

James Simons Montessori SIC Meeting  
4:30-5:30  
May 17, 2022  
Media Center

4:30 Ryan Welcome  
4:30 Dillenkoffer Explain 3rd round of textbook adoption  
4:35 Committee Members Discussion

- Review Town Hall feedback, and figure out how to craft a parent feedback survey to help us understand how we can achieve our parent satisfaction scores.

Compilation of thoughts, ideas, and questions since the April 19 meeting:

**From Mr. Monoc**

**April 26**

At our last meeting, we discussed trying to get more qualitative data from the district that will help us design and implement programs to achieve our goals per the School Renewal Plan. Mrs Ryan invited the manager of that office to our next SIC meeting in May, and I'd like to have some specific questions for her when she comes. Hopefully we can get them to her a week or so ahead of time so she is prepared. Below is my list of just a few items I think are important for us to know. My hope is that she can point us toward the data, and if she cannot, we'll need to figure out how to get it: Can we survey our school ourselves? Do we need to go through the district? The state board of education? etc. As we've discussed before, we can't boil the ocean, so I figure we start with attendance as our "epic" level, and concentrate on a couple (in my mind) related performance goals.

**Performance Goal: decrease chronic absenteeism from 9.1% to 8.2% by 2027**

I feel this is a symptom of larger issues. Any number of factors contribute to this data point, and we get at this by addressing other performance goals.

**Performance Goal: increase student student satisfaction with the learning environment from 80.6% to 83.5% (Gr 3-5) and 81.3% to 84.1% (Gr 6-8)**

The question here is "why?" What is the "why" behind the student satisfaction rating? Does the district have this data? [@ELIZABETH WHELESS](#) I understand you moderated the town hall sessions with students. What was the output of that? What were the kids saying in terms of WHY they were unsatisfied with the learning environment?

**Performance Goal: Increase parent satisfaction with Home/School relationship from 80.0% to 83.0%**

Again, why? Can we survey parents? Once we know this, we can brainstorm some more strategies (in addition to the ones already documented) in order to target those unsatisfied parents. This kills 2 birds because:

**Performance Goal: Increase parent satisfaction rating to the statement "My child's school considers changes based on what parents say" from 74.1% to 78.0%.**

I have no evidence to back this up, but my gut tells me simple surveys a couple times a year, then the SIC brainstorming and coming up with ideas to implement improvements at the school (School IMPROVEMENT Council) increases this number. Again, though, the real trick is "why?" What is currently

problematic for 26% of our school parents? If we don't have this information, we're shooting in the dark.

There are more specific goals around Math and ELA performance, which we should tackle as well but we have to start somewhere, and getting kids in school and having satisfied, engaged parents seems to be a logical place to start.

Please share your thoughts.

**From Ms. Dillenkoffer**

**April 28**

These are great ideas and questions; thank you all.

We held Town Hall meetings in March to review Panorama Survey data (climate survey distributed by CCSD, not the state). I'm happy to present a review of that data at our next SIC meeting and the feedback gleaned from the students. They were remarkable and had such wonderful insight. Mr. Monoc, I'll wait on your questions to Buffy before I put together a brief review, as I don't want there to be an overlap of information shared.

**From Ms. Gleason**

**May 10**

Hi Mr. Monoc, and all,

Thanks for all the thought put into this and an effort to move toward action.

I wanted to share this resource that applies to our conversations regarding school improvement and assessment data. It is a book by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector called *Montessori Assessment Playbook*.

An opening quote of the book is "At NCMPS, our work is grounded in the premise that human flourishing, rather than achievement as defined by standardized tests, should be the goal of education. By human flourishing we mean the capacity to thrive socially, emotionally, intellectually, and economically; to participate meaningfully in family, community, and civic life and to love a life of curiosity, agency and satisfaction." This seems in line with some of the performance goals laid out in the renewal plan and points made by Mr. Monoc.

The goals you have emphasized above are important as well as being responsive to student, parent and teacher feedback.

Regarding Ms. Roberts, it would be interesting to ask if there are alternative assessment methods considered or implemented already in the measurement of success of the district's Montessori schools. If she has specific data on that it seems it would be of interest to look at assessments of the Montessori environment created and how well it serves kids from all backgrounds. Much of the conversation and the data available for analysis by the district about "successful" schools is centered around standardized testing. I believe we all agree that reading on grade level is critical and academic performance in all areas is important. How fair the current methods of assessment that schools are currently measured by seems up for discussion. I know Ms. Ryan and Ms. Dillenkoffer could likely educate us on this front too.

I would also like to ask Ms. Roberts if she thinks all schools in the district are set up for success, as the district defines success, within the school choice system which is set up to pull all the highest performing test takers into one building. To me this system is disruptive especially to Montessori schools that are trying to build a diverse (in many aspects) learning environment through a classroom community. Our school seems especially susceptible to this disruption as a downtown school. Again, if the measure of success is reduced only to standardized test performance and the district is always able to select "high performing" students for its "highest performing" schools it leads to an imbalance academically. My last question to her would be about policies the district has in place to intentionally increase and preserve racial and socioeconomic diversity at schools since they are now collecting and publishing this enrollment data. The goal should be to build school populations that are representative of the population of Charleston County as a whole. The district and schools should be making an intentional effort with policies to preserve diversity where it exists and increase it where it doesn't. Public access to Montessori Education is a true gift offered by the district and it should be done correctly and equally available to all who choose it. Education about why Montessori is a great choice should be an ongoing effort on the district's part. It should also be recognized that diversity is a reason that some parents choose a school and that should not be an accidental benefit but a protected aspect of the environment we are building.

**From Ms. Whitney**

**May 10**

Good evening everyone-

I feel like I'm always late, or apologizing for being late...ugh!

Chris M, I think your questions and line of thinking are solid. We've chatted before about having the actual comments associated with the survey data to help guide any solutions, so if VP Beth can provide that then great! For the 'chronic absenteeism' goal, I am curious if there is a pattern. Is it the same students (without naming people, of course)? Where do these students live? Did this just start this year or were the same students chronically absent last year (or pre-covid)?

As far as Ms. Roberts, I am interested in knowing if she has done any comprehensive analysis of student performance in the Montessori schools vs. the other schools. I don't know if that should/would be broken out by "choice school" (e.g. creative arts schools, math & science schools, etc) in addition to race/ethnicity, but that would be interesting to know. I love what Kimberly said, and I agree that there are a lot of problems with testing and Montessori, which makes it challenging when you need to make sure children are learning and getting the skills they need for life.

Thank you all for your hard work and time!