

CRLS School Council Monthly Meeting Minutes: 9/18/2012

Co-chairs: Principal Smith, Adam Manacher

Secretary: Fran Cronin

Asst. Principal: Bobby Tynes

Family Liaison: Greta Hardina

In attendance: Shameen Akhtar, Patricia Bradshaw, Emily Dexter, Mike Frutkoff, Mark Gardner Victoria Harris, Adam Manacher, Maureen Manning, Natassa Mason, George Papargyris, Janet Randall, Laurie Sheffield, Donna Spiegelman, Gail Stubbs, Nancy Tauber, Helene Vastey, Teresa Walker

Welcome

With the small conference crowded beyond normal capacity, Principal Smith remarked how glad he was to see all the new faces as well as the blend of constituencies, programs, and parents from around the community.

The broad representation was a positive for continuing the work started last year.

I. Introduction by new co-chair Adam Manacher - Recap of 2011-12 SC successes

- SC guidelines were strengthened
- Communications within the school and out to the community were improved, specifically with access to on-line parent/teacher conference registration. This initiative is still considered a “work in progress”
- CRLS Handbook was revised
- Honor Roll qualification process updates have been proposed by Principal Smith
- Facilitated structure of committee led by Barbara Allen to search for and hire new CRLS principal
- Class ranking system is under review
- CPS’ culture around disciplinary issues was presented by CRLS mediator Chandra Banks. This area of focus will continue
- “Community Engagement” dialogue was started and will be continued in an effort to broaden CRLS’ reach into Cambridge’s diverse communities

II. Principal Smith provided and update on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process

NEASC is a non-affiliated organization that evaluates member schools across seven “standards” every 10 years. Reauthorization is a three year process and CRLS is mid-point. Parent/teacher led “standard” evaluations and recommendations must be completed and approved by this December. A team of 18 NEASC members will be on the CRLS campus from 6am - 11pm, March 10-13, reviewing “standard” evaluations and recommendations. CRLS will receive the team’s feedback next fall. The process and feedback are viewed as helpful to shaping CRLS’ future. Mr. Tynes and Dean Gaglione are chairs of the Steering Committee. Principal Smith does not expect any surprises.

III. Open House and Parent/Teacher Conferences

Principal Smith framed this event as a big undertaking for the school but an event he is dedicated to making as efficient and encompassing for all involved. Last year on-line registration was introduced. Principal Smith presented additional scheduling reforms which SC members approved. There will be three conference periods: a morning, an afternoon and an evening session. Students will not be in school during these time slots which will increase access from 18 time slots/teacher to 80-90 time slots/teacher.

The goal behind these changes is to create more time, more sessions, and greater scheduling flexibility for parents to meet with teachers. This revision aligns with Principal Smith’s continued effort to better integrate CRLS with the broader community. “Successful kids have engaged parents, guardians and caregivers,” said Principal Smith.

IV. New Initiatives Presented by Principal Smith

- Discussed 8th grade information night
- Discussed piloting PSAT day excursions

V. Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

Emily Dexter updated on the School Committee roundtable discussion on 9/11 about CPS’ Rights and Responsibilities. This district-wide handbook, written 10 years ago, has been taken under consideration by the School Committee. Focused review is on the suspension and expulsion guidelines, which currently emphasize a “zero tolerance” policy. Principal Smith said the goal is to make the policy less legally-driven and more responsive to context and circumstances of the kids. The goal is to keep kids in school.

Proposed changes are still being discussed by the SC. The current policy has been posted on the CPS website.

VI. CRLS Security Procedures Plan

Cambridge has received a grant to develop a coordinated action plan with the city's first responders to ensure the CRLS building and community are safe in the event of a lockdown or evacuation. As a result of the grant, a red Emergency Action Plan booklet is now in every classroom.

Principal Smith also stated he is working beyond the grant to update CRLS' evacuation procedures with an emphasis on preparation. Asst. Principal Tynes said the goal was to have looped communication and "tie all the loose ends together."

There are usually 1800 people in the CRLS building, which can be cleared in three minutes during a fire drill. Lockdowns will be practiced and perfected with teachers before any drills are run with the students.

There was also much talk about secondary and tertiary communications, such as e-blasts.

VII. Review of Proposed 2012-2013 Topics

Co-chair Manacher asked the group to consider two or three key issues to be pursued this year by the SC. All targeted initiatives will be framed with an emphasis on "building relationships."

The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 30, 6pm-7:30pm