

General Membership Meeting

4/15/2010

Meeting was called to order 6:28 pm by Mark Sandilands

Principal's report: Mark Sandilands

Review of handout

- Hoped to grow to 230 students, district placed a limit of 200 (currently at 203)
- 8-10 each year (approximately) don't come back
- Grades 3-5 all at 30 kids or more
- Staffing is same as last year
- ACCESS will remain at Sabin next year
- All electives and specials will remain the same, possible tweak with Drama
- In May will have a better idea of composition of core classrooms, blends and such could change, based on
- Had over 100 applications
 - First removed all out of district applicants and those not at 99th percentile
 - Teachers are reviewing and scoring the applications, retuning on 4/26
 - After 4/26, applications are reviewed with district and the applicants are ranked, then slotted into appropriate grade level slots
- Letters of intent for current families are due 4/23; if they're not returned, families will be contacted. Helps to get a better idea of # of slots for next year

Special Education changes

- Hoping to work with the district, trying to get the FTE back up
- Currently: 1 Full time and 1 PT paraeducator each for Sabin and ACCESS
- Next year: district decided we were one location, 2 people will be working half time
- Going from 1.5 to 1.0, and 1 paraeducator for entire school
 - Across the entire district, schools will no longer have 1 fulltime person
 - Instead there will be 2 separate half-time people
 - These 2 half-time people will work with both Sabin and ACCESS

Working with Sabin to get the same amenities for students of both programs: specials, gym access, and lockers

Q: Is the hope that all students will have lockers?

A: no, middle school students. Working with Sabin on that issue

Q: Are the available slots for next year just for middle school?

A: We are accepting applications for all grade levels. Some grades may not have any slots, won't know until the letters of intent are returned.

Q: Regarding working with Sabin: do things seem like they're working out with regards to lockers and Gym?

A: Sabin's principal is working with us and understands our needs. Some things fell through last year because of changes at the district. Working on Gym time instead of using the auditorium on rainy days.

Q: What came of the talk of bringing Sarah Allen here to meet with people?

A: Sabin had tried to get her here; if she does come it would make sense to have both programs talk to her at the same time.

Q: I have an entering K this fall, but according to the district, she is not considered a co-enrolled sibling since ACCESS and Sabin are 2 separate programs?

A: Don't know about those types of transfers, but we are considered 1 program regarding the new special education arrangements

Q: What is the plan in regards to 1st and 2nd graders in the future?

A: ACCESS does have a high number of students at that grade level, and now with testing at 2nd grade of all students district-wide it may be more equitable to have entry to ACCESS later.

Follow up Q: Can't parents all get testing in Kindergarten?

A: There is probably a number of parents who don't know about it, and trying to keep access to ACCESS equitable.

Q: How is the 99th percentile criterion affecting the number of eligible students?

A: First we look at the numbers, should be identified as TAG and then possibly struggling a bit before they actually look at us. Different philosophies: testing just to get into ACCESS vs. having problems in regular programs and needing an alternative.

Q: So parents who are asking to get tested would otherwise not be tested?

A: No, usually testing in those situations is for parents who want their children to attend ACCESS instead of their neighborhood school.

Q: In regards to how these new students are chosen, is there a clear protocol? Is it clear on how they're determined?

A: Staff has a scoring rubric, and that is followed by discussion at the district level.

Q: Is the new district-wide testing in second grade influencing discussions about size and growth?

A: Not yet.

Report on the 2E Conference: Renee Morgan (5/6 LA/SS) and Irene Montano (7/8 LA/SS)

"Twice Exceptional" Conference

*NOTE: presentation can be viewed at www.richmorgan.com/diamonds

Takes 5-6 minutes to download*

In early March, went to the conference in Washington, DC

- Thanks to Allison Abell, and the sponsors who gave frequent flier miles; also used professional development funds and PTA funds

3 full days

First workshops given by clinicians: talking about symptoms and how the brain works, but didn't give specific guidelines of how to work with these kids

One message from conference: parents are the experts, bringing some hope back to Portland! New things are out there, and there were some powerful success stories

Rick Lavoie: ADHD specialist, Author of It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend; led a motivation workshop

- Teach them “how to learn stuff” rather than teaching them “stuff”
- How to teach them how to acquire it
- Many kids are focused on specific interests; try to broaden their scope
- Unlearn, learn and relearn is difficult for these kids

In order to motivate them: meet their needs.

- Small classes
- Work one on one
- Ensure that teachers understand them, and that there are resources in the classrooms for the LD child
- Teachers already differentiate levels at ACCESS
- District is always changing these things
- Parents need to be proactive: find out how many kids in class? What are the resources available to them?

LD kids: difficult to make friends: work on social development, how to make friends

- Do a lot of interaction with peers, group work
- Try to engage the child with the social difficulties, give them small chores to do
- Peers at ACCESS are very supportive, this is why there is cooperative learning done at ACCESS

LD kids sub skills:

- Timing and staging: want to make friends, but don’t know how to make it happen organically

Bias against home schooling because they learn these skills in the classroom

Debbie Phelps: dynamic principal in Baltimore school, mother of Olympic medalist Michael Phelps (who has ADHD), Author of A Mother for All Seasons

- She’s in the classroom, and shows how each staff is expected to differentiate learning
- Supports teachers with strategies and models how to do it (i.e. how to help with organization),

“Tough love” message for educators

- Touch the lives of the students every day
- Need to meet the needs of every child
- You are in this business to serve

“Tough love” message for parents

- Parents try to be their kids friends, but they need to be an authority figure
 - Children want the security of knowing who is drawing the lines
- Bring everyone in to provide this security: “circle the wagons”

“Tough love” message for students

- You are the future. You will be running the country and taking care of us
- You are not going to do it alone, will have our help
- Going to school is your job
- We believe in them

Through reaching each kid, can make his or her dreams come true

- At ACCESS, teachers get to read student journals, gives a clue of what interests them and then easier to differentiate learning

John Elder Robison, Author of Look Me In The Eye, Has Asperger's Syndrome, didn't find out until he was 40, hyper focused on electronics

Message: don't fix your kids

- They're not broken and they're not going to change
- Have a distinct place in the evolutionary scheme; the world needs these hyper focused geniuses
- Takes 10000 focused hours to innovate and not a lot of people can do this, but many with Asperger's Syndrome can

Jonathan Mooney: focus on kids with LD, ADHD, disabilities and alternative education, author of The Short Bus

Talks about the bad experiences kids have in school:

- Most receive negative messages, are victims of stereotyping
- "It sucks to be a parent of an LD kid", his mother had to be his resource
- Focus on Empowerment, say positive things to the LD kids

In mainstream classes, perceived as "misbehaving"- had to walk around

- Schools want compliance, currently, only sitting still and eye contact equals listening
- Schools can make or break someone with a LD
- Need to have people around them to support them
- Many schools reinforce "learned helplessness" – can't go to the teacher, no help on the playground, can't go to parents

How to make things better:

- Reframe Compliance
- Teachers/parents to empower them by teaching them to be self-advocates
- Focus on bright spot learning: build on their strengths and then differentiate, and their differences are valued
- Don't remediate the LD learner, give them the tools they need: technology, extra time

Remember: the weakness/disability is not going to go away, but because of the disability, their strengths will develop

Currently lots of interest in how the brain works in these kids, and how they can be successful as they grow up

- Sometimes it takes a while: late bloomers, possibly within a family
- Those who are successful realized who/what they are, realized what their problem is, and how to work around it
 - Believe in themselves, realize they're not bad/alien/foreign, it is a good thing, they'll be very successful, lots of occupations want those kinds of kids
 - ABC story about firm that only hires people with autism "turning disability on its head" – ability to focus to the exclusion of all other, avoid wasting their skills

New way to look at things: used to put ASD kids in one category, and ADHD in a separate category (ADHD child responds to everything, ASD child lives “in a bubble”), but they both need to learn coping skills to come out of wherever they are

Executive function disorder: can’t be tested for it yet, generally thought of an inability to put the brakes on whatever you’re too focused on or an inability to focus at all.

All students in ACCESS consider themselves exceptional

Q: Are there going to be opportunities to share this info with the other teachers (especially the new perspectives and techniques)?

A: It’s an issue of time availability. They encourage all teachers to go to future “Diamonds in the Rough” conferences, ACCESS close to being “special ed”

Q: Besides time, are there other things that prevent this info from being shared as a part of professional development?

A: We don’t see the other teachers, other than staff meetings 1x/mo, professional development is planned for them. Because they teach multiple grades, they don’t have set aside shared time to share the information with the other core teachers

Approval of the Minutes for the February: Minutes approved.

Financial Report: Amaya

Current balance in the account shows \$8548.90; enabled us to fund the approved increases from several months ago

- Music
- Art
- Library
- Sabin garden

Legislative line item had been removed, now we know it is for the state PTA conference

Q: Have the Drama costs been paid?

A: Yes

Q: Does this current balance include the previously “put on hold” expenses?

A: Yes

Social committee has made money: \$90

- Combined the ice cream social line item with the social committee line item
- Not sure if there will be social committee expenses coming up from the upcoming events

Though we will be cutting it close, it looks like there will be enough for the librarian to order flip cameras.

- Sample student videos are available, David will repost to make them easier to find

Nominating Committee Report

The committee posted notice on BigTent seeking nominations, made phone calls and emails, was able to find someone for VP.

- Nominations are still being accepted
- Nominations can be taken from the floor at the next meeting as well

Current proposed slate:

- President: David Fikstad
- Vice President: Kim Grimme
- Secretary: Jen Holcomb
- Treasurer: Amaya Urzaa

New Business:

Amaya will be attending the State PTA Conference

Q: PTA- has liability insurance. Can after school activities i.e. Robotics, Chess be added?

A: PTA has insurance to cover meetings/events sponsored by PTA.

Follow up Q: How can these activities be covered? Possible to have a liability waiver?
Are they covered by school insurance?

Talent show:

- Will now be a part of "Create!"/ Cinco de Mayo celebration
- Now it is anyone who wants to perform instead of just middle grades

Social Committee Recap:

- 1st time to really do things, have fun and build school community
- Especially want to give the middle school population more of a true middle school social experience
- Have been successful if measured by having fun, though attendance has been low for some events

For the future

- Focus on which events worked best, what does this community want?
- Foster collaboration among the diverse segments of the population
- Create events that are self-generating, i.e. science night
- Two months left – 3 more events

Create/Cinco de Mayo: arts event – a celebration of creativity

- Will take place in the gym, library and art room
- Students/staff/parents can sell things
- Hands on art tables/workshops
- Mr. Lamp will supervise the sale of Sabin/ACCESS art cards
- Parents can view mosaics the parents
- Poster contest: used for decoration the night of the event, get some interest. Also use the winners used in promotion for next year
- Talent show: choir will kick it off @ 6:15, salsa dance group, acts of students or parents; performances will be sprinkled throughout the evening
- Food concessions

Q: can you sell homemade goods?

A: Perhaps since it is being sold instead of being served. JaneAnne will look at the policy.

Sock hop: May 14

- Impetus was to give a little of the middle school social experience
- Have had 2 previous dances, this is the first one including the 5th graders
- 50s style sock hop

Q: Is there someone to provide dance instruction?

A: There will be an emcee. Looking for parents or someone who knows swing dancing.

Family field night: May 18

- Entire outdoor area of Sabin reserved
- Will have a picnic, a game of Quidditch
- Grades 1-4 want to perform the choreography learned from drama guest artist

Kids Can: will do a presentation at May PTA meeting, will try to get something out in advance about the Kids Can organization

Box tops:

Earned Approx \$230, at a rate of .10/each

Next payment won't be in until November, but parents can turn them in through end of the year

Run for the arts:

April 23, alternate date is April 30 (Sabin is holding their RFTA on 4/30)

Q: How much of the profit does RFTA take?

A: 7% - well worth it for the organization they provide

Student can choose not to get a shirt, even if they earn one – just write “no t-shirt”

Cost is \$7.50 per t-shirt, which is taken out of the profits

RFTA earned almost \$5500 last year, went for mosaic guest artists

Q: Is that where the money for the recent field trips came from?

A: No. The RFTA money goes into a Young Audiences fund, and schools can pick from that list of artists.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm