

MINUTES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

October 5, 2009

The Middle School Advisory Council Meeting of the Board of Education was held October 5, 2009, at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m. by Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent.

Council members were asked to record their experiences thus far with middle school transformation, the challenges they foresee, and their hopes for this year. (These comments were compiled and are attached to these minutes.)

Current status of middle school transformation was discussed. The new core curriculum in literacy, math, and science was implemented in September. Grade 6 students are provided high quality instruction in both college prep and honors groups. Flexible grouping will allow schools to address individual needs and strengths of all students. An advisory program was initiated to support the social emotional needs of adolescents.

The Efficacy Institute continues to provide support for 6th grade teachers and training for 7th grade teachers for implementation in the 2010-2011 school year. Building and district administrators will monitor the fidelity of curriculum implementation and also provide professional development.

It was announced that Delia Garrity, from Rockville Centre, NY, who presented at the June Community Forum, has invited our district to tour Rockville Centre schools to view how they successfully created honors and college prep groups. Ten members of the Council, including middle school principals, signed up to visit on October 26.

The district will be hosting focus groups for feedback from parents, teachers, and administrators.

The next meeting of MSAC will be held Monday, December 7, at 5:00 p.m.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Monday, October 5, 2009
Feedback

Questions:

- What has been your experience with 6th grade thus far?
- What do you see as challenges as we move forward with Middle School Transformation?
- What is your hope for this year with Middle School Transformation?

Experience Thus Far

T Kids want to work with different kids

P Child is very happy in heterogeneous classes (IB)

P Concerns about class size

T Not so different from past except larger class size (honors is largest)

P Confusion among parents; worried about “dumbing down” the work; class size concern

A Student assignment from central office was smooth

T Kids are more “turned on and tuned in” –everyone participated, creative teaching

P Smooth- why? Have things changed that much if we still have a “top group”

T CP groups are far more mixed than last year; People like advisory, overall
Positive, see difference in 6th grade

A Curriculum –positive feedback from parents; AE more solid
Advisory-wish we could do it more

Grouping doesn't seem like much has changed, but it has (Is it enough?)

- A Positive feedback on Open School Night
7th grade teachers/6th grade teachers like and look forward to Efficacy training
Parent reports that child said she was with different kids and they were working well together (“it’s fun”)
- P Teachers are on top of student placement in CP or honors; positive change with new grouping

Challenges

- P If you (or your children) are in the top group, its wonderful-nothing has changed-but rumblings about people leaving if child not in top group.
- A How can we communicate the success of those in mixed groups?
Creating buy in from ground up
- T Have forums to address concerns
- T Behavioral issues have gone down how do we communicate this?
- A Children co-operating more; self-esteem is up
- T Training for how to differentiate instruction
- P Accountability: What are the pluses and minuses and how do we communicate that? Student voice, too.
- T Honors group: How do we keep egos in check?
- A If my child is in CP, I would want to know how she/he is being challenged. *Parent communication piece, parents want enrichment for their kids
- T Has 3 levels of assessment and uses some “honors” assessment work with college prep students
- P Flexibility-How can kids move from college prep to honors?
- P Children are challenged in college prep

Hopes

- T Move to all heterogeneous
- P Move to all heterogeneous
- P Parent of child not in “top group” wants to see all heterogeneous
- T Expanded Advisory
- P Students feel sense of accountability and they see the results
Keeping egos in check in honors
- T Expanded Advisory
- T To build bridges with parents of struggling students
- P More teachers exposed to training for teaching heterogeneous classes
- T No egos in the art room; everyone challenged already
- A Move kids up from college prep to honors
- A Positive results (CMT)
- A Understanding how we are doing by using multiple measures
- T Students will be ready for high school challenges; students will be confident
- P Parents hear from teachers that MST is going well; MSAC gets out the good news

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Hearing from teachers and parents about grouping

Good to know about anxiety around this work

Other people have same concerns

To hear feedback from teachers

Schools are challenging kids

To hear it's going well

To hear from teachers and administrators it's going well

De-tracking is successful

Time hearing from teachers
Even concerns were positive

To hear it's going well with students

Seeing data

Being heard

De-tracking creates an experience for kids

Positive feedback on heterogeneous grouping

To hear kids are enjoying it

Forthrightness, honesty

To hear its goin well

Still a work in progress what if all groups were honors?

Attempt to communicate it's going well (to public)

To hear MST coming to fruition

Student-centered conversation

Enthusiasm needs to be kept up

To hear teachers are being creative

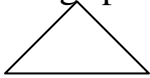
Open discussion about critical initiative

To hear parent concerns

Need more advisory

Mix of practical needs and deeper

Things people are thinking about



More opportunity to share-informal discussion

Meet 1x/month

Small group sharing

How do we bring voices here for more input?

Bring teachers from different schools to share specifics

How is AIR looking at this?

Students here

Hear from more 6th grade teachers

More 6th grade teachers here (+different subject area teachers)

Getting information out to public

Hear from SPED teachers

Change focus from grouping to other components