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Joint Organization Communique #4

Monday, March 14, 2016

“Behold I make all things new ...”

Notes by Dan Beerens of Dan Beerens Educational Consulting, Inc.

Better Together? Better Together!

In January, we left our meeting with the homework assignment of getting feedback about the question “Better Together?” and then responding back to me before the February meeting. We invited our Core Team members and those they represent to be engaged in pondering answers. Here are the notes from the last Communique:

There are at least four possible answers to this question:

1. *No—we should stay separate organizations.*
2. *Yes—limited change; we should continue to collaborate and seek further ways to do that.*
3. *Yes—merge the organizations.*
4. *Yes—create an entirely new organization.*

As a group we are pondering these possibilities and invite you into this discussion. Do we remove the question mark and replace it with an exclamation mark? If so, what would/could that mean for all of us? If yes, what assurances, such as Human Relations services, need to be put in place? What needs to be honoured and what contributions should be incorporated from each group?

Better Together responses

I was quite honestly surprised at the intensity of the responses I got back from all of our Core Team members (and those they represent) around **the desire to create an entirely new organization!** While there were fears expressed related to assurances needed, there was a sense that to continue would mean a fractured leadership that weakens all groups in the long run and to simply merge would be to miss a great opportunity. Our Core Team and those they represent clearly seem ready to replace the question mark with an exclamation mark!

Considering Mission/Vision/Values/Assurances

Since we wanted to form something new, we needed to start with articulating thoughts around mission, vision, values, and assurances related to a brand new organization. At our meeting on February 25, we broke into two groups to collect thoughts and ideas relating to these areas. Although each group approached the exercise in a different manner, the end results were very similar. The work of the two groups has been merged below (keep in mind this is a “brain dump”). We are trying to be transparent about our thinking and invite you into this conversation. Note, this is nothing more than a draft and it is far from finished!

Mission – why do we exist?

1. Capacity building in schools
2. Sustain Christian education
 - a. So our children have faith into the future
 - b. So the next generation will believe
3. Strong organizations to support students
4. Spirit-filled, exciting, culture engaging
5. Salt in the culture
6. Developing leaders
7. Establish new schools? (pro-active vs. reactive)
8. Geographic boundaries – (global or local?)
9. Kingdom contribution
10. To provide leadership and support for the growth of Christian School communities that exemplify best practices in education.

Vision - what do we want and what do we hope to become?

1. A community publically recognized for the vibrancy, innovation and quality of education
2. A true collaborative effort of all of the stakeholders – a true partnership
3. Central location to go for services/needs; get rid of lack of clarity as to which group is doing what
4. Seeking/yearning for best practice

Values – what do we believe? What is essential?

1. Professionalism
2. Perspective/worldview
3. Cultural critique
4. Nimbleness, flexibility, adaptability
5. Innovation encourager
6. Connecting in community
7. Transformation
8. Capacity building
9. Integrity
10. Diversity

Assurances - What must be assured for each organization in a new organization?

1. **Edifide** – Human relations/employee relations (funded by employees), strong PD emphasis/teacher development, and professionalism.
2. **OCSAA** – Professional development of leaders and new leaders, HR expertise – learning and dispute resolution, professionalism – being seen as professional and acting professionally
3. **OACS** – Any areas of focus that support schools to be better, provided they support the mission/vision/values listed above and promote community, professionalism, Christian worldview, and learning.

Thoughts around Possible Structures/Funding Models

1. Put together a representative board who hires an Executive Director (ED) and develops the organizational structure/vision further. Board and ED will need to develop vision/structure together.
2. Funding – explore funding models further considering current and new possibilities to pass on as information to new board/ED.
3. Accountability/Credibility/Certification – consider that individuals/schools must meet certain standards to become a member.

Core Team needs to do some “heavy lifting” around exploration of structure and funding models in coming months.

Questions We’re Pondering

1. Who can help us be innovative around funding models and organizational structure? How can we get help from outside expertise to form the best possible organization?
2. Will a new board be self-perpetuating, constituency based, school community-based or other?
3. Will there be a transitional board that hires a new Executive Director, helps to finalize mission, vision, values, and then turns the organization over to a new board?
4. What is the relationship of mediation/arbitration commission to a new organization? What is the structure for a new employment services group? What is the range and scope of services?
5. How will a new organization regularly review programs to ensure whether they are meeting needs and or need to be sunsetted?
6. What are current outlying groups that we need to engage in the conversation? (PBL Teacher Academy, Cardus, Independent School Associations of Ontario (ISAO), Christian School Foundation, high capacity schools, existing high school groups)
7. What will our change management plan be?

What’s the Possible Timeframe?

In thinking about moving to forming a new organization, there are many practical realities that must be addressed in a timely manner. To form a new organization we would need a new constitution, but before putting time and money into forming a new constitution, we believe it would be essential to have a green light from all Ontario Christian education stakeholders. As we thought about a possible logical timeframe to accomplish tasks without making unwise assumptions, we arrived at the possible sequence listed below.

- **March** – no meeting, regional discussions/input
- **April 7, 2016** – Core Team meeting with identified experts on organizational structure and legal matters, regional discussions/input
- **April 26, 2016** – Core Team meeting with groups indicated in #6 above as well as regional groups for discussions/input;
- **May 2016** – Core Team meeting – prep for June, regional discussions/input; finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- **June 2016** – Seek “green light” approval from the membership of all three existing stakeholder groups to move ahead with formation of a new organization based on the MOU that we have developed; if a yes vote, signing of the MOU by all three organizations and begin to develop new constitution and by-laws
- **August, September, October 2016** – discussions by stakeholders of the three organizations
- **November 19, 2016** – Final binding vote to dissolve existing organizations once the new organization is ready to operate
- **January 2017** – If approved by final November vote, a transitional board would be appointed and the search for a new Executive Director would begin
- **August 1, 2017** – If approved by final November vote, the new organization would begin and the former organizations will be dissolved

How can we all be involved?

There will be many opportunities for discussions between now and June. We encourage you to participate and have your voice be heard. All three organizations have agreed to have Diane Stronks serve as a person who will facilitate dialogue on this important topic. Her work will include meeting with regional groups, planning webinars, and engaging in one on one conversations. She will be fulfilling the desire of the Core Team to ensure that all stakeholders know what is happening and that the work is being communicated clearly. If you desire to have her speak to your group, board, faculty, etc., please get in touch with her. She can be reached via email:

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In summary, I continue to be impressed by the hearts and minds of the leaders representing you in each of the organizations – they truly want to serve God through strengthening Christian schools so that students may be equipped to deeply impact the world. We are making great progress as a group and want you to be with us at each step along this journey!

For the advancement of Christian education, Dan