

Teaneck Public Schools District Advisory Team

District Advisory Team Minutes for November 3, 2015

Present:

Bryant School	Amy Yopez
Hawthorne School	Rebecca Alston, Blene Mekbeb Keshi
Lowell School	Connie Le - Absent
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 7:00 pm with item #1

1. Introduction of Team Members

The Team Members introduced themselves and their school representation at the BQMT (Building Quality Management Team) and welcomed Blene Mekbeb Keshi the newest member to the District Advisory Team and co-representative of Hawthorne School. Ms. Pinsak stated that all schools have Building Quality Management Teams. The District Advisory Team Members share notes, happenings from their BQMT Meetings at the schools and bring their questions or concerns to the Superintendent at the District Advisory Team Meetings. The Superintendent provides an update of what is going on in-district. Ms. Pinsak stated that we get a lot of good ideas from the parents. She continued that we try to keep the meetings to one hour. It is difficult to get new volunteers and many of the current volunteers tend to do many things to support the students. Ms. Pinsak continued that the BQMT's focus is on the children, address the goal and share good news about the schools. The Principal shares the goals with the BQMT Members and the focus is about students and their success.

Parents inquired about Security at the buildings on November 3rd, Election Day. Ms. Pinsak responded that there were officers in plain clothes who were assigned to the buildings.

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

Whittier School

Kara Brady reported the Whittier School BQMT Minutes (**attached**). She reported that Whittier School celebrated the "Week of Respect" with an assembly coordinated by Dannette Coston, Outreach Counselor, and paid for by the Whittier PTO. Students decorated a tree trunk, near the Outreach Counselor's room in the hallway, to show how students were respectful by decorating stars and the act of respect was defined on leaves. School Spirit days occurred as a result of the work of the SciP (School Improvement Panel) Committee. A favorite of families was the Halloween alternative a Vocabulary Parade where students paraded dressed as a vocabulary word. They wore labels with the vocabulary words and 3rd and 4th graders included the definitions of their words on the labels. Ms. Brady continued that Whittier received 23 Chrome Books funded by last year's PTO funds. The Superintendent provided the cart.

Ms. Brady continued that at the October BQMT Meeting, Ms. Kaplan, Principal of Whittier School, invited the residents that live near the school to meet with the BQMT Members. A resident who lives across the street from Whittier met with Ms. Kaplan and the Building Quality Management Team. The resident presented ideas to beautify the playground and the BQMT will continue to have discussions with the residents to enhance the beauty of the playground. The resident also addressed the issue of the dumpsters overflowing with garbage. Ms. Pinsak stated that we have had difficulty with the vendor. Mr. D'Angelo, Facilities Director, has been diligent in contacting the vendor to address the issues of the dumpsters at every building. The current vendor won the bid but couldn't handle the district. We are in the process of filing "breach of contract" because they are not fulfilling the contract. Ms. Brady stated that there is only one trash bin for the playground and basketball court. Ms. Brady inquired if an

additional trash bin could be provided at Whittier School. She continued that the Whittier fence is rusty and balls fly out, therefore, could the district replace the fence? Ms. Pinsak stated that she would bring these issues to Mr. D'Angelo, Facilities Director. Ms. Brady concluded that the BQMT would continue to work with the Whittier community.

Bryant School

Amy Yepez reported the happenings at Bryant School. She stated that the Solar Panel construction at Bryant School is progressing. She continued that Bryant School F.L.I.P.S. (Families Learning Improving and Promoting Success) Program would provide information about the mathematics curriculum at the next meeting. The Outreach Counselor and ESL Teacher reached out to Spanish-speaking parents to attend. Families were brought to the cafeteria to learn instructional games that they could play with their children at home. Ms. Pinsak stated that Ms. Rappoport, Board Trustee, visited Bryant School and there was a good turnout by families for the program. Ms. Yepez continued that they are inviting more of English-speaking parents to the program. A consideration was made to combine the F.L.I.P.S. Programs with the PTO Meetings but PTO Meetings are held every other month and F.L.I.P. meetings are held four times a year. Parents inquired if Kindergarten students at the other elementary schools could attend the Bryant School F.L.I.P.S. Program. Ms. Pinsak responded that funding is from the District, it could be started at any school and target students in K-1 at the elementary schools. Ms. Yepez stated that families learned how to navigate the website through the F.L.I.P.S. Program. She continued that a Safety Meeting was conducted for parents. An overview of HIB (Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying) for parents was presented at the F.L.I.P.S. meeting. A parent training video is in the works to show how HIB looks at Bryant School and to show the process when an HIB is reported. The video will be two or three minutes and available online in January. Ms. Pinsak encouraged everyone to visit the Bryant F.L.I.P.S. Program.

Ms. Yepez reported that the PTO is proposing a Sensory Garden with benches for teachers to have lunch and students to read outdoors. Mr. D'Angelo is providing a quote. The Bryant PTO hope to raise enough funds to create the Sensory Garden through donations, grants and fundraising efforts.

Ms. Yepez concluded that a discussion with Ms. Abrew and the BQMT last year the parents inquired about Intervale Avenue becoming a one-way street during snow storms. There is a concern for parents and students who cross the street. Mr. Broughton, Township Manager has been contacted.

Hawthorne School

Rebecca Alston reported the Hawthorne School BQMT Minutes (**attached**). Ms. Alston reported that the roof repair was completed and some damage repaired over the summer. The cafeteria was painted with hand prints of teachers and students. The Chrome Books are active now for each classroom and carts are available. Ms. Alston continued that the new evening custodial staff is showing progress. She continued that Dr. Spollen-LaRaia presented the recommended school goals. The NJASK results were shared but the PARCC scores have not been received by the District.

Ms. Alston reported that the pathway from the playground to the cafeteria entrance is a safety issue due to the Solar Panel construction. The pathway is not paved, the BQMT suggested stone steps/walking pathway. Ms. Alston stated that there is not enough lighting which is a hazard for the walkway because it is dirt and mud due to the solar panel construction.

Ms. Alston concluded that the fourth grade committee would assist with fundraising for expenses for the 4th grade trips. She continued that a suggestion was made to have a Flea Market at Hawthorne School in the parking lot on a Saturday. Advertisements would be distributed around town for vendors. They could hold the market when school is closed and offer vendors a table at \$20 or \$25 per table. Ms. Alston concluded that a clothing collection was also considered as a fundraiser.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Florence Mitchell-Brown reported that the BQMT would meet on November 18th at TJMS. She reported the happenings at TJMS. Ms. Mitchell-Brown reported that TJMS had a Let's Move Day in conjunction with Michelle Obama's Let's Move Campaign. She continued that they had a 9/11 program which was a very moving experience for the students. The eighth grade committee met and decided to scale back on Spirit Week to lessen the burden on parents and to ensure that all students could participate. Ms. Mitchell-Brown continued that Creative Dance class is available at TJMS. The Honors Ceremony was wonderful. She stated that two Thomas Jefferson Middle School students are members of the BQMT at Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

Ms. Pinsak stated that she was glad that Ms. Mitchell-Brown mentioned the Creative Dance Class. She continued that there is a Creative Dance Class at TJMS and at BFMS. She continued that there is a fee through the Community Education Program but the fee is kept low.

Ms. Mitchell-Brown concluded that when students leave TJMS there is rough-housing between eighth grade students. This occurs on Lindbergh which is a community/school issue. Parents stated that the Police could drive through the area when school is dismissed. Ms. Pinsak responded that occasionally students need reminders. Parents stated that the Teaneck Police should get to know the students. Parents responded that they had a discussion with the Teaneck Police Department and they suggested that students greet the Officers as well.

Ms. Pinsak reported that while remediating the solar panels they found other issues and the district has confidence in this company. They are making sure that the panels are safe and secure. Once the repair is completed, energy would be produced and students would learn about energy. Parents stated that when the solar panels are working it is a cost savings. Ms. Pinsak responded that we would receive energy savings for the use of district property.

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

Tamika Francis reported the BFMS BQMT Minutes (**attached**). Ms. Francis reported that the Building Quality Management Team was reconfigured and parents were asked to participate. She stated that Mr. Deubel's overview focused on the purpose of the BQMT, goals for the year and what the BQMT did last year. The website was revisited, indoor activities/games during inclement weather and donor support. Ms. Francis reported that Mr. Deubel spoke about the appointment of Ms. Pitt as BFMS Principal and Mr. Orsini as Interim Assistant Principal. She continued that parents are concerned about the administrative turnover at BFMS. Mr. Deubel explained that Assistant Principals move on to become Principals in and out of district and that is a sign that quality administrators that work in-district.

Ms. Francis continued that the 5th grade Welcome Dinner was well received and a success. She reported that it has been instituted that flyers would be available on eBoards and sent to parents via email. She continued that the Men's and Women's Day at BFMS was more of an empowerment session for students. The BQMT proposed a Career Day for students to meet professionals with a possibility of an internship process as they move to the high school. Ms. Francis concluded that a Vision Meeting has been scheduled with Principal Pitt and the BQMT Members.

Sodexo Menus

Parents reported that the online menu is an issue at Bryant School. Parents have a discussion with their children then circle the student's choice on the lunch menu. Ms. Pinsak responded that she would contact Sodexo Food Service Manager.

Teaneck High School

Michelle O'Reilly and Kesha Rodriguez reported the High School BQMT Minutes (**attached**). Ms. Rodriguez began by reporting that two new parents joined the high school BQMT; Ms. Jamal and Ms. Pittson along with three Senior Student Representatives. Mr. Heck reported that assemblies on positive school culture were conducted. School safety and security practice drills were conducted with assistance of the Teaneck Police Department. Ms. Rodriguez continued that blue flashing lights at the school's entrance at the high school would alert anyone entering the building that the school was in lockdown. Ms. Rodriguez continued that students are wearing lanyards color-coded by grade. Three retired Police Officers are on campus and have made quite a bit of difference in security for our students. The Officers are also trained to assist during an emergency. Parents inquired if the Officers were in uniform? Ms. Pinsak responded that they are in plain clothes and get a level of respect from students. Ms. Rodriguez continued that the Officers took time to get to know the building; three Officers are at the building at one time and one Officer is on-call.

Ms. Rodriguez reported that teachers piloted a program with swivel-cameras in the classroom to record their teaching which is an opportunity for growth. Ms. Pinsak responded that she was very impressed that there were so many teachers who wanted to participate. Ms. Rodriguez stated that the PARCC scores were reported as poor across the State of New Jersey. The parents and students didn't take the test seriously as well as opting out of the testing.

Ms. Rodriguez reported that in the Advanced Placement classes only 45% chose to take the AP exam which is a 4 percent decrease from 2014. Ms. Pinsak responded that the AP test is free, if the student scores a 3 or higher, the district will pay the fee for the test given during school day unless they are juniors.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that the community outreach resulted in positive feedback about the high school. She continued that Senior Citizen Centers around town were contacted and the Senior Citizens are invited to the Fall Play. She continued that through the Rodda Center the Senior Citizens would be transported to the high school but they don't provide busing on Sundays. Ms. Rodriguez has reached out to Mayor Parker and Social Services to coordinate transportation for the Senior Citizens. Ms. O'Reilly concluded that if transportation could be provided, the Senior Citizens would be invited to the band and orchestra concerts as well. They would need access to the elevator.

Ms. Pinsak concluded the meeting and stated that the District Goals 2015 -2018 would be an agenda item for the next meeting.

The Meeting concluded at 8:30 pm.

Next Meeting Date – November 30, 2015

Dinner Meeting – 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by Linda Kuhran

Attachments: BQMT Minutes