

Graham and Parks Alternative Public School
a pre-kindergarten through 5th grade
Cambridge, MA public school

School Council

Meeting Minutes for November 2, 2023

6:00 – 7:00 pm in person & virtual

School Council Meeting Norms

Take an inquiry stance

Ground statements in evidence

Speak your truth and be open to other perspectives

Hear all voices and stick to protocol

Start and end on time

Be here now

G&P Council Members in Attendance: Kathleen Smith, Debra Gadsen-Holiday (Secretary), Melissa Mihos, Kaitlin Baumann, Karima Cherguaoui, Talia Greenberg, Lauren Morse, Nasrin Belali, Mary Hermann, Christian Henry (Co-Chair), Genie Marshall, Gwen Savych, Aboma Dirbaba, Jodi Rich as well as Dr. Ray Porch, Director of Family Engagement

Community Members present: Marie Lesinasse, Shawdee Eshghi, Rachael Elliott, Andrea Eichman, Jessica Goetz, Maia McAleavey, Will Hurwitz, Ashley Owens Wood, Brook Hopkins, Ela Ben-Ur, Anna Bergholz

... and others on Zoom (no sign-in was taken for our virtual observers)

1. Meeting Convened by Co-chair: Christian Henry @ 6 pm.
2. Introductions 6:00 - 6:05 pm
3. Preparing for the work: What does equity look like at G&P? 6:05 - 6:15 pm
 - a. (2 Min) Definition of equity
 - b. (2 Min) What does equity look like at G&P?
 - c. (4 Min) Share in groups of three (find people that you do not know; 1 min per person)
 - d. (3 Min) Share out (three people share)

Notes: Preparing for the Work

- Kathleen grounded us in our meeting norms and invited us to think about which norm we would lean into during this meeting. For example, by “Taking an Inquiry Stance”, I will ask questions to drive our learning as a community.
- Definition of Equity: **Equity is a process through which we ensure that policies, practices, institutional cultures, and ideologies are actively equitable, purposefully attending to the interests of the students and families to whose interests we have attended inequitably.**
- What does Equity look, sound and feel like at G&P? Share Out
 - Looks like students get what they need; it feels like warmth.
 - Equity means all kids get adequate time to eat their lunch and to play, learn and grow.
 - All students are seen for what they bring and not for what they lack.
 - **Additional Ideas from sticky notes:**
 - **Everyone will Not get what they WANT, because we need to focus on what some children NEED**
 - **Equity at G&P is being mindful of student’s different backgrounds and providing resources and educational practices, so that All students are prepared to learn and help each other succeed.**
 - **Equity at G&P means that we are actively disrupting practices, systems and structures that either uphold systemic racism or lead to low academic achievement of marginalized communities.**
 - **All students have the tools and opportunities they need to become engaged learners, who aim high and expand their imaginations.**
 - **Joyous diversity, where every culture is welcome, honored and valued.**
 - **Meeting students where they are and educating them with a focus on the whole child with social justice goals in mind.**
 - **Looks like:students getting what they need. Sound like: No one voice is louder than another. Feels: warm.**
 - **Equity feels like a community moving forward together. Sounds like many languages.**
 - **Parents and Caregivers feel welcome to share input.**
 - **Access, voices, policies, curriculum.**
 - **All opportunities equally available to all. Children feel included. All voices are welcomed and modulated so that not one voice is dominant.**
 - **Embracing our learners' uniqueness through their differences and abilities.**
 - **Every student gets what they need. so they can progress in the future in a good environment.**
 - **Looks like inclusive learning for all.**
 - **Sounds like excited voices. Feels safe for all.**
 - **All kids can achieve their full potential. A place of high standards and rigor for all**

4. Shared Responsibility: School Improvement Plan 6:15 - 6:30 pm
- a. Purpose: a tool for defining improvement
 - b. Review revised District-wide template, milestones, data, process & timeline
 - c. Goals: Math, Literacy, School Climate, School Attendance

Notes:

- The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is the tool that we will use to plan our goals and Action steps to move towards a more equitable school, and build a community of continued improvement.
- We specifically are looking to explore our data to find solutions to the opportunity gap at G &P

MCAS 2023 Data Trends: Data we will use to draft goals for **Literacy and Math**

- We see large differences in performance of our Black and African American students when compared to White students.
- About 78 % of White students at G&P Met or Exceeded Expectations in ELA. 14% of Black/African American students Met or Exceeded Grade level Expectations in ELA.
- 77% of White students at G&P Met or Exceeded Expectations on the Math MCAS. 19% of Black/African American students Met or Exceeded Expectations.
- G&P Falls in the 77th Achievement %ile when compared to other schools across the state. G&P falls in the 17th Achievement Percentile when looking at Black/African American students for ELA and the 34th Achievement Percentile in Math when looking at Black/African American students.
- When compared to other elementary schools in Cambridge, G&P had the lowest Achievement percentile for Black/African American students in ELA. In Math, we had the second lowest Achievement percentile.

DRAFT GOALS

Literacy SMARTIE Goal:

All Black/African American students will have equitable access to Tier I instruction grounded in evidence-based literacy practices, leading to increased reading proficiency and overall academic achievement. This will be evident by Black/African American students' achievement percentile increasing from 17% to at least 50% on the spring 2025 ELA MCAS.

Math SMARTE Goal:

All Black/African American students will have access to tier I instruction that is culturally relevant and planned to ensure effective scaffolds are provided. This will be measured by the percentage of Black/African American students meeting or exceeding expectations increasing from 19% on the Spring 2023 Math MCAS to 50% on the Spring 2025 Math MCAS.

Chronic Absenteeism Goal:

By 2025, we will establish a culturally responsive protocol for monitoring attendance and partnering with families to improve daily attendance [insert measurement]

School Climate and Culture Goal:

Establish a school-wide approach to discipline emphasizing practices that are instructive, restorative, developmentally appropriate, and equitably enforced while continuing to build a continuum of social and emotional support.

5. Shared Responsibility: School Improvement Plan - Feedback

6:30 - 6:50 pm

- a. Noticings
- b. Wonderings

Notes: From Sticky Notes from Meeting.

Noticings: What I SEE in the data...

- These were really important and difficult topics that will require time for discussion and connection.
- The goal focuses on our Black and African American students.
- That we are using a standardized test to guide our goals.
- That only Black/African American demographics are pulled out.
- That 2nd and 5th grades have almost no students struggling with SEL.
- 80% of Black students are not meeting expectations for Literacy.
- Although we are looking at Gr 3-5 data, it truly starts in K.
- I notice that the data is not segregated by SEI or SES.
- Absenteeism data doesn't break out excused and unexcused absences.
- The SIP template called for more than just MCAS data.

- That the goal was access to instruction.
- That the SIP is focused solely on MCAS scores.
- The Black/White student MCAS data is made up of 93 kids (72 white and 21 black) This is 25% of our student body.
- I notice that the Black/White comparison lacks depth, especially given the SEI population.
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Wonderings: What I wonder about the data...

- I wonder what we can learn from the data if we were to look at SEI, LBLD and mainstream classroom's results separately?
- I wonder how many parents present see their children in the "not meeting expectations" category?
- I wonder which of our current practices are not meeting the needs of our Black students?
- I wonder if our school could better address the differences in test scores if these were made public?
- I'm wondering if the main SMARTIE goal should include language around the gradual release of scaffolds to facilitate independence?
- I wonder how partners can support School Climate and SEL goals?
- Are there ways to measure achievement, other than the MCAS test?
- Where do sabbaticals fall in relation to chronic absenteeism?
- Do we have teacher insight into Literacy and Math needs of our students?
- I wonder how teaching to a test provides advantages to our White and Asian students?
- Will there be PD opportunities (Such as LETRS for grades 5-8) related to the top half of the Reading Rope?
- I wonder if we have any data for younger children?
- I wonder what is included in SEL?
- I wonder if IReady and other data could provide a more complete picture?
- I wonder what our demographics at the school are. What is the achievement percentile per grade level?
- I wonder if the MCAS data shared includes all ELL and multilingual students?
- I wonder what is wrong with our current SEL curriculum? I thought our kids have been receiving SEL: guidance these last 5 years?

Other Noticing and Wonderings:

- I notice that the new schedule has math as the last period of the day.
- I notice that very little or no time is given to actual discussion of ideas and philosophy.
- I observed that filibustering is an effective method to avoid input from others.
- I notice that no school council members have spoken or appeared to have any input this evening.
- I notice that kids learn better when they have fresh air and time to move their bodies.
- I'm wondering if the School Council members could provide more valuable feedback with more free discussion. (Not on post-ist)
- I wonder if we can build time in for Q&A to the next School Council Meeting.
- I wonder what went into the choice to use this protocol, which appears to exclude discussion and input?

6. School Administration Report
 - a. Staffing & Professional development updates
 - b. Facilities updates
 - c. Health policy updates

6:50-6:55 pm

Notes: School Administration Report

- Lots of questions were raised around the data that was chosen to be included in the School Improvement Plan. Perhaps a Parent Coffee would be a space to engage that conversation with the G&P community.

Staffing & Professional development updates:

- One lunch aid has resigned , so we will be looking to fill that position.

7. New business

6:55 - 7:00 pm

- a. G&P International Potluck is back!

Notes: Lauren reported that there is a lot of excitement with the return of the G&P International Potluck! Please, Please consider joining the planning committee. Sign up to have a table! A fun night of food and learning and celebrating our diverse community! To sign up to help: [click here](#).

8. Meeting adjourned @

7:07 pm

2023-2024 Graham & Parks School Council Members

Administrative Appointees: Dr. Kathleen Smith – Principal & Co-chair, Lauren Morse – Family Liaison;
Jodi Rich – Community Representative; Aboma Dirbaba - Community Representative

Educator and staff representatives: Debra Gadsen-Holiday (Secretary), Melissa Mihos, Kaitlin Baumann,
Karima Cherguaoui, Talia Greenberg

Family and caregiver representatives: Nasrin Belali, Mary Hermann, Christian Henry (Co-Chair), Genie
Marshall, Gwen Savych