

CRLS School Council Monthly Meeting

Minutes: 12/18/2012

SC Co-chairs: Principal Smith, Adam Manacher

SC Secretary: Fran Cronin

CRLS Family Liaison: Greta Hardina

CRLS Student Body President: Shameen Akhtar

In attendance: Ross Benson, Larry Childs, Emily Dexter, Mike Frutkoff, Mark Gardner, Victoria Harris, Craig Kelley, Janet Randall, Laurie Scheffield, Gail Stubbs, Nancy Tauber, Teresa Walker

I. Principal's Report/Update

Principal Smith reported on 1.) Lock down drill, 12/11; 2.) Sandy Hook, CT shooting; and 3.) 8th Grade Open House night.

1. Lock down drill 12/11: The drill took 15 minutes, from 10:15-10:30, and went according to plan. Primary goal was to identify problematic areas as well as sensitize students to lock down procedures, which include silence and minimal visibility. The consensus was that these two objectives were achieved. Another lock down drill has been tentatively scheduled for the spring. In the interim, identified "kinks" will be reviewed and addressed.

Primary concerns include: some rooms in the building are too exposed; should room shades remain up or be pulled down; and inability to use current broadcast system in buildings on both sides of Broadway. Also, large open spaces, such as the cafeteria and the field house, currently lack a best-practices protocol.

Next-steps goal is to conduct a successful drill during lunchtime when CRLS is most vulnerable.

2. Sandy Hook, CT shooting: CRLS and CPS responded immediately to the school shooting. The superintendent and his cabinet convened an emergency meeting that resulted in a coordinated response and a robo call to all CPS families. School relevant resources were put in place and distinct JK-5 and 6-12 plans were activated as well as access to the citywide Peace Commission.

At CRLS, counseling support was set up in each learning community for both students and staff. School psychologists and community-based support staff, including Riverside, have been on call in response to Sandy Hook as well as last May's shooting in Cambridge.

In addition, security personnel, including two security officers, are always present at CRLS. The school also maintains an excellent relationship with the Cambridge Police Department. Although many security measures are in place, Principal Smith reiterated that lunchtime remains tricky with students moving in and out of the buildings.

3. 8th Grade Open House night, 12/11: By all accounts the evening was well attended and orderly. Compared to years past, this event was the earliest it's ever been scheduled and all enrolled students had been assigned to both their learning community and guidance

counselor. This greatly facilitated the move into break out sessions after the presentation in the auditorium.

The evening participants, however, did not seem as diverse as the group of rising CPS students that had visited CRLS with their teachers the week before.

The major note for next year was better promotion of the event. Recommendations included earlier publicity, more save-the-date mentions, noting the event on the CPS calendar and leveraging the upper schools to help promote the event at their back-to-school nights. Data collection on who comes to the evening event will also be included in next year's planning.

The Family Resource Center was lauded for initiating earlier registration this year, which resulted in more families pre-registering their children for high school.

II. 2013 Topics List

Before the CRLS SC concluded last year, members created a topics list for consideration in 2013. Upon review at this meeting, all agreed "family engagement" was most critical to help maximize student achievement and to help minimize student isolation. All agreed this is the best defense against incidents as experienced by the Sandy Hook elementary school.

FOCA reported that it emphasizes family engagement and makes much use of its parent liaison system and structure to help develop social and emotional skills.

Two local authors were mentioned as possible guest speakers. Larry Blum, a faculty member at UMass Boston, authored "High Schools, Race, and America's Future: What Students Can Teach Us About Morality, Diversity, and Community" and Karen Mapp, currently a CPS consultant, wrote "Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family/school Partnerships."

Principal Smith also noted his support for the core principals of family engagement and reminded council members of his interest in formulating a "Parent University," which has been prototyped in Boston.

Also restated was the need to address the deficient marks CRLS rated itself on Standard 1 - core values - of the NEASC assessment. The language of the CRLS mission and core values statements need to be reflect the school's beliefs about learning. They currently don't align and this needs to be immediately addressed.

Also mentioned is the lack of CPS transition procedures between 8th and 9th grade.

FUEL - Families United in Educational Leadership - targets low-income families and was mentioned as a possible resource.

III. Misc Items

CSAG -the Citywide School Advisory Committee - reviewed the CPS budget at its last meeting. Rep Emily Dexter offered to write and distribute notes about the process. Larry Childs distributed the most recent FOCA newsletter.

The next SC meeting will be January 29, 2013.