

School Council Minutes
April 29, 2019

Attending:

Mark Wilson, Principal
Michael Newby, teacher
Sarah Cortese, teacher
Diane Nash, parent
Joy Jordan, parent
Doreen Escher, parent
Emily Milan, parent
Nicole Moniz, parent

Unavailable:

Michael Schaffer, teacher
Wyatt Sullivan, teacher
Cheri Armstrong, teacher
Kim Robbins, parent

The meeting opened with school council members reviewing and unanimously voting to approve, with two abstentions, the minutes from its meeting on March 25, 2019.

The meeting continued with school council members discussing the pros and cons of adopting school uniforms at MRMS, a proposal brought by council members to school administration at the March meeting.

Among the cons were:

- the financial impact purchasing school uniforms could have on families struggling to make ends meet, especially in the first few years before hand-me-downs within the family or a uniform exchange program within the school become available;
- the cultural impact that adopting school uniforms has on freedom of expression and personal identity, as students usually perceive school uniforms as a restriction of their rights; and
- the awkwardness of starting the practice in the middle school years, rather than adopting a more natural progression by starting in elementary school so students are used to school uniforms as a standard district practice.

Among the pros were:

- the easier morning routines for families who are trying to get out the door quickly so they can meet elementary school start times or get to their place of employment;
- the shared sense of identity students develop through this practice and/or other common experiences;
- the long-term savings for families once hand-me-downs within the family or a uniform exchange program in the school become available; and
- the potential reduction in put-down comments or evaluative judgments that can sometimes accompany the “haves vs have-nots”, as clothing and footwear are sources of identity for middle schoolers.

After the school council reviewed sample school uniforms, council members decided this initiative would be better served as a possibility for elementary schools to consider. If adopted as part of elementary day-to-day practice, school uniforms would then be “phased in” at the middle school. Principal Wilson agreed to bring the matter to the elementary principals during this summer’s school improvement planning sessions.

The meeting continued with school council members reviewing the school’s second annual “Positive Relationships Survey”, administered to students on March 21st. The survey gathers perceptual data on the extent to which each student feels he/she enjoys a "positive relationship" with one or more trusted adults in the building. The survey asks students to state “which staff members show you warmth, understanding, respect, and interest, so that you are comfortable sharing your personal problems or concerns with them?”

For the second year in a row, MRMS can happily report that over 95% of students have at least one adult that matches this description (the statewide average is 75-80%) in the building, and that the 2018-19 figure comes in even higher than the 2017-18 figure. For all students with two or fewer “connections”, the school will establish “informal” and “formal” mentors to build support.

The meeting continued with Principal Wilson describing how the district will create more consistency across the four buildings through discussion with principals and central office during the week-long “retreat” that occurs the last week of June. One outcome of that week will be common elements in our four schools’ SIPs. For example, possible common elements could include a district-wide approach to organizing student evidence for essay writing such as Brain Frames, or setting up food pantries in each building as a way to meet family “food security” needs.

The meeting concluded with school council members setting their next meeting date for Monday, May 20th at 3:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Wilson, MRMS principal