

# **TURKEY HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

October 16, 2012  
*Minutes of Meeting*

Meeting called to order at 5:05 p.m.

Present: Timothy Santry, Gail Okerman, Brendan Grady, Beth Arsenault, Rhonda Connery, Wendy Bertrand, Shelly King, Laura Friend, Bob Meek-LaVeck

## **Introductions**

- Members introduced themselves and stated their positions in the community. Mr. Santry stated that our goal this year will be to merge the two school philosophies of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades of TCP and the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades of THMS. In anticipation of this, he reviewed the parent and student handbooks of both schools, analyzed the two School Improvement Plans, as well as reviewed both of the budgets.
- Mr. Santry then listed tentative dates for subsequent meetings: November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013, March 5<sup>th</sup>, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the May meeting TBA.
- Mr. Santry led the committee on a building tour given the new 4-7 configuration.

## **Reconfiguration Update**

- Students appear well-adapted. Prior to the start of the school year, the administration was hopeful that after 3 to 4 weeks, students would feel part of the THMS community, but in reality it didn't even take that long. Parents and community members already helped them become well-prepared.
- Mrs. Okerman stated that she feels that the transition went smoothly also due to false rumors being squelched early and that any incidents were handled immediately by the administration.
- Mrs. King added that both her boys were happy with the new setup. Mr. Grady mentioned that the backlash the school committee received was huge, but ultimately it has been a positive change, also due to the swift handling of issues. Consensus has been also that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade is happy at the High School.

## **Nature's Classroom**

- Mrs. Connery reported that NC went well; kids really enjoyed the hands-on learning, and the teambuilding activities. During the formal evaluation, kids stated that they learned to meet new people.
- Students who remained behind at the school for the week received a similar experience.

## **MCAS Spring 2012 Review**

- Many Massachusetts schools were given a waiver for AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)
- The measurement has changed to reducing gaps by 50%, now known as the PPI (Proficiency and Performance Index)

- The PPI compiles data based on 2 years and 4 years. Even though our annual PPI has 20 of 22 markers rated as On or Above Target, it is because of the 4 year PPI that the middle school, and subsequently the district, has been given a Level 2 distinction. The PPI was missed by 2 points. Being a Level 2 school, as required by the state, we are to identify strengths and weaknesses. Data available for this will come in part from the AIMSweb tests for ELA and Math. AIMSweb is a series of tests used to monitor student levels and improvements.
- Mr. Grady inquired as to whether programs were in place to assist teachers if they were having difficulties. Mrs. Okerman responded that the TST teams are in place to assist teachers.
- The council discussed that the 4th grade Long Comp is decidedly difficult given that students are not used to this testing format or expectation.
- Next year's PPI will reflect the current year's reconfiguration.
- Mr. Grady suggested that a "common man's" explanation be given for all the acronyms and data as it is quite confusing unless you really understand it. The council discussed possible methods of this, possibly with a newsletter blurb or a social media site.

## **School Improvement Plan**

- Mr. Santry noted that in the past, goals must be able to have "measured progress." He also stated that although the TCP plan was written in UBD format, they were similar in that Goal 1 dealt with Student Learning, Goal 2 with Social Emotional curriculum, and Goal 3 as a Technology goal.
- Mr. Santry led the council through a page by page breakdown of his Updated 2012-2013 SIP, merging the TCP and THMS plans:

### **GOAL 1: To increase student learning through proven instructional practices that ensure student growth and success, and improve students' ability to think critically and achieve at high levels.**

- The Great Books model has been a successful program and possible a reason for good MCAS scores in ELA since it teaches to back up ideas with evidence from the text, a skill often examined in MCAS.
- Mr. Grady questioned, going back to our original discussion of making the SIP info reader friendly, if we should shorten the goal and show the math percentiles more effectively. Mr. Santry stated that the role of the council was to rewrite the SIP as needed, but that for the purposes of this meeting, it is just a read-through, and we can edit the goals at future meetings.

### **GOAL 2: The social–emotional needs of every student will be supported through direct instruction in a smaller group setting utilizing continued proven interventions.**

- Question as to whether the data was appropriate for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades and it was decided that it was, since they participate in a social emotional curriculum “Responsive Classroom”, the prequel to the middle school’s “Developmental Design”.
- Mrs. Okerman also added that in guidance they participate in Lunch Bunch, and the “Second Step” program, which creates a baseline for all students and encourages critical thinking. It works with Tier 2 and 3 interventions, executive functioning, social training, coaching on peer relationships, and coping strategies. They also participate in Brain Gym, grounding exercises that help the brain.

- A Peer Mediation Program is in the works as well. A group of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders will use a learned set of skills to mediate conflicts. Beginning in November, applicants will write an essay explaining why they would want to become a mediator.

**GOAL 3: To utilize our wireless technology to support and enhance reliable communication between school and home, and continue to build our capacity to provide technology into the classroom instruction.**

- The district utilizes our grading program “PowerSchool” to the best of its ability. This program enables parents and students to monitor assignment/class grades as inputted by the teachers on a daily basis. Email and demographics are also a part of the program.
- There was a lengthy discussion as to the limitations of our version of PowerSchool:
  - For instance, there is no “blackboard” ability, a place where teachers/team can post nightly homework or upcoming tests. Currently many teachers are using the Schoolnotes 2.0 site for this as it is an invaluable asset of school-to-home communication.
  - The office data entry is tedious. Other programs allow parents to log in and enter their own data into the system, versus hundreds of purple sheets that must be entered by one or two administrative assistants.
  - No longer are there self-designed teacher websites available with links to curriculum resources, rubrics or interesting/helpful websites.
  - Pearson, and other grading programs, do offer more features, but at a higher cost to the district, consequently our grading program exists in its limited capacity. This would be fine, but there seems to be a public outcry of desires for features that just don’t exist.
- Mr. Grady mentioned that the school committee is trying to brainstorm ways to communicate with the entire population, so that mistruths are squelched and accurate information can be gathered, and opinions given, and engaging the community. Facebook, Twitter, or other social media sites are a possibility for this.

**Next Meeting** is November 27<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.