

JOHN EATON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Washington, DC

Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT)

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

Minutes

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

Other Eaton Community Members attending: April Payne-McMillian, Caroline Joss, Sarah Bax, Kelley Ellsworth

GOOD NEWS AND COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- Eaton is looking good – we have a new fence, new steps, holes have been filled in, etc. ms. Gartrell noted that about 90% of the smaller tasks on our facilities repair list have been completed.
- Eaton has regularly been in the Northwest Current, and the pieces have been very good.
- We have new playground equipment, color coded by grade. There will be an assembly on October 17 to discuss playground rules.
- Eaton students have started practicing for the walk for the homeless --- which is scheduled for November 1, 2007

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT: WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Ms. Gartrell raised two issues that LSRT should be thinking about for the future:

- Think about next year's budget and staffing issues --- we currently employ a half time Special Ed coordinator who is shared with Marie Reed Learning Center. It is not clear that we need the position to be occupied. Noah Steinberg noted that a couple of years ago, we were backlogged with special ed related paperwork and tasks, and thus needed extra assistance. Ms. G. informed us that we were no longer backlogged, and consequently may want to consider challenging the need for this position. It is quite a

big chunk from our budget, and we are not really getting the services we need for the money.

- Also for 2008-2009, we want to begin to think about how we want to handle the transition as 6th grade moves from John Eaton. This year's 5th grade class will be the last 6th grade class at John Eaton. Will we want to keep the same number of students as we have now, but without the 6th grade? That requires us to think about expanding preK and/or Kindergarten classes.
- LSRT discussed "marketing" John Eaton to the larger community to capture families who are in the neighborhood so that they think seriously about coming to Eaton and then staying there for the duration. We also discussed attracting those families who are from neighborhoods across the park --- dual income families with one or two kids, who might be interested in Eaton.
- We also discussed the notion of a "three year old" class as a strategy for keeping our numbers and attracting neighborhood families.
- Margot suggested that if we beef up PreK/K, we consider going back to requiring that parents commit to volunteering in the classroom. This made a huge difference in terms of parental involvement at Eaton ---- and we have lost that involvement. Parents got to know the children and other families when they had to spend time in the classroom.
- Margot has been working on the transition issues --- and meeting with Rhee next week. She has been pushing for a task force on this issue. She noted that there would be certification issues for elementary school teachers who wish to move to middle school. Similarly, upper grade teachers cannot automatically teach preK/K as there is a particular certification required to teach those students.
- The group discussed query from Ms. Moses re the possibility of her returning to Eaton as a reading specialist. Primarily, Eaton's staffing budget is very tight, and there is no money for a Reading Specialist. Further, the slot in third grade formerly held by Ms. Moses is now a permanent slot. We already have reading strategies in place, and if we had available monies, other priorities might be addressed, including the hiring of a math specialist. Trish suggested that Wilson High school had students who would benefit from Ms. Moses' interest in serving as a reading specialist.

RETAINING STUDENTS: WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO KEEP EATON KIDS IN UPPER GRADES?

- We noted that there are a range of programs that could help kids engaged in the upper grades at Eaton, including activities such as chess, spelling bee, soccer, etc.
- However, it was noted that seeing that kids are engaged and learning is what keeps parents reassured that their older children would benefit from Eaton. In addition, if parents see that school leadership is stable and that Eaton is a good place to learn, then that is all that is necessary.
- It was noted that there are fewer theme oriented activities in the upper grades --- though other members pointed out that a lot is going on in the classroom that parents don't know about. Need to make it clear that parents in upper grades can come to observe.
- Ms. Gartrell has talked to teachers in the upper grades about project based work, including assessments.
- Other options discussed including hosting Open Houses more often for visitors as well as current families; hosting ANC meetings at the school; Gartrell attending ANC meetings other groups to talk about Eaton; looking at ways to showcase Eaton for community members who are at the school for various activities, including Election Day. For example, have kids recite Gettysburg Address on Election Day for the folks waiting in line, or having the chorus perform.

COORDINATING WITH THE H.S.A --- FUNDING AND COMMUNICATION

Group discussed ways that LSRT could work more closely with H.S.A.:

- H.S.A board meeting regularly with LSRT to ensure same goals
- Looking at H.S.A. budget in concert with DCPS funds, and being more strategic about use of instructional support funds.
- Ms. Gartrell noted, for example, that we have not really measured the impact of having co-teachers in the classroom; for a start they are being used to help create and work with small groups within the class. Based on the data emerging from our test results, teachers have developed lists of flexible groups, with a view toward utilizing all available staff to support the groups.

ASSESSMENT DATA: HOW ARE USING IT TO INFORM INSTRUCTION?

- **Ms. Eastman** talked about the drop in math and reading scores in 2001-2002 --- where we lost ground during that time frame was that we lost students with higher test scores; these students were replaced by students with lower scores.
- **Community has been losing core students --- Eaton Scholars ---** consistently. Rather than obsess on why students are leaving, need to focus on ensuring Eaton success. No Child Left Behind provides that students from schools who don't meet AYP standards will be coming to schools like Eaton --- that does meet such standards. Consequently we will continue to have students of varying abilities.
- **Regarding current drop in scores**, we know that in **reading** students struggle with reading informational text. **In math, the** students need to work with issues such as taking directions, vocabulary and critical thinking. **Ms. Gartrell has asked** Laura to work with the 5th grade. Laura has worked with 5th grade teachers to identify groups of students. She will work with those groups intensively for 6 weeks, then assess the impact of her work. She will also work with individual teachers to incorporate reading improvement in their ongoing curriculum --- for example, in Fitzgerald's science program, Laura will provide support in decoding informational text, and will provide handouts so that parents can support what their children are doing in class.
- Ms. Freda reported that the 3d grade will using small groups for reading and math --- using all available instructional personnel --- ELL teachers, special Ed teacher and co-teacher to handle individual groups.
- Ms. Gartrell stated that in grades 3 – 6, there will be groupings of children based on the data. The groupings would be flexible and children can move into different groups as their needs and abilities change.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT'S PLANNED? What about support for vertical planning?

- Need to think about ways to encourage teachers to meet with grades above and below to plan curriculum. Ms. Gartrell stated she intended to do so.
- Co-teachers can assist with such planning, as they may retain some institutional memory.

- To the extent that vertical planning is integrated into curriculum development and parents are aware of it, may minimize “teacher shopping” that goes on.
- Already positive work going on with our 6th grade teachers and Deal math teachers, to ensure that more Eaton students are in the more advanced math courses when they get to Deal. Ms. Gartrell reported that there has been one such meeting, and there will be another one in November.

LOCAL SCHOOL PLAN --- ARE WE ON TRACK FOR THIS YEAR?

- Chancellor Rhee has asked principals to pare down the local school plans to 2-3 pages, and be accountable for those. Generally, Principal Gartrell has to guarantee that there will be an 10% increase in math and reading scores this year --- and she should be expected to do that. Looking at the data will help in that regard.
- Mrs. Gartrell will provide LSRT with a copy of the newly revised LSP for SY 2007-1008.

COMMUNICATION

- We need to make sure our minutes are posted on the H.S.A. bulletin board.
- Ms. Gartrell noted that Mr. Bergfalk has started a media club, and is interested in using technology for communication. She has discussed with him ways to have teachers use current technology (blogs, websites, etc.) to communicate with students and their parents.

FOLLOW UP --- PLANNING A COMMUNITY MEETING AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEES FOR FOLLOW UP

- A community meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, November 14, 2007 in the evening to talk about the data and what is being done to deal with the data.
- Several subcommittees established to follow up on specific issues:
 1. Data analysis and reporting --- David Shapinsky, Ms. Eastman, Claudia Withers, Lucy Mallam

2. Planning for transition of Eaton after 6th grade leaves --- Laura Broach, Ms. Barnhardt, Margot Berkey
3. Marketing the Eaton model --- Trish Berman, Claudia Withers, David Shapinsky, Ms. Freda
4. Planning community meeting --- Noah Steinburg, Joy Carroll Wallis

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:55 PM.

Minutes submitted by Claudia A. Withers