

CRLS School Council

MISSION STATEMENT:

ENHANCING SCHOOL COMMUNITY THROUGH IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Minutes—January 25, 2011

Attending: Staff, faculty, student representatives: C. Saheed, B. Tynes, L. Campbell, J. Childs, R. Benson, G. Hardina

Learning Community and At-Large Reps: L. Mansour, P. Massey, J. Daniels, A. Stein, MJ Jensen

Parents and Guests: H. Mockovak, M. White, D. Erikson, M. Frutkoff, F. Connolly

Introductions & Greetings

Open House February 2nd (9th grade) and 3rd (Main Campus)

Volunteers needed for both evenings/locations to help guide parents around the school. Please contact Greta Hardina if you are able to assist.

Feedback on 8th grade Information Night held January 20, 2011

We received much positive feedback from parents about the event.

Approximately 400 people attended.

There were eight breakout rooms following the opening of the event in the auditorium.

Parents were at ease asking questions in this smaller format.

Chairs Topics

1. Superintendent Young will be discussing his vision for the Middle Grades Program at the Feb. 1st School Committee meeting.
2. The budget process is underway, and CRLS has just completed a report to the School Committee. In general, the report comments on such things as class size and teacher/student ratio. The district is facing a shortfall of 600K. Principal Saheed has recommended no faculty cuts in order to sustain robust offerings in academic subjects, the arts and electives. A much needed seasonal, part-time clerical position has been proposed.
3. A production company is filming at CRLS. A documentary/reality show based in the Middle East is bringing their cast to the U.S. to interact with Americans in a variety of settings, including high school. The show is titled *On the Road in America*, and it has the 2nd largest television audience in the Mid-East with eighty million viewers. The show is produced by Jerome Gary (also produced *Pumping Iron*).

Parent Handbook

At the November School Council meeting, participants were asked to review the CRLS Student Handbook and the curricula and extra-curricular activity guide, *The CRLS Experience 2010-2011*, to identify important topics to include in a parent handbook. From those materials, Jessica Daniels created a list which she will email to School Council participants. Everyone was asked to send in their topical additions and suggestions before the next School Council meeting. MJ Jenson offered to consolidate the list in outline form. We will review the outline at the next meeting.

Quick Primer on School Council Role

Under the law, a school council is established to work with the principal to discuss and consider educational goals, needs of the students, the annual budget, and formulation of a school improvement plan. Principal Saheed added that School Councils are encouraged to form sub-committees to involve more parents in the life of the school. A formal description of School Councils can be found on the CPS website, in the Policy Manual under the CPS Policies & Procedures section of the site.

Some parents shared their thoughts on the role, including to help with projects and facilitate communication between the school and families. A question was raised about the school improvement plan and whether or not it is a formal document. Principal Saheed explained that the district does have a CPS district plan which is used to share data across the state which focuses, for example, on how students are doing with respect to such things as MCAS. In addition, CRLS has its own internal school improvement plan.

Other

Principal Saheed shared that alternatives to the MCAS are under consideration, looking at different ways to examine proficiency focused on key skills and more of a course-based assessment; not focused on *how* to teach but on *what is key* to teach.

We discussed our School Council goal of improving parent communication and reflected on some of the accomplishments over the past year, including the creation of the CRLS Newsletter; School Council members serving to “meet and greet” at the Open House; and outreach to the local community centers to facilitate parent attendance at the spring art event, Music Night. Other communication improvement ideas were floated such as: a parent survey to inform the school council; an informal questionnaire at an open house; and email access to parents was discussed again – progress on this topic has been curtailed due a vacancy in the webmaster position.

A new goal: To help seek opportunities for the senior internship program. It was suggested that we form a parent advisory committee to support Ms. Fitzgerald who runs the program. We will discuss this further at our next meeting.

Announcements

Cambridge Prevention Coalition discussion will be held on Thursday, January 27th, 3:30pm, at 344 Broadway.

Winter Drama Production, CRLS Theatre, Thursday and Friday this week at 7pm.

A Cappella Jam, CRLS Theatre, February 5th, 7pm.

SPED Liaison to the School Council mentioned that the district is looking at the ways schools are addressing needs, specifically around executive functioning issues, and the trend in the CPSD of moving students off of IEPs and onto 504 plans.

Boston Host Families looking for hosts for international students. Jessica Daniels hosted a student last year and offered very positive feedback about the program.

Next Agenda

Parent Handbook

School Goals and Sub-Committees

Next meeting: Tuesday, February 15th, 6-8 pm in the principal's conference room.

All interested parents and community members are welcome to attend.