

CRLS School Council: September 30, 2014

Minutes submitted by Teresa Walker, secretary

Attendees:

Damon Smith, principal
Rachel, intern
Greta Hardina, family liaison
Gail Stubbs, co-chair
Ross Benson, teacher
Janet O'Reilly, teacher
Mike Frutkoff, Cambridge Youth programs
Larry Childs, FOCA
Sandra Cañas, Cambridge Community Services
Lace Campbell, Arts Committee representative
Victoria Harris, FoCRLS rep
Beena Sawar, FoCRLS rep
John Delancey, LC-C parent
Bob Birnbaum, LC-R parent
Trina Abbott, LC-L parent
Rhea Dunn, LC-S parent
Rabeya Akther, At-large rep
Teresa Walker, parent
Adam Manacher, parent
Craig Kelley, parent
Kim Kaufman, parent
Elka, Workforce
Kam, Workforce
Khadija Tissire
Mara Velez
Edwidge Lherarle
Laverne Wilkinson
Marie Antoine
Marie Clerycom
Claudine Charles
Germaine
HaeKyung Chung
Tapan Sigha
Tara Raman

Gail welcomed everyone to the Council meeting. Introductions made with attendees stating their name and grade of their child. Gail reminded parents to fill out survey and sign in. Damon thanked CHA for the space, Workforce for recruiting, and City Links for special presentation. He also thanked everyone for coming out this evening. Will try to visit a local eatery to vary the menu. Long-term members know about history to increase diversity and membership. School Council goal is "Building Strength". Wants to engage in activities with new and veteran members. There is a lot of opportunity to create two-way communication. Wants to learn about the fabric of our community. How CRLS impacts the community and vice versa.

Changing venues to get more people who want to come to the Council meetings to attend by having 4 meetings at Windsor Street, 3 meetings at CRLS, and 3 meetings at Jefferson Park. Go outside of school to learn about community. Changing format of meeting by enticing members about foundational pieces of school and then going into details. Have a learning experience at beginning of meeting and then transition to recurring business of Council. Hopefully learning experience will make members want to stay. Want to create a welcoming environment through use of nametags.

Damon says Sandra is a tireless advocate for CRLS students. It was ideal to bring City Links to the CRLS International Student Center. Opportunity for our students and families to have what it needs to be successful. There was a pilot Chromebook lease program last year. Sandra asked for the Chromebooks to be given to City Links students. These students grew the most and used the Chromebooks academically.

Immigrant students are the future of tomorrow. CCS is at 99 Bishop Allen Drive and has been a nonprofit for over 60 years for youth advocacy and youth development. College Success Initiative for those going to Bunker Hill to give them support; Creative Action program is a summer-only program for 9th and 10th grade girls to build self-esteem through the arts; and City Links which works with the City and CRLS.

Recruit bilingual students and place them in different City department as interns to diversify the City's workforce. To serve students better, tutoring and mentor programs were added as well as service learning. Students also received individualized support and networking.

22 students are paid interns at CPL, CPS, City departments, CRLS, and CHA. Eight 9th graders are interns-in-training. Tutors are one-on-one in the evenings (Tuesdays and Thursdays) in Central Square. Young professionals are recruited as mentors and paired one-on-one. Sandra has taken a group of students to El Salvador for service learning. Students have the opportunity to take technology classes, produce a CCTV show, get SAT prep, go on field trips to colleges and universities, and listen to guest speakers.

CRLS International Center is located in room 2112. There are about 120 bilingual students. Mission is to promote full and equal access to the programs and services at CRLS for students and families whose first language is not English. The heart of the work is to support their successful integration into American life.

Student services include:

- Orientation of new students with 40 volunteers
- Use of computers to do homework
- Use of space for club and cultural meetings
- Help with signing up for sports and electronic documents
- A safe place to eat and hang out
- Monthly lunch with principal
- Monthly workshops on bullying, hygiene, safe relationships, substance abuse

Family services include:

- Monthly information breakfasts
- Monthly workshops with translators on getting to know CRLS, choosing the right college or university; accessing financial aid and scholarships; updates on immigration law, and raising your child in a different culture
- Advocacy meetings with teachers, counselors, and deans
- Technology classes (using Aspen, Google Docs, email) and opportunity to use computers to practice English (and maybe Spanish) using Rosetta Stone
- ESL classes for parents next year with childcare available

There will be a 12-day trip to El Salvador (\$1200 where students pay for half and the other half through fundraising) in June 2015 to visit sister city. Students will be volunteering in the local schools. Students will also visit a local island to learn about the ecosystem and reforest a mangrove. SAT prep course will be at the International Center on Tuesdays from 3:00 to 4:30PM. City Links also brings parents to Open House like Breakthrough and Workforce.

Damon asks members to spread the word about the International Center to other families. Reminds members that they may not have a personal need for the Center but may know of families who can benefit. CRLS is a big school; Council members are not only reps of learning community but of own neighborhood. Do not need to be an international student to receive services from International Center.

- Janet reminded Council of four DESE goals for secondary ed school councils of adopting educational goals, identifying needs of students, SIP, and budget plus review student handbook.
- School size is 1863 with Extension School; 1820 on CRLS campus alone; max is 2000; largest freshman class since Damon has been at CRLS
- There is an upward trend from international students and private schools because CRLS is doing better at getting private school families in the information pipeline sooner and CRLS is top choice for Shady Hill and St. Peter's.
- Process for class scheduling is a multi-faceted approach (last year was the last one done by hand). This was a cultural change for the CRLS community. System worked really well for lower enrollment but as student population grew it was harder to do. Students input requests online and schedules were built through their requests. Caps were put in place, except for film studies (20) and PE (30), all classes are capped at 24 students. Cautioned students about their first and alternate choices. Some students would find their way to a counselor to "jimmy" the schedule. Not as much flexibility because students were reminded that they were asked twice last year. Students got their choice but not necessarily a specific teacher or period. By and large there is extra space with regards to class load.
- How will "business" be conducted? Through subcommittees? Perhaps people should be walking away with tasks for next meeting. Damon hopes for a balance for learning and "business". There needs to be some way to move forward. If 45 minutes is for learning, how will the four goals of School Councils be met? Maybe there should be another group that does outreach and learning. One parent said that presentations fit with SIP and it gives a great example of how CRLS is working with other partners. Another parent suggested themed through line and action afterwards.

- There is a need for input organically and people should send in ideas for agenda items; also a piece for parent-teacher communication; important to organize a parent-teacher group; cannot be done in a 10-minute conference

Sandra Cañas bio:

For nearly 20 years Sandra Cañas has dedicated her life to working with immigrant high school youth in Cambridge, MA. Sandra built the City Links program from the ground up, which is a testament to her dedication to serving immigrant youth by helping them assimilate into American society while preparing for college. Sandra always listens to the needs and wants of her students, then builds her lessons and activities to appeal to those needs while being incredibly informative and educational. Sandra has a broad range of experience coordinating volunteers as well as experience as a teacher and curriculum developer. She taught Spanish Literature courses at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, was a parent coordinator for the Cambridge Public Schools Amigos Program, and served as coordinator of the Women's Refugee Program at Centro Presente, a local nonprofit agency. Sandra is a former member of the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants, the School Council of the Cambridge Rindge School of Technical Arts, the Board of Directors of Centro Presente, and the Kids' Council of the City of Cambridge. She has also coordinated and led educational and service learning groups of students and teachers to various Latin American countries including El Salvador, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala. Sandra Cañas, a native of El Salvador, has made the United States her home for the last 31 years.

This year, Principal Smith invited Sandra to move in to the high school to run the City Links program in-house and at the same time manage the International Student Center.