

Masterman School Advisory Council

Emergency Meeting – Benchmark Testing Waiver

October 23rd, 2012, 4:45 – 5:45PM

- Ms. Neff called an emergency meeting regarding benchmark testing. The school district has declined our request for a waiver, which Masterman has had for a few years.
- Ms. Neff suggested that defining an “Autonomous School” might be a goal for the parent council as Masterman is considered “autonomous” but there is no definition and no support from the school district.
- Ms. Neff suggested that we reach out to Penny Nixon and suggest an alternative to benchmark testing.

Reasons are as follow

- The benchmark tests are intended to help teachers gauge if students are on track, relative to the core curriculum. However, Masterman does not follow the curriculum.
- Benchmarks take place right after midterms, and (for the high school) Keystone testing. Keystone testing is required for all HS students at the end of the year, and is needed to graduate. This year, Keystone testing will also be used to measure AYP (instead of PSSA testing). Keystone tests are for the school, not for gauging individual students.

Ms. Neff along with Parent council came up with several suggestions:

1. Ms. Dopkin suggested we use existing tests as an alternative to benchmark tests.
2. Because Masterman does not use the curriculum, benchmarks and Predictive scores to not give useful information for Masterman teachers.
3. Benchmark testing takes away from instruction time – need to be given four times per year.
4. If a school consistently makes AYP’s (like Masterman), what need is there to continue to give benchmarks? Masterman’s PSSA’s scores are almost all Proficient and Advanced.

Ms. Neff suggested the following course of action:

- Draft a letter to Penny Nixon outlining the concerns around benchmark testing.
- Circulate the letter among school advisory council for any suggestions/edits.
- Send letter to Penny Nixon.