

Jonas Clarke Middle School

School Site Council Meeting

September 28, 2017

7:00AM

Main Office, Jonas Clarke Middle School

17 Stedman Road Lexington, MA 02421

Agenda

In Attendance: Anna Monaco, Principal; Mary Barry-Ng, Assistant Principal; Jonathan Wettstone, Assistant Principal; Kerry Richmond, Teacher; Casey Siagel, Teacher; Anne Witt, Teacher; Tiffany Zides, Teacher; Amy Sellinger, Parent; Christina Cohen, Parent; Cathy Swan, Parent; Angela Chang, Parent; Jennifer Roney, Parent.

I. Welcome / Site Council / SIP overview

- Principal discussed purpose of site council and open meeting law.
- Grouped discussed updates to the building with new construction and landscaping.
- Principal requested feedback and support in regards to the new homework policy.
 - Parent questioned giving of quiz on a Friday, after a Thursday holiday, given that it is a standing assessment (every Friday) and known well in advance.
 - Parent questioned - how much time did staff have to adjust to new policy? Principal responded, noting that policy language was written over the summer and were given to staff on first day.
 - Parent noted a significant (positive) difference over the recent holiday, being able to spend time as a family and not engrossed in homework.
 - Principal reminded group/parents to communicate with teachers, asking questions about homework and time spent on homework each night.
 - Principal stated that staff have been reminded to post nightly homework on web sites, in addition to Google classrooms.
 - Teacher reinforced "time limits," as the topic brought up the most during parent-teacher conferences. Students don't want to come in without homework done, so that is the conversation between teachers, parents and students.
 - Teacher asked parents - what else can we do to reinforce the 20-30 minute rule and cutoff?
 - Parent confirmed - need a universal message from school-home stating cut off.
 - Parent added - struggle at home with either/both student and/or parent, and the stress around sending your child into school with work not done - possible exposure of not being able to keep up or do the work.
 - Principal noted - homework can be different in each course/day, some leading to more flexibility with the policy.

- Parent suggested - add space to note literal time used on the assignment at home, which would be another way to collect data and help students monitor their own time.
- Parent noted that “20-30” minute rule was not included in the new policy, so more communication might be needed.
- Parent shared her own experience with teaching, reminding students to upload work, even if incomplete, which further illustrates their level of understanding.
- Principal displayed the homework policy, which does state - homework is not required. It’s ok to not give homework.

II. YRBS Discussion

- Reminded council of the timing and offering of the survey (every two years, 7th & 8th grade)
- Focus on the Key Findings (p. 3 of the Executive Summary)
- Principal Monaco shared that in coming years, Lexington will be administering a common assessment, one that other schools in Middlesex County will also administer. This way, we will be able to compare ourselves with other schools in similar districts.
- Focus here is clearly more on mental health and well-being of our students. (Reference to #5 and #6 in Key Findings with respect to suicidal ideation and self-injurious behaviors.
- Parent questions with respect to type of questions. Is there one about how students learn about “cutting” or other self-injurious behavior. Teacher pointed out that bullying did decrease and that more students have told adults about their suicidal ideation than in prior years. Principal also pointed out that our new S.O.S. program (Signs of Suicide) that was piloted last year was extremely successful. In particular, the ACT (acknowledge, care, tell) acronym was helpful for many students.
- Parent proposed the idea of parents taking the YRBS to see if they would answer the same way.
- Teacher asked about LHS results,
- LHS 1 out of 5 reported seriously considering suicide (increase from 2015). Academic life identified as point of extreme stress. 62.9% reported that planning for life after high school was most stressful. Alcohol is the greatest use of all drugs.
- Discussion over concern of new “vaping” trend that is occurring.
- Parents express concern and look forward to the new common survey that will be used among all schools in Middlesex County.
- Principal expressed how the survey data has helped us to look at what we are doing at the middle school level. Data from the last survey was used and helped us to develop WIN and the offerings. WIN implementation was a lot of work, and the challenges of not losing time, maintaining specific classes with teachers that work at multiple buildings, as well as the contract made it very difficult to work these blocks into our schedule.
- Committee that will begin to look at the middle school schedules, possibly bringing in a consultant to help with the visioning process with staff.

- Overall, we know our concerns, we have identified many of our needs, and we are working towards the goal.
- Back to School Night - now will be two nights this year due to large enrollment numbers
- Parent expressed how quickly the homework policy and implementation worked. Others explained this has been in conversation at the schools for a while. Principal explained that the creation of the implementation policy was quick; this occurred over the summer.
- Brief discussion of the no-homework at some of the elementary schools and how the transition into middle school, especially the concern over learning executive functioning skills.

III. Questions, Comments, Concerns.

- None noted

V. Adjourn.

