

Jackson Middle School  
Site Council Minutes  
April 8th, 2009

Attendees:

Jill Sage (Asst. Principal)  
Donald Rose (6<sup>th</sup> grade rep)  
Christi Lossner (7<sup>th</sup> grade rep)  
Liz Kobs (8<sup>th</sup> grade rep)  
Jenny Owen (Site Council Chair and Parent rep)  
Karin Chesnutt (Secretary and Parent Rep)  
Maggie Daly (Parent Rep)  
Amanda Brown (Classified Rep)  
Nancy Hand (Community rep)  
Eric Wilson (Parent/PTA visitor)  
Leslie Starker (Parent/PTA visitor)

Absent:

John Ferraro, (Principal)  
John Mashek (SUN Coordinator)  
Melinda Murdock (Electives rep)

Minutes were approved as previously sent.

In order to be time sensitive to the visitors, the meeting began with Family Involvement Plan.

Family Involvement Plan

1) Parent Communication:

Jenny presented information following a previous site council action item as a result of the recent parent survey to increase family involvement at Jackson Middle School. One of those action items was to create a sheet of basic information to help educate parents about the various communication options at Jackson (i.e. PTA webmaster, E-blast, Jackson Journal, site council minutes on PTA web). Jenny Owen and Karin Chesnutt went to a PTA meeting to discuss this project. There was significant discussion at the PTA meeting. Some comments included: 1) families from non-feeder schools have felt out of the loop – there are not packets available for those incoming families or those families that come to Jackson mid-year. 2) there was a comment that the communication process needs to be reviewed so that there is current, consistent and accessible information available to parents – i.e. Jackson Journal not always timely and accurate 3) help office to classroom communication with PA system (currently financially impossible), 4) through the volunteer coordinator, add parent volunteer role of technology assistants to help teachers use the technology available to the school and 5) there was a discussion regarding the Friday newsnotes – going from on-line to school announcement only. This decision was made by John and Jill based on their belief that the info was really only relevant to students and teachers. John mentioned at the PTA meeting that the Jackson Journal would be improving as the school secretary was getting up to speed (previously Jackson Journal written by principal and now by Jackson secretary).

Eric Wilson – a PTA officer and Jackson parent – came to share his perspective about #2 above – improving the communication process at Jackson and identifying the current communication flaws. His concern is that we are coming to the conclusion that we need to improve how to present information before we have figured out the

communication process. He suggested finding one point of contact that acted as the communication “czar” – one central point for accurate information - creating a phone number and/or email that is the main point of contact that can help direct parents, staff, and community members to the correct information. He gave the example of a “1-800” type of concierge, a source website, and an email address. The phone calls to this number would act as a great barometer to the effectiveness of our information system. Eric said that there are 308 members on the yahoo groups email list for the e-blast. There are well in excess of 4,000 hits a month on the PTA calendar which is the “hottest” section of the PTA website (from March 2009 numbers, for example). There are around 200 views of the weekly eblast as either a webpage or a pdf version of the “glossy” versions, rather than simply seeing the eblast summary and not clicking beyond that. The 200 are not necessarily 200 of the 308 recipients since this includes “clicks” from outside the email list. Eric suggested that we need to look into computer communication systems and find the one that best meets our needs. Jenny asked that all council members identify electronic communication needs and return to the next meeting prepared to discuss the topic before we go forward with designing a pamphlet to clarify communication options at Jackson.

Jill commented that the student numbers at Jackson warrant three full time secretaries but because we are choosing to use that FTE in the classroom to maintain our program we have very limited resources in the office to take on significant communication responsibilities at Jackson.

## 2) Signage:

Leslie Starker came to our meeting to discuss the signage project that she has agreed to lead. She walked inside and outside the school to identify signage needs. She called the district and found out that there are not any resources available at the district level. Jill Sage reported that Mr. Starr was willing to help and suggested using plexi glass as a sheet protector but not wood frames. Leslie said that she would check on price of plexi glass frames. Another option is to professionally engrave signs costing about \$35 each for 2 X 18 (cut vinyl on aluminum). It was suggested that we might want to start with laminated signs until we are able to locate monies for something more permanent. There are approximately 15-38 signs needed and the challenge will be to attach them to the concrete walls. Signs would include naming places in the school in English, Spanish and Somali as well as teacher rooms. Leslie distributed a list of all of the possible signage needs. She starred priorities – including Main Office, Nurse’s door, Student office, 6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade pods, Library, Cafeteria, and Gymnasium as well as all teachers’ rooms. Other suggestions include considering paint, seeking professional printing businesses in our Jackson community (enlist Annie Bottinelli -PTA volunteer coordinator - to ask for specific volunteer needs or donation needs), considering flag signs (although these attract mischief), and seeking grant money. Marcel Rodriguez updated and upgraded the current Jackson Map, which Leslie distributed to help identify the building layout.

## Principal/Vice Principal Report:

Jill Sage reported that there may some proposals to change the Jackson school calendar next year to include a revised Fall conference schedule to 2 nights (with days off) instead of 1 1/2 days of conferences – with emphasis on goal setting. In addition the administration will be proposing a spring student conference to follow up on the Fall goals that were set. The Student conference incorporates the Bernstein Artful learning concept of reflection. The student conferences would be designed to empower students to be responsible for their learning – employing the teacher as the coach instead of expert in this setting. The goal is not tied to grading as much as it is helping the students to identify and achieve their own personal goals. This proposal is still in the very early stages of planning with many logistics to be satisfied. There was a great and largely supportive discussion about the benefits and challenges of student-led conferences. Benefits included the increase of parent involvement – especially in our more vulnerable populations, increase in the students’ self esteem and ownership of education, and incentives for teachers to assign interesting projects. The challenges mentioned in our meeting concern the logistics and the loss of teaching time it could take for students to prepare portfolio. It

was suggested that if Jackson adds student led conferences that we set up clear expectations for parents before the conferences through PTA meetings and/or parent “brown bag” meetings.

Jill reported that FTE next year is down by about 1.81 or 1.84. This loss will be absorbed by one retirement and the loss of this year’s temporary position. There is some pressure from district to use our full secretary staffing and we will have to explain why we need that FTE in other programs. Next year there will be a loss of 60-70 students with community demographics and that loss will show in our FTE the following year (2010-2011) requiring the administration to make some difficult and creative decisions.

Student/Teacher placement letters will be sent this summer between August 14-28<sup>th</sup> and all classroom decisions will be permanent by the time that school begins to ensure a calm and effective school beginning.

Site Council Elections: There are two (2 year) positions available and two candidates have been self-nominated.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Chesnutt  
Site Council Secretary