

Teaneck Public Schools District Advisory Team

Minutes of Meeting - December 3, 2013 Eugene Field School – Conference Room

Present:

Bryant School	No attendee
Hawthorne School	Rebecca Alston
Lowell School	No attendee
Whittier School	Chondra Young reported for Kara Brady
Ben Franklin Middle School	Tamika Francis
Thomas Jefferson Middle School	Florence Mitchell Brown, Chondra Young
Teaneck High School	Michelle O'Reilly, Denise Sanders

Ms. Pinsak began the meeting at 7:00 pm with the introduction of the committee members. Ms. Pinsak gave an overview of the Teaneck Public Schools District Advisory Team and Building Quality Management Teams (attached).

Margot Fisher and Sarah Rappoport, Board Trustees, joined the meeting to report on the findings of the Parent Focus Group.

Parent Focus Group Discussion

The parent focus group meetings were designed as part of the Strategic Planning Goals as goal #5: *The Teaneck Public Schools will continue to improve/enhance communication between schools and between schools and parents in order to support student achievement and social success.*

Mrs. Rappoport explained that there were two parent focus groups over the summer. These focus group meetings were not meant to be a survey of large groups. Instead smaller groups met with facilitators to express how they felt about their experience in the schools without administration, board or faculty present. Twelve parents were in the first session and eight parents attended the second session. What made these sessions unique was trying to understand how to improve parental and community involvement in the schools. A scribe was present to take notes of the meeting without names. A PowerPoint presentation explained to parents how important family involvement is and to make a commitment to get more involved in your child's school.

The committee inquired about the process to gather the respondents. Mrs. Rappoport responded that parents registering their children were asked to participate in these feedback sessions. We also worked with PTO/A representatives to reach out to parents.

Many of the responses from parents that were considered appropriate for action are already being done in the District and should continue.

- Keep the website current and every assignment on the website available to students.
- More student to student peer mentoring because mentoring works, for example:
 - Heroes & Cool Kids (middle and high school)
 - National Honor Society (middle and high school)
- Offer evening and weekend programs to get fathers involved.
- Find opportunities for parents to help each other with transitions between buildings.
- High expectations for all students
- Find opportunities for parents to contribute without placing them in a leadership role.
- Opportunities for parents to help each other.

**District Advisory Team Minutes
December 3, 2013 Meeting**

Mrs. Fisher suggested that parents could start a babysitting co-op for credits, exchange favors back and forth within the group. This could not be facilitated through the district due to confidentiality and liability. The committee stated that it is a challenge to get parents to participate in the buildings because everyone's life is very busy.

The committee suggested that reaching out to parents to get them involved could begin as a block association within the school building. For example, a parent could offer to have a classmate to their home to do homework and have a snack after school until their parent arrives from work. The committee stated that a trust must be built with parents before having their child in your home and may become difficult if more than one child is in your care at one time. **Ms. Sanders** stated that past practice, cottage parties were held; teachers and administrators met parents at a home for 15 to 20 minutes which brought parents together in the community. Mrs. Fisher suggested to consider taking this information back to the Building Quality Management Team (BQMT) and Parent/Teacher Organizations (PTO/A). The committee suggested that guidance counselors could reach out to those families who have not been involved. Sports programs are a common interest for parents and their children at all grade levels. Mrs. Fisher suggested a bulletin board on the website to inform parents of how they can become involved in their child's school. Ms. Pinsak stated that she created a survey in Google Docs for feedback about the website. As one of the district's goals, we want to improve the website but first find out about parent usage through the survey. The committee suggested that parents be notified to sign-up for email alerts from their child's school through the website. The committee agreed that they would brainstorm and reach out to community members for ideas to engage parents in the schools.

The following suggestions were presented on December 4, 2013 via email from Ms. Young:

- 1. Meetings must be (as much as possible) kept to 1 hour or under.** (Parents cannot be made to feel like if they attend, it's going to take time away from their children/family. This deters those that are already actively volunteering and those who may be considering.)
- 2. Skype/Webinars/Dial-in Conferences (use of Technology) are needed.** (This will help those that are always volunteering and attending meetings as well as those who just can't ever get the time to come out to meetings, the opportunity to be home with the flexibility of still being able to cook, attend to children and listening/chiming in on the meeting.)
- 3. Liaison for parents at each building.** Maybe we can have a liaison at each school or maybe we can have a Parents' Forum over all of the schools. If we had a Parents' Forum where we provided the parents with some services such as tutoring, mentoring, light childcare, place to register as volunteers, offer great gatherings and local trips, I think it would build and enhance the community to school relations.

Superintendent's Report on District Goals for 2013-2015

Ms. Pinsak reported that these goals are posted on the website. The goals are an ongoing effort to align the curriculum with the Common Core State Standards. We have added technology goals and the Board allocated funds for technology for our schools. Last year, we focused on professional development for teachers and instructional staff.

GOAL 1: Students attending the Teaneck Public Schools will acquire the skills, knowledge and understandings in order to be successful in the twenty first century, as measured by:

**District Advisory Team Minutes
December 3, 2013 Meeting**

Objective 1: Students will demonstrate improved performance on primary indicators of college readiness and success.

Goal 1; Objective 2: Students will engage with curriculum that is relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that they need for success in college and careers.

Goal 1-Objective 2 is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and college readiness and the student will take the assessments using technology.

GOAL 2: Teachers and administrators in the Teaneck Public Schools will acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to support student achievement as measured by:

Objective 1: The District will implement a performance evaluation system that employs multiple measures to evaluate teachers', principals' and supervisors' effectiveness.

Goal 2-Objective 1 refers to the Teacher Evaluation System and Principal Evaluation System. Teaneck was one of 10 districts to pilot the Teacher Evaluation System and Teaneck was in the top two in the State of New Jersey to make the teacher evaluation system work. The administration gave a lot of input to the State Department of Education. We are using the Danielson Tool Model. MPPR (Multidimensional Principal Performance Rubric) this year will be used for the Principals to create goals with periodic reports on the goals and objectives. We are developing a rubric for guidance counselors. Child Study Team members also have evaluation rubrics. Rubrics are developed for staff not teaching in the classroom. We would observe the guidance counselors during parent meetings and evaluate their practice. The State is using the evaluation terms: ineffective, partially effective and highly effective and these same terms would be used for the principal evaluation as well.

GOAL 3: The environment in the Teaneck Public Schools will be safe and respectful, with students and adults appreciative of the unique contributions of members of the community, as measured by:

Objective 1: Teaneck's discipline regulations/schools' Code of Conduct will ensure equity, alignment with code and statutes, consistency and a philosophy that develops and sustains good character and citizenship.

The Harassment Intimidation & Bullying (HIB) numbers went down last year. The building principals submitted a self-assessment indicating that we want to do more work in areas that were identified such as parent meetings because they are not well attended. We are trying to make our meetings more accommodating to parent's schedules.

GOAL 4: The Teaneck Public Schools will communicate effectively with parents and with the community, as measured by:

Objective 1: The Teaneck Public Schools will continue to improve/enhance communication between schools and between schools and parents in order to support student achievement and social success.

**District Advisory Team Minutes
December 3, 2013 Meeting**

Goal 4: better communication with the community. We have a drive for family access for parents to sign on. Teachers are keeping postings up-to-date on family access. We are working on improving the website and social media.

GOAL 5: The Teaneck Public Schools will provide funding for Goals 1-4 and sustain school facilities while respecting community resources, as measured by:

Objective 1: The District will prepare annual budgets that keep the increase to the tax levy below the 2% state limit.

Goal 5 relates to district budget, facilities and seeking grants. We will continue to upgrade the facilities; review and eliminate the programs that are not working over the next three years.

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

Ms. Alston reported the Minutes of the Hawthorne BQMT (attached). Wireless access completed throughout the building. New computers installed in the classrooms and a laptop cart was purchased for the building. The asbestos abatement was successfully completed. Security cameras located at the doors, parents cannot enter the building without an appointment. **Ms. Mitchell-Brown** reported that the PTA leadership had a discussion with the principal about not being allowed into the building without an appointment to drop off flyers. Dr. Spollen-LaRaia indicated that it would only affect the parents that show up randomly without an appointment to visit classes. No one can come into the principal's office without an appointment. Ms. Pinsak stated that it is a side effect of how the world has changed in all districts not just Teaneck. **Ms. Mitchell-Brown** stated that it is to protect our students. **Ms. Alston** continued to report that the District Goals were presented at the Board Retreat on September 30, 2013. The Hawthorne School goals were reported at the first PTA meeting. NJASK scores were received and mailed. **Ms. Alston** stated that it was suggested, at the BQMT meeting, to post NJASK assistance for parents as website links on eboards and on district and schools' websites.

Ms. Alston concluded that at Hawthorne School the principal greets students with the announcement of the Words of Wisdom.

Ms. Young reported the Minutes of Whittier BQMT (attached) on behalf of Ms. Brady, Whittier Representative. Whittier School has many parent volunteers and the year is going well. Ms. Kaplan began a discussion with parents regarding school climate. Her activity consisted of three panel discussions of what our school is like now; what would we like our school to be; how we think we can facilitate the change. Ms. Young concluded that the focus was on school climate.

Ms. Mitchell-Brown reported the Minutes of the Thomas Jefferson Middle School BQMT (attached).

Ms. Davis presented the school goals. A Title 1 workshop was held, a recommendation was made to provide parents with the tools to understand the areas where our children are deficient. What parents can do to help their children improve. The Literacy Supervisor could host the workshop and provide handouts with testing information by grade level to work with our children at home.

Ms. Francis reported the Minutes of the Benjamin Franklin Middle School BQMT (attached). The Benjamin Franklin BQMT has three new members because parents have moved up to the high school. Ms. Powell joined BFMS staff as a Behaviorist. Dr. Small reviewed the NJASK scores, testing concerns and moving forward in the 2013-14 school year. The BFMS goals were presented.

**District Advisory Team Minutes
December 3, 2013 Meeting**

Ms. O'Reilly reported the Minutes of the Teaneck High School BQMT (attached). Mr. Heck reported about what is going on in the high school, goal setting with a discussion about math scores. The Student Ambassadors to visit the middle schools to speak to students. Mr. Heck discussed what the schools could do for community outreach; invite neighboring residents to events. Ms. Pinsak stated that Charter and middle school students are invited to shadow at Teaneck High School. **Ms. O'Reilly** concluded her report stating that dates would be arranged through the PTO for the middle school visits by the Student Ambassadors.

Ms. Pinsak concluded the meeting and she would send best choices for dates for the next District Advisory Team Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting: TBD

Respectfully submitted by Linda Kuhran