

MINUTES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

December 7, 2009

The Middle School Advisory Council Meeting of the Board of Education was held December 7, 2009, at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m. by Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent.

MSAC members who visited Rockville Center, NY, school district in October reported back to the group. They described staffs who are truly committed to success for all students; well-structured support programs; before and after school enrichment and support classes with a strict limit on group size (6-12); PLCs meeting every other day with a focus on lesson planning; teachers able to differentiate and engage students at all levels; highly trained and competent teacher aides; well-established inclusion; rigorous course work; aligned curriculum; and a shared philosophy of "Failure is not an option."

The Council broke into five smaller groups to discuss honors placement. Three questions were considered:

1. Should honors placement be forever? Yes or No? Why?
2. How often should honors placement be reviewed?
3. What aspect of student performance should be weighted in determining honors placement?

Upon reconvening, each group presented its responses to the Council as a whole. Members commented on the challenge of appropriate student placement. Many recommended regular review of student progress, utilizing various criteria, or limiting movement to once a year. Some remarked on the need to consider developmental issues of middle schoolers which may temporarily affect their performance. Dr. Starr noted the importance of both a clear and open placement process and parent/student trust in their teachers and administrators to determine the most appropriate placement.

Dr. Starr stated that the MSAC feedback will be useful in developing options for honors placement, which will be included in a draft for near completion by February. Plans are to circulate this draft to many stakeholder groups.

A recently completed report of 6th grade first quarter data will be published and sent to Council members by the end of the month. This data report will be presented to the Board of Education at the January 12 meeting. A Community Forum is also being planned for January to solicit feedback from 6th grade parents as well as questions from parents of 5th graders. The possibility of reconvening the MSAC in January was raised and will be considered.

The next scheduled meeting of the MSAC is Monday, February 1, at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.