

School Governance Council
Wildwood Elementary School
Minutes of the Meeting of Dec. 16, 2014, 3:30pm (Conference Room at Wildwood)

Attending: Nick Yaffe (principal), Susan Bellak (parent & SGC representative), Kristin Lieber (parent), Liz Elder (teacher), Kerry Crosby (parent), Laura Quilter (parent)

Co-Chairs: Nick Yaffe and Kerry Crosby.

AGENDA

I. Welcome and introductions.

Nick Yaffe will share information about Karen Mapp's work. Her book, *Beyond the Bake Sale*, could be a good resource for the group. Kerry Crosby and Nick Yaffe will change the upcoming SGC meeting that is scheduled for Thursday to another day via email.

II. Discussed November meeting and minutes.

The group approved the minutes. Once minutes are approved, they should be sent to Mr. T at the email address: takayamat@arps.org. Nick Yaffe noted that the minutes are a public document and posted on the website, and should be closely reviewed. The date of today's meeting on the agenda should be December 16 rather than December 22.

III. Review Family Survey summary and next steps.

There was a discussion of Kristin Lieber's summary of the district survey. While the school scores well overall, several of the areas that were rated less highly might be addressed through better communication. The group found several questions weren't clearly stated and will provide feedback to the district to improve future surveys.

- "How motivating are the classroom lessons at your school?" (survey question). The group felt that this question wasn't clearly stated. Nick Yaffe noted that the school has adopted a new approach teaching a "growth mindset" that will involve students tackling challenging work. The math teacher is leading this initiative.
- "Teachers and families have frequent opportunities to meet face-to-face and get to know each other." Nick Yaffe commented that he feels protective of teachers' time. Parents or teachers can request a spring conference, but there are not early release days for parent-teacher conferences in the spring. The committee discussed how often face-to-face meetings are actually requested. Liz Elder mentioned that she offers to meet parents in the spring in her newsletter to parents and said probably about three families requested a spring meeting last year. Kerry Crosby wondered whether there might be more requests for face to face meetings in the younger grades because parents may receive less information from their young children.
- "How well do you feel your child's school is preparing him or her for the next academic year?" Generally the group would like more specificity, e.g. is it academic or social-emotional preparedness? Getting feedback from 7th grade teachers regarding preparedness is something to investigate with Mark Morris at the district.
- The group discussed establishing norm, setting basic expectations for parent and teacher communication that is mutually respectful. Serving as a constructive communications framework, it can have an introductory statement about respecting teachers' time and respecting parents' need for information (a "we believe" statement). For example, this

framework might include expectations around the timing of communication, where and when it is appropriate to engage teachers in conversation about a child, and expectations for response to emails over weekends. Susan Bellak noted these guidelines would be in keeping with the School Improvement Plan to ensure that parents know they can communicate with teachers and the school. Members discussed that there can be variation in the amount of communication per grade, however there is a general expectation that teachers communicate at least once a month. Class parents may be able to provide more support to teachers in this area.

Next steps & suggestions:

- Survey improvements. Laura Quilter will set up a shared Google document to collect comments and suggestions for improving the survey. Kristin Lieber will enter comments received so far into the document. Other members will review and enter additional comments/suggestions into the document. Once feedback is gathered, the group will send it to Mark Morris at the district office.
- Norms for communication. The group will continue to discuss establishing norms for parent-teacher communication.

IV. Review last year's School Improvement Plan and SGC role

The discussion centered on communication, support for teachers and equity.

- Susan Bellak asked how well the school is addressing language barriers. The district has a staff person in the family center to assist with written or phone translation for Spanish. This is a new service that parents might not know about. Written communication from the district is in both English and Spanish. Nick Yaffe noted there has been an influx of students from China. Naihsin Kuo in the guidance office has taken this on.
- Susan Bellak recommended that teachers can use class parents as a resource for families that come from abroad. Kerry Crosby, who is a class parent, doesn't feel she reaches everyone and asked if, under confidentiality rules, class parents can get email addresses from teachers. Nick said to go through Joyce in the office. About 25 children's parents don't have email addresses.
- Nick Yaffe commented that Wildwood welcomes a lot of new students, eight at the most recent assembly. There used to be a hospitality coordinator who created a welcome kit. The kit is still available and the group could consider how to restore this role.
- Nick Yaffe passed out a handout on parent-friendly schools that could be roadmap for communication improvements moving forward. Without the SGC initiative, this assessment would likely not occur due to time/resource limitations.
- Several parents have approached Nick Yaffe about the school's approach to teaching an understanding of diversity in light of recent national events. The school is dedicating six upcoming staff meetings to this topic. Nick Yaffe commented that Wildwood is such a laboratory for diversity and he would like to invite the SGC and interested parents to have a participatory role.
- The group discussed gathering information from Gwen Agna, principal of Northampton Jackson Street elementary school on their communication strategy and other approaches and practices.
- There are several possible roles for the SGC : (1) communication guidelines, (2) how to better support teachers, (3) evaluating school using Mapp's parent-friendly school assessment, (4) feedback on family survey language, and (5) role for SGC on equity. The group will discuss further how to move forward at next meeting and whether all of these may be too much to take on.

- Kerry Crosby knows an interested person who will be a Wildwood parent next year. As the committee doesn't yet have a community member, could this person join? The group discussed that a rising parent may not be what was intended for the SGC community member.

Next steps & suggestions:

- Nick Yaffe will send a link to more Karen Mapp material via email. The group will review the parent-friendly schools handout and discuss at next meeting.
- Continue review of SIP and SGC's role.
- Get feedback from PGO on communication guidelines.

V. NEXT STEPS and ACTION ITEMS

- Kristin Lieber doing minutes for this meeting.
- Laura Quilter will set up a shared Google document to collect comments and suggestions for improving the survey. Kristin Lieber will enter comments received so far into the document. Other members will review and enter additional comments/suggestions into the document. Once feedback is gathered, the group will send it to Mark Morris at the district office.
- Nick Yaffe will send a link to more Karen Mapp material via email. The group will review the parent-friendly schools handout and discuss at next meeting.
- The group will continue to review the School Improvement Plan and SGC's role, discuss establishing norms for parent-teacher communication, and consider getting feedback from PGO on communication guidelines.