

District Council Minutes

September 29, 2014. 3:00 at Nassau

Next Meeting: **Tuesday, December 9, 2014. 3:00 at Nassau.**

Future Meeting Dates: Tuesday, February 17 and Tuesday, May 12.

Attendees: Julia Caldwell (student rep), 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), Jeanne Nemes (support services rep), Lois Powell (superintendent), Cathy Porco (Nassau parent rep), Erin Ruppert (Hagan parent rep), Vickie Setzer (Todd parents rep), and Mark Van Horne (secondary school teacher rep)

We welcomed James Linacre who replaces graduate Dana Jackson as one of the student representatives.

The Baldrige visit will be the week of November 17th, but there are no other details at this time.

Committee Chair: Lois Powell

Assessment Letter from State Ed:

Pre-assessments were initially put into place to meet APPR requirements by the State. In order to reduce testing, the State now indicates some tests such as the pre-assessments aren't needed but 1) some tests mentioned in the letter have already been eliminated (there's even less in Art than shown for strictly APPR purposes), 2) negotiation with the teachers' union is necessary for any changes, and 3) the tests are used for other criteria like planning AIS, scheduling AIS groups, and as a growth measure to see how we're doing as a district.

At the secondary level, the formula is more complicated. There are no pre-assessments at this point. The problem with just using the Regents exams for both State and local measure of teacher effectiveness (which would be 40% of their evaluation) is we have no control over these exams and with Common Core we aren't even certain what the exams will be asking in order to prepare students. A teacher's caseload needs to be 51% - some tests exist in case there's a situation they need to be used; in some cases we never expect to need to use these exams for APPR.

The APPR implication is that with two ineffective evaluations in a row there can be disciplinary charges. We don't anticipate this happening at Spackenkill.

We can't take away Regents or State Assessments and they're 20% of a teacher's evaluation. We tried to balance local scores and state scores.

Discussion on State Letter/Pre-Assessments/Testing:

- It seems that there are a lot of these exams (MAPS at the elementary level) and they are useful for AIS but that's only hitting a small percentage (estimate 25%) of the student population in a given class; that for the majority of these students they serve little to no purpose..
- Not all students are good test-takers. I have three kids and only one is good at taking tests.
- Seems a lot of testing where they can't see what they got specifically wrong and learn from their mistakes.
- The teachers get a MAPS report; it's very granular on what the student knows or doesn't. There's good information there.
- The MAPS are definitely essential. The teachers use them a lot.
- We had like 96% or higher of our teachers evaluated as highly effective. We don't expect these exams to impact any teachers for a thousand years and they're used

mostly for planning and scheduling AIS, so what percentage of our population do they really matter for? Again, it seems like a lot of tests at the elementary level for their purpose.

- We'd have to agree to disagree on that.
- In cases where a Spackenkill teacher is ineffective, what do parents do? They hire tutors so the kids do well anyway.

Discussion on Opt-Outs:

The above discussion led to a question on how opt-outs were handled and if they counted as a "zero." The impact on the teacher depended on how the student would have done on the exam; on MAPS it's not a zero. The district is sending out a letter/survey to explain how these tests were used and to find out why parents chose to opt their children out.

- With opt-outs we can get nailed in the sub-groups, like if we don't have enough free/reduced lunch participants and can't show growth.
- I see value in some of this, not everything, best we can do is explain why we're making the decisions that we are; like why when we're required only to offer the Common Core Regents we're offering the old Regents as well, and why we're offering tests in January. It's not less testing but feel we're doing the right things for the students.
- Communication about our decisions and why is key.
- I hope the letter shows some balance and truth. No school to date in NYS has been impacted by not meeting the 95% participation rate and Western NY is a lot higher as far as opt-outs than anything we've seen around here. Schools do not lose funding.
- So it sounds like scare tactics to get people to participate.
- There's a chance of being labeled a School in Need of Improvement that includes a huge amount of paperwork, taking teacher time away from kids; a plan has to be put in place to address the issue. The wording, I believe, is that this "could" happen.
- Not just paperwork and time but there are also numerous visits to your schools.
- It would be nice to see a truthful approach to this topic and what the consequences really are.

Action: Lois will look into how letter was worded.

Discussion on Public Meeting About the State Letter:

There was concern by a Board member that speaking about this at District Council was too small a forum. It was agreed that a web story would be placed on the District Website with a way to submit feedback to the District Council and that the District Council would talk about this again later this year. These are open meetings, so anyone is welcome to attend.

Action: Lois to get the website information up and functioning.

Action Plans/Metrics:

District Goals have been established with baseline data and target dates. Anything in blue (in copies handed out) is new. The recent evaluations just got put into the system, so that data will be finalized and filled in this document. This will be presented to the Board at the 2nd meeting in November. Lois explained some of the terminology: "domain 4" means "professional obligations of teachers" and "environmental rating" are factors we do not have complete control over / controlled by bigger issues, such as population growth.

Action: Everyone is to read this over and give feedback to Lois accordingly.

Discussion:

- Looking at Safe, Healthy, Caring Schools and the write-in results from the student surveys complaining about school lunches - It's my understanding that a local pizza business won bids to a half dozen local schools: City of Poughkeepsie (it was noted that this bid has switched but not necessarily for fiscal or quality reasons), Millbrook, Dutchess BOCES, Spackenkill, Holy Trinity, and one other; however, Spackenkill isn't following through on this citing NYS nutritional standards but the state documentation even mentions pizza as long as it has whole grain crust, sauce and a certain amount of cheese to meet the protein criteria, so why isn't this happening here?
- Holy Trinity as a private school doesn't fall under State Ed guidelines.

Action: Lois said she'd look into it.

Budget Forum – November 3:

Action: Lois will have sign-up on the website soon for attending this.

Action: Everyone: if interested in participating let Lois know.

Establish Next Meeting Dates:

Suggested dates: December 9, February 17 and May 12. **All at Nassau at 3:00.** No one seemed to have any objections to these.

Committee Self-Assessment:

Lois left the room and the council members filled out the self-assessment forms.

Action: Mark collected them and will collate the results.

Next Meeting:

Date: Tuesday, December 9 at 3:00 at Nassau.

Agenda Items: 1) Budget Exit Survey Results, 2) Budget Forum, 3) Revenue Generation.

Michele Moloney will be in attendance.

Action: If you have any additional items to add to this agenda, contact Lois Powell.