

Cotswold Elementary School Leadership Team

Meeting Minutes January 26, 2015

Attending:

Scott Reed	Stacey Randall
Haley Schron	Michelle Powell
Sylvia Moras	Carla Haughton
Candice McWhirter	Stephanie Menzo
Samantha Meyers	Barbara Helm
Erin Ashendorf	Joe Knaack
Lee Ham	Alicia Hash
Marsha Mullins	Sherese Smith
Mary Barlow	Katie Catron
Morgan Cromwell	Alison Busch
Scottie Thompson	Carol Harding
Mary Casey	Kristin Van Stratt
Susan King	Leigh D'Amico

Chair Alison Busch called the meeting to order at 6:10. Alison discussed the summary of the notes taken from the roundtable session at the previous meeting. The notes were e-mailed to members prior to the meeting and are included at the end of these minutes. Alison had spoken with Mr. Clutts for an update on Achieve 225. The PTA is in process of working with Mr. Clutts to find funds to purchase the new soccer goals. The Class Clustering initiative will be addressed in the data analysis part of the meeting. Ms. Moras and Mrs. Haughton gave updates on the Next Steps Committee. The basis for the Next Steps Committee is the success of the Ron Clark Academy, a private middle school in Atlanta serving primarily a low income population. A group of staff members visited the academy Friday. Several staff members spoke to the benefits of seeing the Academy in person and the inspiration it provides to the staff. Mrs. Haughton said that the most impressive result seen at the RCA is the high level of engagement of the students. Mrs. Haughton gave an example of a 5th grade math class studying the quad root of multiple variables. She emphasized that the bulk of these children started the year below proficiency. Mrs. Haughton talked about using strategies at Cotswold to engage the “whole brain”, encouraging children to learn and do more. The Next Steps Committee is the platform to share

these strategies with the staff. Mrs. Hash said the plan is for all classroom teachers to visit the RCA by the end of the next school year. Ms. Moras said that the end goal is to use the RCA model to increase Cotswold student engagement and rigor, and improve the climate and culture.

Alison asked Sherese Smith, PTA President, to give an update on the Publix rezoning project. The zoning permit was approved by the city council. Permitting could take through the summer. The tenants are moving and construction beginning in the fall. Construction could take up to a year. Projected opening is the first quarter of 2017. Parking and traffic during and after construction are concerns for our school. Sherese and Mrs. Hash are working on options for getting more cars off of Randolph and Colwick. Some of these options are the possibility of moving the drop off/pick up location to the gym, encouraging more bus riders, removing the option of front door walking, and considering using multiple lanes. The developer is expected to make changes to traffic patterns as well, including a right turn lane at the Greenwich/Randolph intersection and possible traffic lights, sidewalk improvements, etc. Sherese and Alison made a note to talk to the developer about the possibility of making some changes during the summer months when there is less traffic at the school.

Alison gave an update on the bylaws. Meredith Sutton and Alison met last week to revise the bylaws. The goal is for the bylaws to be updated before spring elections. This will be done outside of SLT's regular meetings. There will be a separate meeting for the bylaws to be reviewed. SLT members interested in that process can attend.

Mrs. Hash gave the principal's update. She reviewed several slides of data. The data included fall and winter MAP and spring 2014 EOG data. MAP scores from the fall testing to the winter testing were reviewed. Cohort data was presented comparing EOG data from the prior school year to MAP winter testing (so that the EOG data directly correlated to the same group of students). Mrs. Hash and the staff are pleased with the data. On the MAP data, 8.9% of 3-5th grade students increased in reading proficiency from fall to winter. 16.09% increased in math proficiency from fall to winter. All data showed improvement in proficiency and growth with the exception of 5th grade Math growth, which remained stagnant. Mrs. Hash emphasized that while the staff is pleased with the growth, they will keep working every day to make improvement until the end of the year. She said that while the data is good, her wish is for every student at Costwold to show growth. She said this is the goal of every educator. Katie Catron asked about how our numbers could be compared to other schools. Mrs. Hash said that is a difficult thing to do because the population of each school is so different, and even the grades & classes within a school can be very different.

Leigh D'Amico is a Cotswold parent who attended the meeting. Mrs. D'Amico's career is in education and testing with the University of South Carolina. She gave some insights on the data. She talked about MAP testing being used as a progress-monitoring assessment. The testing is not designed to penalize but to be useful for understanding instruction and guiding the education progress. It's not what the data says; it's how it can be useful for the staff. Mrs. D'Amico talked about the shift in measuring based on growth rather than proficiency. She also talked about testing results being an estimate similar to weather forecasts and being one tool in a whole toolbox available to teachers.

Mrs. Smith asked if there is a way to determine how many kids who are testing below proficiency are close to the proficiency level. Mrs. Hash replied that she does not have an exact number but that a high percentage of students are on the border line. Mrs. Hash was asked what she thinks led to the success and asked Mrs. McWhirter to respond. Mrs. McWhirter talked about the Class Clustering and the MAP results and how both help the teachers to meet the children at their specific levels. She emphasized that the teachers are covering the required curriculum but are also able to target the groups of children to meet their needs and push them further. Mrs. Haughton talked about the initial inundation of data and how the staff is becoming more skilled at interpreting and using the information. Mrs. Haughton also talked about the new Compass Learning (literacy) and Dreambox (math) programs. The Compass Learning program directly correlates with MAP testing. Mrs. Van Stratt gave an example of how she used MAP results to assign levels and folders to her students in Dreambox and Compass Learning. Mrs. Haughton is going to send out more communication on access to Compass Learning. Mrs. Busch is going to look into adding information about the mid-year testing and Compass Learning to Cougar Bites. Mrs. Hash is adding a section on the back of the 3rd and 4th graders' class placement questionnaire to get parent feedback on Class Clustering.

Staff updates were done and are summarized below.

Kindergarten – Mrs. Powell. Next week is the 100th day of school. This involves fun math activities, classroom rotations, writing activities, etc. The teachers have been focusing on generating writing ideas. They are moving into focusing on adding details to pictures & stories. They took a field trip to the Discovery Place that tied well into their previous IB unit. They are moving into working on nonfiction and measurement. There will be field trip soon the Matthews Playhouse. The teachers will have their 2nd data day.

1st grade – Ms. King – They are finishing up their study of holidays around the world. This involved small group rotations in different classrooms, which the children enjoyed. The next unit focuses on how people and places have changed in history. They went to a play at Imagination. They are focusing on measurement and on improving math and writing skills.

2nd grade – Mrs. Van Stratt – The kids are beginning their unit on sound which is a fun hands-on unit involving experiments and a Discovery Place in-house visit. They are starting their character celebrations and working on reading resolutions for the 3rd quarter. They are working on math strategies to become more efficient and accurate with double digit addition and subtraction. Mrs. Van Stratt thanked the PTA for help with math night.

3rd grade – Ms. Menzo – They just finished their storytelling unit which involved a presentation. The presentation helps the kids with many skills and the teachers were proud of the kids' hard work and courage. They are moving into their study of the human body included all the systems and making healthy choices. They are focusing on multiplication and division, including lots of story problems and reinforcing facts. In reading they are beginning a study of biographies.

4th grade – Mrs. Schron – They just finished studying about sharing the planet & animal adaptations. They are starting the unit how we express ourselves, which will have a heavy state government focus. They are going to Raleigh on 3/20. In math they are working on fractions and decimals. In literacy they are doing novel studies and working on persuasive writing.

5th grade – Mrs. McWhirter – The 5th graders are taking a brief break from fractions to focus on decimals. They are working on their exhibition projects. The project was moved to earlier in the year and the subject matter changed to better correlate with the science curriculum. Mrs. McWhirter thinks both of these are great changes for the kids and is excited about their progress and their enthusiasm for the projects. They are studying body systems and nonfiction. Mrs. McWhirter invited parents to walk through the exhibition on 2/11. Mrs. Busch will add information about this to Cougar Bites.

EC – Mrs. Helm and the EC staff continue to support this population on campus. She talked about a visit the children had in December from a hearing impaired adult and what a great life skills lesson that was. Mrs. Helm is co-teaching with Ms. Pointer's class in math & reading 4 days/week. Mrs. Hash said that classroom is seeing phenomenal growth. Mrs. Helm indicated these things are possible due to the increase in staff this year.

Connect – Mrs. Harding gave the Connect update. Mrs. Carpenter is working with the 4th and 5th graders on playing their recorders. There were no other Connect updates. Mrs. Harding talked about how much she loves watching the 5th graders do their exhibitions and seeing their passion for this year's subject matter. Mrs. Catron commented on how she is happy to see the increase in field trips and how those trips enhance the educational experience.

Mrs. Busch complemented the teachers on their great updates.

Mrs. Hash talked about Cougars' Camp, the after school enrichment/tutoring program implemented last year. Ms. Mullins is working to identify the population for this year. Mrs. Haughton handles the curriculum planning. The teachers split the instructional time. The program will start in March. The students go to a connect activity during Cougars' Call, then to instructional time, then to computer lab time. Mrs. Busch is working on getting snacks donated.

Mrs. Hash talked about the new NC school grading scale that is coming out next week. The scale is based 100% on test scores (80% on proficiency, 20% on growth). It is projected that 60% of NC schools will get a D or F. Mrs. Hash feels that a school is so much more than test scores, and this opinion is shared by many educators and parents. She encourages those who agree to advocate for the schools, staff, and children. She does not know what Cotswold's score will be. Schools receiving a D or F must inform parents by a letter. Public school parents will be informed by a school report card, but there is a possibility they will be informed first by the media. CMS is asking as parents if you do not feel like this system is legitimate to voice your concerns with Raleigh. The scores do not affect funding. Mrs. Hash's concern is that it could affect staff morale and public perception. CMS is coming up with their own school grades using a different set of criteria. There is not a projected date for completion of this project. Mrs. Hash will receive and share more information about how people can be advocates after the release of the scores.

Several SLT members discussed that timely and informative communication with our parents is a great form of advocacy. Mrs. Hash will consider adding the positive testing results from mid-year data to what is communicated to parents. Mrs. D'Amico talked about the grading system in South Carolina and how lobbying was successful in preventing letter grades from being assigned to schools. Mary Barlow asked how the grading will compare to websites like greatschools.com. Mrs. Hash replied that the websites are not government endorsed.

Mrs. Hash announced that there is a baby boom with the staff with 5 babies expected to arrive in the spring and summer.

Mrs. Busch thanked the PTA for providing dinner for the staff. The next meeting is 2/24. New business should be sent to her by 2/27.

Chair Alison Busch closed the meeting at 7:45.

Addendum to 1-27-15 SLT Minutes

The recap of the discussions in the breakout sessions at December meeting is below.

Class Clustering

- Method of building classes based on grouping peers of similar abilities
- K-5 classrooms have traditionally had 5-7 ability groups
- 3rd-5th grades this year have max of 3 levels
- Allows for better planning, differentiation in instruction
- Teacher feedback has been positive
- Kids at all levels being challenged and growing
- Gives average kids opportunity to be at top of their class
- Students are motivating each other
- Still are some outliers based on social and emotional needs (some kids not assigned with natural group if would be poor social fit)
- Ms. Meyers is able to see TD kids much more often this year
- Ms. Helm is able to see EC kids much more often this year
- Overall Mrs. Hash sees this program as raising the rigor of curriculum at every level
- Concern about subjective grouping this year. Next year there will be a more formal rubric for student placement.
- Concern about lack of diversity in classrooms. Staff input is that classrooms are still diverse because of how groups are combined in a class.
- Concern about labeling students and teacher expectations being based on that label.

Next Steps

- New committee established to improve behavior, reduce office referrals, increase school pride/camaraderie
- Team meets monthly to assess program
- House program rewards group and individual achievements
- Has been effective in reducing office referrals. 133 total last school year, 48 for year to date.
- Establishes a common language and behavior system, expectations
- Essential 20 matches up with Learner Profiles
- Monthly House Meetings celebrate students, build teamwork and community, and impart character lessons
- Goal is for kids to leave Cotswold better world citizens
- Teacher feedback has been positive
- Concern about how to track the program's effectiveness
- Concern about communication of details of program

Achieve 225

- Grant's purpose is to increase physical activity, and therefore increase success in the classroom
- Program can be tweaked to fit school and "coaches" meet regularly to discuss what's working and what's not.
- Especially effective for children who are not normally active
- Students are more comfortable trying new things and skills are improving
- Teachers are more involved
- Increase in problem solving skills (Rock It Out)
- Overweight and sedentary kids are being reached with this program
- Teacher feedback has been positive
- Mr. Clutts thinks there is less fighting, less injuries, fewer office referrals. Working to track these with data.
- Concern that football is not an option for students.
- Concern about students waiting in line for soccer. Potential future purchase of a second set of soccer goals?
- Discussed potential to increase recess by 5 minutes next year?
- Will provide year end update