



Syringa Mountain SCHOOL

The Syringa Mountain School Board of Directors would like to respond to a recent article regarding the financial solvency of our school.

Dear Syringa Families and Friends,

Syringa Mountain School is and will continue to be a public charter school option for families in the Wood River Valley. The speculation of our finances is expected but under misguided understandings of our solvency. After all, we are only two years old. But, despite being just two years with our doors open, we are ending this school year with \$20,000 in the bank. For a "start up business," this is an incredibly rare success, especially for a non-profit. Most new businesses take between three and five years to become fiscally solvent. Investors will send thousands and sometimes millions to start up entrepreneurs understanding that they won't see their return for a few years. It takes time to build an organization and in the two years our doors have been open, we've done a wonderful job of grant writing, fundraising, and utilizing our federal and state tax dollars wisely.

Our school is highly supported by many in our valley and beyond. Arts, music, and nature education are hard to come by in most communities and our *freepublic* charter school, guided by the core principles of Public Waldorf Education, provide all of these avenues for learning to children *daily*. Families have moved here from other states to support and be a part of our vision. We believe in a free public option for a school guided by Waldorf principles and we see the community supporting that into the future.

The Board was perplexed with why the following statement would be a surprise for anyone who understands the beginnings of a new business:

"While fundraising efforts have met current cash flow needs, SMS has struggled with lack of funds periodically throughout its years in operation."

That's two years, to clarify. Expecting strong financial solvency for a local charter school in the first two years of operation is unrealistic. Despite this, for two years, we have struggled but *met* our own financial needs. For such a young school, this is a success. Given the loophole in local tax law, we do not receive local county funding. We are required to make up the local funding deficit with fundraising and have seen and will continue to see massive local support for this. We will continue to see an increase in



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enrollment and will increase the number of classes in grade levels, and expand into a full middle school to meet the needs of our community. In two years, we have increased enrollment 10% and 13% respectively. We plan to recruit new families in a more targeted way in the coming year. We have a new Director of School and are hiring a new Development Director full time with secretarial support. We have a clear, ambitious and achievable plan in place for 2017 and beyond and we are right on target for our long-term goals.

Our solvency plan for the next three years includes national, long-term, and larger funding support through enrollment, grant writing, large donor fundraising and endowment search. Magic Valley News quoted our board chairman as saying, "The state is taking action because "a significant portion of our budget is raised through philanthropy...They have concerns relative to the efficacy of it being sustainable." It's an inequity of education that we do not receive local tax funds and the state government and charter agencies need to address this unequal distribution of funds if they expect charter schools to be successful in Idaho state on tax dollar funding only. We have successfully raised monies through fundraising every year to meet deficits within our budget without compromising the quality of education for our students.

Syringa Mountain School will not close mid-year nor do we have any reason to believe this could be a possibility. The new payment schedule from the State of Idaho has no bearing on our overall annual funding amounts. The charter commission expects only enrollment increase to create a solvency for our school – we believe we can do better than that. We will increase enrollment at the pace that makes sense for our community while raising funds, grant writing, and securing long-term financial contributions.

Sincerely,

Greg Bloomfield, Chairman
Randy Flood, Vice Chairman
Stefanie O'Neill, Secretary
Phoebe Pilaro, Board Member
Bobbi Filbert, Board Member
Amy Jonas, Board Member
Jessica Banks, Board Member
Christine Fonner, Director of School