



Parent / Community Involvement Task Force (PCITF)

Meeting Minutes

McFatter Technical College (Room 602)

August 7, 2017 / 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Present: Mary Fertig (Chair), Debbie Aleman, Joseph Balchunas, Janet Bravo, Andrea Cavanagh, Esther Mizell, Lew Naylor, Veronica Newmeyer, Laurie Rich Levinson

Guests: Nadia Clarke, Christine Semisch

- **Call to Order**

Ms. Fertig called the meeting to order.

- **Update on Parent / Community Engagement**

Ms. Clarke presented certificates of appreciation from the District to members for their support of parent and community involvement and volunteerism over the years.

Ms. Clarke has been looking at feedback and best practices over the summer. She discussed the Specialized Professionals Advancing Resources, Knowledge and Skills (SPARKS) initiative, including building the parent advocate piece. 3 buckets: (1) student achievement, (2) parenting and advocacy, and (3) personal growth. This effort will be rolled out online and in print.

Customer service is still the number one priority. Workshops will be offered.

A re-visioning of the family resource guide, on school websites, was discussed. Ms. Clarke's office (Family and Community Engagement) is working with the Public Information Office (PIO) to enhance this guide, including pushing out information to

families. Her department is also working with the Children's Service Council to update resources.

Mr. Naylor inquired if the District has a listing of the number of parents who own computers (or do not own them) in this "digital divide." May we ask municipal partners to provide a campaign for this?

Ms. Fertig recommended printing out the guides – even in a limited number – to reach some families (better than none).

Ms. Clarke stated, for some communities, staff will "walk with resources" into the communities.

Ms. Fertig reminded that too many acronyms (in materials for parents) may intimidate community members. Mr. Naylor recommended acronyms be presented in unique ways (for example, in thought clouds) to make them more user-friendly.

Ms. Fertig also recommended involving the parents in naming the programs, which will help increase their buy-in.

Ms. Bravo inquired on how parents in the Dillard Zone will be reached. Ms. Clarke indicated all families will receive the information, even if they do not live in the zone where their children attend (for example, reassignments, Magnet programs, etc.)

- **Approval of May 8, 2017 Minutes**

The minutes were unanimously approved – with one sentence (page 2) revised by Mr. Naylor as follows: "Lew said the Zone focus should start in the middle schools."

- **Goals & Actions for 2017-2018**

- Parent Engagement Conference

Mr. Balchunas suggested holding only one Parent Engagement conference during the year rather than two – an "Annual Conference." Spring would be the best time. This would also allow members to focus more of their energy on the innovation zone project.

Ms. Newmeyer stated many parents may not be aware of the Parent Engagement Conference. She asked for schools help increase awareness.

Ms. Fertig suggested scheduling a date for the Parent Engagement Conference so we can let people at the next forum know about it.

Mr. Naylor requested increased marketing of the Conference and reaching out to the community, from a District level. Mr. Balchunas stated principals and teachers play an important role in increasing awareness, too.

Ms. Cavanagh added that parents need the information they learn at our conferences earlier in the school year.

Todd Sussman will reach out to Piper High School to secure this location. March 10, 2018 is the chosen date.

➤ Forums

Ms. Rich Levinson recommended starting the forums again (high school, middle school). It gives parents the chance to have their voices heard.

It was recommended to combine the High School and Middle School Forums into one forum: the Secondary School Forum (on November 1, 2017). Todd Sussman will reach out to Indian Ridge Middle School to secure the location.

➤ Innovation Zone Project

Ms. Semisch indicated Dr. Valerie Wanza strongly supports the innovation zone efforts. There are now more meetings where parents are involved (including quarterly meetings) – a rebuilding of innovation zones throughout the District.

Mr. Balchunas stated zone principals and leaders are having a conversation about what the zones look like now and what their needs are now.

Ms. Mizell suggested a collaboration with parents, rather than parents simply receiving reports.

➤ Task Force Recommendations

Mr. Naylor asked for the goals to include evaluating and measuring prior efforts of the Task Force, to see where we are being effective.

Ms. Rich Levinson called for “meeting the parents where they are” – communication-wise, including their preferences for receiving texts, emails, or telephone calls pertaining to District and school communications. The prompts were already added to the Student Emergency Contact Card; now they need to be input and implemented. Ms. Bravo asked to re-visit the original 99 recommendations from 2012 to see how we are doing on them. Ms. Rich Levinson indicated the Board extended the Task Force, to implement these recommendations.

Ms. Rich Levinson suggested working with a zone or two, to begin to implement those recommendations that have not yet been addressed.

➤ The chosen actions – a recap

Ms. Fertig summarized the preferences for actions to take...and members chose these projects / events as the focus for 2017-18. Subcommittee chairs / co-chairs were named.

1. Evaluate the original 99 recommendations – what was done, and what was done successfully. Subcommittee co-chairs: Mr. Naylor and Ms. Bravo.
2. Parent Engagement Conference – the group chose to hold only conference this school year (in Spring), rather than two. Subcommittee co-chairs: Ms. Aleman and Ms. Cavanagh.
3. Zone initiative – the Deerfield zone is ready and was selected – one zone rather than two. Chosen dates to meet with zone principals: August 30, 2017 and August 31, 2017. Subcommittee chair: Mr. Balchunas
4. Forum in the fall (Secondary School Forum -- high school and middle school combined). Subcommittee co-chairs: Ms. Newmeyer and one other (to be named).

The members asked that the following previous goals should be incorporated into the above four (4) chosen actions:

1. Facilitate communication
2. Promote best practices
3. Build relationships
4. Recognize excellence
5. Share resources
6. Offers opportunities to be heard

- **Fall Conference Report**

This was changed to an “Annual Conference.” Please see above “Parent Engagement Conference” discussion under “Goals for 2017-2018.”

- **Innovation Zone Support Discussion**

The Deerfield zone was chosen for this project. Please see above “Innovation Zone Project” discussion under “Goals for 2017-2018.”

- **Future Meeting Dates**

- Monday, September 25, 2017 - Regular meeting – McFatter* - 6:00 p.m.
- Monday, October 16, 2017 – Regular meeting – McFatter* - 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 1, 2017 – Secondary School Forum (high school & middle school forums, combined) - Indian Ridge Middle School* – 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, March 10, 2018 – Spring Parent Engagement Conference - Piper High School*

*Mr. Sussman will reach out to the above schools to confirm these locations and keep the Task Force posted.

In addition to the above meetings and events, it was announced that information gathering meetings with the Deerfield Zone principals will occur on:

- Wednesday, August 30, 2017
- Thursday, August 31, 2017

- **Adjournment**

Ms. Fertig adjourned the meeting.