

Teaneck Public Schools District Advisory Team

District Advisory Team Meeting Minutes for February 5, 2015

Present:

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| Bryant School | Amy Yepez |
| Hawthorne School | Rebecca Alston |
| Lowell School | Connie Le |
| Whittier School | Kara Brady |
| Ben Franklin Middle School | Tamika Francis |
| Thomas Jefferson Middle School | Florence Mitchell Brown |
| Teaneck High School | Michelle O'Reilly, Kesha Rodriguez |

Ms. Pinsak began the meeting at 7:10 pm with an overview of the District Advisory Team

Ms. Pinsak welcomed the newest members of the District Advisory Team, Amy Yepez representing Bryant School, Connie Le representing Lowell School and Kesha Rodriguez representing the high school.

Ms. Pinsak stated that the District Advisory Team Committee Members report a summary of their BQMT (Building Quality Management Team) and bring questions to the Superintendent to dialogue about District information. In order to respect the committee members time, the meetings are held for an hour or an hour and a half. The Minutes for the BQMT meetings are posted on the website with the District Advisory Team Minutes. The BQMT notes are shared with this group to get great ideas from each other and suggestions from the Building Quality Management Teams. The Superintendent provides updates and resources to the District Advisory Team members for the BQMT.

Parents inquired about the testing dates for PARCC (The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers).

Ms. Pinsak responded that the schools are submitting their calendars to her by Friday, February 6th and parents should get the testing calendars from their schools. Whittier School is doing a practice test in February. **That has since changed, no practice test will be given.** In addition, the NJ ASK Science test will be administered to fourth and eighth grades. At the high school grades 9, 10, 11 will take the PARCC assessment for the English and Mathematics classes which they are enrolled. The current senior class has already taken the HSPA (High School Proficiency Assessment) and this is the last year that the HSPA will be counted towards graduation.

Parents inquired about why all students wouldn't be tested in English/Language Arts?

Ms. Pinsak responded that some students may not have an English class on their current schedule because they may have taken two English classes in one year, therefore, they won't be assessed. The State tried to go with EOY (End of Year) Assessments but it didn't work out. Parents stated that English/Language Arts assessment is similar to the Regents testing for English. Ms. Pinsak gave the committee a handout of PARCC Frequently Asked Questions (**attached**) from the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Superintendent Report

Ms. Pinsak reported that the high school administration will be introducing Academic Institutes at Teaneck High School for 9th grade next year in 2015-16. The Board of Education requires 140 credits, the State Department requires 120 credits to graduate but Teaneck students can take 160 credits. Any

student can select to go through the Academic Institute strand. The student would graduate with an endorsement.

Parents inquired about what is an endorsement?

Ms. Pinsak responded that an endorsement is a notation on the student's transcript that they completed the subject in the Institute. Students must pass 4 additional courses with a grade "B" or higher and a cumulative weighted GPA OF 3.0 or higher, to graduate with special distinction on their diploma.

Ms. Pinsak reported that the classes of 2016, 2017, 2018 restructuring graduation requirements based on the PARCC criteria developed by the State Department. Tests are more difficult and the State cited that districts can expect a big drop at least 30% in scores.

Parents inquired about Opting-out of the test.

Ms. Pinsak responded that districts were clearly told that a 95% participation rate is required or it could affect the district's State aid.

Reports from each building representative summarizing the key points of the latest BQMT meeting, including questions, comments and/or concerns for the district team.

Hawthorne School

Ms. Alston reported the Minutes of the **November** Hawthorne BQMT (**attached**). Ms. Alston gave the Superintendent the required documents per district policy for the Hawthorne PTA. She stated that Hawthorne had their second BQMT meeting this afternoon (February 5th) therefore the minutes were not yet available.

Ms. Alston proceeded to report on the November 25, 2014 BQMT Meeting. The classrooms are being updated with white boards that were supposed to be installed in January but the installation has been on hold to date. The Progress Action Plans were shared with the **School Improvement Panel (ScIP) Committee**. Ms. Alston stated that it was very exciting news about Hawthorne's National Honor Society for fourth grade students. The co-advisors are teachers Linda Disken and Stephanie McKee. The selection process took place in December with an Induction Ceremony held on January 21, 2015.

Ms. Alston reported that for the 2015-16 Budget the BQMT had the following requests:
new performance risers, add a concrete path around the cafeteria wing for the safety of parents and students due to the solar panel area that is cordoned off and the car pool circle for safety and to allow more parking.

Ms. Alston reported that the PTA is organizing a parent workshop to address concerns about PARCC and to provide sample assessments. The PTA is encouraging parents to make sure students come to school to take the test. Dr. Spollen-LaRaia suggested a **podcast** to get the PARCC information to parents and students. Ms. Alston continued that there was a discussion of an indoor recess plan with additional games provided by the PTA. The Working Parents Association is considering a homework club and currently visiting other schools and observing outside trainers to bring into the homework club. Ms. Alston concluded that Colette Brantley presented the HIB (Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying) protocol to the Working Parents Association.

Whittier School

Ms. Brady reported the Minutes of the October 21, November 25 and December 16, 2014 BQMT Minutes (**attached**). Ms. Brady reported that parking at Whittier School is limited with no solution to improve the parking for staff and parents. Parents were parking in the Ogden Circle (back of building) but the residents complained and parents were issued parking tickets. The blacktop area for parking is a small area. Ms. Brady stated that this is the first time in six years that parents cannot park on Ogden Circle and a suggestion was made to have the curb painted yellow. Ms. Pinsak stated that she would reach out to Chief Carney regarding the parking tickets.

Ms. Brady reported that there are new signs on the playground and letters were distributed to residents regarding the use of Whittier's playground during Teaneck Public School students' recess. Some community members are aggressive with our students during recess and WPA outdoor activities on the playground. Ms. Rodriguez stated that community members who attend St. Mark's Church are planning to visit the Working Parents Association at Whittier School to monitor the playground during recess and WPA afterschool childcare. Ms. Brady reported that the drop off/pick up is smooth in the AM but difficult in the PM. The Essex Street parking lot next to the cafeteria the flood light on the roof is not working and a work order was input for replacement. **Ms. Pinsak contacted Mr. D'Angelo, Director of Facilities, and the flood light will be replaced.**

Ms. Brady inquired if the email/phone blast could be a written email and sent to cell phones as a text. Ms. Francis stated that parents could sign up for website alerts. Ms. Pinsak agreed and stated that parents sign up on the website to receive alerts but it is received as a link to the website not a text message. **Ms. Pinsak inquired about text messaging to parents, Ms. Muro, Coordinator of Student Information, informed her that consent form is required due to data charges for text messages. Ms. Pinsak requested that the consent form be included in the parent packet in September 2015.** Ms. Brady reported that Whittier parents were concerned about the lack of technology in preparation for the PARCC testing. Ms. Brady concluded that discussions took place regarding reinstating class parents, twitter account, Smarts Nutrition committee to give input regarding school lunches (calories/ingredients).

Lowell School

Ms. Le reported the Minutes of the December 16, 2014 Lowell BQMT Meeting (**attached**). Ms. Le reported that the BQMT Meetings focused on Anti-Bullying. Mr. Cruz presented the information about HIB (Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying) and what it entails at a PTO Meeting. This garnered a lot of parents to come out to hear his presentation. Ms. Alston stated that the anti-bullying puppet show "Helping Drew" created by Mr. Ishkanian at Bryant School was presented at Hawthorne School on February 3rd.

Ms. Le reported that parents have concerns about the circle at Lowell during pickup because parents don't move their cars to keep the line moving forward. Ms. Le continued that two teachers are assigned with student sign-out sheets. Music teacher, Alan Green, is assigned with a walkie-talkie to call students when parents arrive. Ms. Pinsak suggested a memo reminding parents of the procedure and for drop-off and pick-up for the safety of our students.

Ms. Le concluded that during security drills staff have acquired a better system for covering the windows using shades with velcro corners.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Ms. Mitchell-Brown reported the Minutes of TJMS BQMT Meeting. Ms. Mitchell-Brown stated that social media APPS (Hoot Sweet) are available for posting a message to all social media accounts at one time.

Ms. Mitchell-Brown reported that the 100 Black Law Enforcement will present for the students on what they should do if they are stopped by law enforcement. The film SpongeBob, PTO fundraiser, was held at Teaneck Cinemas on Saturday, February 7th. PTO Council is planning a 5K in the spring and Ms. Davis brought the information to all of her meetings. Ms. Pinsak stated that the district would advertise the 5K event.

Ms. Mitchell-Brown reported that they are working on a grassroots movement getting parents involved and engaged. Suggested ideas were to start a campaign with t-shirts and buttons stating "no excuse" get involved in your child's school. Ms. Mitchell-Brown concluded that parents will come out for presentations by students but it is a struggle to get parents to take action.

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

Ms. Francis reported the Minutes of the BFMS BQMT Meeting. She is working with Mr. Deubel and the BQMT Committee. It was suggested that the committee break into subcommittees. Ms. Francis continued that separate subcommittees would be created for the website, technology, HIB (Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying) and culture and climate in groups of two or three. The subcommittees would then report to the BQMT Committee as a whole. Ms. Francis reported that a fundraising skating event is taking place at McKay Park for the families of BFMS. The BFMS Essay Contest is scheduled for February 13, 2015. Ms. Francis continued that the 7th grade students saw a play about slavery at Bergen Community College then later saw the film Belle. Ms. Francis reported that a former graduate, Mr. Mineo, BF class of '61, works with computers and will make a donation to BFMS.

Ms. Francis stated that parents want more information about MAP Testing and if the information could be posted on the website. Ms. Frances reported that parents are working with administration to inform students what activities are available when they cannot go outside for recess. Ms. Frances concluded that a suggestion was made to reward parents if they get involved as volunteers.

Teaneck High School

Ms. O'Reilly and Ms. Rodriguez reported the Minutes of the high school BQMT Meeting (**attached**). Ms. O'Reilly reported that at BFMS a crossing guard is needed near the bridge on Windsor Road and that the BQMT is writing a letter to the Township. Ms. O'Reilly brought the concern to Dr. Small and the administration took action and was present to supervise.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that the high schools BQMT Meetings were scheduled every other month (not December). It was decided on the goals to reduce suspensions by 5% and to score above 75% passing on exams. PARCC assessment schedule mailing to parents by February 24, 2015.

Ms. O'Reilly and Ms. Rodriguez inquired if the district could consider adding more counselors, psychologists and social workers.

Ms. Rodriguez reported that parent concerns of the altercations at the high school. Ms. Rodriguez continued that she would be interested to know if the Division of the Protection of Children and Families could assist to contact parents who ignore requests by the high school administration.

Ms. Rodriguez stated that Mr. Heck is raising the bar at the high school. Ms. Yopez stated that she lives near the high school and since Mr. Heck has been principal the students have been respectful and littering by students has been addressed.

Ms. Rodriguez concluded that the guidance office is always available and keeps parents informed of programs at the high school and the FORUM through Naviance notifications.

Bryant School

Ms. Yopez reported the happenings at Bryant School. Ms Yopez stated that the PTO meeting was a great success at Bryant School with 32 parents in attendance. The F.L.I.P.S. program (Families Learning, Improving, and Promoting Success). F.L.I.P.S. parent programs occur four times a year in Literacy and mathematics. Spanish translators are provided. The program was created by Ms. Wilcox (ESL Teacher) and Ms. Jackson (Outreach Counselor). Ms. Yopez continued that parent reviews of the program have been amazing. Ms. Gillet, Mathematics/Science Supervisor, presented to the parents on the topic of why math is so important. The parents who attended thought the presentation was great and asked when the next meeting would be held.

Ms. Yopez reported that at Back-To-School Night she informed parents that if they receive a flyer on lavender paper that is specific information from the PTO.

Ms. Pinsak responded that she is pleased to see the forward movement of the BQMT Committees.

Ms. Pinsak adjourned the meeting at 9:00 pm and informed the committee that the District Goals for 2014-15 would be discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting – TBD

Attachment: NJSBA FAQ
Academic Institutes for 2015-16
Graduation Requirements for 2016, 2017 and 2018

Respectfully submitted by Linda Kuhran