

Marvin School Governance Council Meeting Minutes
(February 5, 2019 Marvin Elementary Library)

Council Members:

Present: Darnelly D'Erario, Mimi Chang, Mark Lilliedahl, Kathi Hughes, Dana Siano, Sue O'Shea, Nate Sheldon, Nancy Lamb, Aly Johnson, Christine Murray and Julia Dufort
Absent: Kari Gutierrez, Tara Palmer, Judith Rivera, Amanda Seroff and Diana Paladino-Christopher

Proceedings:

-Meeting commenced at 6:07 PM

Handouts

- An email from Dr. Adamowski in response to Nate requesting greater elementary school representation in the School Start Time Committee
- An email to Norwalk principals outlining the upcoming budgeting process and the review of the rosters for the 2019-20 school year
- A notice informing Marvin parents about the benefits of completing the School Climate Survey and incentivizing it with a raffle

School Start Time Committee

- Nate and Mark received responses of support from most schools regarding increased elementary involvement in opposing a possible change in school start times
- These two members also submitted a letter to Dr. Adamowski and the Board of Education requesting increased elementary school membership on the School Start Time Committee, whose members were hand-picked to support the change
- There was solid elementary representation at the policy meeting Monday night (Feb 4), where parents voiced their concerns and pointed out the repercussions of such a change
- Effects of switching the start times would affect the 45 minutes allotted for bus routes, sports practices, daycare and other arrangements for the care of young children, parents getting to work on time, the time taken for students to adjust their sleep and work schedules, and hiring more caretakers for kids, all of which would generate an expense that must be considered
- The Board of Ed still has 9 more meetings on the proposal and is waiting from focus groups for more input; it seems that there is significant consideration still to be put into the logistics
- Although the Board has expressed that they have yet to come to a decision, they are mainly focused on improving the sleep schedules of high school students based on schools nationwide that have delayed high school start times
- If the elementary start times were divided into 3 tiers, school populations could become unbalanced if most parents chose to send their kids to the latest-starting school
- It was suggested that spending about 3 million to create separate high school bus routes that didn't affect the elementary students could be worth not upheaving the current system
- Another issue was that middle school parents lacked representation in the Committee, despite the changes that could make their start time earlier or later. This would affect middle schoolers' sleep and bus schedules as well

- Suggestions from the Board of Ed included possibly combining buses from all grades or possibly giving sports players 4th period off to make time for practice, which could create contract and Union issues for teachers and coaches
- While Greenwich, New Canaan, and Wilton schools have made this change in start times, these districts do not have similar budget restraints to Norwalk. Moreover, Greenwich reverted to original start times after a year-long trial, while grades K-12 in Wilton all have schools on a single campus, so bus routes were not as significant a conflict
- Mark and Nate are working to represent the elementary schools during this process and have gathered increased support from elementary school parents thus far, as seen at Monday's meeting
- The only change in start times next year will be adding 30 minutes to the elementary school day for schools that have not yet made this change; the times of the other schools will remain the same for 2019-20

Umbrella SGC Revisit

- The idea of forming an Umbrella SGC was brought up last year in order to increase elementary school representation, which is currently lacking in the School Start Time Committee
- While Kendall and Brookside Elementary Schools declined, most of the other elementary schools have voiced support for the proposal, and Naramake's SGC leader has been especially responsive to the letter sent out by Nate and Mark
- Nate suggested that the SGC wait to mobilize SGC and other parent/teacher/community members from Eastside schools until either later this year or the beginning of next school year until we receive more feedback from other schools
- Hopefully there will be a meeting with Adamowski to discuss this Umbrella Committee

School Counseling Redesign Committee

- Each school's SGC was asked to identify an involved parent they felt would positively contribute to the School Counseling Redesign Committee
- Darnelly D'Erario will be representing Marvin for this committee whose goal is to reform the guidance counselor departments
- The commitment involves approximately 6 meetings between this spring and next fall

Budget Proposal/ Update

- The Board of Ed is requesting 12 million for the 2019-20 budget, which is an increased number from last year
- 9 million is put towards the bus routing program, although there is still room for improvement in bus services and it is unsure whether there will be any recourse for busing
- Barbara Meyer-Mitchell proposed that the SGCs could possibly have a say on what to cut, if anything. However, committees will have varying opinions based on their own school's needs
- Although principals are supposed to receive their school budgets in February, they typically do not get them that early
- Marvin will have the same amount of teachers next year as it does this year: 21 teachers

- As of now, it seems that there will be four Kindergarten teachers, three 1st Grade, four 2nd Grade, three 3rd Grade, three 4th Grade, and four 5th Grade. This may entail one teacher moving from 1st to 2nd Grade and one moving from 4th to 5th
- There are concerns that the school-based budget may be frozen
- Next year, costs for art, music and paraprofessional subbing/extra responsibilities will come from the budget given to Principal O'Shea rather than from the Board of Ed
- It seems that schools are allotted different budgets based on school population size
- The budget for other elementary schools now includes the extra 30 minutes of school in addition to the extra special

Climate Survey

- A notice sent out to parents explained that their input on the Climate Survey helps improve the school for their children. It also gave them the incentive of their child's name being entered in a raffle for emailing a screenshot of the completed survey to Principal O'Shea
- It was suggested that there be three raffle drawings: February 28, March 15 (the day after conferences), and March 28
- Prizes could benefit both parents and students, including gift cards to family restaurants or Bowlmor, lunch with the child's teacher (if all teachers agree), tickets to Sky Zone, or an ice cream party
- Other ways to increase parent completion are allowing parents to use the school computers while waiting for their conferences or during the PTO event at Stepping Stones

District Breakfast Program

- It will not be possible to move the breakfast program back to the cafeteria; breakfast will continue to be eaten in the classrooms
- The middle school students are also beginning to eat breakfast in their classrooms if they have not already been doing so

Miscellaneous Items

Painting Marvin's Interior

- Marvin's hallways are currently being painted
- One wing has already been painted and the paint job is moving along very well

Fence

- A fence has been installed around the playground and no dogs have been getting into the playground areas

Redistricting

- The governor had discussed possibly redistricting the state in order to achieve equitable education and to consolidate existing resources
- There were three proposed bills for this plan, which is only in early stages
- A possible effect would be combining certain school systems, such as Wilton and Norwalk, and talk of which led to a petition voicing Wilton parents' opposition to this idea
- However, there is much consideration needed to be put into the bill, including a discussion about real estate values and parents' choices regarding where to buy their house based on the school their child would be sent to

All-Year Round School

-There was also talk of making the school year a full year-round cycle with week-long (or so) breaks occurring about every two to three months, the goal being to make the school system comprised of Schools of Excellence

-Rowayton schools could be used as a model; however, the populations at these schools vary significantly, and there may be more parent involvement in Rowayton

-The cost of the changes would equal around 3 to 4 million, which would come from private, philanthropic foundations

-The means of the long-term funding of upkeeping a full-year school program would have to be considered

-Meeting adjourned at 7:14

-Meeting minutes submitted by Julia Dufort