MLK, Jr. School Council Meeting

November 16, 2021 9-10:15am on Zoom

Participants: Alexandria Grant (rep), Constantine Psimopulos (rep), Dongmei Liu, Eric Leslie (MLK Co-President), Gerald Yung (co-chair, principal), iPhone, Jason Homsy (rep), Karima, Katie Ng-Mak, Legese Guremel, Marguerite Hicks-Gyewu (family liaison), Mary, Marzyeh Ghasemi, Piotr Mitros (secretary), Robin Chen (rep), Rusty, Sandrine Hulot, Sara Engel (rep), Wil Moss (co-chair)
Members Absent: Robyn Towner (rep)
All participating remotely

Attachments

- Gerald's MCAS presentation
- Robin's grounds presentation

Action items

- Next meeting will have a dedicated schoolwide email announcement (not combined with other updates).
- Administration will check on why automated email didn't go out until after the meeting started.
- School admin will set up a group email to contact everyone on the council.
- Wil is confirming AG Open Meeting Training Requirements. Members who have not yet done so will complete training
- Piotr will email Gerald (and/or school council) about assessments and data.
- We will form three working groups:
  - Process for soliciting parent input for school council agendas
    - Seed group: Piotr, Gerald, and Wil
  - Community building and outreach
    - Seed group: Marzyeh, Sara, and Marguerite
  - Grounds (might not be structured as working group)
    - Seed group: Gerald, Wil, and Robin.
    - This will need broader community outreach.
    - School admin will help figure out ownership of specific issues.
  We identified seed participants, but these will have a broader call for participation, especially targeting underrepresented groups (including Asian Americans, other immigrant populations, and low-tech parents, etc.).
- Outreach for above working groups; let the school community know that they exist, and invite them to participate

Questions to the school administration

- What is the mechanism for improvement of school grounds? E.g. How would we approve the use of the partition as a community bulletin board? Is this approved by the School Councils of PAUS/MLK?
- We should compile interim assessment ("screener") data for presenting at a future council meeting. Specifics TBD.

Minutes

- Meeting began with a discussion about the lack of a Zoom link / phone number sent out 30 minutes in advance. Zoom link went out in other emails. Ice breaker suggested, but skipped
- Wil suggested having a discrete email announcing the meeting. This was agreed to.
- Wil thanked Robin Harris for helping get this started. Thanked Gerald, Piotr, and Robin.
- Piotr Mitros was given the title of School Council Secretary. Process:
  - Piotr takes minutes and sends them out within one week.
  - Those are approved at the following meeting.
- Wil asked about process:
  - How does one get the attention of the council? How does one get items on the council? How does one bring questions and queries? Open discussion followed:
    - Public comment period was raised
    - Group wide email was suggested in chat. Robin raised that at least one parent raised an issue with her privately (screentime policy)
    - Wil suggested sharing email addresses of all members
    - Wil suggested that anyone should be able to raise an issue with a council member, and it will be raised with the school council.
    - Robin pointed to the web comment form at the Morse School's School Council website, here. Suggested that this could be anonymous too.
    - Alexandria wanted to understand guidelines for what is added and isn't to the agenda, timeframes, etc. given time constraints. Not all parent concerns have time to be addressed on the agenda.
    - Robin raised the concept of a school council rep "sponsoring a motion," as in the school committee
    - A Google Form for intake was suggested.
    - **Action item**: Wil asked about if anyone would be willing to help with this. Robin suggested a working group. Wil and Robin discussed outreach. Wil suggested a seed subgroup of Piotr, Gerald, and Wil
    - Jason asked for an @cpsd.us or similar email so as not to give out personal email
    - Marguerite suggested a common email for the council which community members can use to email the council with questions, suggestions, concerns or topics for discussion
    - Wil raised that everyone on the Council must be reachable by email.

- - - Gerald wanted to make sure anonymity was an option in both directions (e.g. people providing input to the council can choose whether or not to give their name+email), so that there could be follow-up / follow-through directly from the school for people who wanted that.
      - Alexandria asked that we have a group email so that we avoid siloing.
      - **Action item**: Will gave action item from forming group consensus around setting up a group email
      - Robin suggested giving her cell phone number, for people uncomfortable with email
    - Wil raised that all council members are required to go through Open Meeting Laws Training. All parent members commented they had done it. It is required to happen within two weeks of the Council starting.
      - Robin raised that council has to announce meetings if more than 5 members talk about an item of substance
      - Jason mentioned a webinar and certificate which are required.
      - **Action item**: Wil has reached out to AG to understand specific requirements. All council members will complete said training.
- **Community building**. This discussion jumped between community building around the council, and community building more broadly (e.g. clubs, school visits, etc.).
  - Gerald: Concept of community is a big umbrella. Two programs in one school. How do we create community within the school?
  - Wil: How do we foster community with people who aren't part of this body?
  - Marzyeh: Asked about how parents can enter school spaces. Would love to see the garden, etc.
  - Marguerite: Using parent conferences to solicit input
  - Robin: A teacher weekly newsletter is required. Should we have a blurb about the school council there? Gerald corrected newsletter was not required but common. Robin raised the issue of staff.
  - Wil piggybacked off of staff, and how we get their input.
  - Wil suggested a subcommittee.
  - A lot of discussion about surveys, school tours, and school visits.
  - Marzyeh volunteered to help. Sara volunteered to help.
  - Marzyeh suggested zoom meetings were tiresome (despite being a CS prof at MIT). She suggested mixed modes of meetings (synchronous and asynchronous, in-person, not in-person, etc.)
  - Alexandria suggested we engage with research about engagement
  - Back-and-forth also mentioned Robin Harris, community groups (e.g. CFCC), Community Engagement Team, and research communities. I shared the PTSA National Standards for School and Family Partnerships and Karen Mapp
- MCAS data (Gerald leadind)
  - Gerald gave a presentation.
    - 2020 MCAS cancelled due to pandemic
    - 2021 MCAS for diagnostic, and not accountability. MLK accountability for extended learning time grant.

- - - Randomly assigned to at-home versus in-school.
      - Participation was low (82% in ELA/Math, 74% in science), so data quality is low
      - ELA: 76% met or exceeded expectations, compared to 46% in the state
      - Math: 49% versus 34% in the state
      - Science (grade 5): 69% versus 41% of students in the state
      - Historical trend constant. Didn't change much 2018, 2019, and 2021
      - Can see performance at: https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/
      - Continue to have an achievement gap, and continues to be a source of our focus.
    - Piotr
      - Asked about data for interim assessments, and inadequacy of MCAS for instructional planning. Not sufficient time to address this in the meeting. Piotr will follow up over email.
      - AI: Robin and Wil both asked to see these in a future meeting.
    - Wil: What are weaknesses?
      - Gerald: Does not capture many of the skills students have. Also raised cultural bias, noise, etc. used to guide decision making.
    - Wil: Other options
      - MCAS is state. We have interim assessments ("screeners"), as well as diagnostic on-the-spot assessments.
    - Sara raised other screeners (e.g. SEL)
    - Gerald raised his concerns about sharing data with parents. Numbers and tests can impact how we view kids. We should understand the whole package.
- Grounds and gardens (Robin leading)
  - *Note from secretary; I recommend looking at the presentation. This is a short summary, and the slide deck is very substantive*
  - School beautification efforts
  - History of school grounds
  - Who are the decision makers?
  - Who is the neighborhood (who also uses the school). E.g. Riverside Neighborhood Association
  - Trash and rat problem (overflowing bins)
  - Noticeboards
  - Listed improvements (e.g. frayed flag, crosswalk, etc.)
  - Discussion of outdoor learning spaces
    - Current uses
    - Tree stumps
  - Potential improvements:
    - Improvements to plants / landscaping
    - Bike repair
    - Bathrooms facilities (e.g. map to nearest businesses / libraries / etc)
  - **Question** of ownership. Gerald suggested tree pruning or approval was the city. Said ownership was piecemeal. This is something which will be looked into.

- ○ **Action item**: Form group to discuss this (some discussion of structure). As part of this group, the school admin will help figure out ownership of specific issues.