

CRLS School Council Monthly Meeting

Minutes: 2/26/2013

SC Co-chairs: Principal Smith, Adam Manacher

SC Secretary: Fran Cronin

CRLS Family Liaison: Greta Hardina

CRLS student President: Akhtar Shameen

In attendance: Ross Benson, Larry Childs, Emily Dexter, Mike Frutkoff, Victoria Harris, Patty Nolan, Janet Randall, Gail Stubbs, Teresa Walker

The key issues covered during the evening's meeting were as follows: NEASC status and next steps; FY2013 budget update; feedback from February's Open House; intraschool communication; the March teacher/family conferences; Prof. Larry Blum's presentation at our next School Council meeting; status of the CRLS student handbook and movie night at CRLS.

I. NEASC update

The NEASC evaluation committee will be visiting CRLS from Sunday, March 10 through Wednesday, March 13. Their 18-member team will be lead by committee chair George Edwards. At Sunday's session from noon - 4pm, CRLS will present its Standards review followed by NEASC committee interviews with CPS superintendent, CPS administrators, CRLS staff, CRLS school council members and CRLS families.

During the following two days, the NEASC team will be in CRLS observing our school and interviewing students. The visit will conclude with a preliminary report out from the committee on Wednesday before they leave.

Greta Hardina will distribute the NEASC schedule prior to the arrival of the evaluation team.

II. Budget update

Principal Smith reiterated the budget is still in process and will not be finalized until late spring. Still to be determined are the goals for the School Improvement Plan as well as CRLS initiatives for next year.

III. February Open House: feedback

All agreed the February Open House with its potluck was a success. Parents took advantage of the food and arrived early enough to eat and socialize. Our community partners concurred. People were mobile and mingling. They reported receiving a lot of visibility.

While a successful event, Principal Smith reiterated his goal to continue building family engagement and to implement strategies that will help make our large school seem smaller. Ideas floated to help achieve this end included IDing tables by learning community and

decorating these tables with the learning community logos. Participants could also wear name tags.

Members commented that more time was needed in each classroom session. This could be addressed with some tweaking to the schedule. The community partner workshops could move to the end of the evening, allowing the class sessions to start a little earlier but still finish by 8pm.

To cut down on “passing” time, signage needs to be improved and elevator and bridge access clearly marked.

It was also encouraged that the RSTA culinary arts program play a more high profile role in food preparation for the evening.

IV. Intra school communication

Principal Smith informed the council that Edline will be phased out the end of this year. In addition to having too many communication platforms at the school, the company CRLS has contracted with to service the system will no longer continue to do that. Two bid finalists are currently in review to replace EdLine with an integrated system that conforms with CPS privacy guidelines. The new service will be required to manage attendance, grade reporting and class functionality.

The goal is for staff to be trained on the new system by the end of this school year and ready to run with at the start of the new school year, September 2013.

V. Teacher Family Conferences

Second semester conferences are scheduled across three days - Tuesday, March 26 through Thursday, March 28 - and will offer a variety of scheduling options. Both Tuesday and Thursday will offer online scheduling. Conference times are Tuesday morning with a late student start and Thursday afternoon with an early release day for students. Parents can also walk-in and schedule for teacher conferences on site Wednesday evening. Breakthrough Cambridge and the Work Force have agreed to be present that evening.

VI. Next Meeting: Prof. Larry Blum

Larry Blum, a professor at UMASS Boston, has been invited to speak to our school council because of his intimate knowledge of the CRLS culture and student body. His findings as a teacher of race and identity at CRLS informed his new book: *“High Schools, Race, and America’s Future,”* published last year.

In considering format, all agreed Prof. Blum should make opening remarks followed by a Q & A. Principal Smith said questions of concern include: the achievement gap, barriers to interactions across ethnic, racial and neighborhood groups, and how to strengthen our social/emotional narrative at CRLS. Principal Smith felt strongly that student “capacity” is not the key barrier to deeper community connections.

VII. CRLS Student Handbook

Revisions to the current student handbook will begin in April and be ready for distribution in the fall. Principal Smith asked school council members to work with the learning community deans in facilitating this process.

Principal Smith also made clear that the disciplinary policy in the CRLS handbook will be a direct lift from CPS Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.

VIII. CRLS sponsored movie night

The CRLS school and student councils agreed to team up and sponsor a movie night this spring. Subcommittee volunteers include student council president Akhtar Shameen and Patty Nolan and Victoria Harris.

The next school council meeting will be Tuesday, March 26 at 6:00pm.