

Manhattan School for Children

School Leadership Team (SLT)

November 5, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

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| Claire Lowenstein | Principal |
| Erin Moughon-Smith | Teacher |
| Mary Ann Schmidt | UFT Chapter Representative |
| Wendy Smith | Teacher |
| 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) |

November Meeting began at 3:15pm in Science Room.

I. **Principal's Report.** Claire provided a report on staffing, facilities and enrollment.

Staffing:

- a. The **Parent Coordinator** position has been reposted through Nov 7 and the Hiring Committee will meet to consider applications. In the meantime, Kindergarten Tours and Middle School Open House are being coordinated by parent volunteers.
- b. **Teaching replacements** have been made for the two teachers that resigned (Jeffrey, 7-8th grade ICT) and Andrea (3rd grade). Samantha has been hired as 7th and 3rd grade ICT and Special Education Teacher (SET). Robin is coming back to 4th grade, so the school reorganized a few classes for appropriate coverage. This includes having Celeste (hired over the summer) to teach 8th, 1st and 2nd grade ICT and Lindsay to work as 4-6th and 8th grade SET. This means that both the Upper and Lower houses have coverage for academic intervention.
- c. The team discussed expanding the **Hiring Committee** for Teachers to include parents, similar to the Committees for Parent Coordinator and that used under the C-30 for Principal. Principals have full authority to hire teachers directly, but whenever possible, Claire convenes a Hiring Committee of teachers and staff to help in the process. In the future, one parent from the Upper and one from the Lower could be selected to join the committee. The majority of hiring happens over the summer, and it was suggested that the overall hiring process be reviewed in advance. It was also suggested that the Hiring Committee could meet with the Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee (IDC) to understand the concerns and recommended criteria for evaluating future positions. The IDC had

recommended criteria for the PC hiring committee to consider, which included cultural competency, experience working with diverse populations etc, which could be similarly applied to teachers. Claire will put an announcement for parents interested in participating in the Hiring Committee; names will be drawn from a hat.

- d. The team also discussed the ways to increase **diversity of the student population** as well. It was noted that the diversity of the student population has decreased over the past years, in part due to changes in the DOE system of enrollment. While Kindergarten Connect (DOE's new on-line system) had expanded the applicant pool – MSC received 250 more applications than the prior year – it did not diversify the Kindergarten class as had been hoped. In part this is due to the fact that families need to know to list MSC as their first choice in order to be eligible, and the gentrification of the UWS. The IDC is working on outreach to underrepresented District 3 preschools and Head Starts. Mary Ann suggested that this could also be a community service project for 7th graders, who have often expressed interest in diversity. Brigit to followup with Mary Ann.

Facilities & Enrollment

- e. Claire reported on the **Little Yard Playground temporary closure**. The closure is due to pieces of concrete from the neighboring brownstone which have fallen into the yard. It cannot be opened until it is declared safe. Claire has been working daily with the Head Custodian and meets next week with the Building Council. Claire to send update to families on status.
- f. A status report on the **Auditorium Sound/PA system** was requested and provided by Claire and Andre. Funds were awarded by the City Council (\$170,000) for sounds, lights and balcony. Planning is beginning with a committee of teachers and parents, and is hoped to be completed over the summer.
- g. **Enrollment** as of Oct. 31 (the final date for changes) is approximately 780, similar to last year. This number is used by DOE to determine the final annual budget.

- II. **Parents Report.** Andre and Alison provided a report on Annual Appeal, Relatives and Special Friends Day, the newly renamed Auction/Earth Ball and status of responding to lice in classrooms.
 - a. **Annual Appeal** response rate is 16% to date. While this is lower than last year, the giving levels are higher so Annual Appeal is on par with last year. A final push will be made the week before Thanksgiving with Phon-a-thon.
 - b. The annual **Auction** and "Earth Ball" will be on March 28, 2015 at St. Paul's (same venue as prior year). The event is being renamed to clarify that they are one event. The working name is "Celebrate MSC". It is an adults-only event. Teachers will be provided complementary tickets again, which was greatly enjoyed and appreciated.
 - c. **Relatives and Special Friends Day** (renamed from Grandparents Day, since not all kids have grandparents) is a go for Dec. 5th. New additions include a Kindergarten sing and a raffle at

the end for Broadway tickets. The Green Team will be selling goods and the Annual Appeal will be collecting Dedications for the Auction Journal.

- d. As it does every year (and in every school), **lice** is again present, primarily in grades K-3. It is particularly acute in the 2nd and 3rd grades, with most classes having a few cases and one class having nine cases. Several blasts and letters from Claire have gone out urging every family to check their children for lice. The DOE policy allows for children to come to school with nits, but not live louses. This makes it hard to contain if parents don't regularly check and get treated. The team suggested sending out the old "Lice Letter" to supplement the video link and recommendations already provided by PA. Several parents have requested that the PTA pay for an outside group (like "Hair Fairies") to come in and check the entire school or relevant grades. They will do an initial check of 90 children (or 3 hours, whichever comes first) for free. However a full school check could cost \$10,000, and is not seen as sustainable for the PA to cover. Further, it is only a screening – it does not provide treatment or ensure that the 10 day followup check is conducted. Further, it requires consent by families. Claire and PA are working to develop policy on when outside groups could be used (for ex, more than five cases per class) and on how to ensure fairness on which classes/grades would be given this benefit versus others. While in-school hours are best for checking everyone, the PA will explore using the upcoming ½ days to schedule Hair Fairies to be available on site for families which want to be checked.

Old Business/New Business

- III. **Debrief of Recent SLT Events.** The team debriefed the recent Responsive Classroom workshop led by teachers and the Partnership Mixer, and incorporated suggestions for future events.
 - a. The Team applauded the teachers who led the **Responsive Classroom** workshop in small group settings. About 30 parents participated, which is on par with regular PA meetings. As followup, it was requested that Claire share a Parent Notification protocol (similar to the one used for the Nurse) that describes the steps involved in discipline, and when parents are (or are not) called. It was suggested that the team also consider hosting a similarly-oriented Parent Workshop by an outside facilitator who has written "How to Speak so Children will Listen and How to Listen so Children will Speak." This could be a joint workshop for both Teachers and Parents, and would need to be timed in two shifts so all could participate (eg, 3:00-4:15 during Professional Development time for teachers and again at 5pm for working parents. It was also suggested to include sensitivity training for teachers. Manuela will contact the facilitator for either February 9 or 23rd.
 - b. The team celebrated the well-attended **Partnership Mixer** which brought out about 70 families and so many children. For any future event, a larger space would be recommended, and food provided by potluck or a non-partner vendor so as not to blur the lines. It was suggested to have a **Curriculum Exhibition in May** that showcases the arts and all curriculum. Similar to the science symposium, this could be led by teachers who could host special rooms –and children could help present - such as a Storytelling, Reading Marathon, an Art Gallery....

- c. **Next SLT/PA Event: December 9th at 8:45am– Reading Levels.** Wendy will reach out to Stephanie (8th grade interpretive dance) to join Audra and others.
- IV. **Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP).** Claire reported that the new Chancellor has revised the CEP format and has not set a new deadline. Claire, Darlene, Kerry and the teachers have started to discuss the related Instructional Goals. This includes how all children are being challenged – where to be pushed, where to be supported. This is the daily practice of teachers and Claire and her team is working to showcase how this works and is measured. Claire will bring the revised materials for the next meeting for a longer discussion. MSC will receive a Quality Review in March 2014 for the DOE to assess how all children are learning. This will include a parent meeting.
- V. **SLT Chair Training Report.** Alyssa reported out on the DOE training she attended recently for SLT chairs. The meeting’s agenda, which included reports by the Principal and Parents, was informed by this. All members should have access to the school’s CEP, SLT by-laws, Chancellor’s regulations and budget. She shared that many SLTs are chaired or co-chaired by teachers, and welcomed any teachers to let her know if they would be interested. She also brought up the question of whether the meetings include enough of the teachers voice. Teachers stated that they enjoyed the collaborative spirit of the meetings and feel very comfortable sharing things with Claire. Alyssa reminded the group that the msscshoolleadershipteam@gmail.com email is for everyone and can be anonymous. To ensure that all members of SLT know they are welcome to attend SLT meetings, Brigit will re-send out the email address along with the minutes and future agenda topics in blasts prior to the meetings.
- VI. **Debrief of Meeting.** Based on the SLT training, Alyssa introduced time to debrief the meeting so all participants could share what they felt about or would suggest for improvement about the meeting. Positives included a “creative” space for sharing ideas and building off each other, energetic, clear agenda and the support of Claire and the collaborative approach. Future improvements included getting the word out about the SLT to staff, inviting parents to participate, being strategic about not overlapping other work being done by PA and revising topics that aren’t yet resolved (like elevators).
- VII. **Future Topics:**
- a. 8th Grade – balancing multiple priorities in Fall/Winter
 - b. Attendance and Notification
 - c. Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusiveness
 - d. Hiring
 - e. Elevator

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 3rd at 3:15pm in the Science Room.

December Agenda (draft)

Principal's Report (20 min)- Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) review and discussion of how all students are challenged/supported; budget update; facilities & safety

Parents' Report (5 min*) – Fundraising report; special events (*unless there are big concerns with fundraising goals and related change)

Old Business (15 min): Elevator/Stairs overcrowding; lice; protocol development for parent notification of safety issues; partnering with 7-8th grades for outreach

New Business (40 min): Support for 8th grade ex-missions; student attendance information & tracking for families; proposal to develop SLT Sub-Committee on Diversity

Future SLT Events (15 min): Planning Logistics for 12/9, 8:45AM Reading Levels with Audra Robb& Wendy; Followup on Facilitator for Spring responsive parenting workshop (February); Future events: 4/14, 5:30PM Navigating Social Media – Panel& Speakers TBD; May/June, TBD

Debrief (5 min)

Future SLT Meeting dates: First Wednesday of every month at 3:15pm (except May*):

- Dec 3
- January 7
- February 4
- March 4
- April 1
- May 20
- June 3