

District Council Minutes

February 17, 2015. 3:00 at Nassau

Next Meeting: **Tuesday, May 12, 2015. 3:00 at Nassau.**

Attendees: Sharon Ciccone (elementary teacher rep), John Farrell (elementary school rep), Jennifer Kaufman (HS parent rep), James Linacre (student rep), Steve Malkischer (secondary school principal rep), Ellen Marble (community rep), Lois Powell (superintendent), Erin Ruppert (Hagan parent rep), Vickie Setzer (Todd parents rep), and Mark Van Horne (secondary school teacher rep)

Baldrige Feedback Report

Lois distributed copies of the feedback report from the Nov 17-19 site visits by the examiners with district personnel. The back of the 2nd page has information on understanding the report. Opportunities for improvement in bold are probably where we want to focus, “more bang for the buck.”

Action All Members: If you have any questions, contact Lois.

Action All Members: Read through the report and be ready to discuss proposed plan of action for next meeting.

Parent Survey Plan

We have three regular surveys:

- the budget survey (which will go out this week)
- the feedback letter on strengths/weaknesses in our district (we sent out last May)
- the parent satisfaction survey (which we offered last fall)

Budget Survey: The council agreed to continue sending this survey out in Jan/Feb.

Parent Feedback Letter: The council agreed to continue sending this survey out in late April/early May. Gives parents of Kindergartners, for example, an opportunity to express their opinion.

Parents Satisfaction Survey:

HS SBT preferred the Fall during Open House – schedule lends itself to that if parents have study hall. Only time you get the most participation at the school.

Todd SBT preferred the Fall during Open House for similar reasons.

Hagan SBT – last 2 mtgs canceled but feel important to discuss (as opposed to sending out a note) and will have that discussion next meeting.

Nassau SBT preferred mid-year – Fall wouldn't really have Kindergarten represented.

We discussed whether it mattered if different schools offered it different times. Nassau Principal needs to know to consider 3rd grade feedback, Hagan Principal the 6th grade feedback, and Todd, the 9th grade feedback. It was suggested to link access to the survey from the Parent Portal page.

Action (John Farrell): Feedback to Lois about Hagan's preference after next SBT meeting.

Action All Members: Consider ideas for how to boost participation for discussion at next mtg.

Parent Survey Results

Principals have helped identify questions that are ambiguous. A subcommittee of District Council volunteers was formed to look at and discuss the responses at the district level, across the Board district-wise. The custom questions can be reworked.

Action (Lois Powell): Lois will set up a time and location in early March (on a Mon or Wed) for the subcommittee to meet.

Smart Schools Bond Act Committee

Lori Mulford and Brett Hasbrouck will be running the meetings. This program requires community input. We potentially only have one community member participating.

Action All Members: If know anyone interested in participating, please let Lois know.

Follow-up on Pre- and Post- Assessment Memo from State Ed

The council received three responses that were not in favor of how the memo was handled by Spackenkill, that it missed the intent, and that MAPS wasn't disclosed. Concerns went beyond APPR toward the amount of testing and test prep. Lois explained, not wanting to sound defensive, that her intent was to be compliant, forthcoming with the information required, and Spack has been the only local school that has broached the subject; that it was discussed at a Board meeting and put on the website twice.

APPR and the HS: For APPR purposes we initially used MAPS as part of APPR law; it wasn't useful at the secondary level, was eliminated and other ways to handle APPR were identified. Explanation: MAPS expects a certain amount of expected growth but as students get older the tests aren't sensitive enough to show that growth. Best performing students at the HS manage their time so a test that won't impact their GPA they won't put time into. Middle School students savvy to its lack of importance on their grade as well. High School students felt didn't take the tests seriously because didn't have to. Scheduling is also difficult. HS is using Final Exams for APPR purposes; parents not even aware of what tests being used because other than written exams in chorus and PE (which the students complain about) it's business as usual. Final exams were created by the departments but worked with assessment consultants so would be reliable and valuable. Took training and time but it's a good process, meaningful and valid.

The Teachers' Union is conducting its own survey initiated a couple of weeks ago regarding testing (MAPs) and results will be shared (estimated beginning of March). Discussions also have been taking place at JTAC mtgs.

Concern about culture changes in Spackenkill that we can't continue the way we have and that need to be addressed. A discussion ensued on testing. In summary:

Pros*	Concerns*
<p>MAPS:</p> <p>The teachers like the norm reference way to compare to other students. The results coincide with what teachers see in the classroom (feel teachers would feel differently about them were that not the case).</p> <p>At the elementary level MAPS help teachers customize instruction from the feedback about skill sets.</p> <p>Teachers look at RIT scores, not with APPR in mind.</p> <p>A way to evaluate how students are progressing during the school year.</p> <p>I invite anyone to see MAP assessment going on; maybe concern is lack of education and the look and feel of it.</p> <p>Skill set results; teacher can help child more</p>	<p>MAPS:</p> <p>The teacher is not allowed to help them during the assessment if the student has a question; no learning going on, no interaction with teacher.</p> <p>Dave Webster pointed out that the standard error made the growth meaningless unless look at 1x year: spring-to-spring or winter-to-winter of fall-to-fall.</p> <p>3 times a year might not be the right amount; discussions have taken place about possibly eliminating one of the administrations per year. Have we learned something about the test now that we didn't know about when we first experienced it?</p> <p>We "learn from our mistakes" but the students don't get to see what they got right/wrong to understand and correct.</p>

<p>individually know what to work on. Feedback from some parents is positive.</p> <p>Even if APPR went away tomorrow, I would advocate for MAPS. Feel they are challenging, adaptable, and developmentally appropriate.</p> <p>My kids don't feel pressured when doing MAPS. The test adjusts so they don't get frustrated. Unique feature, it adjusts where you are.</p>	<p>Survey results indicate parents feel there is too much testing.</p>
<p>NYS Tests:</p> <p>Technically AIS is mandated if fail a NYS Test but there's flexibility on what that would look like.</p> <p>Although parents have the freedom to say my kid doesn't have to take these, we don't have luxury to say State Tests don't mean anything. The numbers matter, they're in the school audit every year, and decisions are made using them.</p> <p>Fundamentally wrong to have students sit for a test they're not prepared to take.</p> <p>Some parents care very much about testing and expect their kids to get 3s and 4s.</p> <p>Students have to pass Regents Exams to graduate; experience and predictor with NYS Tests.</p>	<p>NYS Tests:</p> <p>Unlike MAPS, NYS Tests are not accurate or necessarily reflective of student/classroom work. We had a kid in AIS Math and Honors Math at the same time; put in AIS because got a 2 on the NYS Test.</p> <p>What's really changed? This is the same community and we must have been doing well on tests with what we've been doing or people wouldn't want to move into Spackenkill and if we weren't doing stellar, I guess it doesn't matter, because people still want to move here.</p> <p>Prepping 4th graders for a 4-hour SAT or 3-hour Regents in HS seems a bit much.</p> <p>So in addition to MAPS, this is another test given where the students do not get the results of their test to learn from. What impact will that eventually have on kids, continually not getting feedback on their efforts?</p>
<p>Testing:</p> <p>Teachers are vocal if feel their time is being wasted.</p> <p>It's important to know where we have control, where we don't, and communicate why we make the decisions we do. (There was a shout-out to the HS Principal's phenomenal communication but as usual he didn't take the credit.)</p> <p>It comes in waves. My kid was in that first class when they made the change to 4th grade</p>	<p>Testing:</p> <p>I care more about the kids and what they think.</p> <p>The topic of testing keeps coming up but there's no stand on it. Let's take control; figure out a way to do less testing and make our district better. What do we want our students to get out of this? This testing elephant is everywhere in the room. It needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Too much emphasis on tests; too much</p>

assessments and there was a lot of pressure / focus placed on that.

Now the bar was moved and pendulum swung again. Sense we're moving in the direction things are settling down again. Secondary not feeling it now but concern at secondary it will hit there when one of our kids doesn't pass a Common Core Regents.

pressure.

Concerned about some of our district goals and matrices because they also are focused on test scores will just propagate this.

Writing Benchmarks (narrative, expository, opinion):

Driving force is not State Test. Writing was not instructionally aligned horizontally or vertically, that was the driving force.

Calibrate for consistency – can't write that in curriculum. Have same thing with Art teachers where discussing a student's piece of artwork. Also with admin with respect to teacher observations. Need to insure consistency of expectations among the teachers and this cannot be done by a written mandate.

Collectively thought meaningful for staff to talk together about what is a 1, 2, 3 or 4. If the teachers think this was positive and beneficial I'll support it.

For test prep not why going through this exercise, but it would be unfair to send students into an exam who were unprepared, who had never experienced this.

Successful in that better aligned – adjustments may be necessary.

I don't find 40 minutes of independent writing objectionable.

Writing Benchmarks (narrative, expository, opinion)

Why is this not just part of the curriculum design?

Use one piece and see if everyone would grade it the same. It's disturbing that's "3 hours of instructional time" where we "pay substitutes" to sit in the classrooms and again the students do not receive feedback on their writing.

40-minute independent writing piece sounds like a State exam environment.

What is meant by independent? More testing where the teacher can't interact with the student and answer questions?

(Answer: it's not guided through a rough draft, etc.)

I could have my kid write an essay at the table, but will he get anything out of it? No.

The editing and the interaction with the teacher is what matters.

We've had writing segments on our NYS exams before and it never got to the point someone other than the teacher assigned/graded the work. Why now?

** These are in no particular order and do not represent the views of everyone on District Council. They are ideas about testing that were identified in dialogue by various speakers. There are more pros/concerns and one can quibble over which is a pro vs concern but this represents the verbal points discussed at the meeting in an attempt to present the information in a comprehensible way.*

Next Meeting (May 12):

- Follow-Up on Items from February Meeting
- PR Plan
- Membership
- Self-Assessment

Action All Members: If one has any additional items to add to this agenda, contact Lois Powell.