Linden S.T.E.A.M Academy governing Board Meeting Notes

August 14th, 2013 6:00pm

Attendees: Diana Buonopane, Richard Bransfield, Kathleen Cutting, Laura Degelmann, David DeRuosi, John Froio, Deborah Gesualdo, Rachana Gray, Jocelyn Ken, Ann Schiro, Susan Terban, Franklin Shearer, Leonard Young

* Connections
  + Leonard Young – Offered a warm welcome back. He expressed his excitement for all we have accomplished so far and for all that we can do in the coming year.
  + Rachana Gray
    - She asked everyone with a Facebook page to please click on the “Give with Target” link. Each click equates to $1 for our school. Last year we were able to get over $800 and purchased the large monitor that is in our lobby.
    - She brought up the fact that ward 6 has no one on the ballot for upcoming school committee election. She asked what would happen if no one stepped up. David DeRuosi said that the Mayor would appoint someone. She announced that her husband Joe Gray would be running a write in campaign for the position.
  + Franklin Shearer – Secured a position as the director of communications at a charter school in Boston. Previously he filled this capacity as a consultant.
  + Richard Bransfield summarized his updates from this summer.
    - Hired 12 people this summer. Included in these positions are:
      * 2 technical Education Teachers,
      * a K-4 Special Education Teacher,
      * An adjustment councilor,
      * A new librarian (reading specialist/interventionist)
    - Library will change this year. It will be more about research and literature circles.
    - Engineering is elementary from the Museum of Science will be coming in.
    - The middle school will have common planning time every other day
    - The elementary side will have common planning time once per week.
    - He will put the MAC lab in the lobby.
    - The building is getting wired for internet access
* Kim Schultz, our middle school guidance counselor discussed a new initiative that she and several other staff members are working on.
  + The concept is a Culture club that will help the school’s culture evolve into what we all hope it can become.
  + They will organize a once a month “Friday Friend-z”. Probably during the last hour on a Friday. They want to have all the meetings scheduled and the in calendar so that dates for MCAs and vacation are factored in.
  + Friday Friend-z will run 8 times through the year. Each meeting will have a classroom based activity with the goal of promoting respect, making connections, establishing relationships and encouraging growth of student leaders.
  + Every student will be paired with a student from another class/grade. This will give the younger kids an older buddy and help the older kids feel more connected.
  + Kim Schultz passed out a handout explaining the concept.
  + This is a staff driven idea.
  + The goal is to have all the classroom partners picked by the first early release is in October. Teachers will be encouraged to pair up on their own. If not, they can be assigned pairs. Teachers, who don’t have homerooms, will assist as needed.
* Uniform Needs
  + Richard Bransfield spoke with Barbra Kelly from the Revere School. They have an overall lower income than our school and had only one request for financial help.
  + We have had four requests for help.
  + Legally we can’t force people to get uniforms.
  + We will ask the families to send letters to the board explaining their hardship.
  + Welfare/EBT has a clothing allotment that should be used for the uniforms.
  + John Froio suggested we should set up a committee to take it off Richard Bransfield’s plate
  + Rachana Gray asked if we can ask the families we help by volunteering at the school. Some thought it was good idea, many others felt we really couldn’t do that.
  + Around the 90th day, we will have a uniform swap, which will help the families who are having difficulty affording the uniforms.
  + People who submit letters of hardship will be referred to the school adjustment councilor who will be able to connect them with social services to see if they are eligible for any additional aid.
  + We will have No uniform today (NUT) days. The children will be asked to bring in a dollar to participate. The money raised could be used to help with this issue.
  + Donations are coming in for a closet of spare clothes. Some families have purchased extra clothes and donated them to the school.
  + It was agreed that any aid we give with not be in the form of money. It will be either vouchers for a participating store or something we will purchase or have been donated.
  + We have 910 kids in this building this year.
* Election Process
  + Peter Dolan suggested we use one of our two evening school events to hold the election. The Back to School night in the fall or the Night of Excellence at the end of the year. If we hold it in the fall, then the parents of the Kindergarteners can participate, if we hold it in the spring, then the new board can be ready to go in the following year.
  + The Bylaws state elections are to be held in September, so we will have to amend them.
  + A question was brought up regarding votes. Should there only be one vote per family, one vote per student, or one vote per parent. Everyone felt it should be one vote per family.
  + It was decided to hold the elections in the spring so the new board members can be ready to start in the new school year.
  + Parents will serve out their terms even if their kids are no longer in the school. So if a parent gets elected when their child is in eighth grade, they will complete their second year even though the child has graduated from Linden.
  + We will change the Bylaws to hold the elections in May.
  + There was some discussion on needing a student list to verify that there is only one vote per family. Richard Bransfield felt that we would be lucky if we got enough votes to require us to check.
  + We will start the nomination process in February.
  + There are five parent positions on the board. Two will be up for election in 2014. Three will be up for election in 2016. Rotating every two years.
  + Leonard Young and Ann Schiro’s positions will be up in 2014.
  + The teacher elections can be handled during a staff meeting.
  + There must be a Malden Education Association (MEA) rep on the board. Deborah Gesualdo was our MEA rep, but has been elected into an officer position, so a new MEA rep will need to be selected.
* PTO Info Night/parent night
  + The first PTO meeting is in October, we should plan to attend and introduce ourselves.
  + This brought up a heated discussion about parent/ teacher nights. Rachana Gray felt that they don’t work and need to be changed.
  + Many of the staff felt that many things have been tried in the past and that there is no way to make everyone happy.
  + One suggestion was to do away with the night all together and to require the parents to make appointments instead.
  + A suggestion was made to set up a sub-committee to survey the parents for alternative ideas.
  + If we do make a change it will need to go into effect next school year. There isn’t enough time for this year.
* Franklin Shearer brought up a discussion about how we make our agendas
  + Richard Bransfield felt that nothing on our agendas is particularly innovative. That we should leave the day to day issues to him and work on the bigger picture issues such as:
    - Increase student learning time
    - Increase school year
    - Flexible hours
  + Out of all the teachers, only one opted out and transferred to another school. So they should be open to trying new things.
    - A suggestion was made that we identify 3 goals and plan our agendas around achieving them.
* Schedule Next Meeting - Sept wed 25th 6pm-8pm