

**Marvin School Governance Council Meeting Minutes**  
(December 4, 2018 Marvin Elementary Conference Room)

**Council Members:**

*Present:* Sue-Ellen O'Shea, Aly Johnson, Mimi Chang, Christine Murray, Mark Lilliedahl, Tara Palmer, Nate Sheldon and Julia Dufort

*Absent:* Nancy Lamb, Kathrin Hughes, Dana Siano, Darnelly D'Erario, Judith Rivera and Diana Paladino-Christopher

**Proceedings:**

-Meeting commenced at 6:02 pm

**PTA Guest Speaker**

*-The PTA guest speaker, Marissa Mangone, was unable to attend the meeting*

**Membership**

*-It is fortunate that the vacancies for teacher members have been fully represented*

*-However, there are still two parent vacancies whose spots SGC members hope to fill with possibly upper grade parents who can bring diverse perspectives*

*-Members were asked to give suggestions and ideas to increase parent involvement in SGC*

*-Principal O'Shea brought up the idea of sending a "flashy" notice home with the students, but teachers agreed that not all parents consistently check notices*

*-It was proposed that members could try to ask the parents already involved in the PTA, but members agreed that some are already involved in several school aspects and are only willing to focus on that group; it was proposed that the SGC might have to reach out to others who aren't currently involved with such groups*

*-Teachers were asked if they could attempt recruiting parents throughout the day at the Snowflake Shop*

*-There is also a vacancy for a community member, the spot for which will hopefully be filled for a member in the area, specifically around East Norwalk so he/she can relate to the local issues being addressed*

*-It was suggested that it might be a good idea to fill the vacancy with a politician, perhaps someone who is involved in Common Council and is interested in expanding his/her influence or community activity*

*-Specifically, the name of a politically-involved restaurant owner was suggested, Luis Solis, who is already quite active within the community*

*-Another name suggested was one of the crossing guards – Mr. Christopher and who is a grandfather of a student at Marvin*

**District Breakfast Program**

*-The idea of the new District Breakfast Program was brought up to discuss its outcomes so far as observed by teachers and parents*

*-Marvin staff is also planning to bring up the program at the next faculty meeting to hear feedback and discuss any changes that should be made to it*

*-It was noted that Nancy had already begun polling teachers around school on their thoughts*

- The program's original purpose was to ensure that more kids had the opportunity to get breakfast before school, and that all children ate breakfast during the week*
- The program ultimately moved the breakfast provided for students from the cafeteria to the classrooms*
- A long-term goal was to hopefully receive additional reimbursement fees for kids who are on the free/reduced food program*
- However, the point was made that even if the program did not last, teachers could still check that kids were eating breakfast*
- The negative effects of the program would be more potential distractions for the teachers, as the breakfast was one more thing for them to focus on while they are trying to get the day started and prepare for the day*
- However, the program was definitely doable; teachers could just adjust their routines to make room for the breakfast each morning*
- It was noted that the program might not be effective for the kids who typically already have breakfast every day, especially since snack time is held so close to the start of the day*
- It was suggested that it might be easiest for the breakfast to take place in the kindergarten rooms as there is more support there, while for the first through fifth graders, it is more difficult to have all the students stay in their classrooms*
- Another possible outcome could be consistency as it is possible that the same students would take advantage of the food program, leading to a lack of wanted diversity in results*
- One idea was that perhaps the cafeteria could be opened early for the students who want breakfast*
- A potential downside would be an increase in ants due to extra food and waste in the classroom; it was noted that there was not as much surplus when the breakfast was not held in the classrooms*
- It was agreed that the future of the program should be determined based on what is best for the students; it is therefore important to figure out whether more students are getting breakfast in the classrooms or the cafeteria*
- An additional figure that should be taken into account is how many of the kids eat double breakfasts in the morning*
- Teachers observed that there are some parents whose kids receive food for reduced rates who are surprised when the money they send in (meant for their kid to only buy lunch) doesn't last as long since their child buys breakfast in the mornings as well*
- It was suggested that the teachers survey their students to determine how many of them eat two breakfasts and to identify their ideal place for breakfast, whether it be at home, in the cafeteria, or the classroom*
- Another noted factor was that perhaps some students enjoy the school breakfasts more than what is available at home*

- An influential issue is that some students don't take advantage of the new breakfast program simply because they are unaware that it is available for all kids, not just those who have free/reduced rates; it is also unsure as to whether the parents know this fact
- When the breakfast was held in the cafeteria, the students sat by grade as usual and the kids who wanted breakfast typically got back to class on time

### **School Painting**

- The plan to repaint the school's interior walls is in place; Marvin has reserved a spot on the district painter's list
- The district painter Paul (who is known to be a precise worker) is set to begin painting the school around January this year, and it was noted that the paint job may take a while
- The plan is to paint one wing at a time, preferably starting in smaller, more contained wings like C-Wing or by the fourth grade classrooms where there is not much hallway traffic
- If the painter begins near the older students, a benefit would be that the younger students could learn from the more mature kids how to behave around the wet paint
- It would be preferable for the front of the school to be painted last as a more public celebration that the paint job was almost complete
- The same routine will be used as when the fifth graders painted a mural on the wall during the school day; a big red line was placed in the middle of the hallway, and passersby would have to walk on the opposite side of the line to ensure that the wet paint would remain untouched
- Principal O'Shea wanted to ensure that everyone had an input on the paint colors for the hallways, so she will have teachers in each wing and the main office choose between colors to determine the colors
- It was agreed that the different colored wings act as a guide for students and parents and help them identify their location in the building
- The plan is to keep the two tones on the walls, repainting the top, which is currently white
- If the top tone is left untouched, it likely won't receive a fresh coat of paint for perhaps 20 more years
- Since the school-sponsored Walk-A-Thon raised money for Marvin, and it was noted that this money can be put towards the painting job
- Another goal on the list of renovations is to have the plastic-like material on the walls replaced in addition to the rotting boards outside
- Each year, there is a master list of fixes for schools in the district, and sometimes other things are prioritized over the smaller fixes
- It was observed that the Norwalk High SGC was very involved in seeing its school painted
- It was noted that the SGC can come up with a list of all possible issues that should be fixed that can be given to the Facilities Department, who can take them into account

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

- This year, teachers have the opportunity to hold parent/teacher conferences during two days: Thursday December 6th and Thursday December 13th
- Principal O'Shea asked that all teachers keep their walkie talkies available in case of emergencies

- It was suggested that the teachers could have brochures or notices advertising involvement in the SGC handy in their classrooms during conferences
- Teachers noted that parent attendance is fairly close to 100%, with the exception of maybe one or two parents who forget or don't show up to their scheduled conference, so this would be an efficient way to reach out to all Marvin parents
- This year, with two early dismissal days allocated for conferences, teachers note that parents who don't attend will simply receive a phone call and their child's progress report sent home
- Teachers agreed that these conferences are especially helpful, as they act as their first one-on-one interaction with their students' parents
- They concurred that they are able to learn new information about their students that allows them to find the most effective teaching method for their students

### **Principal/Teacher/Parent Feedback**

- The fence being fixed in between the dog park and the school was brought up
- The fence is difficult to see in summertime due to foliage, but during the winter the fence will be fixed before plants grow and cover it up
- The purpose of the fence is mainly to keep dogs from coming on to school property than to keep students in the school grounds
- It was suggested that perhaps a gate could be installed within the fence just in case of an emergency evacuation
- It was noted that only the trail in the dog park is being fenced, not the entire area
  
- The newly changed 8 AM school start time was discussed
- Teachers agreed that they didn't feel that there was truly extra time in the day to cover what they are supposed to
- It seems that the extra 30 minutes ties in with the transition from breakfast to class time and not all students arrive on time to class now
- The added time was originally allocated for a specials block, specifically for math, which teachers feel has been helpful to their kids
- Library is no longer used as a special to compensate for the extra time in other subjects
- Staff and parents observed that it took a while for the students to adjust to waking up, getting ready and arriving 30 minutes earlier; initially, there was much bad behavior since the students were more tired
- It was noted that eventually there might be some curiosity from Central Office as to why there have not maybe been improvements in students' improvement, but this will not occur right away
- The reason for this longer school day is truly that Norwalk Elementary Schools have always shorter than other districts, and they are just now catching up
- The discussion switched over to the possible issue of switching the starting times of high school and elementary school, as some other districts are doing
- Members agreed with Principal O'Shea that they wanted clarification as to how such a change would benefit the students, and specifically which group of students this plan targets
- Such a change would also have to take into account teachers' and parents' schedules

*-An issue would definitely arise for working parents; it would need to be determined whether it was easier for them to drop off children earlier or later in the morning*

*-A potential plan would allow teachers, parents, and students to prepare for a major switch throughout next year, hopefully giving parents enough time to rearrange their children's daycare or babysitting schedules*

*-It was noted that if the goal of having all elementary, middle and high schools start at the same time was achieved, it would cost close to 1 million to rearrange and find more buses to transport students*

*-Another topic discussed was for students in need, specifically of some ELA practice, Principal O'Shea looks to hire someone already working in the district for small group instruction, possibly a certified building sub*

*-Meeting adjourned at 7:04 pm*

*-Minutes submitted by Julia Dufort*