

SLT Meeting 12/21/2017

Minutes

Present:

Charlotte Arboleda
Cara Biggane
Sarah Courtemanche
Karen Dahl
Jill Gabin
David Kerievsky
Nate O'Reilly
Scott Parker
Beate Sissenich

Guests:

Adam Javidi (Asst. Principal)
Sharmilee Ramudit (parent)
Micheline Tang (parent)

Absent: AJ Cermak

Call to order (Gabin): 4:03 pm

SLT Chair Gabin on the role of the SLT:

Ms. Gabin stated that the function of the SLT is more advisory than she had previously realized. Its role is to do research outside of formal SLT meetings and come back with recommendations. It is hard to make recommendations based on deliberation in the meeting. She noted that perhaps traditionally the forum has been overly deferential (to the Principal, that is).

Approval of minutes of 11/30/2017:

Approved without changes.

PTA Presidents' Report (Courtemanche):

Summary of last PTA meeting on 12/19/17—questions can be directed to Sarah Courtemanche.

Principal's Report (Parker):

- All grade-level coffees have been completed. Will be repeated in the spring. Often these sessions are not well-attended, hence Principal Parker is considering holding joint sessions for certain grade levels.
- Communications plan has been established with PTA. It is not fully implemented yet; the administration and PTA are sorting out details of who takes the initiative.

- Principal Parker noted that many people are not aware of DOE policies and explained that Sharon Lustig's role is to help families understand DOE policies, explain Chancellor's Regulations, how to use the DOE website (in addition to the PS452.org website). The overall goal is to help families understand the broader context of school experience.
- Professional development around challenging behaviors: PS9 is experiencing similar challenges around behavior; they hired Ross Greene (who also ran trainings attended by some PS452 teachers). PS9 is reserving 3 spots in their PD for PS452 staff.
- The school is reviewing new NYCDOE curriculum titled "Passport to Social Studies."
- Professional development for literacy in the upper grades (3-5) is focusing on vocabulary and grammar.
- PD for special education teachers is in progress.
- The school library is scheduled to open in January. Furniture is coming during last week of Dec. Library media specialist Kirschenbaum is in the process of ordering more books. Will need some parent volunteers for setup.
- PS452 received a Resolution A grant of \$350,000 for a cafeteria upgrade through Council Member Helen Rosenthal's office.
- Community service has been expanded for 5th graders this year, with opportunities that include helping in pre-K, administration, and physical education. Kids choose assignments based on needs spelled out by teachers.

Teachers' Report (Arboleda/Biggane):

- Arboleda: Special Education team has used its time to create positive behavioral and academic interventions (CEP goal); SIT team; meeting monthly to ensure that needs of students with disabilities are met with minimally restrictive environment. Preventive strategies and services.
- Biggane: STEM: 100k grant and what can be done with it; e.g. mobile Smartboard for library; teachers' concerns around technology, may want to run survey to understand what teachers want and need. Problems with technology. Upper grades' science lab used by Ocampo and Anthony. Good to have a lab, using kids to set up experiments as part of community service; lower grades: still thinking about how to set up a lower-grade science lab.

Presentation on RULER Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning (Asst. Principal Javidi)

- Assistant Principal Javidi presented the basics of the RULER curriculum for social-emotional learning (SEL), developed at Yale. The framework helps create a consistent vocabulary and tools for SEL that children encounter from kindergarten to 5th grade.
- RULER was chosen by PS452 from a variety of curriculums and in partnership with PS9; Yale conducted professional development with 10 staff members from each school in 2015.
- According to RULER, emotional intelligence consists of 5 key skills: identifying emotions, knowing causes and consequences, labeling/communicating about emotions, expressing, and regulating emotions.
- Mr. Javidi discussed academic and other positive effects of the curriculum.

- Anchor tools for leveraging the curriculum in the classroom consist of four different charts streamlined for different ages, which Mr. Javidi showed in a handout.
- 2016-17 was the second year of applying RULER at PS452; staff found that it is not easy to make time for this curriculum, as it doesn't neatly fit into a subject area.
- For the current academic year, 2017-18, the administration recognizes the need to get the RULER curriculum back on track. This includes making it "our own" by adapting it to the concrete experiences in PS452 classrooms. There are three staff subcommittees to conduct "lunch and learn" sessions for teachers to share experiences with applying the curriculum, help new staff learn the material, and create a pacing calendar to carry the curriculum through the year. It would also be good to create some community events.
- Sarah Courtemanche asked whether the teachers are thinking about ways to introduce families to the curriculum. She noted that there had been presentations and workshops for families in previous years. In that spirit, she stated that it would be great to focus on spreading the language/vocabulary to families as well in order to foster continuity of learning between the classroom and the home. Ms. Biggane added that the power of the curriculum is in how the classroom is run every day, rather than in special sessions dedicated to crisis management.

Presentation on Speaker Series "Raising Race-Conscious Children" by Sharmilee Ramudit (parent):

- Ms. Ramudit presented information about "Raising Race-Conscious Children," a workshop created by two mothers who also maintain a website about the subject. The group has a social-justice focus and treats race as a social construct with real consequences for structuring our lived reality, including that of children. She pointed out that research shows that children recognize race, but traditionally school curriculum tends to erase race and promote notion of "color-blindness". Without a vocabulary for race as a social construct and lived experience, we do not equip children to think and talk about race critically. The result is that children come away thinking that there are "better" and "lesser" races.
- Ms. Ramudit has encountered this workshop at her children's nursery school, ages 2+.
- She discussed experiences from the classroom that indicate race consciousness among the kids. There are lots of stories in our everyday lives that highlight race as a salient concept structuring our experiences.
- The goal of the "Raising Race-Conscious Children" workshop is to learn to name race and talk about it in a safe space, making sure that color does not equal value.
- The group can organize professional development around race consciousness.
- Ms. Ramudit suggested that it would be great to bring this workshop to PS452.
- Ms. Gabin observed that the SLT recognizes value of a speaker series and suggested that the Community-Building Committee should take this on, decide if one or multiple sessions, decide on topics. Others on the SLT raised concerns over relegating this topic to a committee, especially since CBC is already planning multiple events. Mr. Parker suggested that the PTA could also organize a speaker series targeted toward families, for which it doesn't need the SLT. By contrast, the SLT would have to weigh in on making

this a topic for professional development for staff. One way of approaching this topic would be to start with a PTA-led speaker series and build up from there. He also suggested working with other schools to maximize reach for such a speaker series.

Sub-Committee Updates:

- **STEM (Kerievsky):** The group learned that the Reso A technology grant can't be used for Chromebooks or iPads. The committee will help with an inventory of current equipment and need for refreshes as well as new technology. The STEM Committee also discussed setting up the lower-grade science lab. Michelle Kirschenbaum applied for a Maker Space grant. Ms. Arboleda mentioned that Mott Hall had its PTA fund Chromebooks and used its Reso A grant for tech support through DOE. Mr. Kerievsky and Ms. Cermak will work together to explore options.
- **Community Building (Gabin):** The committee is planning a late-January event on yoga/mindfulness to introduce the Mindfulness Room. She encouraged the committee to focus on substantive issues, not just fun events. Ms. Courtemanche pointed out that it will be better to do a few quality events than many events lacking substance.

Old Business:

- **Email (Gabin):** There were no new emails to the SLT email account. But Ms. Gabin stated that the SLT needs to find an agreed internal protocol for answering emails sent to the SLT. Ms. Cermak checks the account, sends an acknowledgement of receipt. She answers if the email is easy to respond to. Of the latest 2 emails on safety, one was answered by Mr. Parker, the other took a long time to get answered; the SLT awaited the Principal's Letter and the SLT letter to the school community before answering the individual letter on the topic of challenging behaviors. The SLT agreed on the following protocol: Initial response: acknowledge receipt within 48 hours. The SLT Chair, along with Ms. Cermak, take ownership of responding. Substantive issues will be discussed at the next SLT meeting, then the SLT Chair will work with Ms. Cermak to issue an email response afterwards. Mr. Parker added that the SLT is not meant for quick fixes, but intended to focus on longer-range goals. If something needs immediate attention, the SLT should redirect the sender to teachers or administration etc.
- **Safety (Parker):** Last week was the latest safety committee meeting. Several drills still need to be completed. There will be public town hall meeting in February. Mr. Parker enumerated the members of the Safety Committee. PS452 had a Code Blue drill (unannounced) and passed. Although the safety plan cannot be disclosed, there are two public versions of the safety plan (teacher version, family version); families can ask in writing to see the family version.
- **Challenging behaviors:** On 12/22 at 9am, PTA presidents Courtemanche and Winter, along with PTA VP of Community Affairs Liz Campbell, and SLT Chair Jill Gabin are meeting with the Superintendent of D3 to discuss how children are experiencing the current situation. An unresolved issue for PS452 is how to communicate about challenging behaviors. There is a draft Q&A document, which the SLT decided to table for the moment, though it could be discussed with the Superintendent. Parents have now been encouraged in multiple places to contact the teachers directly if they have

concerns about challenging behaviors in the classroom; however, Ms Biggane reported she had seen no increase in parent communications about disciplinary issues.

Concerning professional support for staff, Ms. Biggane said that she had two 1:1 phone conversations with Tara (resource recommended by Karen Dahl). Her conversations focused on therapeutic language teachers can use when communicating with children in crisis and on strategies for aligning families to the teaching practices around challenging behaviors. Ms. Gabin requested that Ms. Biggane conduct more research on resources and come back with a recommendation and cost estimates. The proposal from Tara should cover both teacher consulting and parent consulting.

New business:

- Recess coach—structured games, leagues; can't be provided by regular teaching staff.
- Recess Advocate; mediator, conflict resolution. Train kids to help each other—cf. PS199 experience, specific program. Some schools hire through Wellness in the Schools. Asphalt Green offered recess coaching at Ps199, worked partially.
- Use of structured games could be helpful for some kids.

Adjournment: 5:37pm.