

**Manhattan School for Children**  
**School Leadership Team (SLT)**  
**September 15, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Claire Lowenstein	Principal
Wendy Smith	Teacher
Erin Moughon-Smith	Teacher
Mary Ann Schmidt	UFT Chapter Representative
Danielle Monaghan	Paraprofessional
Andree Sanders	Parent/Co-PA President
Alison Holden	Parent/Co-PA President
Alyssa Cheng	Parent Representative (K-3)
Manuela Zamora	Parent (4-6)
Leslie Powell	Parent (7-8)
Brigit Beyea	Parent (all grades)

**September Summary:**

The School Leadership Team (SLT), comprised of teachers, parents and administration, is excited to kick off the 2014-2015 school year. The September SLT meeting covered:

- ✓ Responsive Classrooms as a school-wide focus for teachers, staff and parents to unify the school around MSC’s progressive model of education. Teachers will join the Oct 14<sup>th</sup> Parent Association (PA) meeting at 5:30pm to extend the conversation to what parents need to know and do at home!
- ✓ Raised and discussed concerns identified by teachers and parents, including elevator use and congestion in the hallways.
- ✓ Discussed changes to Intervention services (formerly known as “Extended Day”) and Professional development based on the new city-wide UFT teacher contract
- ✓ Planned for 2014-15 SLT Workshop series, starting with a Parent Partnership Mixer to get to know all the many enrichment providers who work with the children all year long (October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00pm; stay tuned for details)

Full meeting minutes are available online ([link](#)).

Next meeting: Wednesday, Oct 1<sup>st</sup> at 3:15pm in Room 519. Topics include: MSC’s budget and priorities, SLT goals, differentiating between SLT and Parents Association (PA) and how best to guide people on where to take their questions/concerns/ideas, and followup from Chat with Claire topics, such as differentiated learning in math. All are welcome!

Frequently asked questions:

**What is the SLT?** The School Leadership Team (SLT) is comprised of 11 members of the SLT community. In addition to the Principal (Claire), 10 are elected teachers and parents. SLTs are a required part of

each school's structure and are required to review and approve each school's Comprehensive Education Plan. The SLT is a consensus-based model and meets monthly. SLT elections are held each spring to coincide with Parent Association (PA) elections.

***Can I join the meetings?*** All meetings are open to any member of the MSC community. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 3:15pm in the Science Room (unless otherwise noted). Only elected SLT members can vote on SLT issues, but all members of the community – parents, teachers, staff- are welcome to join meetings.

***How can I learn more?*** To learn more about the SLT structure across NYC, visit [http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CCEB5782-FB6C-4BE8-BFB3-01013F831A1D/0/SchoolLeadership\\_finalcolor.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CCEB5782-FB6C-4BE8-BFB3-01013F831A1D/0/SchoolLeadership_finalcolor.pdf). To read past minutes or get contact information for SLT members, <http://www.ps333.org/school-leadership-team/>. Future meetings will be broadcast via school email blasts and on the SLT bulletin board in the lobby.

Meeting began at 3:00pm in Room 516.

**I. Introductions.** Alyssa welcomed the team to the 2014-2015 school year.

**II. Election of SLT Roles.**

Alyssa was unanimously voted as SLT Chair; Brigit as Secretary and Manuela as timekeeper.

**III. Communication.**

Alyssa sought ideas for increasing communication to and with parents, which supports Claire and the administration's goals to improve communication throughout the school. The team discussed ways to do this, including setting up a general SLT email, putting SLT contact information up in the basement (in addition to the lobby, if bulletin boards can be used by MSC) and re-instating the suggestion box in the lobby. Alison noted that last year's SLT contact emails are already up on the website, but that Justine would update that list with the current members. Justine can also create an electronic forum via the website for parents to email suggestions/concerns directly to the SLT. To encourage attendance at SLT meetings, email blasts with the agenda and a summary of the minutes (with links to minutes posted online) can be sent via email Blasts.

Alyssa suggested that it would be very helpful to have someone take on the role of "communication lead" to help make sure all this work gets done. We will continue to look for someone to volunteer or help in this area, such as making signs for events, drafting updates etc. Please email Alyssa if you are interested.

**IV. SLT Events & Workshop Series**

***New Event: Parent/Partnership Mixer.*** Alyssa reviewed the goals of the SLT from last year to hold a Partnership Mixer for parents to have a chance to meet and learn more about the many partnerships

that their children interact with during the school year. The team identified that it would likely be interesting to new families just joining the school, to parents interested in ‘what’s coming’ in the grades above, and critically to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who are considering whether to stay at MSC in middle school. The event will take place on **Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> from 6:00-7:00pm**. It will be organized as a ‘fair’ where parents and teachers can mix and mingle with partners. The following partners (at a minimum) will be invited:

Lincoln Center	Teachers College Readers and Writers
SunWorks (greenhouse)	Urban Advantage (science)
Roads to Success (afterschool)	Wellness in the Schools
Music (Recorder for 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> ; Singing for K)	iZone (technology)

Internal partners – such as the Intervention team of Wendy and others – will also be invited as they form part of the network of support beyond the teachers that provide enrichment to the children. The team discussed that in the future, this could be combined with Curriculum nights in September or Family Conference nights in November.

Claire will provide contact information for the partners. SLT will also reach out to Wellness in Schools to solicit food and RTS for child care. SLT will email communication to parents, promote the event at the PA meetings and via class parents.

***Future Event: Responsive Classrooms (Part II)***

Alyssa reviewed the parent surveys from the workshop on Responsive Classrooms that Wendy had held at the June 2014 PA meeting. The feedback was very positive and parents indicated a desire to learn more. This aligns with the extensive training that the MSC faculty and staff have undergone over the summer (see below under Professional Development).

**V. Issues and Problem-solving**

***Concerns on Elevator Use by Adults.*** The teachers raised concerns about overcrowding in the elevators by parents and caregivers at times that classes need to be moving as a group up and downstairs. For example, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade has 6 children who use wheelchairs and yet the class often finds the elevators on 6 are full – of people who have ridden up just to ride down! Beyond this, teachers are reporting that children are being pushed and shoved by adults trying to get into the elevators. The team discussed that several methods of communication are needed, including:

- Creating art by the children to remind adults to take the stairs whenever possible (similar to previous year’s campaign that Bernard had led)
- Mary Ann will use Curriculum Night to tell all parents about the policy and importance
- Use classroom newsletters from each teacher

- Re-establish the “Up” and “Down” signs that streamline flow
- Seek parent volunteers (with signs?) at pickup and dropoff to remind people to take the stairs
- Engage student council and children as spokespersons for telling their parents and caregivers
- Remind people to read the handbook, which addresses elevators

### ***Congestion in the Hallway***

The team discussed the issue of congestion in the hallways. The basement dismissal was implemented to alleviate the serious congestion on multiple floors. Alyssa noted that it has greatly improved things on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. However, teachers and parents noted that there are new bottlenecks that have formed, particularly in the stairs, which could be dangerous. Andree noted that addressing this issue has always required creativity because the school is trying to maintain the connections with and between parents using the unique model of picking up inside the school. The team agreed to discuss at a future meeting once the new routines have settled down and the ‘up’ and ‘down’ stairs get re-formalized.

***Electronic-only Communication.*** MSC is making an intentional push towards electronic-only communication this year. It reduces burden on staff time, resources and is better for the environment. However, each family completed a form during the first week that asked how they wished to get information, and it will be provided as requested. Families can request hard copies of newsletters, the Handbook, or any communication from their teachers. Copies of school-wide documents are also available in the office at 516. Just come in and ask!

## **VI. School Budget and Class Size**

Parents asked to discuss some of the changes for 2014-15 school year and to better understand which, if any, were budget related. Specifically mentioned were class size and elimination of extended day. Overall, the team discussed that the budget is a reflection of the school’s priorities as articulated in the Comprehensive Education Plan and is part of the SLT’s review process. Claire requested that we discuss the budget itself at the next meeting when Tatiana can be present.

***Class size discussion:*** Past Parent Surveys and recent questions/concerns have indicated class size is a big concern for parents. Mary Ann noted that it is also a concern for teachers. The team discussed that MSC has limited ability to control class size, as the DOE seeks to maximize placements (especially for a school with such high demand) and needs the per student allotment from DOE to cover its operating budget. MSC has kept class size below the maximum for all grades, despite DOE and need for spots (especially 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) in the area. While the non-profit “Friends of MSC” has no restrictions on the amount of funds it can raise, DOE regulations state that privately raised funds cannot be used for teachers or paraprofessionals. Funds raised by parents go towards enrichment activities.

For parents wishing to get involved in class size issues, Andree recommended [www.classsizematters.org](http://www.classsizematters.org) which is coordinating efforts around the city and has had active participation by MSC parents in the past. For MSC, the SLT will look at the budget and DOE regulations to better understand the constraints and any possible ways to address class size.

**Extended Day:** The new city-wide UFT Teacher Contract also had big changes. As a result, there is no longer 'extended day' for children who need extra small group time on reading. Instead, the Intervention team (led by Wendy) will go into classrooms and pull out children to provide those same enrichment services during the school day. This change resulted from an exciting change in the contract that supports teachers' time in professional development, planning and curriculum and family involvement.

**Professional Development:** When discussing the changes to the UFT contract, teachers were excited that they had designed their own PD and were eager to use the planning time to better individualize for each child throughout the day. They have used a "growth model" for assessing the children to ensure that they are progressing. This was a choice that teachers made which helps avoid more testing. MSC teachers voted once again to use first Friday's for professional development, with a strong focus on Responsive Classroom. All teachers, paraprofessionals and staff received the training, which was funded by the PA. This helps unify the school and ensures that all are speaking the same language. Wendy and others will present to the parents at an upcoming PA meeting (Responsive Classrooms: Part II) and they will use some of the resources for parents that they received in their workshop trainings.

**VII. 2014-15 Updated Documents**

***Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) timeline***

Claire stated that she had submitted a copy of last year's CEP with no changes and had not yet heard back from DOE with any feedback. The CEP is a document of goals and action plans for the school that was done collaboratively by the SLT last fall. She will alert the SLT if DOE requests any updated information.

***Parent Handbook***

Congratulations to Claire and the team that updated and put on-line the Handbook this year. The revisions were made over the summer with input from Suzanne Shelley, Andree and Alison). Parents noted that it reflects a more streamlined and improved document and was easier to read. Claire welcomed any suggestions or changes, as it is a "living document."

**VIII. Next Meeting: Wednesday, Oct 1, 2014 at 3:15 in Room 519**

Future SLT Meeting dates were agreed to first Wednesday of every month at 3:15pm (except May\*):

October 1	January 7	April 1
November 5	February 4	May 20 *
December 3	March 4	June 3