

Teaneck Public Schools District Advisory Team

District Advisory Team Minutes for April 14, 2015

Present:

Bryant School	Amy Yepez
Hawthorne School	Rebecca Alston
Lowell School	Connie Le
Whittier School	Kara Brady - Absent
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 7:00 pm

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 that the BQMT (Building Quality Management Team) met in March but the Minutes had not been transcribed. She gave an update regarding the PARCC testing and that the third graders found the test to be easy. The fourth graders were quieter about how they felt about the test. The Science test will take place at the end of May. Ms. Alston continued that the shipment of white board skins would arrive soon. The community garden committee is working with the Teaneck greenhouse (Danit Macklin) and fourth grade students to help with the community garden. The groundbreaking ceremony will take place on April 22nd at 1:00 pm. The roof replacement is scheduled at Hawthorne School, therefore, Camp KooKoosKooos will be held at TJMS. Ms. Alston was happy to report that there were no concerns to report at this time. The next Hawthorne BQMT meeting will take place next month.

Let's Move

Ms. Pinsak reported that she is working closely with the Township and Ms. Macklin on information to promote First Lady, Michele Obama's Let's Move Program of Five things to promote a healthy lifestyle. The schools are very responsive and the space for a garden worked out nicely at Hawthorne School.

Bryant School

Ms. Yepez reported concerns from Bryant School. The lack of parking due to the solar panels and what could they do to inform the community about whether the solar panels would be removed or repaired? A sidewalk leading to an entrance at Bryant School was damaged due to icing over the winter months and cracked but the custodian Mr. Pete has kept it covered until the repair could take place in the spring. **Update, the damaged concrete at the Main Entrance landing and stair were repaired. Mr. D'Angelo, Facilities Director, will assess the areas of the concrete sidewalk around the building that are in need of repair or replacement.**

Ms. Yepez continued that the roof repair is scheduled at Bryant School over the summer. She continued that last year, a Kindergarten mixer was held during the day in August, new teachers and new parents attended, which helped to promote parental involvement in the Bryant PTO. She inquired about accessibility of the playground for this summer in August due to the roof and solar repair.

Ms. Pinsak responded that the PTO may want to consider using one of the other elementary school's playground for the mixer but she would ask Mr. D'Angelo, Facilities Director, about the schedule for Bryant School's roof repair.

Update, Bryant School's playground is not available in August, therefore, Ms. Pinsak suggested to Ms. Yepez to ask the committee to consider Lowell School's playground.

Bryant School cont'd

Ms. Yopez continued that Intervale Road (behind Bryant School) is a two-way residential street. Students are dropped off and picked up on Intervale Road which causes traffic and safety issues. She inquired if it could be made into a one-way street during school hours?

Ms. Pinsak responded that a discussion with the Teaneck Police Department and a letter to the Township may be necessary. She continued that she would contact Mr. Broughton and Chief Carney.

Solar Panel Update

Ms. Pinsak explained to the Committee that Hudson Solar went bankrupt and the district requested a court order to take the solar panels down ourselves. In the meantime, Sunquest Architectural firm reviewed the damage and pointed out that Hudson Solar was at fault because they didn't use the bolt specified in the plan. During installation, the epoxy was inserted after the bolt was installed, therefore, the epoxy didn't set and they found that the bolt was also too short. Over the summer, SunQuest will work after school and during weekends to shore-up and rebuild the support for the arrays. She concluded that she would have an update on the website.

Ms. Yopez reported that the F.L.I.P. program was held in a two-part series Ms. Jackson and Ms. Wilcox are making the program an annual success with Bryant families. She continued that "Helping Drew" an Anti-Bullying puppet show created by Mr. Ishkanian was presented and tied into writing samples for students. Ms. Yopez concluded that Ms. Schachter has been very helpful in getting student volunteers to read to students at Bryant School.

Lowell School

Ms. Le reported that a parent meeting was held in the Lowell Media Center to show the PARCC test to parents and to answer their questions. This was a very informative meeting for PARCC. She continued that FIOS interviewed Mr. Green about the PARCC testing and they asked her daughter about how she felt about taking the test and the guidance she was receiving in school towards the test. Ms. Le stated that the March BQMT meeting was about the April activities taking place. The book fair and the spring dance held on 4/1/15 which raised \$900. The dance was promoted in collaboration with The Helping Hands Pantry and the entrance fee was discounted \$1.00 if the student brought a can of food to donate. Ms. Le reported that Ms. Schachter was very helpful in getting high school student volunteers to assist the PTO for that evening. The money was raised for the Fourth Grade student activity fund. She continued that a Chucky Cheese night was planned for the fourth grade and 15% of the profit that evening would be donated to the school.

Ms. Le reported that a concern at Lowell School is the parking during student pickup time. Parents block Lincoln Place and they don't keep the traffic moving up around the circle. Teachers are outside with the walkers but the cars are backed up through Standish Road. She continued that it has improved without the snow mounds but the bus drivers can't get through to pick up the students and the buses are late getting students to their afternoon bus stops.

Ms. Pinsak suggested that Mr. Green could contact the police department, who are very cooperative, to schedule uneven days for a uniformed officer to stop by the school to assist. The officer would not to ticket parents but ask them to move on. The Committee suggested that a phone blast to parents as a reminder of the safety during pickup and drop off times.

Teaneck High School

Ms. O'Reilly and Ms. Rodriguez reported the high school BQMT (Building Quality Management Team) Minutes.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that at Sunday with the Superintendent a parent stated that parents received a robo-call the evening before testing. It didn't give parents enough time to make adjustments if they were carpooling. The high school administration stated that it was too difficult to setup a testing schedule by subject in every grade level.

Teaneck High School cont'd

Ms. O'Reilly continued that at parent teacher conferences that parents are sometimes not received by their appointment time and other parents are taking more time than allotted. She stated that when the appointments for parent teacher conferences are up electronically through Skyward that should assist the teacher and parent to remain on schedule. Ms. Pinsak responded that we are pursuing the electronic appointment schedule for parent teacher conferences and hope we can implement it next year.

Ms. Rodriguez stated that the onus is on the teacher to check the schedule that the parent they are meeting with is the parent scheduled at that time. She continued that the afternoon of high school parent teacher conferences, the greeters at the door were not very helpful. They were assumed to be Security staff but they were chewing gum and didn't know the building to assist with directions and not very friendly to parents. She continued that there has been a policy shift that students no longer can wear hoodies or headphones on their heads due to safety concerns because they can't see or hear what is happening around them.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that students attended a luncheon at Maggiano's Restaurant with the high school administration. Ms. Rodriguez reported that the high school administration is talking about Youth Empowerment programs to teach etiquette to students. She also reported that the high school is modeling the Montclair Big Picture Program to address the issues of truancy and family intervention. She continued that Mr. Orsini, Interim Guidance Supervisor, would be introduced to parents at the next BQMT meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. O'Reilly concluded with the good news that a student was accepted into three Ivy League Schools. They stated that this should be publicized in the newspaper.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Ms. Mitchell-Brown reported the Minutes of the Thomas Jefferson Middle School BQMT Meeting. She reported that TJMS had a Poetry Writer's Workshop, Open Mic Night and the TJ Achievers Program is going very well. Mr. Ortiz is doing a great job with the young men in the Achievers Program. She continued that the last meeting was devoted to the PARCC testing and parent concerns. She continued that parents said that the PARCC preparation assisted to relieve student test jitters. She continued that there were some computer glitches but the makeup sessions went well. They are encouraging students and parents to attend the technology presentation by Ms. Adrienne Williams held on April 13th regarding Technology and your student with a plan to hold a second session in the future. She reported that the upcoming TJMS book fair and Cherry Dale fundraising activity is taking place. Ms. Mitchell-Brown concluded that she spoke to Board Members about parent engagement and a grassroots movement to consider and deploy the program. We need to celebrate our successes because students make greater strides and it would bring the masses together as we celebrate the success of the Teaneck Public School District.

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

Ms. Francis reported the Minutes of the Benjamin Franklin Middle School BQMT Meeting held at the end of February. She continued that the meeting topic was mainly about PARCC and how the testing schedule was coming along. The feedback from students was that teachers didn't put pressure on them but students put the pressure of testing on themselves. She continued that the test scheduling was good but she was concerned about all that had to be done prior to getting into the test.

Ms. Pinsak responded that the administration was at the buildings at 6:00 am to start the process.

Ms. Francis reported that Family Skate Night was a success and the students had a really good time. Students who never skated did skate that evening and enjoyed themselves. She continued that BFMS had parent teacher conferences, Women's Day and Men's Day empowerment and at the end of the day they teach the students step by step to tie a tie knot. Ms. Francis reported that Mr. Deubel is doing a great job in keeping the website up-to-date at BFMS. She

BFMS cont'd

continued that BFMS administration isn't planning to model the TJMS instruction during recess in the winter months. BFMS administration and parents prefer to continue to have recess time for students.

Ms. Pinsak responded that she was disappointed that BFMS doesn't want to follow the lunch program but BFMS administration may have a model that they could share with TJMS to modify the program. Ms. Francis responded that possibly a study hall or a class that counts could be implemented but there are students who need to get outside.

Ms. Francis continued that the parents received MAP Testing results during the parent teacher conferences. She continued that there would be changes to the Honor Roll as to how students are recognized and parents would like students recognized more often. She concluded that the high school Academic Institutes were presented to Benjamin Franklin Middle School parents and they were impressed and loved the idea of Academic Institutes at THS.

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Pinsak reported that there are big budget cuts planned for next year but despite the pain of cuts she is happy to report that in terms of programs, academic programs and extracurricular activities nothing is being touched in those areas. In addition, the students going from 8th grade into 9th grade will be offered preview classes in the summer. She continued that we are maintaining the summer enrichment programs of Honors Global History, Global U.S. History, and Summer Reading. Algebra would be offered as a refresher for all 9th grade students to touch up on their Algebra skills. The final budget submission is due on May 6, 2015.

The Committee inquired about the Special Education Director. Ms. Pinsak responded that we are interviewing, in the meantime, she and Mr. McHale are supervising the department. The committee inquired if the paraprofessionals would be outsourced? Ms. Pinsak responded that we are not happy about the outsourcing but the 39 district paraprofessionals will be offered work with Mission One. The library and in-school suspension paraprofessionals would **not** be affected by the budget cuts. The committee suggested that parents pay to participate in sports. Ms. Pinsak responded that the Finance Committee and the Board are looking into it. We have a policy but it hasn't been implemented due to the consideration of whether or not we could charge students in the free and reduced lunch program.

Ms. Pinsak concluded with the suggestion that the next District Advisory Team Meeting be devoted to the best plans to publicize the success of the Teaneck Public Schools. Each committee member could bring someone for a core group of parents to begin planning. Ms. Pinsak could invite a Board Representative because the same conversation has been brought up at the Board Community Relations Committee meeting.

The full committee agreed that it was a good idea and the topic for the next District Advisory Team Meeting in May.

The Meeting concluded at 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting Date - TBD

Respectfully submitted by Linda Kuhran