

School Council Minutes  
December 16, 2019

**In attendance:**

Mark Wilson, principal  
Michael Newby, teacher  
Sally Davol, teacher  
Mike Schaffer, teacher  
Wyatt Sullivan, teacher  
Joy Jordan, parent  
Diane Nash, parent  
Doreen Escher, parent

**Unavailable:**

Emily Milan, parent  
Maegan Storey, parent  
Kim Robbins, parent  
Sarah Cortese, teacher

The meeting opened with school council members reviewing and unanimously approving, with two abstentions, the minutes from its meeting on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting continued with school council members receiving an update on the school's "rat rod" club, which restores old bicycles as a way to create a sense of community and shared interest for approximately sixteen students who struggle to find their niche within our overall school culture. The level of interest and engagement has been a pleasure to witness and speaks to the need for hands-on, project-based activities for students who might find traditional academic tasks and demands of little interest.

The meeting continued with school council members reviewing and discuss the results of the Youth Health Survey (YHS) administered on February 14, 2019 to a random sampling of one hundred and sixty-seven 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students (eighty-seven 6<sup>th</sup> graders and eighty 7<sup>th</sup> graders) by the MA Department of Public Health and MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The discussion centered on identifying concerning results that ought to be addressed through Health curriculum, classroom instruction, and/or programmatic shifts.

School council members were in agreement that results from the following items are of concern and warrant both public sharing and classroom intervention:

- self-injurious behavior, as described by questions 19, 20, 21, and 22
- hours spent daily playing computer games, as described by question 11
- domestic violence, as described by questions 27a and 27b
- bullying, as described by questions 28, 29, 32a, and 34e
- perceptions of peer substance use, as described by questions 34a, 34b, 34c, and 34d
- actual peer substance use, as described by questions 35, 49, 66, and 71
- ease of access to substances, as described by questions 63a and 63b
- perception of risk when using illegal substances, as described by questions 64a, 64b, 64c, 64d, 64e, and 64f
- perceptions of long-term physical/emotional disabilities, as described by questions 78 and 79
- safe community, as described by questions 88 and 89
- food security, as described by question 87

School council members were in agreement that results of the following items are positives to report:

- amount of sleep each day, as described by question 16
- negative response of parents to substance use, as described by question 33

On the question of food security, Principal Wilson briefed school council members on the school's current responses, which include: covert backpacks on Fridays; expanded access to school breakfast; gift cards for groceries, gas, etc. during holiday seasons and family crises; partnership with the Greater Food Bank of Boston / Family Food Pantry in Harwich to provide free apples to all students

at all hours; and a holiday food drive that generated 136 bags of groceries to stock the local food pantry. Of these, the increase in breakfasts served at MRMS reveals both an expanded access (increase in clubs + shift in start time) and an expanded need (increase in % free and reduced lunch over time) relative to food security:

2016-2017 – 7,931 breakfasts

2017-2018 – 9,841 breakfasts

2018-2019 – 11,498 breakfasts

2019-2020 – 4,800 breakfasts by November 30<sup>th</sup>, which projects to 16,000 for the year

The meeting continued with school council members reviewing the “positive relationships” survey, first administered two years ago at MRMS. The survey asks students to identify which staff members “show you warmth, understanding, respect, and interest so that you are comfortable sharing your personal problems or concerns with them.” Council members appreciated the news that the district has adopted the survey and will expand it to include students in grades 3-12. Although MRMS used a March window in the past, the district survey window is late January.

The meeting concluded by tabling a review of the district’s SEL (social-emotional learning) survey until the next meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 PM in the administrative conference room.

Respectfully,

Mark Wilson