

J. R. Masterman School Advisory Council - Meeting Minutes

December 16th 2014, 4:50 - 6:10PM

Attendees:

Jessica Brown	III.B.1 (Principal)	
Louis Borda	III.B.2 (PFT Building Rep)	
Tara Hayden	III.B.3 (HSA Representative)	
Alex Kwok	III.B.4 (HS SGA President)	Not Present
Alfredo Pratico	III.B.4 (MS SGA President)	
Kim Neu	III.B.6 (Department Head)	
Bernadette Kearney	III.B.7 (Teacher)	Not Present
April Claytor	III.C.2 (Teacher)	
Carolyn Gray	III.C.2 (Teacher)	Not Present
Mike Neights	III.C.2 (Teacher)	
Jane Monaghan	III.C.2 (Teacher)	Not Present
Steve Gallagher	III.C.2 (Teacher)	
Joanne Donahue	III.C.2 (Teacher)	
Nicole Geiger	III.C.2 (Teacher)	
Todd O'Neill	III.C.2 (Teacher)	Not Present
Andrea Appel	III.C.1 (Parent)	Not Present
Alison McDowell	III.C.1 (Parent)	
Anndee Hochman	III.C.1 (Parent)	
Mathew Whitehorn	III.C.1 (Parent)	
Meg Wise	III.C.1 (Parent)	Not Present
Sam Garst	III.C.1 (Parent)	
Bridget McFadden	III.C.1 (Parent Alternate)	Not Present
Yvonne Lee Clayton	III.C.1 (Parent Alternate)	Not Present
Ranim Albarkawi	MS SGA Vice President	Not Present
Robert Sim	HS SGA Treasurer	
Xiaoyan Ming	Parent	

- 1) Meeting opened at 4:50 PM.
- 2) Approved minutes of November 18th meeting minutes, with minor edits.
- 3) Ms. Brown gave a brief principal update
 - a) The Winter Concert is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 18th at 7PM.
 - b) A movie night fundraiser for the Robotics Team is scheduled for Dec. 19th.
 - c) High school applications were due Dec. 12th
 - d) The Philadelphia Tribune is visiting on Dec. 19th, to prepare a piece spotlighting the middle school; it should be published sometime in January.
 - e) Ms. Annette Finch, the new counselor, has started; an email was sent to parents welcoming Ms. Finch, and detailing the reassignment of counselors to students.
 - f) Mr. Garst asked about the parent-teacher conferences. Several teachers said there were more parents attending this year, in part due to better communication.
 - g) Mr. Garst asked about the new high school application process. Ms. Brown explained that it is a new transfer process, and impacts anyone applying to transfer to Masterman (not just current 8th graders). The timeline is short- review of transfer applications starts in early January, and administrators need to make decisions by the end of January, with notifications to parents sometime in March. Masterman counselors verified every 8th grade student had submitted a transfer application. Ms. McDowell raised a concern that transfer requirements for schools were unclear, and information conflicting about required essays and interviews.
 - h) Several parents questioned if the application process provided adequate supports in alternative languages, or supports for special education students.

- i) Mr. Pratico shared some concerns about the PSSA scores and percentile rankings, which are required for special admission high and middle schools. The percentile “cuts” are based on the aggregate scores for all Philadelphia students taking the PSSAs, and provide a means to compare one student’s scores against the Philadelphia average scores.
- 4) Mr. Sim gave an update on high school student government
 - a) The high school students have met the new counselor.
 - b) Spirit Week is planned for sometime in March; the specific date will be determined this Friday (Dec. 19th).
 - c) The atrium of 440 N. Broad has been reserved for the Sock Hop.
 - d) Mr. Sim wanted to extend a thank you to Ms. Brown, for helping to resolve conflicts with midterm examinations.
 - e) The high school student government has been thinking about how to improve communications with the middle school student government.
- 5) Mr. Pratico gave a brief update on middle school student government
 - a) The middle school student government has been planning an end of 2014 party.
 - b) There have been several fund raisers, for National Honors Society, Toys for Tots, a stuffed animal drive for Philadelphia Children’s alliance.
 - c) Pretzel sales continue.
 - d) There is a Pennies for Leukemia assembly planned for January or February.
 - e) The 7th and 8th grade dance will be held in February. The 5th and 6th grade red and white dance is planned for March.
 - f) To help resolve communications with the high school student government, Mr. Pratico suggested relying on siblings (where one child is in middle school, the other in high school).
- 6) Ms. Hayden gave a brief update on Home and School Association
 - a) The HSA is garnering support for the upcoming auction. The auction is scheduled for March 21st, and there is an effort to get more parents involved- both in attending as well as in donating goods or services to auction.
 - b) Ms. McDowell recently attended a fundraiser, and described a novel means of raising money. A “paddle raise” is an auction where people can donate money directly without bidding on anything.
- 7) Ms. Neu presented an update on the Middle States Accreditation process
 - a) The kids completed a pre assessment, answering the question “what are you looking for from this process?” Overall, the middle states process is very successful, particularly the blending of middle and high school students. The high school participants enjoy mentoring the younger students, and the middle school students enjoy working with their older peers.
 - b) This Friday (Dec. 19th) is a session on study skills.
- 8) Ms. McDowell gave an update on efforts to reduce high stakes testing.
 - a) City Council passed a resolution asking the school district to look at the costs (both financial and human) of standardized testing, and to look for ways to reduce those costs. The resolution passed unanimously. A similar resolution passed in Pittsburgh recently, and reclaimed 33 hours of instruction time by eliminating some standardized tests. A wide ranging discussion ensued, concerning the PSSA and Keystone tests. Central High School’s SPS (School Performance Profile) was lower than expected, due to reliance on student’s performance improving over time. Using this kind of measure may be unfair, as it penalizes high achieving schools, as they need to show continual improvement.
 - b) Ms. McDowell also expressed concern that Act 82, which ties school, principal and teacher evaluations to student performance on standardized tests, is not very well understood by parents. Ms. Brown concurred, and mentioned the need to devote an entire day of Professional Training to Act 82, in lieu of other more useful PD.
 - c) Ms. McDowell also expressed concern about the Keystone tests; in two years students will be required to pass four Keystones tests in order to graduate.
- 9) Meeting adjourned 6:10PM.