Linden S.T.E.A.M. Academy (LSA)

1/8/2013 Governing Board Meeting notes

Attendees: Linda Bell, Richard Bransfield, Diana Buonopane, Nicholas Catoggio, Kathleen Cutting, Laura Degelmann, David Deruosi, Peter Dolan, John Froio, Deborah Gesualdo, Rachana Gray, Leba Heigham, Jocelyn Ken, Meliisa Lightbody, Linda Patrie, Ann Schiro, Franklin Shearer, Susan Terban, Lenny Young, Robin H. Farren, Jen Hendry, Joan Santo, Andy Zeiberg

* School uniforms:
  + There was discussion about the district meetings that are going on about the same subject. David and Rich made it clear that any decision that the district makes does not apply to the LSA. The district will require parent approval, whereas the LSA would not.
  + A question arose over whether there would be parent input into the decision. David and Rich clearly stated that the LSA Governing Board has the authority to make decisions for the school. That the purpose of becoming an innovation school is to give more decision making power to the teachers who are the front line in our children’s education. If the teachers feel strong enough to convince the board, then the decision will stand. It is up to the board to decide how much parent involvement goes into any decision they make.
  + A concern about the legal aspect of requiring uniforms at a public school was made. David made assurances that innovation schools have the right to make the decision. At this point Nick passed out invitations to the Board Members to attend an all-day meeting with the Malden District Capacity Team. David mentioned that the consultant will be on hand to help us get a better understanding of what we can do as an innovation school.
  + A suggestion was made to search out studies that have been made into the pros and cons of uniforms. The general feeling was that there would be an equal number of studies for both sides and that no one would be convinced either way.
  + A comment was made that some parents would want the teachers to wear uniforms if the student did. The general feeling was that this would not get passed. Teachers do wear staff shirts on school spirit days or other special occasions.
  + School safety was also brought up. If all the students were wearing school colors, it would be easier to pick out someone who didn’t belong at the school. If a student left the school, it would be easier for authorities to know where they belong. Also on field trips, it would be easier for chaperones to keep track of the kids.
  + Comments were made about enforcement. What sort of discipline would be implemented for kids who are not in uniform? It was mentioned that other schools that had optional uniforms or didn’t enforce them, no longer have uniforms.
  + The idea that it would remove an element of bullying was brought it. It was felt that children who bully would always find something to bully about if not clothes. An alternative view was brought up that kids who can’t afford expensive fashions would feel more comfortable coming to school in uniforms.
  + Robin brought up cost. She was concerned that not all parents would be able to afford the uniforms. She suggested that it would cost more since, they would have to buy the uniforms for school and then separate clothes for after school. She was also concerned that the school would need to purchase uniforms for the kids who could not afford them. She wanted to know where the money would be coming from. If the PTO purchased them, she was worried that it would mean fewer field trips. If the school purchased them, she was concerned about what would be taken away. She would rather spend the money on other things than uniforms. The board felt that we would need to research into exactly how much the uniforms would cost to understand the impact.
  + A consideration was made to create a subcommittee. In the end it was decided that Individual Board members would take on research for the uniforms and bring back their findings to the next meeting. It was felt that creating a subcommittee would prolong a decision since they would have to set up separate meetings.
  + In the end, we realized that there were just as many compelling reasons for both sides. The ultimate decision would reside with the board and in the end some people will be happy and other will not. The board will do some research into cost, and whether or not they want to get parent input via a survey.
* Kathy gave us all an assignment to think about the school vision and what direction we want the school to move in. Nick felt that the meeting with the Malden District Capacity team would help guide us with this assignment.
* Due to the meeting with the District Capacity Team, we decided to cancel the next meeting on the 24th and have the next meeting on February 5th at 7am.

Action items:

* Deb, Melissa and Laura will investigate several stores to find out about uniform pricing. Some stores that were discussed were: Sparks, Lands End, Burlington Coat Factory, Wal-mart, Kmart etc.
* Everyone is to come to the next meeting with their vision of the LSA
* Rachana will remind Rich to send out a connect ed call for the next meeting.
* Rachana will contact Denise Perry to update the school website with information.
* Board members who are available will attend the District Capacity team meeting.