

Jackson Middle School
Site Council Minutes
February 11th, 2009

Attendees:

Liz Kobs (8th grade rep)
Christi Lossner (7th grade rep)
Donald Rose (6th grade rep)
Nancy Hand (Community rep)
Jenny Owen (Site Council Chair and Parent rep)
Karin Chesnutt (Secretary and Parent Rep)
Maggie Daly (Parent Rep)
Amanda Brown (Classified Rep)

Absent:

John Ferraro, (Principal)
Jill Sage (Asst. Principal)
John Mashek (SUN Coordinator)
Melinda Murdock (Electives rep)

Minutes were approved as previously sent.

Family Involvement Plan and Parent Survey

Jenny Owen presented a summary of all of the survey results on a power point presentation. The survey included two pages of questions designed for parents to answer regarding Jackson school climate and communication. There were 24 multiple-choice questions and 6 open ended questions. It was distributed through the email list and PTA e-blast as well as hard copies at the PTA meeting and in the office. Some teachers also forwarded the survey to their student's parent's emails. We were very pleased with 107 responses (100 online and 7 handwritten). The details of the results, including the appendix of comments, are included in the attachment to the minutes below. The motivation behind the survey is based on our assumption that parent involvement in our student's lives affects student achievement, that the school climate affects parent involvement and that school communication influences parents' ability/desire to be involved with a students' school. Some of the results are the following. (See complete survey and full appendix)

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the school climate is welcoming based on our
Criterion in the survey. Open questions # 7 & 8 provide specific feedback from parents on what's working and what's not working.

The majority of respondents are not aware of several standard methods of communication within the school. Many communication mechanisms are effective for parents when used. Open questions # 19 & 20 provide specific feedback requesting consistent communication by all staff.

Ninety-two percent of Respondents agree that email tops the methods for communicating with teachers. [NOTE: the potential bias of this survey is that 100 of those surveyed (out of 107) responded on-line, which might suggest a greater ease with the electronic

medium.]

Over 1/3 of Respondents did not feel adequately informed about what's going on in the classroom. Over 1/4 of Respondents did not feel adequately informed about their child's academic progress. *[NOTE: the potential bias of this survey concerning #28 is that the survey was only offered in English thereby perhaps limiting the Respondents to those who speak English.]*

Jenny asked that we give our reflections regarding the survey results. The teacher's feedback included their appreciation for the info gained in the survey, but that the solutions to improving communication may not be so simple. For example, the limiting factor for teachers using web grade is not necessarily the teacher's choice to use this method, but rather a limited amount of web-grade trainings and licensure issues. We also have to consider that the use of tools such as web-grade can foster an unhealthy focus for both students and parents on the letter grade alone instead of an emphasis on learning. Another comment included the need to approach this goal of better communication sensitively, since teachers are working hard and could be defensive if this info is not presented carefully. It was also suggested that next year we try to present our survey in other languages. Parent reflections included a confirmation of effective communication – that is, email is the most and easiest form of communication between teachers and parents. That being said, we all realized that our data is biased towards those parents that have access to computers and are comfortable using them. The presentation and utilization of this information to the Jackson Staff will be up to John and Jill.

Jenny asked that after we receive the full power-point presentation via email, that we should formulate priorities and potential action items and come back to the next meeting with ideas. There was concern that certain teachers named could be destructive to our community. Jenny confirmed that the teacher's names were only used in positive examples and she did not see this as a conflict. Nancy suggested that we email back those that took the survey a thank you for taking the survey and survey results. Jenny commented that the survey results would be attached to the minutes from the meeting and therefore would give public access to anyone from the PTA site.

School Improvement Plan – Writing

Donald Rose presented a list of strategies that the staff came up with to improve writing at Jackson. Some of the ideas discussed by staff were cross-curriculum writing, school wide writing expectations, scheduling next year, Writers workshop development, writing in content areas, team teaching across the grade level, and classroom management strategies that allow for writer's workshop. Staff suggestions included many strategies that they can further explore during professional development days. The goal is to push the students of all abilities in their mastery of writing. Teachers struggle with the elementary model of working in like skilled small groups while keeping the rest of the class on task.

The two prominent action steps are to 1) Develop on demand writing as an assessment tool across the school grades/classes and 2) To develop a consistent writer's workshop that focuses on instruction and continuity throughout the Jackson education. John will help staff to prioritize all of the suggestions and give direction to this pursuit.

School Improvement Plan – Reading

Liz presented the current school improvement plan regarding reading. Goal with reading is to follow the same procedure that we followed in writing improvement. It was suggested that the teachers bring this to their teams to talk about a list of strategies and throw out what is currently not effective. Specific task: For teams to come

back with specific ideas that would make our school improvement plan for reading a working and relevant document. Our goal is to create a document that reflects the current effective strategies used at Jackson. We will take time in the next meeting to readdress these strategies.

Site Council Announcements:

Nancy Hand brought the SWNI newspaper to share and pointed out the calendar on the back. She announced that there would be a community budget forum on Feb 24th for the city of Portland. All bureaus are cutting their programs. (Seven million dollars saved by closing two precincts but this directly takes officers off of our streets.)

Art Auction is February 28th.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 11th, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Chesnutt
Site Council Secretary