

VLUS School Advisory Council Meeting
October 3, 2014
7:30 a.m.

Attending:

Lissa Galluccio	Natalie Beaumont-Smith
Katie Ehresman	Nancy Tauber
Melissa Brown	Elisa Bronfman
Marlena Montanez	Tucker Fischer
Elsa Head	Mary-Ann Matyas
Kathleen Moore	Helen Moschapidakis
Rachael Cobb	Jeb Sharp
Nora Clooney	Carolyn Turk
Brian Gellerstein	Fred Fantini
Jamel Adkins-Sharif	Fran Cronin

I. Reviewed and accepted amended minutes from Sept. 12, 2014.

II. Hiring Updates: 7th Grade Science and Accelerated Math

A. Science - Cynthia (Cindy) Sweetser interviewed and did demo lesson

- impressed hiring committee and students
- experience: Cambridge Friends school, Middle School in RI, MOS
- accepted position: may be in classroom next week on Tuesday
- Kathleen will help with transition and there will also be support from Science coach
- expect a parent meet and greet initiated by Cindy

B. Math - large accelerated group in 7th grade

- It has been decided to keep group together and build in support
- Matt the Math Coach and substitutes have been utilized
- have posted a .5 Math teacher
- Suggestions from teacher, coach, admin, and parents have been helpful

Questions:

Over-sized class and union requirements? Teachers are requesting this and looking for union support for this situation.

8th grade accelerated group? good now, may have 1 returning student in January, will be re-examined then.

Advanced planning for next year? Yes, we are learning as we go. Will plan placement assessments earlier.

Is that test necessary? The Math Department will be discussing how to have data to make decision as early as possible.

How are students in need of intervention being served if Matt is in the accelerated 7th classroom? Temporary support is being provided until we get the half time teacher on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

How do SEI student population fit into this? Most SEI students in 7th grade are not ready for the accelerated class. Language needs are being addressed first.

Total cohort in 7th grade? 102 students

Will new Math teacher be eligible for health benefits (cost concern)? No, not unless they are .67 or more. The need is for only half time.

III. Community Day

- A copy of all parent responses was distributed
 - Student responses are being compiled and will be distributed via website or email
 - Cabinet met last Tuesday to find common themes/summarize for each of the 3 groups
 - Parents will do so also: a summary will be communicated to parents for response, then create a drafting committee
 - Students will do this in Advisory
- Teachers will articulate the educational philosophy of the school -
 - Stephen Gould (consultant) is working with Jamel and Tanya to facilitate this

IV. School Advisory Council Election

- Two new parents were elected, and multiple new teachers joined.
- Norma was elected last year but was not included in this ballot
- Jamel will speak with her about being a community representative
- The last two parents on the ballot, Palo Coleman and Wogbeza Tsedale will also be included to reach parity with teacher numbers
- By-laws are on the DESE website

School Advisory Council is an advisory body whose primary role is:

- To work with the Head of School and administration in setting educational goals for the school
- To identify the developmental and educational needs of students attending Vassal Lane Upper School
- To assist in the formulation of a school improvement plan

Membership of the Vassal Lane School Advisory Council:

Katie Ehresman (parent and co-chair)	Nora Clooney (library/media specialist)
Lissa Gallucio (parent)	Elsa Head (grade 7 math teacher)
Melissa Brown (parent)	Brian Gellerstein (music teacher)
Rachael Cobb (parent)	Kathleen Moore (building substitute)
Palo Coleman (parent)	Katie Severino (special education teacher)
Wogbeza Tsedale	Marlena Montanez (grade 8 math teacher)

Jamel Adkins-Sharif (Head of School)

Open Position (Community Representative)

2014-2015 Schedule:

First Friday of each month in library at 7:30 a.m., except holidays –

November 7	March 6
December 5	April 10
January 9	May 1
February 6	June 5

V. School Improvement Plan

- A one-page chart of the Strategic Objectives and Initiatives was distributed
- 5 Strategic Objectives
 1. Raise Achievement of scholars of color, and scholars with disabilities
 2. Foster an environment of growth mindset
 3. Increase Culturally Proficient Teaching and Learning
 4. Strengthen school climate through shared visioning and community building inside and outside of school
 5. Strengthen scholar expression of abstract ideas in writing and speaking

Questions:

How do we include the students in the efforts to accommodate and accept differences?

This is only a snapshot of a piece of picture. These are specific to DESE requirements and do not encompass the full school's work.

Schools are trying to create school improvement plans that are manageable and specific: Look at it as a process rather than a huge document with too many projects. This is a one-year action plan to address a two-year improvement plan.

When is this due? Due to Carolyn at the end of today. Want to add a math goal and the assessment of teachers for student results. (Jon Saphier's work throughout the district)

Why is climate issue/spirit of unkindness not included? Jamel disagreed with assertion that staff are yelling at kids. There are students who need correction. There was a situation that 7th graders were in the auditorium for indoor recess. They were being loud and disruptive and the group was set down and reprimanded. If there are teachers that are speaking inappropriately to kids, that needs to be reported to Jamel and Tanya. We do have a number of new students who are pushing the boundaries and unsettling classes.

What about the lunch room staff not allowing a student to get her lunch from the play yard? It was found later, eaten by rabbits.

If students are experiencing this as very stressful and they are unsafe, that needs to be acknowledged and addressed. Jamel: in a middle school, staff is always talking, redirecting, conferencing. It is the developmental stage of 11-14 year olds.

Marlene: There needs to be education for the public around the change to an Upper School campus. The culture is different. There needs to be more of a discussion around what that means. What teachers need and what students need in a middle school is different from the elementary level.

Carolyn: sometimes perception is stronger than the 'reality.' You feel what you feel.

School Improvement Plans – Goals for math and special needs are required. The other goals are more flexible.

Jamel: As restorative justice and growth mindset and student government begin to function well in our school, that will help.

Natalie: Under school climate column, if student perception is negative then Restorative Justice is not filtering down. The lunch incident indicates that lunch staff is not on board.

Jamel agreed that the ancillary staff needs to be included in the improved culture.

Ran out of time.

Next meeting is Friday, November 7th, 7:30 a.m. in the VLUS library.

- submitted by Katie Ehresman