

## **Vassal Council Meeting Minutes**

**6 December 2013**

**Start time 7:40AM**

**Attending:** Lissa Galluccio, Natalie Beaumont-Smith, Bob Cowherd (minutes), Laura Sylvan, Jamel Adkins-Sharif (facilitator), Tara Greco, Kate Ehresman, Brian Gellerstein, Liz McNerney, Heather Kelley, Kathleen Moore.

### **Agenda:**

7:30 Welcome, Review agenda, Approve minutes  
7:35 School Council Composition Proposal  
7:45 School Improvement Plan  
8:15 Social Studies Curriculum, District Expectations and Facing History  
8:25 Advisory Teacher Expectations  
8:30 Public Comment

### **Minutes:**

Minutes Approved.

### **School Council Composition Proposal:**

The Social Studies Night parent representative school council election yielded the following results: 1. Lissa Galluccio, 2. Kate Ehresman, 3. Norma Casaya. Ben Greene has stepped down as Community Representative. Hamza will shift to Community Representative opening up a second parent position on the School Council. The top two vote getters will move into the resulting two spots. If a sixth staff member can be recruited to serve on the Council then the third place finisher in the election can be seated as a Parent Representative.

There will be a Cambridge School District meeting 6 to 8PM Monday 3 February on the roles of school councils in school governance looking to support a consistent implementation of community engagement across the district.

### **Winter Concert Announcement**

There is a great deal of excitement and interest in the initiatives being exercised by the kids for the upcoming Concert on Friday 13 December featuring the Chorus, Orchestra and Band.

### **School Improvement Plan**

Jamel presented the latest draft of the School Improvement Plan that has been expanded to include MCAS and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Accountability Report. Vassal Lane achieved a "Level 2" rating on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 is the highest achievement). The other middle school programs in Cambridge all achieved Level 1 status. The breakdown of English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS results, in particular disaggregated by subgroup, suggests that the inclusion of Vassal Lane's disproportionate numbers of Special English Immersion (SEI) and Individual Education

Plan (IEP) students has impacted Vassal Lane numbers in comparison with other programs.

The School Improvement Plan is directly linked to a School Improvement Budget Request that outlines the resources proposed to be allocated to specific actions designed to shift the needle on the various measures of school performance. The Achieve 3000 program was a focus of discussion as representative of the kind of programs proposed to address deficiencies. Building on recent progress on school climate, the Cabinet has moved to support individual student identity development. The Cabinet and the Instructional Leadership Team (Head, Assistant Head, two curriculum coaches) will shift to focus on the School Improvement actions described in the Plan.

The draft School Improvement Plan will be posted to the Vassal Lane website. A formal presentation of the Plan and Budget will be made in the new year.

### **Student-Teacher Conferences**

What would it look like to have advisory teachers meet with parents twice per school year? Last year we included World Language and Specials teachers as Advisors reducing advisory group sizes to 13-14 students. The schedule in 2012-2013 allowed advisory groups to meet daily. This year we have fewer advisory teachers and thus larger advisory groups of 17-18 that meet for 20 minutes twice a week. Last year the advisors were responsible for generating Habits of Scholarship grades in consultation with the larger grade teaching team.

The schedule next year will include Advisory every day in smaller groups. The discussion covered how to both ease the parent-teacher burdens and increase the reach to include a wider cross-section of our community. All present acknowledged the unsustainable conditions of teachers making extraordinary sacrifices to meet with parents as complete teaching teams (multiple teachers meeting with parents of a single student). They have routinely exceeded the contract allotments for parent-teacher meetings. At the same time, the school has not followed through on its commitment to strengthening school-community engagements by making the most of Advisors as the primary point of contact between families and the school. The discussion pointed at the need for reserving the full-teaching team meetings for students/families in need while being more effective in reaching all families. The first-come-first-served nature of this trimester's parent-teacher meeting allocation conflicts with our goal of reaching all families. Expanded versions of the spring trimester portfolio nights could take care of much of the perceived needs around student-focused community engagement.

Is there anyone focused on school outreach to traditionally underrepresented communities? Not really, we have had translators and family liaisons but it has not been as consistent and constant as we would like. Community outreach workers are available through the district aimed at lowering language barriers on an event-centered or ongoing basis. A real challenge is seen in things like this School Council where we tend to not see the larger representation that we have committed to.

Next meeting: 6pm Thursday 9 January 2014.

End: 8:50AM