

Site Council Meeting Minutes

Date: October 17th, 2013

Attendees:

- Ken Gilbert, MMS Principal
- Suzanne Smith, Site Council Chair & MMS Teacher
- Kerrie O'Brien, Site Council Secretary & MMS Teacher
- Dan Rothwell, MMS Teacher
- Michelle Meekins, MMS Teacher
- David Jazmin, MMS Education Assisstant
- Peter Mathios, MMS Parent
- Becky Moyes, MMS Parent
- Lise Grato, MMS Parent
- Rebecca Bond, MMS Parent

PTC – Spaghetti Feed

Our PTC has been working on planning the Spaghetti Feed, but due to a miscommunication about time, no one from the PTC made it to Site Council today. There will be a special meeting of the PTC about the Spaghetti Feed; it may be after school today at 6pm in room A-1.

To promote the Spaghetti Feed, the school has scheduled an interview with the radio station KGAL next week. We will also get information out to the newspaper and through Facebook. We have had four separate donors donate \$100 each for a total donation of \$400; because of these and other donations, all the money from the Spaghetti Feed will be pure profit for the PTC. Our band will be playing music and we will have a Bake Sale during the event as well. The event will be on Thursday, November 7th from 6-8 pm at the school. People will be able to buy tickets at the door; prices will be \$7 for adults, \$4 for students, and \$20 for families (defined as up to six people with a maximum of two adults).

An announcement asking for donations for the Bake Sale went home with music students; we may also send out information via our email newsletter or Facebook page to solicit more donations. We may have a special cake as part of the Bake Sale that will be up for silent auction. Our leadership students will be helping out at the event, making posters to advertise, and creating a Thank You for our donors.

School Improvement Plan Review

Our School Report Card was recently published in the newspaper. As discussed at last month's meeting, we scored four out of five. This is great for us and represents improvement. This is right where we should be compared to the state average and schools with similar demographics. The report card is based on achievement on the OAKS test as well as overall growth. The growth category is important because we can't control where students are when we get them. For example, a student may come to us in 6th grade with a score twenty points below passing; we're not likely to be able to get that student to pass, but we might improve their score by ten points, which is a huge amount of growth. If the report card were done purely by achievement our score would likely be a two or a three. Our demographics have shifted in recent years to include more students with a lower socioeconomic status; these kids tend to be underprepared when they start school, and they therefore have to struggle to meet grade level benchmarks.

A parent asked if we ever use websites such as greatschools.org to assess where we are; they aren't something we have used in the past, but they may be useful. These websites display some of the same information as the school report cards as well as additional pieces. Websites like this are

useful to compare with other schools that don't have the same testing system we use, such as private schools. One problem is that information on these websites isn't always accurate or up-to-date. Websites such as greatschools.org could be helpful to us to get information out about the things we have going for us; we can encourage our parents and community members to post feedback about our school. We frequently hear positive things from parents, substitutes, and community members; it would be nice to get that information out to the public.

There has been some research out there about how school climate affects students. Climate isn't something that you can see just by looking at test scores, so you can't see it on our school report card. However, we think it is an important factor in helping our students be successful, well-rounded people.

We will table the discussion of our SIP review until our next meeting in order to discuss the things we need to get to. We know from our State Report Card that we are doing the right things and moving forward; the change won't happen all at once, so we need to continue on this path.

Student Learning and Growth Goals (SLGG) and Teacher Evaluations

This year that state has said that at least 20% of teacher evaluations must be based on growth goals and state testing. A new student growth section has been added to our evaluations, which are currently done yearly but will transition into every other year when our TIF grant runs out. The teacher evaluations are based on a four point system where a four is Highly Effective, a three is Effective, a two is an Area to Strengthen, and a one Does Not Meet. This is the first year that teachers have had to create SLGG goals, and we need to clarify the evaluation system for them. Most SLGG goals for Reading and Math as well as some for Science are based on our OAKS testing. An example of a typical goal is that 80% of students will improve their OAKS scores in Math by at least four RIT points. The difficulty is figuring out exactly how to evaluate the goals on the rubric. For example, a Highly Effective teacher has student growth exceed the SLGG goal, whereas an Effective teacher has student growth meet the SLGG goal. The difficulty is where exactly to cut it off. If the goal is 80%, does the teacher get a two if they see 79% growth, a three if they see 80% growth, and a four if they see 81%? This is an extreme change in evaluation level for not that big a difference in percentages.

There are many things to consider when thinking about SLGG goals. Our teachers are expected to teach the new Common Core State Standards in order to prepare our students for the new test that will begin next year, and yet the students are still taking OAKS, which covers different standards. We also have many teachers who have entirely new subjects and/or grade levels, so it is difficult to know what a reasonable goal is. Since this is the first year of a new system, the SLGG goals will not have a huge impact on teachers' evaluations yet. This will allow us some practice time to learn what a reasonable goal looks like.

After some discussion, we decided that a reasonable way to evaluate a goal that says 80% of students will grow by four points may look like this: if 90-100% of students grow four points, the teacher would be Highly Effective. If 80-89% of students grow four points, the teacher is Effective. If 50-79% of students grow four points, it is an Area to Strengthen. Of 49% or fewer of students grow four points, the teacher Does Not Meet. We wanted to be careful not to make the cutoff for Does Not Meet too high, as a score in this category automatically begins the process of a plan of assistance for that teacher. However, if a large percentage of the students are not meeting the growth goal, that will indicate that there's an issue that needs to be addressed. Average growth on OAKS has been at around three points over the past years, so the four point goal is somewhat lofty, but should be doable.

Other subject areas that do not have OAKS test will have to be looked at on a case-by-case basis; each goal is set up differently, and may have to be evaluated differently. Teachers and administrators will work together to ensure that things are done fairly.

Pinnacle Questions

Since we have some new parents at our Site Council meeting, we wanted to get some feedback on Pinnacle. There have been many changes to our gradebook system this year, and we want to know how parents are reacting to the new system. Some aspects of Pinnacle are dictated to us by the district so they are things we can't change, but it's nice to get information from the parents that we can take back to our staff to improve the things we can control.

Overall parent response to Pinnacle continues to be positive, although there is an ongoing concern that it isn't always up-to-date. It also looks very different from last year due to our new Effort category; this is graded on a four point scale which some parents got a key for, but we could send out more information about what E, S, N, and U mean and what each level looks like. It's been an adjustment for teachers, too, to get used to using this four point scale correctly. Parents see Academic and Effort grades side-by-side even though they are calculated separately. Unfortunately, there is no way for us to change it so that they show up separately. One way you can see Effort on its own is to get a report by the standards. None of the parents at today's meeting have looked at this report; Pinnacle is user-friendly overall, but there are some tricks that people don't know about. We are currently working on getting out information about the new grading system to parents in a way that's clear; we may create a YouTube video that will walk users through things or offer help sessions during conferences in November.