

DPMS SCC Meeting Notes - March 11, 2020, 3:00-4:35.

SCC Members Present: Mary Anderson, Heather White (Chair), Stephanie Fowler, Allyson Dunbar, Chad Smith, Holly Neibaur, Megan Gebhard, Lindsey Moffat, Cindy Krueger, Robin Perry, Kit Linkous, Krista Pippin (Vice Chair), Kevin Rothert, Mike Neyman

SCC Members Absent: Brandi Ripa

Staff and Community Members Present: Randall Seltz, Kaylie Sullivan, Kristana Price

1. Welcome and Approve February 12, 2020 SCC Meeting Notes - Heather White

- a. Ms. Fowler made a motion to approve the meeting minutes with no changes. Ms. Moffat made a second.*
- b. The motion passed unanimously.*

2. 6th Grade Honors ELA - Mary Anderson

- a. Mrs. Anderson started the meeting by reviewing the discussion about 6th grade honors classes from the last meeting.
- b. Ms. Sullivan, a 6th grade ELA teacher at DPMS, presented about the ELA honors classes at 6th grade. She said all classes at DPMS are rigorous. Writing, and specifically, multi-paragraph essays are a main focus in 6th grade ELA. Students come with varying background knowledge and levels of readiness to approach those topics. Much of 6th grade (in all subjects, but especially ELA) is spent getting all of the students up to par for middle school.
- c. Ms. Sullivan said a classroom with a mixture of different levels of ability facilitates more robust discussions. She says she finds honors classes often do not have the best discussions because the students feel they know the answer and do not want to entertain other ideas from other students.
- d. Ms. Sullivan said 6th grade is a transition year where students are attempting to learn how to be successful at school.
- e. Ms. Sullivan said it is challenging to create a “true” honors section because of how difficult it is to gauge student readiness for an honors environment. Often, the honors section is not the highest scoring class at the school. She says the honors section often has a varying level of abilities, which keeps the class from going more quickly through or deeper into the curriculum.
- f. Ms. Sullivan said one of the ideas about how to offer a more true honors experience is to start the 6th grade honors at the semester break and have students apply for the program midway through the year. She feels students are not really ready until midway through the year, but really, most of them are not ready until 7th grade.
- g. Ms. Fowler asked Ms. Gebhard about the feasibility of starting 6th grade honors at the semester break. Ms. Anderson and Ms. Gebhard said it would be challenging to change that many student schedules around.
- h. Ms. Neibaur said the main issues she sees are determining what data we’re using to place students in the honors section and distinguishing between an honors and a non-honors

section. In the past, students were sorted as early as 5th grade into honors and non-honors tracks.

- i. Ms. Anderson said we've used teacher recommendations before and it was disastrous. There was a lack of consistency about the rationale for why students were being recommended.
- j. Ms. Gebhard discussed the difficulty in doing an honors entrance exam. For example, students would have to come to school during the Summer months, a teacher would have to grade the tests, the test accounts for academic readiness, but perhaps not the other factors that might determine if an honors environment is appropriate for a student.
- k. Mr. Neyman said he loves the honors program and his kids have excelled in the honors classes at DPMS. He praised Ms. Sullivan for the idea of starting 6th grade honors at the semester break.
- l. Ms. Linkous said if there's a will to have an honors program, then there should be a way to do it. She said the school could dictate the process when students are in 5th grade.
- m. Ms. Moffat said her students were in the honors program. Her children attended a charter school and it was a nightmare to try to get data points for DPMS. She said she doesn't see the advantage if the curriculum is going to be the same. She said 6th grade is a transition year and students start to form powerful perceptions about their abilities based on how successful they are in an honors or non-honors section. She said the timeframe of starting honors at the semester break still may not provide enough time.
- n. Ms. Gebhard said the test to determine if students are eligible for honors has issues of fairness and accuracy.
- o. Ms. Neibaur said we have a test for the SALTA program. She said there must be options for students at their neighborhood school.
- p. Ms. Gebhard said the SALTA entrance exam isn't designed to be used as an honors entrance exam.
- q. Ms. Neibaur said it is important to provide students with the opportunity to stay motivated and excited about learning. She feels honors classes provide that opportunity. She said there is a lot of research that supports students needing an accelerated learning environment.
- r. Ms. White said the transition from 5th to 6th grade is difficult. She shared an anecdote about her son. She repeated what Ms. Sullivan said - that the curriculum is the same, the Summer reading project is no longer allowed (Utah State Board of Education ruling), and diverse abilities in a class allow for a more robust discussion.
- s. Ms. Neibaur said it is the middle school's job to prepare kids for the rigor of high school. She said before a change of this magnitude is made, she would like to survey the parents and the students.
- t. Ms. Fowler said she would like the district to make programs more accessible for parents.
- u. Ms. Moffat said honors is not available at most middle schools in 6th grade.
- v. Ms. Pippin said from the perspective of teaching 6th grade, the transition is difficult for students to navigate because the classes are much more rigorous in middle school than what they've experienced in elementary school. She said we have seen a sharp rise in anxiety expressed by our students. She said the 6th grade curriculum includes many new skills and higher standards than students are used to. She said it is common for students who have been successful in elementary school to struggle a little at first in middle school.

- w. Ms. Perry said she is frustrated by her high-level learners being dismissed by school officials for logistical reasons. She had her students tested for SALTA but ultimately decided she wanted her students to attend their neighborhood school.
- x. Mr. Smith said he hopes that our school wouldn't let logistical issues get in the way of doing what's best for students. He said this is a big issue with a lot to consider. He asked that the school push for different solutions and allow students to have opportunities to learn best.
- y. Ms. Dunbar said her students were ready academically for honors in 6th grade but probably not socially. She said the Summer reading project was great to help focus kids in the Summer.
- z. Mr. Rothert said he gets students with a wide variety of familiarity with Spanish in his classes. He said the students who have the most background knowledge struggle with basic Spanish.
- aa. Ms. Anderson said the point of bringing this up was to start a discussion. We are not going to resolve this issue today.
- bb. Ms. Pippin said our school is pushing to bring more depth to the curriculum by using more structured classroom discussions. Teachers have received a lot of training on this strategy.

3. Land Trust/TSSP - Mary Anderson

- a. Ms. Anderson distributed copies of the TSSP/Land Trust plan.
- b. Ms. Anderson reviewed each goal and the budget items associated with the plan of how teachers will work to achieve that goal.
- c. There was discussion about the classroom instructional aides in Goal 1.
- d. There was discussion about the textbook budget for math and the data days for the teachers in Goal 2.
- e. Mr. Smith said he was glad to see more money going toward supporting extracurricular activities and paying staff.

4. District Update - Mary Anderson

- a. Ms. Anderson shared the results of the SCC Parent-Teacher Conferences surveys.

5. Electronics Policy - Mary Anderson

- a. Ms. Anderson shared the final copy of the school cell phone policy.
- b. Ms. Anderson suggested sending the new cell phone policy out to the community this year to help everyone adjust for next year.
- c. *Ms. Anderson made a motion to accept the cell phone policy. Ms. Fowler made a second to the motion. The motion passed unanimously (Ms. Neibaur, Ms. Moffat, and Ms. Ripa were not present during the vote).*

6. Bike Safety - Allyson Dunbar

- a. Ms. Dunbar mentioned that there have been a number of close calls between students on bikes and cars near the school.
- b. She met with Mr. Seltz and Detective Green to discuss her concerns.
- c. Mr. Seltz said he would send out a Skylert recommending bike safety tips.
- d. Ms. Dunbar said she is looking at partnering with local businesses to get certificates to give to students who are being safe.

7. Legislative Update - Chad Smith

- a. Mr. Smith said the biggest takeaway from the legislative session was Suzanne Harrison's resolution for schools to discuss pushing back school start times.
- b. Mr. Smith also discussed tax reform version 3 was pushed through and it could change the state constitution to remove the earmark on income tax where it is to be directed to public education.

8. Next Month's Meeting - Mary Anderson

- a. Mastery-based grading conversation; or, how do we get kids to turn in more homework assignments?

9. *Ms. Gebhard made a motion to end the meeting. Ms. Anderson made a second to the motion. The vote was unanimous. Meeting Adjourned at 4:35. (Ms. Neibaur, Ms. Moffat, and Ms. Ripa were not present during the vote).*

Meeting notes approved at May 21, 2020 meeting.