

District Wide Parents' Council (DWPC) JANUARY 2008 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Madeline Hoetger at 9:40.

Old Business – Secretary's report – a motion was made to accept the minutes by Madeline the motion was seconded by Caroline Ramaley to changes were noted.

Treasurers' report – we have \$238.38 in our account. The following schools still owe dues please see Caroline Ramaley - Kennedy, Graves, Myer, Meagher, and Miller. Again we have \$10 and we still do not know which school it came from – please contact us if it is from your school.

Do we want to pursue having Joakim Larley (Safety coordinator) and/or Catherine Whittacker – do a presentation for parents on the diversity issue? This topic has come up several times and we are now looking at different avenues to see if it is visible to arrange something. We would like to have the presentation take place at a community center rather than a school. Hopefully, using this as an outlet we hope to get a better turnout from the community. Joakim Larley discussed the results that were given from a survey conducted at the high school. Pam Tack gave a brief overview about how the survey was presented and completed. This topic was brought up at the Dec meeting and we felt that further discussion should take place at today's meeting. Another diversity presentation was made at the middle schools. It was the Flash Judgment program which was put together by Rev. Childs' and presented to the students. We put this topic on hold so that Marystephanie Corsones could give her presentation.

Speaker - Marystephanie Corsones – Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction – Marystephanie gave us an overview of her background. She has spent many years in the field of education at many levels. She was educated here in Kingston and before coming back to work with the district she was working down in DC. Education is much different today then when she started out and Marystephanie wanted everyone to know that she believes that education follows a cycle.

The Curriculum and Instruction department which she is in charge of covers all areas of education in the district except the Special Education department. They work together but it is a separate department. Also working with Marystephanie is Al Goren the Assistant Superintendent to Math, Science Technology and Paula Childs - Director of Instructional Support. Right now, they are looking at the direction that they would like to see the district move towards for the future. Right now they are looking at what they want to see our students doing as graduates from the Kingston high school.

English and Language Arts is the current area that they are working with improving. The big focus is on literacy. They are standardizing the approach at what a research project will look like – it doesn't matter what the subject is the approach will be the same. They are trying to set it up so that it will be going through all of the levels. From the reading report that was done back in 2000 balance is the direction that the curriculum department is working at doing. This year they are taking the strategies and instructions used by different approaches and sending them out to the eleven elementary schools and letting everyone know who the master teacher is and how they can get contacted. The goal is that they are trying to have continuity within the district. Change is very difficult and they are taking it slowly. A lot of areas are still being addressed. Literacy road maps can be found on the website. Writing rubrics are being revised this year. The grade level meetings are being used as a means to get the changes out to the teachers showing them how to use the rubrics.

A lot of changes are occurring this year – one big change will be a pilot program taking place in four elementary schools for the third period they are introducing an automated report card the looks will not change but teachers will be able to type comments in which will make it easier to read and they can put more info in it. This year they are looking at the K-2 report card Joellen Gibbons will be running the committee that will be coming up with a new card the committee will start sometime in the spring.

Every elementary teacher has a teacher computer in their room they have access to all of the district's web sites and info. The new literacy program is being implemented this year.

A new music textbook has been adopted for K-4 this year and next year the older grades will be getting a new series. The music textbooks have not been changed in many decades.

Another big area is a new math series they have waited to adopt a new series because none of the publishers had a book that followed the New York state standards. In fact, it was brought to our attention that every year since

Marystephanie has started working in the district New York State Math Standards have changed. Differentiated instruction is one of the goals that the district is working towards. Ways that the teachers get together – elementary level – consistent prep periods at each grade level so that once a month they meet with the building principal and discuss an education concept. If a particular need is brought up then a master teacher or someone from the department will attend the meeting. Another meeting is district level grade level meetings. Superintendent days and in school conference days are the other ways that training occurs.

Discussion continued regarding Catherine Whittacker, we asked Marystephanie for some input regarding Catherine and how she has helped the district in the past. We continued our discussion regarding the diversity issue and whether it would be possible to have Catherine Whittacker and Joakim Lartey do a presentation for parents. We are going to be looking at this issue and see if we can find a place for a presentation.

In depth discussion took place regarding reactions from the presentation made by Marystephanie.

Mr. Pritchard came in and made the comment that they are trying to find textbook series that are more web based oriented. He also wanted to update us on his recent trip to Rockland County looking at the computer based lunch program system that he and Ed Carelli saw. He also talked about the last meeting that took place with the Health, Wellness and Nutrition policy. They had a meeting on December 17 and Mr. Pritchard brought up a lot of the issues that have been presented to him from our previous meetings and concerns. They realized that the communication presenting the policy to the parents was not done real well. An action plan for 2007-2008 was set up. They came up with 28 strands that need to be approved. The committee decided that they need to get a registered dietician to come in and meet with them. He is looking at getting some funding from the William Jefferson Clinton federally funded Healthy Alliance program. Some of the strands that are being looked at include – looking at the web based program called Nutrikids it is a nutrition allowance program. They are looking at ways to get the word out for people to change. They are still going with the whole grain foods, low fat milk, a non fried fish item and lower calorie items. Health education is going well. Walking and biking issues depend on the location of the school. Other topics include staff and needs assessment, and trying to offer foods that are culture based this is a very hard area to do because of the number of meals prepared here in the district. They are going to put the food service program as a contingency item and that the food service does not have to worry about making money. They do not want to raise the school lunch price they are looking at other financing areas.

Question came up regarding the use of the see through back packs – they are not allowed only the string bags can be used in the classroom. The back pack is not part of the dress code they can only be used going to and from school.

Maureen Bower – passed out her information – a call to action from the state legislative network and the math and science technology goals for 2007-08.

Due to the time we will be doing the new business topics and roundtable next month.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 by Pam Tack was made and seconded Jolyn Safron.

Next meeting will be held on February 7, 2008.

Minutes submitted by Cheryl Oliver. Minutes are not official until approved at the next meeting.