

Marvin School Governance Council Meeting Minutes
(October 2, 2018 Marvin Elementary Library)

Council Members:

Present: Sue-Ellen O'Shea, Aly Johnson, Nancy Lamb, Kathrin Hughes, Mark Lilliedahl, Mimi Chang, Dana Siano, Darnelly D'Erario, Tara Palmer, Nate Sheldon and Julia Dufort

Absent: Jon Wilkins and Diana Paladino-Christopher

Proceedings:

-Meeting commenced at 6:03 pm

Handouts

-Principal O'Shea provided handouts of the Marvin Elementary School Compact for Achievement, which goes home to all Marvin families and lists Marvin's mission statement and the Norwalk Public Schools Outcomes that impact elementary schools

-Principal O'Shea also gave out a packet on the School Improvement Plan Overview, which included Marvin students' achievement on SBAC, CMT Science, NWEA, and Dibels Assessments since 2015 compared to the overall district

Introduction

-There was a round-table introduction by all attendees to meet new members

Membership

-There is still a vacancy for 1 teacher and 1 parent SGC member seat that the council has been trying to fill through newsletters and notices that go home with the students

-It was mentioned that last year's council setup may have turned people away from volunteering, but the meetings this year have been significantly more organized and efficient

-Although it is likely that teachers may not want to volunteer their time due to long commutes, other volunteering positions, or young kids, it was agreed that the teacher members will brainstorm to find a 5th teacher

-It was discussed that although the teachers give incentives for the students to have parents look at their notices, it does not happen often for certain students

-Principal O'Shea discussed the new policy of prohibiting early dismissal between 2:30 and 2:50 PM on school days to keep those last 20 minutes sacred and free of chaos

Open House Review

-Mr. Sheldon commented (and both teachers and parents agreed) that the new setup for Open House this year was successful and more organized. Principal O'Shea's slideshow was deemed very soothing

-Since it was determined that the parents come mainly to meet the teachers, this setup allowed parents to meet teachers in smaller, more intimate settings in a way that was more beneficial than last year's larger setting

-The only issue was that the video teachers showed required all lights to be off; teachers were debating whether to have late parents enter in the dark classroom in the beginning or give them handouts to sign in the dark at the end

Parent Involvement Policy/ School Compact

-Principal O'Shea noted that the School Compact has gone home to all students in Spanish and English versions

- Principal O'Shea went through the Compact and explained that its purpose is mainly to inform parents about events at the school and to increase parent involvement
- It was noted that the Outcomes change yearly based on yearly policies from central office, but items like the mission statement stay constant
- Next year, Principal O'Shea mentioned that she would prefer the Compact go out later in the school year and confirmed she would review its content later in the spring
- As for parental sign-offs on homework, the teachers said that they have their students get their planners signed every night where they write in their homework assignments. As incentives, they offer tickets for prize boxes and extra recess on Fridays

Climate Survey

- This survey is a 72 item questionnaire given electronically (in both Spanish and English) to all teachers and 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students throughout the district for central office to use as comparison. There is a district-wide goal for 40% of parents at each school to take the survey
- Last year, only 32% of parents filled out the survey. This year, we are looking to give parents more incentives and opportunities to complete the survey
- Principal O'Shea, teachers, and parents agreed that many of the questions (especially those about social media use) were not applicable to the young kids and difficult for them to understand. Principal O'Shea noted that there was a goal to reduce some social media questions
- It was suggested that the school could hold a Survey Night or an event with incentives such as food, money for book fair books, or raffle tickets/prizes
- Another option was that during pick-up time, parents could fill out the surveys while their children played on the playground or watched a movie
- Principal O'Shea mentioned that last year, she promised to dye her hair red if enough parents did it

Umbrella Council Progress

- Mr. Sheldon mentioned that although it seems that Mr. Wilkins has been unsuccessful so far, he is continuing his efforts to find East Side school contacts that would be interested in meeting and creating an umbrella council
- It was mentioned that currently, Silvermine does not have a SGC; it is a possibility that former members could be good candidates for an umbrella council
- Throughout this school year and in the years to come, creating an umbrella council will remain a goal to work towards

Student Achievement/Development

- Principal O'Shea explained the content of the Student Improvement Plan and went through the percentages of students scoring proficient or above proficient on their assessments divided by subgroups
- Overall, an issue seemed to be that the scores throughout each of the the past 3 years have remained fairly consistent rather than showed improvement
- Out of the 12 Norwalk Elementary Schools, Marvin scored 11th in amount of proficient or above math scores
- For the NWEA test, students generally showed greater growth between the fall and winter tests than the winter and spring tests
- For the Dibels, there was an increased amount of students in the middle yellow area and a decreased amount of students in the red last year
- The point was made that although the scores are generally lagging behind those of the overall district's, there are not huge gaps. Marvin's 4th and 5th grade had one of the smallest gaps in the state

-It was noted that low scores in math can partly be attributed to parental fault. Parents do not always explain how to solve homework that involves problem solving and may want to save time by doing it by themselves or giving their kids the answer

-A goal for upcoming years is to really target struggling kids and to improve math scores and problem solving abilities in the students

-Principal O'Shea noted that an ideal teaching day would consist of a more integrated approach, where all subjects were taught together, and the teachers agreed

-Principal O'Shea will be meeting with the Chief Academic Officer to discuss Marvin students' achievements and to outline a plan to improve throughout this year and upcoming years

-It was suggested that a possible solution could include running an after-school program for any students struggling in math

-The discussion turned to Student Learning Objectives, where teachers are assessed based on their students' performance on such tests. It was pointed out that while all school principals are supposed to conduct SLO's, not all do, which could be unfair if teachers were being held to higher standards at some schools than others

-Principal O'Shea commented that she would rather do SLO's based on growth; looking at numbers realistically should most consider a student's improvement throughout the year

-Meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm

-Minutes submitted by Julia Dufort