

**Manhattan School for Children**  
**School Leadership Team (SLT)**  
**January 13, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Claire Lowenstein	Assistant Principal (acting for Claudine Cassan-Jellison)
Katy Bowen	Faculty (UFT Rep)
Wendy Smith	Faculty
Erin Moughon	Faculty
Alyssa Cheng	Member/Parent Representative (K-3)
Suzanne Shelley	Member/Parent Rep (grades 4-6)
Brigit Beyea	Member/Parent (all grades)
Leslie Powell	Member/Parent Rep (grades 7&8)
Alison Holden	Co-Pres, PA Rep

Meeting began at 3:45pm in the Science Room.

**I. 2013-14 Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP)**

CEP is almost final. DOE had a few suggestions on language of goals, which had been incorporated, and question on composition of SLT. This was clarified by team, and Claudine will followup with DOE. All signatures are completed and should be finalized soon.

**II. Additional Opportunities for Parent Involvement**

Team discussed the opportunities for additional parent involvement, which have been discussed in prior meetings and which are in addition to CEP Goals. These include:

- Math workshop
- Conflict Resolution – what’s done at school and how to be consistent at home
- How to be an “Upstander” (vs. By-stander)

Claudine announced that Dreambox – which is a terrific tool for families to connect to children’s educational activities at home and increases communication– will be available to students in upper grades in the next month. This has been used successfully in the past.

Also discussed was the Roles & Responsibility document which was shared with team and used for the Parent Involvement Plan. The team discussed that this document could be reviewed and updated, as it clearly lays out much of the shared expectations of students, teachers, administration and parents. For example, teachers have the responsibility to make themselves available to parents –but not during the middle of a lesson, or in front of other children/parents. Teacher-members described that they are expected to alert parents to their preferred method of communicating with parents, and find this works in most cases. Some prefer to receive an email/phone call first, so they can prepare for a conversation; others tell parents that they are available at certain times of the day when they can reach them.

Teachers also stated that there's also always the option of sending a note with the child, or calling the office and asking for a call-back, which parents can and do take advantage of. The team discussed how MSC's "open door" policy doesn't remove the fact that sometimes teachers get busy, and that parents may need to be persistent and patient. In no case can the school discuss confidential information about a student with another family.

The team discussed that it's helpful to be clear with parents about the best way to get their needs met and the process that the school uses to resolve problems. This helps parents feel that problems are handled consistently, and avoids problems when parents hear stories about other experiences. The example used was the Sick & Hurt Child Protocol email which Annie had recently sent out, which laid out what happens and how the school handles these situations.

### **III. Update on Teacher Appreciation and Activities**

Teachers reported that the end-of-year Teacher Celebration, hosted by the school's Sunshine Committee with support from the PTA, was "the best party ever!" It was held at Sylvana's – a restaurant owned by an MSC parent, and had delicious food and great music. Teachers wanted to be sure all parents knew how much they appreciated the nice event.

Teachers and administrators also reported that the new Teacher Evaluations are coming along. Each teacher is receiving 6 evaluations during the year, and receiving specific feedback on where to improve performance. These are a lot of work – especially for those conducting them (Claudine and 2 Assistant Principals) for the 48 teachers – but teachers reported the conversations that are generated from the observations using the evaluation rubric are "the most professional in my career" and helpful. However, it was noted that they do create stress for some and can take away from other priorities, especially on the administration's end.

### **IV. Report on Diversity & Inclusiveness Committee**

Because of the overlap of the SLT and the Diversity & Inclusiveness Committee, an informal update was provided on the Committee's progress. The Committee's goals relate to increasing outreach to families to increase the diversity of the student population (which has significantly declined over the years, in line with the neighborhood) and to improving the inclusiveness of the community. Specifically, this means addressing concerns and creating new ways to connect families who do not currently feel welcomed or heard within the community.

The team then discussed the issue of hiring of teachers, and specifically the need to recruit teachers from more diverse backgrounds, including men. One suggestion was to look at Internship programs that support the recruitment of men of color, for example. (Bank Street used to have a program like this). Interns are paid for by a grant during their training; they then are more likely to stay and become teachers. Alison will followup with the Grant Writing Committee to see if this could be researched and done.

Currently, when vacancies arise, the school accepts applications from the 'open market' and the regular DOE processes. A "Recruitment & Hiring Committee" was formerly used, but hasn't been used in a while. Generally the applicants come from non-diverse backgrounds and are almost all women. Several cases were noted where applicants of color were offered a position, but took positions with other institutions or places (eg, private schools, international fellowship). It was discussed that recruitment could be a place where more energy could be put, to help diversify future hiring.

#### **V. Connections in the Classroom – Town Hall & Rules Congress**

The team discussed that while the Town Hall meetings and work with the Student Council are amazing experiences for the participating children, not much of the experience is transferring to the rest of the school. Wendy described how she and Maryanne have recognized this issue, and already began working with the current student participants so that they can come up with strategies to reinforce the "rules" that they created. Students will now take the lead on bringing the rules back to their classrooms (eg, leading chants, incorporating it into morning meeting). The team discussed that this may require more support from teachers, particularly in the lower grades.

#### **VI. Next Steps**

The team will circulate the ideas generated at prior meetings related to potential Parent Workshops (and how to bring MSC home).

A Parent Survey will also be developed to better gather information on topics, and best times for workshops.

*REMINDER: Next meeting: Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 3:45pm in the Science Room*