

Cotswold Elementary School Leadership Team

Meeting Minutes March 24, 2015

Attending:

Scott Reed	Stacey Randall
Michelle Powell	Carla Haughton
Candice McWhirter	LaShyondha Berry
Barbara Helm	Erin Ashendorf
Joe Knaack	Alicia Hash
Marsha Mullins	Sherese Smith
Mary Barlow	Katie Catron
Scottie Thompson	Carol Harding
Fae Schaffer	Sandy Mintz
Patricia Gilbert	Patty Drummond
Meredith Sutton	Allison Dowker
Megan Pilar	Erica Schofiled
Michael Wolff	

Chair Alison Busch was absent. Vice-chair Fae Shaffer called the meeting to order at 6:05.

Mrs. Hash gave the Principal's Update. Per Mrs. Hash, we begin the 4th quarter after spring break. The Boosterthon kicked off today, which creates great positive energy in the building. MAP testing was just completed. TRC testing will begin soon. The school has projected numbers for the fall. Total enrollment is projected at 860, which is made up of 7 kindergarten classes, 7 1st grade, 6 3rd grade, 5 4th grade, and 5 fifth grade. There will be no K-1 multi-age class next year. Mrs. Hair will teach 1st grade. Mrs. Catron asked about when the school climate survey will begin. Mrs. Hash said the survey was just completed by the staff and will go out to the parents in this week's Principal's Pen. Mrs. Catron asked if there is a way to encourage more staff to participate in the survey than in previous years. Mrs. Hash said that she expects the numbers to be up based on a high participation rate in a recent staff survey.

Mrs. Hash announced on behalf of Ms. Moras that Cotswold received the Magnet School of Excellence Award. We have also been named one of top 6 magnet schools in the country. 300 schools applied

for this honor. A team is coming out unannounced next week that will meet with the administrative team and take a 2-hour walk-through of the school. There will be one national merit award winner. Mrs. Catron asked if there will be an element of the judging that relates to our strong school culture, and Mrs. Hash replied that there will be.

The next agenda item is staff updates. Mrs. Shaffer read an update from Ms. Moras about the no backpack day that was held on Friday to promote awareness of the lack of backpacks and supplies in other countries.

Mrs. Powell kindergarten – The kids are excited about the Boosterthon and returned to their classrooms dancing down the hall today. They are focusing heavily on literacy as they round out the 3rd quarter, plugging away at meeting their end of year goals. They are focusing on retelling and oral comprehension. They just finished their weather unit and a related focus on nonfiction. The Arts Alive Unit is next, which is always one of their favorites. They are finishing a study of 2D shapes in math and are moving on to 3D shapes. They had a Discovery Place field trip in their last unit and will visit the Mint Museum in the next Unit. They are hosting their first spirit night soon.

Mrs. Gilbert 1st grade – They finished MAP testing in reading and math and are working on retell in written pieces. In math the teachers are working with differentiating instruction to all children. Some kids are working on addition and subtraction facts; some kids are focusing on higher level math such as multiplication and multi-digit addition and subtraction. They are studying people who changed history. They are beginning a To Market To Market unit, and went on a field trip to Cotswold Mall which the kids loved. They will go to Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens as part of their upcoming Sharing the Planet Unit.

Ms. Dowker 2nd grade – They are focusing on reading series books. The kids formed reading clubs and are learning to have conversations about their reading, make predictions, think independently, and use evidence from text to respond to questions. In math they are working on unit measurement, and the kids particularly enjoy actively measuring things around them. They are studying weather and correlating this study with the math topics. They are finishing up geometry. They just finished a sound unit which included an on-school visit from Discovery Place. They will go to Old Salem on 4/14 using funds from a grant and as part of their unit on passport to learning.

Ms. Berry 3rd grade – They are taking a field trip to the McDowell Nature Preserve this week which correlates with their IB unit on plants. They are doing a social studies unit on economic and natural resources which transitions well into the plant unit. They are beginning EOG blitz groups (see Mrs. Haughton's update below) with a focus on building skills, written comprehension, and getting kids through the benchmarks for 4th grade. They are working on area and perimeter, fractions, time, and addition and subtraction in math.

Ms. Pilar 4th grade – The Raleigh field trip was on Friday which is a great end to a year-long study of NC history. They visited the science museum, history museum, legislative building, and the capital building. They are moving into a study of magnetism and electricity which concludes with the lighthouse project. They are wrapping up a study of decimals and fractions, line plots, and measurement. They are

beginning blitz groups in math and language arts. They are reading nonfiction and studying the phases of the moon. They are working on persuasive writing and will move next to personal narratives.

Mrs. McWhirter 5th grade – They just finished the Exhibition. They are wrapping up the Sharing of the Planet unit and are studying the civil war, which includes work on story plotting and a focus on historical fiction. Mrs. McWhirter is very impressed with the quality of the stories the children are writing. They are beginning their unit on Who We Are and How We Express Ourselves, which includes a focus on the transition to middle school. In math they are working on fractions & decimals, and multiplying & dividing. Mrs. Catron asked if they no longer do RHASE (Reproductive Health and Safety Education). Mrs. McWhirter said they will do RHASE, it will be after EOGs. Ms. Mullins said the EOGs will begin the Thursday before Memorial Day.

Mrs. Haughton gave an update on the EOG blitz. The overarching goals are to expose students to variety of text and to a variety of math problems and to prepare for EOGs. Core instruction has been completed. Now they will drill to help the students be confident with what they know, and help identify what needs work. The staff intends to support the kids as coaching, building confidence. They work as teams to go through different genres, starting with poetry, moving into fiction, moving into narrative nonfiction (biographies), wrapping up with informational text. The blitz is in grades 3-5. They will work on strategies for test taking. The blitz is small group instruction and involves pulling in 12-16 support staff. The blitz is a 45 minute block each day Mon-Thurs during the literacy block. The 4th and 5th grade groups will be consistent with their Cougars Call grouping

Mrs. Harding gave the Connect Update. Friday night is the Cotswold trip to the Checkers game. 360 students and parents will attend. Several Checkers players visited the school last week and read to some 1st grade classrooms. Field day is coming up on May 4th & 5th. Mrs. Carpenter is thankful for the PTA's purchase of stage risers. Mrs. Harding talked about how much the 3rd-5th graders have enjoyed using the chrome books and the enrichment she has been able to do with the chrome books. She is working on a grant for headphones. New programs have been added to the Cotswold website, include True Flicks and Capstone Library. Information will go out about this to parents soon. Ms. Catron and Meredith Sutton talked about the benefits of the new program where all middle school students in CMS have chrome books. Mrs. Harding said it is great that our 5th graders will move to middle school already having this experience.

Mrs. Helm gave the EC update. She talked about the process for identifying the EC population. A small percentage of the population begins kindergarten already identified. Other children are referred to the intervention team (led by Ms. Bowers) by their classroom teacher in the early grades.

Mrs. Hash mentioned the career day that Ms. Bowers is heading up this year. They are looking for parent volunteers. Mrs. Hash also talked about the 3 student teachers the school has had from UNCC this quarter and the Swiss interns who will visit for 3-4 weeks later in the spring.

The next agenda item is the SLT Bylaws. Chair Alison Busch met with a subcommittee to edit and review the bylaws. Mrs. Busch sent a copy of the revised bylaws to SLT prior to the meeting for review and edits. Mrs. Shaffer discussed that the primary changes involved the process for electing members, the

term of service, and the election of officers. Mary Barlow asked why a quorum for a vote was 5 rather than 7 for a 14 member board. Meredith Sutton, who was part of the subcommittee, replied that the quorum is a legal term that doesn't mean majority. Mrs. Shaffer made a motion to approve the Bylaws. The motion was seconded. The bylaws were unanimously approved.

Sherese Smith asked for SLT or staff members who know of anyone who is interested in being on SLT and would be a good candidate to please pass along that information. The member nomination process has begun. Mrs. Shaffer asked for anyone interested in being an officer next year to notify Mrs. Busch.

The last item on the agenda is future plans for advocacy for our school, district, etc. Mrs. Hash indicated that there are 3 major areas where she feels advocacy is needed : (1) the school letter grade system (2) proposed changes to EOG testing (one test/one grade in the elementary school period) and (3) teacher salaries. Discussion ensued on these topics as well as possible other advocacy areas. Major points are summarized below:

Mrs. Barlow discussed potential changes to the grade system. There is not a push to eliminate the grade, but the process could be tweaked with the growth component being separate or carrying heavier weight. Concerns are that the grades aren't consistent or fair and don't consider all students in the building. Mrs. Barlow also discussed the NCPTA's position on bringing the school calendars under local control, and this being an issue that SLT could advocate.

Mrs. Hash discussed the 3 early release dates next year. These will not be tied to teacher workdays. The afternoons will be used for teacher education. There will be an afterschool option for interested families for a fee.

Mrs. Sutton suggested that going forward we include an agenda item for advocacy in each meeting.

Mrs. Hash discussed how advocacy continually evolves as the school faces a changing environment. For example, the Safety Task Force grew from SLT's concerns after the Sandy Hook school shooting. Mrs. Haughton advised that we limit pre-chosen advocacy items to a handful so we can be prepared to take on unexpected issues.

Mrs. Barlow suggested that August pre-meeting with the new SLT involves a look at the Advocacy priorities of other groups (NCPTA, MeckActs, MeckEd) and that the SLT picks a few to tackle during the school year. Mrs. Catron suggested that this process involve a survey done either the end of this year or the beginning of next year to summarize parent and staff priorities. She suggested the survey include several suggested advocacy items as well as a blank space for responders to indicate things that may not be on the list or on our radar. Mrs. Sutton talked about what the most effective means of communication is given our population, lack of internet access, and language barriers. Mrs. Catron indicated that AG Middle School sends all information in 3 formats, including a robo-call. Mrs. Hash replied that for our population Cougar Bites and Cougar folders have been the most successful at reaching a large population. The Spanish teacher and Mr. Chapin help translate many things for the Spanish speaking community. Mrs. Catron emphasized that any survey should include the staff. Mrs.

Shaffer suggested that Mrs. Busch could do a close out update for SLT (similar to the mid-year update) that includes the survey.

Mrs. Shaffer called the meeting to close at 7:15. The next meeting is on Tuesday, April 28th.