

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Middle School Conferences Committee December 8, 2011

AGENDA

1. Review Minutes
 2. Review Homework
 - Chapter 9 “Scaling Up”
 - Committee field trip to Shuksan Middle School
 3. Analysis of Survey Results
 4. Homework
 - Chapter 10 – Useful Resources
 - Chapter 11 – Tools to Support Your Work
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NOTES

Committee Members Present:

Ann Buswell
Chuck DeVange
Criss Forslund
Trina Hall
Jeannie Hayden
Ben Hayes
Andrea Hood

Laurie Hoyt
Michelle Kuss-Cybula
Teri McIntyre
Josh Meese
Tina Perona
Kenn Robinson

Sara Strommer
Karen VandeBossche
Tom Venable
Cat Wallace
Ronni Weston
Peggy Zehnder

Review Minutes

The minutes from the December 1 meeting were reviewed and amended as per committee member input. Andrea Hood made a motion to accept the minutes as amended; Chuck DeVange seconded. Motion passed, changes will be given to Marilyn and notes will be posted.

Review Homework

Committee members engaged in small group discussion related to the homework assignments of reading Chapter 9 of *Beyond the Bake Sale* “Scaling Up” and attending the *Turning to One Another* experience at Shuksan Middle School. Following the small group discussion each group shared out some key points of their group discussion, with whole group responses and dialogue. Some of the sharing is captured here:

Related to Resources

- (Page 236-237) – wonderment around the amount of time and resources
- Tapping volunteer sources
- To what extent should we prioritize resources to a family engagement community liaison with all the other

Related to Initiative/Leadership/Involvement:

- Wondering about the ideas in the book related to top-down / bottom-up

- Some felt the ideas in the book were very top-down, from the superintendents; others felt that the book represented a bottom up approach with the initiatives coming from the parent groups, and then being supported by the system/supt.
 - Wondering about the idea of the parents building the initiative and being involved – if you build it they will come way of thinking
 - Lots of support (PD, resources, involvement) from superintendent and district are necessary to implement the ideas in this book
- Related to How the Book/Visit relate to the work of the committee on MS conferences
 - The book is about how we engage with families and communicate about what is going on in schools – how do we connect this with the work of the committee related to conference schedules and conference contents.
 - Shuksan tour provided an example of ways to bring community into the school – purpose of changing perception – getting the families and community members in
- General Noticings/Wonderings:
 - Shuksan visit was mirroring what was just read in the book
 - Most of the data went through 2006 – are these programs still taking place? Are these still sustainable? Or did they get cut? Sustainability is important.
 - The parent liaison running the parent center – builds the programming, educational pieces, would be a fabulous resource to help parents support their student’s learning
- Related to Communicating with Families
 - Considering families who do not have access to the web – also include print form – perhaps even in a newsstand like setting in front of the school
 - We have good ways to get the message out but access to all can be an issue
- Related Specifically to Conferences
 - Availability of information for most parents, allows that when they come to conferences going over all the grades might not be the best use of time because families already have that information
 - More and more in our student led conference we are finding ourselves informing parents about shifts in pedagogy/teaching practices – is 1:1 the best way to share this information or should the 1:1 conferences be for specific to student/showcase rather than on informing parents of other things that are non student specific
 - In terms of thinking of conferences we want to create opportunities to engage in discussion about and/or highlight learning

Analysis of Survey Results

The survey results were shared with the committee. The committee engaged in a review of the data, with the goal of obtaining a general understanding of the survey results and the range of responses. Members reconvened into groups for sharing of their findings and dialogue around the survey responses. Realizing that this first look at the data provides us a general understanding of the survey results a quick whip around included the following statements. Some statements shared in a quick go around included

- Pleased with how positive the statements and input were
- Saw a lot of people didn't like the half days; suggestion of full days was brought up, but then we can't count them as school days – something to consider
- Saw that a lot of parents said they would like to meet with more than one teacher
- At one MS teams of teachers do weekly updates for families that include the weekly learning targets by subjects, what is going on in the class that week, etc. and there were several comments from parents that were supportive of this
- Impressed by the number of respondents – 28% is a high number of respondents to a school district survey – validated an interest of parents to be involved in their child's learning – and that there are a variety of ways for families to be engaged and involved.
- Parents seemed to like the regular updates and different ways of communicating with their teachers
- A lot of parents wanted to have the individual time with teachers – and also a desire to speak to the teacher without the student present
- Conflicts of conferencing are the same now as when we started the SLC model – there are different models in place at the different schools – this is being addressed in different ways at different schools (teaming, etc)
- Pointed out that we are not aligned (at the staff or the parent level) in terms of the purpose of conferences
- Saw a big diversity in wants and needs around the type of communication desired – different people have different needs
- Related to how well we communicate outside of conferences, there was a range of responses from some very specific forms of communication that were working to some areas of calling for improvement.
- Variety of what people want. Parents mentioned that perhaps conferences should not be required for all – options for various parents seemed to be called for
- Some parents didn't have a chance to meet all of the teachers and wanted to
- Pg 12 of 37 staff section - FMS and KMS were almost opposite in their response to the same question
- Looked for patterns – there was a reoccurring theme of appreciation for student led conferences but still a need to meet with each teachers – perhaps we can think of
- High percentage of folks who do not want to change the current structure
- Common themes: parents would like to see consistent use of the parent connect and teacher updates
- Survey results seemed very positive overall
- Negative comments seemed focused on lack of availability to all teachers and also related to lack of ability to discuss student behavioral concerns
- Perhaps the name “conferences” is misleading –
- Satisfaction with the experience is somewhat less with parents who are highly involved with their child's academic learning
- Struck by the large number of parents who mentioned email as a good way to be communicating.
- Parent connect is perhaps not the vehicle for reporting immediacy regarding missing assignments, etc.; School Messenger might meet some of this

Homework

- Chapter 10 – Useful Resources
- Chapter 11 – Tools to Support Your Work
- Continue to review the survey data

- What can you generalize from the responses
- What is the range of the responses
- What does it NOT tell us – what more do we need to know?

Next Meeting:

Thursday, December 15, 2011 1:00-3:00 in the Board Room at the District Office