

JOHN EATON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Washington, DC

Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT)
Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Minutes

Members in Attendance: Jacqueline Gartrell, Laura Broach, Carolyn Barnhart, Susan Eastman, Lisa Freda, Diane Magruder, Lucy Mallan, David Shapinsky, Noah Steinberg, Joy Carroll Wallis, Claudia Withers

I. Welcome and Good News

- Welcome Back Barbecue and DCPS Beautification Day were great successes.
- Ms. Eastman reported that the students love the new laptops in the computer classroom.

II. Community Concerns

- Unfortunately, the new fourth grade teacher decided not to come to John Eaton at literally the last minute. Principal Gartrell immediately met with the students in the class that was to have had the teacher, and did a great job of sharing the unhappy news with the students. The plan is to have Laura Broach step in for the short term until a new permanent teacher is hired. In addition, Joy and other parents in the class have offered to work with the class in small groups to assist whomever takes the class. Ms. Gartrell reported that she had already begun the process of hiring someone new; an emergency meeting of fourth grade parents was scheduled for September 12 in the am.

III. Updates

- Principal Gartrell reported that student enrollment is currently at 409--- it is projected to be at 411 as of September 17, 2007. Eaton is budgeted for 411 students.
- With the exception of the 4th grade, Eaton is fully staffed, and things seemed to be going well. This is excellent, considering that we have 5 new teachers. All of the new teachers seem to be adapting well to Eaton procedures, and the atmosphere feels very positive. Principal Gartrell invited anyone who desired to come in and observe classes.

- We have all our textbooks for this year, but what we don't have in sufficient quantity are "consumables," things like workbooks, etc. Principal Gartrell is working to get all those things to Eaton ASAP.
- Physical repairs to Eaton are ongoing --- DCPS repair folks are moving forward with wall, stairs, etc.
- Chancellor Rhee is expected to meet with our Principal sometime the week of September 14 or September 21. Rhee is going to be focusing on the following questions:
 - What does the plan say?
 - What are the problems?
 - What are the proposed solutions?

Principal Gartrell plans to share what she gives to Rhee with us.

IV. Eaton's Test Scores

- Overview: There has been a drop in Eaton's test scores the last several years. Generally:

Math

2006 --- 62.19% proficient
2007 --- 57.59% proficient

Reading

2006 --- 74.63% proficient
2007 --- 67.02 % proficient

There is also a gender gap:

Math ---- Boys

2006 --- 61.76% Proficient
2007 --- 52.13% proficient

Math --- Girls

2006 --- 62.63% proficient
2007 --- 61.86% proficient

Reading --- Boys

2006 --- 66.67% proficient
2007 --- 60.64% proficient

Reading --- Girls

2006 --- 82.83% proficient
2007 --- 73.2 % proficient

- Laura shared an e-mail that she had received from an Eaton parent who expressed serious concerns for Eaton's performance on the DCCAS (?) tests and what she termed the complacency of the LSRT regarding our performance. The parent said that the LSRT should be more honest

about our performance --- and the need for performance enhancing programs.

- It was noted that we need to be very careful about comparing our scores to other Northwest schools --- it would be like comparing apples and oranges. Eaton, for example, has a very high turnover rate, and relatively few students go straight from pre- kindergarten through sixth grade.
- However, some of the concerns expressed are valid. It is important not to overplay our performance --- we don't want to create a trust gap with LSRT and Eaton leadership and the parents.
- A number of questions were raised in the discussion as ones perhaps to be considered, including: (1) Do we compare the same kids from year one to year two; (2) Is the significant issue how the school deals with progress in one year; and (3) Is my child learning?
- Principal Gartrell noted that the lower test scores were definitely something we needed to pay attention to, and also said that Eaton has everything it needs to be successful. From her initial read of the test scores – Eaton has a large number of kids on the cusp --- at or just below basic, for example, or right at the edge of proficient and advanced. A big difference between the new tests and the old SAT 9s is that in the new test, students have to construct answers --- they need some help in learning how to do that better.
- We really need to think about what we can do regarding enrichment. She emphasized that nobody is to blame --- we have some things we can do. Principal Gartrell intends to share some suggested approaches with the staff at their very first staff meeting.
- These include regular assessments --- preferably twice a month. These assessments could either be based on the unit or could be project based.
- We need to really look in greater detail how different groups of students -- - such as those new to Eaton --- do on the tests, and also look at how students do on different parts of the tests. For example, look at how students are doing on vocabulary and on comprehension.
- LSRT member David Shapinsky offered to take what Gartrell would be doing to analyze the test scores, and write up a summary that was accessible to the entire Eaton community.

V. Chinese Program

- Chinese is offered in grades 4 – 6 at Eaton for 30 minutes, twice a week. Lessons are going well. The teacher is very engaging, and commands the respect of the children.
- The teacher is also planning to do a bulletin board which would more fully engage the Eaton community in Chinese culture. Laura Broach suggested

that we explore all the ways we can reinforce the lessons -----
recommend books about Chinese culture, for example.

VI. After School Math Program

- There is a need to have Eaton kids more prepared in Math --- Several of the teachers stated that Eaton doesn't pay enough attention to math, and this position was echoed by a parent who says that Eaton students don't end up in the more challenging math classes when they get to middle school.
- Need a program that reaches all the kids --- there are lots of ways that kids could have fun with math --- the games "24" and "Set," are two examples.
- Concerns include --- who would participate in the program, and who would run it.
- Principal Gartrell suggested that we look at the data to see how our kids are doing, and then use that information to figure out what kind of programs we need.

VII. U.S. Chess Program

- Principal Gartrell would like to institute chess for 4th and 5th graders during lunch --- she believes it would be an alternative for kids who don't want to go to the playground. US Chess Program would provide some assistance to Eaton in this effort.
- Ms. Magruder noted that 30 students have already signed up for Chess Club for after school.

VIII. Communication

- LSRT members discussed the need to communicate our efforts to Eaton community through:
 - posting minutes on the website
 - using the space we have allotted on the H.S.A. bulletin board
 - including articles in the Eaton newsletter, and
 - hosting community meetings
- It was also suggested that we consider doing a blog --- to enable ongoing conversation in the community about issues of concern and interest.

IX Next Meeting scheduled for 4 pm on October 16, 2007

Minutes submitted by Claudia A. Withers