

## Joint Organization Communique #5

Monday, April 24, 2016

*“Behold I make all things new ...”*

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

There is true joy in community when each person can offer his/her gifts to benefit and move that community forward! We were able to experience that joy at our last Core Team meeting when two strong friends and supporters of Ontario Christian education joined us and helped our Team think about the next steps if we truly want to be *Better Together*.

Our first guest was Brian Verheul, a consultant from Verheul and Associates, who was engaged by OACS last past year to assist with a visioning process. Brian reported on that process and the data he had collected. He made 92 contacts with stakeholders—49 through survey and the remainder through phone and personal interviews. It was heartening to hear him report that the responses were very positive and that there was strong support for a better together approach. Brian reported that the responses from schools could be sorted into these four areas of need: advocacy, leadership, learning, and financial sustainability. As a team, we were able to raise and discuss with Brian our questions relating to vision, leadership, funding, and the organizational change process. The team was grateful for Brian’s commitment to Christian education and his willingness to share his expertise.

Our second guest was David Van der Woerd, a lawyer from Ross & McBride LLP in Hamilton who specializes in charity and not-for-profit law and is knowledgeable about Christian schools as well as Edifide and OACS. David shared information about the current legal status of each organization and the implications for any new organization that might be created. As a team we thought it was important to examine all the possibilities for moving forward and understand what would be required in each situation. This is critical for effective planning as there are legal issues surrounding organizational structure, employment relations, funding, and board governance to be considered in each scenario. Over all of these issues there are timeline considerations that are critical to make sure everything happens at the legally correct and morally responsible times. David’s expertise in these matters was much appreciated by the Core Team.

It became clear to the Core Team that while we cannot operate as if the “Better Together” concept is a sure thing, we nonetheless must prepare as if we are moving in that direction. If we don’t begin to prepare for this outcome, we will miss timelines and will not be able to take the necessary steps for forming a new organization. To that end, a sub-group of our Core Team has begun work on a required document called a Memorandum of Understanding that will spell out the essentials of our conversation and work thus far—matters around mission, vision, governance, funding, areas of focus, assurances and timelines. This document will be a key summary to consider when the Core Team asks members of the three organizations for a “thumbs up, thumbs down” vote in June.

We will be continuing the conversation with members of all three organizations in several ways. Regional informational meetings have already begun and will be completed by the end of April. We will also be doing a webinar this spring and a video link will be sent to Edifide reps, OCSAA members and school boards so they can review the information at their staff/board meetings.

At our next meetings we will continue work on planning for the future, but will also dialogue with other possible partner groups such as Cardus, Christian School Foundation, and Teacher Academy as well as educational leaders from our Christian school community. We really desire that great ideas and creative thinking are part of this process! We need each part of the body working together to be our very best!



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