

**Morse School Council
November 8, 2018**

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Chad Leith (Principal)
Delia Puntionio (SC Parent Representative)
Sayem Khan (SC Parent Representative)
Thalia Krakower (SC Parent Representative)
Shannon Finley (Friends of Morse President)
Stephanie Brennan (SC Staff Representative)
Therese Bellino (SC Staff Representative)

Matt Correia (Parent)

Notes:

- There was a question about the meaning of “culturally responsive” practices. There are many dimensions to this, from more surface level understandings to deeper issues of structural racism and implicit bias. Different staff members have been engaging in different conversations and reading different books that address this issue.
- One member suggested that having speakers come in might be a more effective tool for addressing structural racism and implicit bias than reading books. This led to a conversation about the different ways in which race and culture shape the experiences of students, families and teachers.
- One member reminded the council that we had previously discussed having students respond to a survey that asks about students’ experiences with race. This will be added to the School Improvement Plan.
- Another member pointed out that by 4th grade, students are able to engage in sophisticated conversations about in-class hierarchies.
- One member said that she had recently viewed a documentary series called, “America to Me.” At some of the upper schools, there have been ongoing conversations around race. The Cambridge Street Upper School has been having monthly conversations.

Other Suggestions for the School Improvement Plan:

- Clarify that Kindergarten report cards will come out in 2019-2020.
- Parent representatives also asked about teacher-parent communication, noting inconsistencies between teachers, grades and classrooms. Parents said that even a simple, regular template would work (“Here’s what we’ve been working on...” “Ask your

child about..." "I hear that you are reading Winn Dixie..."etc.). Also, have a system for sharing the weekly schedule with families (perhaps during fall open house).

- The above point led to a discussion about plans for planning and implementing a new schedule.
- One parent suggested that there should be more communication with parents about expectations for a coming year. Perhaps a visiting day where students (and parents) can spend some time with the team at the next grade level.
- Also, it would be helpful to know how feedback is reviewed (e.g. when a parent mentions something she or he has seen that she would like to see changed) and how steps taken are communicated afterwards.
- Should different outcomes observed between boys and girls also be factored into our understanding of the achievement gap? Does that fact that boys seem to be disciplined more often contribute to these outcomes?
- Should we talk about moving the bar for everyone? Should we look at pushing the number of students who are exceeding expectations? Setting more ambitious goals? ("Every child meeting her/his maximum potential").
- Could we have the parent survey administered at the same time as the 2nd trimester parent conferences? More direct appeals to members of traditionally underrepresented groups would also perhaps yield higher and broader participation.
- Could we start a Student Council at the Morse School?
- Another suggestions about ensuring movement breaks for kids whose behaviors stem from excess energy
- Could teachers be encouraged to take classes outside (e.g. to read in the courtyard, rather than in the classroom) from time to time?
- Also, could we establish a boys empowerment group, where there do something regularly that helps boys (and particularly boys of color) to develop positive ideas about themselves (we could connect with some of the male staff members at the school and in the after school program).
- Could we also set up incentives for boys like before- or after-school basketball games (e.g. if you complete all your homework, etc.)

Additional items:

- How to boost our community interface (book readings, connections with local preschools, etc.)
- Better web presence
- More out-of-school-time activities (create current things like Math Olympiad, start new ones)