

CRLS School Council Meeting Minutes, October 25, 2011.

School Council Attendance:

Damon Smith (Acting Principal), Jessica Daniels (Community “R” Representative), Emily Dexter Ed.D. (Lesley Univ. Center for Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative), Bersabell Yeshitla (CRLS Student Body President), Patricia Bradshaw (Director, Moore Youth Center), Mike Frutkoff (Cambridge Human Services Dept.), Ross Benson (CRLS Teacher Representative), Lace Campbell (CRLS Arts Council Rep.), Greta Hardina (CRLS Parent Liaison), Natassa Mason (Community L Representative), MJ Jensen (At Large Parent Representative), Lauren Gibbs (9th grade parent), Nancy Tauber (School Committee Member), Mary White (parent of student at CRLS, representative of Special Ed Parents Advisory Committee).

Agenda:

1. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Accreditation Process

Damon Smith explained the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process. There is a need for parent/ family member involvement on Committees which will be formed to cover 6 of the 7 Standards (see below). You must submit your name to Mr. Smith if you are interested in serving on a committee or if you have someone to nominate. Reply via email dsmith@cpsd.us By November 8. There will be one meeting per month, which will be meeting for at least 1.5 hours each time, on Tuesdays 2:30 - 4M at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS). Most of the work will be done this year, but will run through January 2013. The first meeting is November 29, 2011 from 2:30 - 4PM at CRLS. There will be food at meetings.

Those working on standard #1 and #6 may be done by May 2012 but may need to be consulted periodically the following year. The Committee members working on the other standards will need to serve for two years.

Committees will be based on These Standards: 1. Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations. 2. Curriculum* see note below. 3. Instruction. 4. Assessment of and for Student Learning. 5. School Culture and Leadership. 6. School Resources for Learning. 7. Community Resources for Learning.

*Standard # 2 – Curriculum - for teachers only, NEASC does not advise parents to be on this committee.

Background:

Membership in this organization is voluntary but shows that CRLS adheres to best educational practices. The NEASC and members (both high schools and colleges), ascribe to 7 standards and beliefs. It evaluates the programmatic strengths and weaknesses based upon the seven standards.

Looks at vitality and/or any dysfunctional aspects in the school. This accreditation also gives CRLS standing among colleges. Which then helps when colleges' admission officers look at the rigor of our curriculum when admitting an in-coming CRLS freshman.

There is a visit to each school every 10 years by the NEASC. Now we are in the self-study mode. We need Committee members for each standard. The committees are to be comprised of teachers, two students (sophomores and juniors) and two current parents/family members. A few committees will also have representatives from community partners who currently occupy the CRLS building (Such as Breakthrough Cambridge, Upward Bound, the Youth Centers, Workforce). An 8-12 page paper will be written about how the school is doing per standard. The committee will base its report on all the data the school has regarding that standard and its mission statement.

Some committees will have up to 30 members because all staff members, certified to be teachers or psychologist are to be involved. Also no parents are allowed on the Curriculum Committee. Each Committee will have 2-3 Chair persons who will take responsibility to get the work done. It was recommended that an organizational chart be developed when committees are established.

The Visit to CRLS is on March 10-13, 2013. The third year will be a self-study process, and a report on the visit evaluation. A self-study report is submitted by Mr. Smith after approval by vote by the entire school by December 2013.

There is no tie to the State Dept. of Education or the equivalent agency at the Federal level, and CRLS also follows both agencies' regulations.

2. Cambridge Schools Advisory Groups (CSAG)

A representative from the School Council is invited to attend the CSAG meetings regularly. To volunteer please contact Lace Campbell at Lace@beyondthe4thwall.com.

Background

Lace Campbell reported that this group was previously the "All City Schools Council". It is comprised of parents from every elementary school in Cambridge and meets with the Superintendent and his staff. It is more like a gathering of parents than a formal committee. It is very K-8th grade focused. They would like a CRLS parent representative to attend. Lace attends and has a child in a lower grade and one in high school. She has to leave the meeting on 11/26 early and was hoping a parent from our committee would attend the meeting tomorrow specifically, but also attend these meetings regularly and report back to our committee and form a bridge with the lower schools. Right now they are very hard-working and energetically focused on the Innovation Agenda (the creation of grade K-5 schools and Middle Schools). There are two representatives from each K-8 school. They meet at 6:30PM at the Cambridgeport Library. It would be more productive for a parent with a middle-school child from the School Council to attend to help bridge to the high school. No one agreed to attend the meeting on 11/26, attendance was not robust from elected parent representatives and some are parents of seniors. It

was also thought that parents from that group should report up to the School Council to learn more about CRLS.

3. Follow-up Discussion of Parent-teacher conference/ Changes for Spring Conferences

Mr. Smith would like to have an endorsed plan by the School Council. Must have clear objectives. He will bring the plan to the next meeting, and a status report with the plan by December 20.

Background:

Mr. Smith tried to get teachers to agree for the parent-teacher conferences this week to be held in 7-8 large spaces (e.g. Gym, Cafeteria) and on the 1-3rd floors to reduce the movement of parents throughout the building. He also proposed the sign-in at one central location. There was a hesitation from staff members and the leadership team to adopt new methods at short notice. This will change in the second semester. Mr. Smith said it is not good to bring old habits into a new space.

Discussion:

On-line sign up is not fair to those who do not use computers. But the hand-out sent home also said parents could call to make appointments. There are privacy issues to consider, the ability for some to show student work, physical issues of disabled to access all the floors quickly as is required now is not fair. Elementary school's ask parents to preregister.

Nancy Tauber mentioned a Dr. Karen Mapp – who works with schools. She also said portfolio night is a nice way to see the student's work and less one-on-one with teacher but more concrete.

Teachers should reach out to parents they need to see. Collect data, who is coming and which mechanism are they using, on line - emailing teachers, calling them, attending parent teacher conference afternoons or evenings?

Right now 30-40% of parents attend. Parents of honor students comprise about 60-70% of those attending, while for College Prep Classes about 10-20% of those parents attend. In the spring attendance is less enthusiastic than fall.

Natassa had a creative brainstorm of setting the evening like a college fair. Each table would be a specific department, say math. Parent would go to the table and see what 4 years of math could look like for his or her child. We thought also this could be videotaped so people could watch it on line. Some teachers are not consistent in what they cover for the same class was mentioned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary White