***Cultivating intellectually curious, eco-literate, compassionate, self reliant thinkers, prepared to solve the challenges of our world.***

December 9th, 2014

The Blaine County School District Board of Trustees

Dear BCSD Board Chair Bennion,

By this letter, the Syringa Mountain School Board requests a meeting to commence a dialogue with the Blaine County School District Board of Trustees in the interest of charting a new course in district/charter/magnet school relations for our community.

The first charter school was established in the U.S. in 1992. Idaho charter law was written to give communities the power to create public schools that serve their unique needs. The original intent of Idaho’s charter school legislation was to create incubators of education innovation that, if proven successful, could be taken to scale in a district, essentially positively effecting all students, not just the charter school students. What our Idaho legislators failed to do years ago was ensure equitable funding for these cutting edge education endeavors. With the creation of Idaho’s charter school law, our legislators saw fit to fund charter schools using the same state funding formula and allocations as any established public school and district would receive. But what they did not allow for was the ability of charter schools to benefit from their local community tax base. That lack of foresight has essentially slowed down and in some cases crippled the ability of charter schools to innovate, thrive and multiply.

What would it take to initiate an era in Idaho where public school stakeholders in either district schools or charter/magnet schools respected and supported one another’s commitment to providing a quality, *equitable* public education to all school children? Might the BCSD Board of Trustees consider a bold venture to create the first hybrid charter/magnet/district partnership where both parties share equally the commitment to provide all BCSD students and families with quality public schools and broader school choice, through a culture of collaboration and a level playing field? Might Syringa Mountain School, the first public Waldorf charter school in Idaho, become one of the unique school choices included in the Blaine County School District’s K-12 education portfolio?

Syringa Mountain School has generated much success in the short time we have been open. There exists a loud positive buzz about what we have created across the valley. We have proven there is a need/want by the families/tax payers in our community for Waldorf inspired curriculum. Our enrollment is currently in the 135 student area, and we see our classrooms filling to capacity as each day passes. Many of you have visited and been able to see how engaged and happy our community is. Parent involvement is a key component at our school, we expect many will be willing to voice their strong support of seeking a relationship between our two organizations.

A cutting edge collaboration such as this is uncharted territory for Idaho and the nation. The SMS Board believes our combined efforts could create a groundbreaking shift in perspective on how district/charter/magnet relationships are defined locally and nationally. The timing appears to be fortuitous. The BCSD Board has recently embarked on the visioning of their strategic plan. The newest BCSD Trustee, Rob Clayton, brings a novel professional tool kit that includes a successful track record as a charter school creator and administrator.

We invite you to join with us in building on the progressive intent that motivated the initial Idaho Charter school law by pioneering a new district/charter/magnet relationship.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Bloomfield, Chair

Syringa Mountain School Board