

## Site Council Meeting Minutes

**Date:** January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014

### **Attendees:**

- Suzanne Smith, Site Council Chair & MMS Teacher
- Kerrie O'Brien, Site Council Secretary & MMS Teacher
- Amber Prucha, MMS Parent
- Greg Roe, MMS Parent
- Ken Gilbert, Principal
- Eleanor Smith, MMS Student
- Sophia Lynn, MMS Student
- Bailie Burt, MMS Student
- Dan Rothwell, MMS Teacher
- Michelle Meekins, MMS Teacher
- Amanda Hollenburg, Vice Principal

### **Student Guests:**

We have three students from our 8<sup>th</sup> grade leadership class today with a proposal for school improvement. On Wednesdays we have an academic study hall period during our elective period. The students pointed out that it would be more useful to students on Thursdays at the end of the school day. That way the students would have their homework from all of their classes instead of the just the first two periods; they would also be more motivated because if they were able to complete their homework then they would be free after school. They would also have more time to work on their assignments since it's not an Early Release day. Additionally, most tests are given on Fridays, so students would be able to prepare for them. The students would also prefer to have the regular elective class at the end of the day because it is more difficult to focus on academic classes when you're thinking about going home. Even if it weren't possible to implement the changes this year, the students pointed out that it would be helpful for students next year.

On the subject of the weekly school-wide study hall, the students think that it is worthwhile so long as it's being used effectively. Some students spend the time goofing off, but again, having the period at the end of the day would help with that since the students would have all of their homework.

There is one main barrier to this; we have one teacher who is half-time, and it would mess up her schedule. It might work if we could arrange something with her. It would also affect lunches as we would all have to eat earlier in the day.

Having the elective period in the afternoon would also help students who are on half day schedules; the majority of these students attend in the mornings, so they lose out on an additional core class period.

The main reason the elective period is scheduled in the mornings was because of BEAR time; it was a non-graded, non-attendance period when we first started it, so we were concerned about students potentially

leaving in the afternoon or checking out academically. That is no longer the situation, so the reason for having it isn't there anymore.

If the study hall period were at the end of the day, it would also help students utilize the after school homework help more effectively; they would be able to find out before they went home that they needed help with their homework, so they would be able to go get it right away.

### **PTC Book Fair**

Our annual Scholastic Book Fair had to be rescheduled due to the snow days in December. The new dates for the Book Fair are February 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>. We will need some parent help to staff the book fair both during school and after school on the days when we have concerts and the Academic Dessert. We will get the schedule to our PTC president to find more volunteer help.

### **Middle Years Flyer**

We have been purchasing these flyers designed to help parents work with their kids around study habits, technology, etc. However, most parents don't really read them, so we will save the money and not renew the subscription.

### **Memorial 50 Year Anniversary**

Our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party is going to be from 1-4 on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. We will have leadership students helping both at the party and going up to it. We will have leadership kids as greeters as people come in. There will be stations around the school with memorabilia and artifacts from all the decades the school has been open, such as technology that was used in the school. The classrooms will all be open with "Then and Now" information. There will be refreshments in the cafeteria. We will have one of the school's former principals as well as our current principal hosting, and there will be both current staff and retirees on hand. The current and former staff will have nametags with pictures on it. There will also be photocopied yearbooks for each year as a decorative display in chronological order throughout the school; we aren't sure exactly what that will look like yet, but students will work on it as a project. Frank Babcock, a former teacher, will put together a video about the school. The different subcommittees that are working on the anniversary party will communicate with our leadership class to coordinate. We also were able to locate the old statue of the former school mascot, the brave, which is currently in the home of a community member. We are working on contacting the person who has it to try to get it loaned back to us for the party.

There has been some question about whether someone might be offended by the mascot; our thoughts are that the statue is part of our school's history, so it is appropriate to include it in this event. We stopped using the brave as our mascot in order to avoid offending anyone, but we want to give an accurate history of the school and how things, including our attitudes about school mascots, have changed over time.

Calapooia recently had their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary party, so we are getting some ideas from them. They said that they had good turnout for the school part of their party. They also had a no host dinner, but that was poorly attended, so we will not be having one. We will put information in the paper about the event, as well as asking for artifacts that we can use in our displays.

We also thought it would be good to do some sort of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary assembly for our current students. We aren't sure what it will look like yet; we will work on the assembly as we continue to plan the party. We could include leadership students dressed up from each decade, music from the decades, as well as the history of the school. Many of the students and staff aren't familiar with the history of the building, so this way we can preserve that knowledge.

### **Academic Dessert Night:**

This year it will be on Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be very similar to last year's format; originally we thought about making it more about effort, but we are promoting that in other ways, so we will stick with academics. Students with 3.5 and above GPAs in each grade will be recognized, as well as the 4.0 students. There will be male and female students from each grade recognized for subject area awards as well. There will be dessert refreshments in the cafeteria after the assembly. We will send out invitations to families beforehand.

This is our 3<sup>rd</sup> year doing the Academic Dessert. It's hard to find a good time since so many students have after school sports and other activities, but it is important to recognize the hard work of these students. With our new grading system, it is harder to get A's and B's for most students since the academic grade is focused on assessments. Students no longer have the homework assignments to help bump up their grades. Sometimes it is difficult for students who struggle with tests; there are also some classes that don't have as many assessments, so each one is a substantial portion of the grade. That means one bad test score can have a fairly significant effect on a grade.

### **Conferences:**

At our last meeting, we talked about what parents were hoping to get from conferences and how to make sure that they would be meaningful for everyone. To some extent it depends on timing; how much time parents and teachers are able to speak depends on how many parents are there at the time, which isn't easy to control. It is also helpful to have direct feedback if there is an issue; parents don't want the teachers to "pull punches." That way everyone is on the same page. If there were an opportunity for parents to schedule time to talk to each teacher, it could make these conversations easier. Looking at our data from November, we had around 1500 conferences total, which means that about 53% of our students came in. With numbers like that, it is very difficult to schedule times for individual meetings. Often the students who come in are the ones who don't struggle; the ones who really need in-depth conversations don't tend to come to conferences. Our staff can also utilize Pinnacle better by putting in upcoming assignments and including narratives. This would take a substantial time commitment from our teachers, who may not have time. We need to find a

good way of using Pinnacle as a communication tool, not just as a gradebook. There are other tools that some teachers use as well, such as Schoology, Google calendars, and email.

### **Site Council Plans:**

In November, we talked about what we want to do for the rest of the year in our meetings so that we are productive. One thing that we can discuss is the master schedule for next year, as well as the staffing of who will teach what, if we will hire, etc. We have finally reached a financial point in the district where we will probably not lose FTE for next year; we may even gain some. This will let us look at what we want our schedule and programs to look like in coming years. We can discuss what we want to offer kids that will meet the new Common Core requirements as well as the difficult graduation requirements. We also need to look at what we want our electives to be like; we have had a Bear Time system for the last few years, which has worked, but hasn't necessarily been the best quality program. We want to look at where our subject area teams are headed as well. We will not have a scheduling committee this year, so Site Council will serve to provide student, staff, and parent feedback in this regard.

Elective is a big area we need to discuss. Many teachers struggle with teaching electives because it is an extra prep, but is at the bottom of their priority list. For students, however, it is a great opportunity to enrich themselves and try new things. From the student perspective, the electives are enjoyable. It's a good taste of things to come, such as foreign languages. We are considering the possibility of having more elective teachers, rather than just having each subject area teacher do an elective. We could offer electives such as Spanish to all three grades, so that students could enter the high school with a substantial base. One problem with this model is that we lose options; we currently have about twenty different options for the kids, but if we had specific elective teachers, we would only have a few options. However, the electives offered would be higher-quality, and it would allow the subject area teachers to focus better on their regular classes. This elective model also eliminates some flexibility in the master schedule, which is difficult when we have lower FTE. It's also nice to give some options for the students so that they can choose their electives. We will continue to think about the elective program over the next few weeks.

Some of the technology tools available to students in electives, such as computers, iPads, and Kindles are such an excellent way for students to engage in the curriculum. The expenses for technology like this go way beyond the devices themselves; we have to purchase apps, cases, storage units, chargers, and more to maintain them. It's also difficult to keep the devices synched and working well. We hope to be able to purchase more iPads to create a mobile cart that can be used building-wide. (However, the cart itself is incredibly expensive – the cheapest models run about \$3000.) We are finding out some of the difficulties in using these new technologies as we get them. We need to integrate more technologies into the classroom in order to prepare our students for the modern world; as much as possible, we will continue to bring in new technologies. We have an incredible amount of hardware through cell phones, iPads, etc. that students already own; we could work on bringing these resources into the classroom to teach them how to use these devices effectively instead of banning them in school. Our student participants pointed out that kids are much more likely to record assignments and due dates in their phones than they are to record them in the planners that we currently spend money on. Teachers could have Google calendars that students could synch to their

phones. This would be complicated in a number of ways ranging from issues of technology to behavior problems, but it might be worthwhile in its ability to enrich students' experience in the classroom. This is something that we will continue to explore and discuss.