

Local School Restructuring Team Minutes

December 11, 2007
4:00 – 6:00 p.m
Eaton Library

LSRT members present:

Sue Eastman, Joy Carroll Wallis, Lucy Mallan, Carolyn Barnhart, Margot Berkey, Laura Broach, Kelley Ellsworth, Noah Steinberg, Diane Magruder, Claudia Withers
Other participants: Marianne Eby, Jeanie Mah, Jeff Schwartz

I. Good News and Community Concerns

- a. Tree Sales booming; sales hit record high on Saturday
- b. Mini Cooper Car Raffle Tickets doing well; drawing will be Sat 12/15
- c. Excellent response (almost 50%) of Community Survey about the Principal

I. Rhee Dinner Recap

On Thursday, December 6, Eaton parents Rick and MaryAnn Nash invited Chancellor Rhee, Principal Gartrell, and several Eaton parents and teachers to an informal supper. These were some of the topics discussed: Rhee's decision to close under-enrolled schools, the principal candidate pool, early childhood education, arts in education, a plan for Special Education in DCPS, autonomy granted to high-performing schools, how to prepare for Eaton's moving its 6th grade to Deal.

III. Transition Planning for after 6th grade leaves Eaton

Laura Broach and Margot Berkey led a discussion of the work of the transition planning committee. They reported that the committee focused primarily on the idea of having 3 kindergartens after the 6th grade leaves. LSRT members discussed this idea, and decided to match this concept with our space plan, and also to get some actual numbers from Trish Berman to determine the validity of this plan. Members also noted that it would be possible to "market" this concept.

Other issues discussed: Would there be leeway in the budget, so that when we lose the 6th grade, we could keep our teachers? Should we consider one combined classroom for one of the lower grades? Can we use our small group approach as a way of handling 3 classes worth of students at each grade?

During this section of the meeting, members also discussed broader issues of transition to Deal. What about keeping the 6th grade? Apparently Rhee has talked about this possibility, and she seems to be considering some K-8 schools for the system. However, it was noted that Deal is on a good path to become a model middle school; also 6th graders at Eaton are really ready for the challenges of middle school.

We need to embrace the notion that the 6th grade is moving on, and think about transition strategies beyond the "buddy day" that is in place. Margot reminded the group that math teachers at Deal are already working with upper grade teachers at Eaton to better prepare our students for middle school math. We also needed to think more about linking parents at Deal with parents at Eaton to facilitate the transition of the students.

I. Principal's Report

--- Enrollment: Our current enrollment is 411; we have received many inquiries from parents.

Our two Open Houses have been very successful. Ms. Gartrell thanked the parent volunteers who made the visitors feel so comfortable.

--- Staffing: The teachers are planning and collaborating. The flexible groups continue. It is time to assess groups in order to make full use of resources for students. Groups and times may be adjusted to meet the needs of all students.

---- Professional Development: DC BAS (benchmark test) data are back; the overall results look promising. Ms. Gartrell will share results at the net meeting. Teachers will develop a "prescription" based on data for each student to be implemented in January. Staff will be attending professional development meetings in house and district wide in January.

--- Big Questions for SY 2008-2009: Good look at the budget and positions, for ex., .5 Special Ed Coordinator; reading/math specialists, etc.

--- Big Questions for SY 2009-10 and beyond: Quality Early Childhood Program? Do we have the facilities to accommodate?

V. Presentation of Principal Selection Survey results (Jeanie Mah and Mariane Eby)

Marianne and Jeanie presented the results of the Principal Selection Survey to the group. They noted first of all that they compiled and interpreted the results, with no input from either the LSRT or H.S.A. leadership. Highlights of their presentation:

---- Approximately 293 families received surveys, as did 32 DCPS funded teachers and staff and 9 H.S.A. funded staff.

--- Forty six percent overall response rate; 43% of families, and 68% of teachers and staff

--- Over 80% of respondents feel that the learning environment at Eaton has improved.

--- Ninety percent of respondents feel that communication between the Principal and the Eaton Community has improved.

--- Eighty one percent of respondents feel strongly that the principal has demonstrated positive educational leadership at Eaton this year.

---- Eighty seven percent of respondents said they would retain Ms. Gartrell as permanent principal if it were up to them.

Marianne and Jeanie noted that 50% of the survey responses included written comments --- and that none of the comments --- some quite lengthy --- were negative regarding Ms. Gartrell. They noted also that the survey did not ask questions about process for the principal selection, including whether Eaton should have a national search.

LSRT members agreed to table further discussion of the survey until the January meeting. In the interim, the survey would be discussed at the H.S.A. meeting, posted on the Eaton list serve, and sent home in backpacks, to ensure that the Community would be informed about them, and also about the issues that were not asked in the survey, but still important.

VI. Discussion of "Marketing the Eaton model" (Trish Berman, Claudia Withers, David Shapinsky, Ms. Freda) was delayed until the next meeting.

Submitted by Claudia Withers