. A collaboration of middle school teachers should take place to merge the two. |
| Maintaining a rigorous curriculum with homework expectations that are reasonable for active families. | Both parties will need to come together  on what “reasonable” means for each grade level. Elementary vs. High School “reasonableness” is different. It’s subjective and developmental at each grade. MSA has its current expectations in the student  handbook. |
| Maintaining our Leadership program, which includes aspects of service learning, in grades PK-12. | MSA does character strong in grades  6-12 which is the same as WLA. We would like to know more about what this would look like at the higher grades. |
| Maintaining small class sizes. | We are in agreement. |
| 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. | Concerns about the size of the WLA campus for PK to 8. Middle school and high school should be kept close together if possible. Would be easier to maintain the curriculum if the middle school is in the same location as the high school. Split middle school campuses also introduce other problems with staffing and curriculum. Scheduling may also be a concern. Leaving K-5 at WLA long term is not a concern. We need a joint facilities task force to figure out what would be best for a merged school. This would be a further discussion on what makes the most sense for all students. This may take phases as the schools grow and renovate. |
| Continued employment agreements with our current staff members, which are not cut due to a merger. | We agree that no one should have to lose their job as a result of the merger. Some jobs may need to take adjusted roles as we grow. Questions about the compatibility of the employment agreements may also be a question. |
| Continued celebration of our diverse learners, with curriculum, programs, and activities that actively promote the inclusion of all learners. | We are in agreement. |
| 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. | Quality and comprehensive programming is in agreement. |
| 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. | What does maintaining the identity mean? K-5 identity makes WLA unique, and 6-12 identity makes MSA unique. We are not opposed to adding service learning to the high school.  Though, if you are one school,  you are one school. What that culture looks like in Elementary is different than Secondary. Some students may need to adjust based on  being housed in a K-8 building as opposed to a 6-12 building. Changes to culture can be difficult. If each individual school were to expand they can keep individual identities. A merge means you  create a new identity. |
| PK-8 students remain in uniforms, with considerations for up to grade 10 (modified uniforms for grades 6 and above). | Uniforms in K-5 are fine. We would need to look at marketability if we begin to require uniforms. How many families would we lose? If our location is 6-12, how would that affect 6-8? Students at MSA have their own unique  identities. What would happen in a mixed grade class. We would want to survey our families and students on this issue. |
| No current or pending litigation | Agreement no litigation on both sides. |
| A combined “transition” board that includes members form both MSA and WLA. | How does a transition BOD look? Would the  authorizer have input on this as well?  Both schools should have equal representation. |
| 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. | There are a lot of factors to consider besides just bondholders and or lawyer(s). We should also look at Minnesota School High School League, accreditation, school rankings, and marketability, too. |