

GRAHAM & PARKS SCHOOL COUNCIL

Minutes - Approved May 16, 2024

School Council Meeting: Thursday, April 11, 2024

Called for 5:45 PM at the Graham & Parks School, 44 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

School Council Members Present: Kathleen Smith, Christian Henry, Lauren Morse, Aboma Dirbaba, Jodi Rich, Debra Gadsden-Holiday, Talia Greenberg, Karima Cherguaoui, Kaitlin Baumann, Melissa Mihos, Gwen Savych, Genie Marshall, Mary Hermann, Nasrin Belali

School Council Members Absent: No Members Absent

Also Present: Jen Amigone, CPS Director of Assessment and Accountability

With Kathleen Smith & Christian Henry serving as co-chairs, and a quorum of the Graham & Parks School Council being present, Co-Chair Kathleen Smith called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm and read the call of the meeting.

- This meeting of the Graham and Parks School Council is called to order at 5:45 pm. Would the Secretary please call the roll call for a vote to proceed.

The meeting proceeded with a roll call vote of the members.

Kathleen Smith, Christian Henry, Lauren Morse, Aboma Dirbaba, Jodi Rich, Debra Gadsden-Holiday, Talia Greenberg, Karima Cherguaoui, Kaitlin Baumann, Melissa Mihos, Gwen Savych, Genie Marshall, Mary Hermann, Nasrin Belali

1) Introductions & Opening

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| <p>a. Minutes for Approval March 14, 2024 5:45 pm</p> <p><i>Motion moved by Debra Gadsden-Holiday to “approve THE MINUTES OF THE GRAHAM & PARKS SCHOOL COUNCIL FOR THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR AND THE MINUTES OF THE GRAHAM & PARKS SCHOOL COUNCIL FOR THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR THROUGH MARCH 14, 2024.”</i></p> <p><i>Motion seconded by: Mary Hermann</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll Call vote: Kathleen Smith, Christian Henry, Lauren Morse, Aboma Dirbaba, Jodi Rich, Debra Gadsden-Holiday, Talia Greenberg, Karima Cherguaoui, Kaitlin Baumann, Melissa Mihos, Gwen Savych, Genie Marshall, Mary Hermann, Nasrin Belali• Results: Minutes of the prior meetings accepted by unanimous vote. |
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A request from those in attendance in person to audio record the meeting was made, accepted, and announced by the co-chair Christian Henry.

The participant norms for school council meetings were shared, and we were reminded to support each other in staying true to the norms. Karima Cherguaoui served as timekeeper for the meeting.

b) Feedback from March 14 Meeting

- Affirming feedback “PLUS”:
 - The budget presentation was great; Learned what pieces of the budget are determined by the district and what is in the school’s control; Appreciated the level of detail
 - Breakout sessions were helpful to give people a few minutes to discuss the budget and ask questions; Appreciated the recap of prior meeting and things the school was doing to address follow up items; Liked hearing from the many staff voices and appreciated the chance to get to hear from new voices.
 - Liked that we ended on a positive tone; Also appreciated the agenda being available in advance.
- Requests for changes “DELTAS”:
 - Some **confusion about the complaints about things that don't support our community**; Would be more helpful for folks to share what steps they will take to uphold and create a welcoming community at Graham and Parks.
 - Ask attendees to **leave questions until the end of presentation**. The constant interruptions from attendees asking questions during the presentation was very disruptive and created an unsettling atmosphere .
 - **Zoom was very, very hard to hear.**
 - Request to hear more explanation of the vision behind budgeting items and hopes for the school (beyond increasing test scores).
 - Request to clarify Q&A - **We had questions but no answers during public comment.**

Dr. Smith provided these follow up responses to the community comment from the prior meeting:

- Intern Program Update: Boston College has reached out and we will be hearing more from them, once they have master’s students available to consider practicum placements for the Fall 2024 Semester.
- Community Building: Family Engagement Team will be coming together to work on community building and engagement with families.

2. School Administration Report

5:55 pm

a. Staffing & Professional Development Updates

- Retirements of Grade 5 Teacher Mary Gallagher, & JK/K SEI teacher Marna Kennedy
 - More details to come when these positions are posted.
- Staff Community Circles started: We will reconvene them next month, as we continue to create space where staff can talk and build community with each other.
- Staff met in front of the building to view the Eclipse on Monday, April 4. It was a great way to come together as a staff.

b. Facilities Updates

- No update

3. Graham & Parks School Climate Survey Data

6:05 pm

a. G&P School Climate Survey Data Presentation [Slide Deck of Presentation](#)

Notes from Presentation: *See Slides linked above for details from the presentation

Jen Amigone, Director of Assessment & Accountability · Cambridge Public Schools presented the same slides on Tuesday April 9th, 2024 at the Principal's Coffee. Those present at that prior meeting will find it to be an overview of that same material, but hopefully engaging!

- Superintendent wanted to have a measure of school climate, measured by students, families and staff.
- Collaborated with the union around questions for staff about meaningful work, feedback, coaching and wellbeing.
- All 3 stakeholder groups participated in the survey in November and December 2023
- Panorama created the questions, vetted by experts, and comparable to national data
- 236 parents and caregivers, 154 students and 57 staff members
- This was the first year that the district surveyed students.
- Data is presented in a way to summarize a lot of data in a digestible way, so we are focusing on most and least favorable data but all data has been released to the public dashboard and PDFs linked.
- When staff looked at the data in Teams, they reflected on the data by giving feedback on Observations (The What) Inferences (The So What) and Implications (The Now What)
- Protocols allow for equity of voice, so everyone can engage in the data in a way to feel comfortable
- Grow = the least favorable
- Ratings that fell in the middle or more neutral categories, had significant responses and don't factor into the favorability.

Jen presented the slides* Slides linked above

Emerging Next Steps

- Staff met in small groups (Professional Learning Communities) to review the data and discuss next steps. All staff were invited to participate, at a time that worked for them.
- Community Building and Trust Building was lifted up as a way to continue to support staff and family belonging, including the Community Circles
- Coaching and Feedback - some staff members are evaluated by someone outside the building, can be the most challenging, sometimes there isn't the opportunity for in-person debriefing, so thinking about how do we create that opportunity, plus a rotation of evaluator to hear different voices
- Peer and informal feedback - not necessarily tied to the evaluation system
 - Creating a culture of affirmation plus wanting to hear feedback to encourage growth and improvement
 - Possibly Opt In - some teachers expressed concern that peer feedback would contribute to sense of exhaustion
- Staff well-being
 - Balancing time for meetings, this is a district and school issue.
 - Are all meetings and/or PD relevant to all staff?
 - Scheduling Team meeting to discuss shifts to next year's schedule
 - Continue to lift up conversations around district expectations around content.
- Family survey
 - Discussion about clarifying urgency - do all families operate with the same understanding of what is urgent, what requires a response from teachers immediately?
- Next steps
 - Family Engagement team - 3 parents, 3 staff, that represent the diversity of our school to draft vision statement

b. School Council Discussion

i. Noticings

- Do we have denominators, so we know how many students participated out of the total? Jen answered: 89 % of families completed the survey (261 total families, 236 responses)
- Do we have any comparisons with the 2019 data?
 - The questions were not the same, but we do have some data
- There were no Glows at G&P and at the District Level in the area of coaching and feedback; New Educators responded with more favorable scores on their ratings in this area
- Subgroups of families who responded more favorably were opposite of the students who responded less favorably: Black/African-American families rated their school experience more favorably than families in other demographic groups. African-American students rated the school the least favorably in comparison to other demographic groups of students.
- In response, Jen reported she was happy that so many families participated in the survey, nice to see such a diverse group in the room tonight, makes her happy to see that families were so positive overall.

ii. Wonderings

- How might a mentoring program be implemented that could support staff who rated belonging unfavorably? Could we look at other district schools who rated higher and see what is happening at their schools?
- Wondering how the data from the student survey will be impacted by the new social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum?
 - It would be great to triangulate the data with other feedback sources. The SEL committee could take that on, also looking at the math identity data.
- Wonder how the responses would change at different times of the year? One teacher, member of council, reported that her mathematics coaching cycle is happening now, so they would have answered the questions very differently because of that coaching.
- Slide 26 - Do we have information about how many families of all income levels here?

4. Family Liaison Update 6:45 pm

a. Talking Circles

- We have hosted 4 Talking Circle Sessions so far, and 4 more to go. Hoping to get more families to sign up. The goal of the talking Circles is to foster belonging and build community.

b. Upcoming events

- The Free Food Market is on May 14th! We love to have volunteers. It is a great time to meet new people and connect with other families.
- Cookies and Games from the Around the World
- Open House: Incoming K and Pre-School Students in May

5. Community Comment 6:50 pm

- Approximately 10 participants were on zoom at that moment.
- Commenter 1: When looking at the survey results and comparing to other schools, our school compares unfavorably. Some parents have put together some charts to show data about staff ratings. For example, staff ratings around belonging were the lowest in the district. This seems like a vast majority of staff. Who here represents those voices? Do the Staff on the School Council represent those voices as well? Members of the Caregivers Coalition have asked to meet with administrators and would like opportunities to speak on their concerns.
- Commenter 2: Board Member of DragonFly. He was excited when his child first attended G&P. Something has been lost. I agree with the sentiments stated by others. On the work environment ratings, G&P has ratings that are the lowest in the district. We need to find time to address these issues or we will lose these teachers. We have great teachers, who have made my children's experiences so rich. With respect to the teachers that disagree with my concerns, I still have great respect for them. Will you help us fix this problem?
- Commenter 3: I agree with what others stated. We wanted to come to this school. We were excited to be here. My child's first teachers at this school have been amazing and I really respect and appreciate them as educators. The coffee this week was a good start. The conversation between families and the Leadership team needs to improve. I have concerns about the data that has been presented and the message that it sends. Would love to see some of the 2019 data and see how it compares. There should be a conversation about the trends then and now. Will there be open dialogue to look at this data as it compares to the 2024 data?
- Commenter 4: I share a lot of the concerns that Guy said. What can we do that is constructive? Understand that the data is a high level summary, we can use that data to decide where to put our efforts. G&P is last in teachers' well-being. When the student data was low here compared to the district, we made that a focus, and rightly so. Can we give teachers more freedom to teach in the way they want while also holding them accountable. We need open ended, inclusive conversations, not overly formal protocols with noticings and wonderings.
- Commenter 5: Reflecting on the way I'm feeling now, compared to how I've felt in this space before. This school has been so unbelievably good for my kids, and I am grateful. I know it's deeply imperfect; just speaking my view. The way the division feels among caregivers, I'm forced to speak into silence, and I won't be responded to, that feels like grief. That's not how I want to be in these spaces. No one here can pretend that things are all okay. The survey shows that things are not okay, I don't hear those voices in this space. How can we have this conversation in an accountable way? I don't know how to speak about this in a productive way.
- Commenter 6: Not a data person, not a math person. As a parent, I want to have a better sense of what is going on about the staff opinions - Panorama created the questions. But wondering how much staff think the principal is responsible for the negative working environment? That would drastically change my opinion on all of this.

6. Meeting Adjourned

Motion Made to Adjourn Meeting at 7:10 pm by Melissa Mihos

Motion Seconded by Talia Greenberg

Motion passed by unanimous vote