Falk School – Evaluation Capacity Building

Phase I: Establishing an Infrastructure

The Collaborative for Evaluation and Assessment Capacity is honored to present a proposal for evaluation capacity building services for the Falk School. This proposal grows out of a conversation held at CEAC in May, 2009 with various staff members of Falk and its Director, Wendell McConnaha with Cindy Tananis, Director of CEAC.

Rationale for the Evaluation Capacity Building

Evaluation need not be onerous or burdensome; it need not take enormous resources or become the sole focus of an organization. Evaluation, within the proper context, matches the goals and objectives of a organization, and seeks to gather meaningful and relevant information about both the process and the impact of the organization. This information can then be utilized to fine-tune programs, report back to involved stakeholders, and assist in long term planning efforts. Good evaluation reflects the organization and its impact accurately, to examine and judge carefully, and to inform decision makers as they continue to implement and refine the current and future work of the organization. The proposed evaluation capacity building activities delineated below will allow Falk School to develop both the culture and capacity to gather important information, both baseline and formative, to inform and guide the educational planning at the classroom and School levels.

We are proposing the following evaluation activity for this crucial infrastructure-building phase of work

I. Professional Development

Falk School has a long history of working together as a cohesive staff to serve student and community needs. This culture of collective agency serves as a sound foundation to further develop a “culture of inquiry” that moves beyond that in place for student learning, but that now can permeate the organization as a way to learn and grow as an organization.

To begin the process, CEAC will, in conjunction with an appointed Evaluation and Assessment Team of Falk staff (and parents, if deemed appropriate), develop a two-prong professional development series that will present material related to evaluation, assessment, culture of organizational inquiry, and the use of formative assessment with students as key hallmarks of an evaluative culture that values information
and meaning-making. These sessions will most likely be presented in two public presentations, followed by small group work with actual data and evaluation scenarios, and conclude with group debriefing and a determination of next steps to further the process. Meetings of the Evaluation and Assessment Team to develop a Falk School Evaluation Logic Model will follow findings from these presentations and professional development “retreats”.

II. Falk School Evaluation Logic Model

The Logic Model will include representations of major areas of inputs, activity/processes, outputs, and short, mid, and long-term outcomes that are aligned with the mission and vision of the School.¹ For the Logic Model to be inclusive and accurate, reflecting what Falk is really “about,” it must have opportunities for wide input, review and approval. CEAC will work with Falk staff to assure that feedback will be solicited and acknowledged in meaningful ways so that the final draft document will be a useful reflection of the work done by the organization.

The model will be further developed with Indicators of Progress (indications of successfully continuing the journey toward the long-term outcomes) that can be measured and/or documented in meaningful ways. Evaluation markers will be added, indicating points for data collection and reflection, and an Evaluation and Assessment Calendar will be developed that can capture, heuristically, the annual process for documenting progress.

III. Proposal for Next Steps

The evaluation capacity building activities outlined above and in the attached scope of work are designed to develop an infrastructure, both in culture and in the development of “living” documents, that can then serve as the blueprint for further action. As CEAC concludes its work on Phase I, we expect to produce a proposal, similar to this current one, that will address Phase II – Evaluating Our Progress activities that we recommend, in conjunction with the Evaluation and Assessment Team. At that time, a more clarified evaluation plan would be developed that would outline both the internal and external evaluation needs of Falk School, coupled with an action plan to address these needs.

Deliverables from Phase I

While a balanced evaluation plan produces a number of tangible “deliverables,” others, less tangible, are also products of the evaluation process. These often include productive internal discussions and deliberation about the programs and activities involved, impact and outcomes, priorities, etc. The tangible deliverables planned for this evaluation capacity building project:

- Professional development sessions to address Evaluation and Assessment planning and establishing a culture of inquiry.
- Logic model for Falk School (describing key inputs, activity, outputs, short, mid and long-term outcomes, indicators of progress, and key evaluation activities aligned with the outputs and outcomes)
- Evaluation and Assessment Calendar
- Proposal for Phase II – Evaluating Our Progress

¹ A good beginning for long-term outcomes are the “wishes for students” already articulated by faculty and staff of Falk School.
Costs

The attached Scope of Work documents outline the costs involved to accomplish this Phase I work. The timeline for the Phase I activity include September 2009 through June 2010. This schedule allows for ample time to complete these activities while concurrently having staff teaching and administering a school. If the activities of Phase I are finished early, CEAC is prepared to develop the proposal for Phase II and commence work prior to the close of the 2009-10 school year.

The total cost of the Phase I activity is $9,675. CEAC provides its services through the use of doctoral Graduate Student Researchers working in conjunction with School of Education and other University faculty. Any questions you have in relation to this scope of work proposal for services should be addressed to either Cindy Tananis, CEAC Director or Cara Ciminillo, CEAC Project Manager.

We appreciate your consideration of CEAC to assist you in your evaluation and assessment work!