

School Improvement Council Meeting
Recorded by Juli McDonough
October 23, 2009 Bancroft Media Center

<u>Attendees:</u>		<u>Term Expires</u>
Francine Goldstein	Principal and Chairperson	On-going
Nancy Sweeney	Kindergarten- Bancroft Teacher	2010
Sue Greenberg	Parent Representative	2010
Lauren King	Learning Specialist - Bancroft Teacher	2010
Nancy Snow	Librarian – Bancroft School	2011
Lisa McDonough	5 th Grade Bancroft Teacher	2011
Heidi Borenstein	Parent Representative	2011
Dorie Resnik	Parent Representative	2010
Laura Gregory	Parent Representative	2011
Juli McDonough	Community Representative – Recording Secretary	On-going

Key Points from Meeting:

Francine continued a review of the Elementary Level School Improvement Plan FY2010

- School Improvement Plan is written in January for the following year
- Parent Surveys are distributed in the spring

CLASS SIZE

- has increased, 27/class, which is “unacceptable”
- this year’s small kindergarten class may help next year’s numbers

TECHNOLOGY

- Smartboards are on site which represents progress but most upgrades are on hold pending the building plans

PARENTS

- Math Night was successful on Oct. 22
- parents found it helpful and Francine may consider doing more including a family math night

MCAS

- Math was a bit lower than LA
- Francine explained the concept of Adequate Yearly Progress and the fact that the better your school does the harder it is to show that progress given consideration of special categories or demographics

ETF

- approval was given to redefine Deb Hall’s position
- Francine will inquire about process for doing this

EXTERIOR SOUND SYSTEM

- requested for safety, “all calls”
- estimates were received by Francine for \$2000-\$2900 (=best)
- the PTO in considering fundraising
- Francine suggests waiting for new building
- one member expressed concern for broadcasting student names over the outside speakers

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

- new building plans are moving forward
- several options are being considered
- feasibility study is in progress

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- .2 1 person/1 days was cut from the 09-10 budget
- Francine will try to have it restored for 10-11

Council Goals:

- Francine is considering a fall teacher survey (even though they did one in the spring 2009) rather than concurrently surveying parents and teachers in the spring.
- Nancy suggests early spring

Follow up: Members are to review parent survey responses to individual questions and submit general comments to Juli (jmcdonough@andover.edu):

Francine

Question: Before or after-school offerings you are interested in (please number in order of priority

1=highest priority)

- Math Enrichment
- Science Enrichment
- Foreign Language
- School Newspaper
- Instrumental Music
- Theatre
- Art

Math and foreign language were the highest priorities. However, in the comments (only 6 comments) people indicated more of a need for physical activities, such as sports or PE after school.

Lisa McDonough

Question: If fee based, would you be interested in optional before or after-school offerings similar to Expanding Horizons but contracting with outside providers?

More people responded yes:

People seem to think that foreign language and strings are two great options for before or after school as well as creative writing and math. In general, responses leaned towards gearing these towards enrichment for higher achieving students. Also, since the only options currently are SHED and YMCA some feel that it would be nice to have an option right here at Bancroft so students don't need to be bussed to a new location.

The people who responded no:

A few people felt that there are already too many fees in public schools, and others thought that if there are programs, that they should challenge children since there are so many programs in place already to help children who struggle academically.

Nancy Snow

Question: The School committee Policy for class size is: Kindergarten: 16-24(midpoint:20) Grades 1 & 2: 19-27 (midpoint: 23) Grades 3-5: 21-29 (midpoint: 25) We strive to stay at the mid-point of the ranges. Sometimes, our priorities may be challenged by the economic times we face. Maintaining reasonable class size has been the highest priority for Andover families. Now, as we face economic challenges, does maintaining reasonable class size remain a top priority for you even if that maintenance means cutting some existing programs? If not, what is? Please consider programs such as music, art, PE, technology, media, and health.

Responses: Out of 29 responses, 19 replied that small class size was a priority over programs. 4 of those 19 suggested supplementing lost programs with paid programs before/after school. 8 respondents were in support of keeping programs at the expense of class size: 6 mentioned PE specifically; 4 mentioned Media; 4 mentioned Health; 3 for Art; and 3 for Music. The Neutral responses (2) were in support of a finding a balance between program cuts and maintaining reasonable class sizes.

Juli McDonough

Question: To what extent do you find the PTO Website to be an effective means of communication?

Responses: Out of 25 responses, 14 were positive, 2 were neutral, and 9 were negative or suggested improvement. The positive thought it was easy to use but still recommend individual announcements for important events. There were common comments about the need to take time and remember to check the website, thus the email prompts are helpful and perhaps an expanded weekly summary would be useful. Some comments referenced the address features as some users may be looking for access to email addresses while others may want to suppress a group from certain targeted alerts (i.e. teachers from appreciation related mailings). The "alerts" seem to do their job and tell people to check the site, however, people need to be diligent about their checking to avoid missing deadlines or events. Make sure the website is up to date when the alerts are sent. Some parents still prefer paper notices sent home and more personal contact, especially for new members of the community.

Sue Greenberg

Question: Is there a curriculum area that you would like more knowledge about?

Everyday Math was by far the most frequent response. Of 20 comments, 12 included math as the subject area they most wanted more information about. Probably the second most frequently mentioned subject was Health—including sex education—with four people mentioning that. Two people expressed confusion about the music program. Spelling, reading, science and social studies were all mentioned in passing.

Nancy Sweeney

Question: To what extent would you be willing to accept a higher class size in order to maintain programming?

- There were 17 respondents (total) in the Positive, Negative and Neutral categories.
- Smaller class sizes or the current size as stated by the school committee was an overwhelming result from all respondents.
- There were several suggestions as to how to keep class sizes down. There ranged from-- cutting programs (3 people), parent volunteers (1 person) and dividing into leveled groupings
- Of note:-One parent stated that the skill, passion and ability of the teacher are very important qualities.
- Another parent felt that the "mix" of the class--personalities, needs--determine how many children should be in a class.

Laura Gregory

Question: What do you consider to be an area that we can continue to grow and improve on as a school?

There were a total of 30 responses, which fell primarily into the following categories:

- Building: clean up overgrown vegetation (suggested parent volunteers); replace/fix up building; don't spend \$ on building put \$ into teachers & programs;
- Math: improve teachers' knowledge & teaching strategies; program can be improved at various grade levels; advanced students not being addressed, particularly in lower grades
 - Outdoor Ed. – parents should be involved; why pay \$ so early?; parents feel pressure to allow their kids to go (suggested doing it on a weekend & not presenting to kids before parents). Very strong feelings on this by multiple people.
- Environment/recycling – continue use/promotion of list serv and website; more recycling;
 - Communication: more communication from teachers to parents – suggested regular e-mails from teacher to entire class;
- Improve programs for more advanced students - through curriculum and enrichment programs
- Recess/physical activity – several comments on always having recess and not taking it away as punishment; importance of physical activity for effective learning in the classroom; get outside more at recess and in PE;
- Teacher quality – not all teachers are doing more than minimum
- Budget – keep specialist programs; cut administration, not teachers; union contracts & teacher seniority decrease teacher quality in many cases; class size; no more fees or fee based programs
- More Smartboards
- Not even/consistent application to all students – with casting of Variety show & Principal's book
- More cross over programs, particularly involving creative arts and character development
- Offer foreign language
- More homework should be given in older grades to prepare for middle school.
- Parent volunteers – get more involved and in more organized fashion; use in math curriculum;
- Have a weekly Bancroft "spirit day"

Heidi Borenstein

Question: "Does your child feel safe and comfortable in the school environment (school, bus, lunch, classroom, recess, hallways, bathrooms, specialist classes)?"

There were a few positives/negatives that seemed to stand out.

Bus:

- + There were problems, but those problems had been addressed.
- No seatbelts
- Drivers smell like smoke
- Bullying
- Policy for cell phone use for drivers?

Lunch:

- Short/rushed

Recess:

- Bullying/cliques issues

Bathrooms:
- Dirty/smelly

Next meeting will be the 2nd Friday of November, 11/13 at 8 AM.