



JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

Montessori Borealis Site Council



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Date and Time of Meeting: October 19, 2009, 5:45 pm

Members Present: Dayna Weiler, Adriana Bothelo, Alicia Smith, Laury Scandling, Stephanie Allison, Chris Trostel, Tori Talley, Barbara Thurston, Anastasia Tarmann

Members Absent: Darla Madden

Guests Present: Lupita Alvarez

Routine Business

Introductions: We went around the table so all members could introduce themselves. Tori and Adriana will share the AMP student position, with one vote between them. The teachers will rotate the two teacher positions, with one returning and one new teacher at each meeting.

Election of Officers: We elected Stephanie Allison as President, and Barbara Thurston as Secretary. Both were unopposed.

Term of office: In order for the site council membership to have continuity from year to year, we needed to select some members to sit for two year terms and others to sit for a one year term. The AMP student position is already scheduled to serve a one year term, and the rotating teachers make the question irrelevant for them. The assistant superintendent will remain on the board indefinitely.

Members were asked for their preferences, and after a discussion, the site council decided that Alicia, Barbara, and Stephanie will serve for two years each, while Anastasia and Darla will serve for one. The open position is scheduled as a one-year spot, though the actual duration will largely be up to the person accepting the position.

Filling open position: We have not yet had anyone express interest in assuming the open site council position, which is designed for someone outside the Montessori community. Invitation letters were sent to the Harborview and Yaakoosge site council members, with no apparent interest. We discussed other possible sources for a representative.

Laury questioned whether the board policy requires that the community member be a member of an ethnic minority. Barbara stated that she believed that such a requirement is not included in the board policy, but said she'd check the relevant policy. Everyone agreed that it would be helpful to have a representative from one of the minority ethnic groups in town.

Laury suggested some organizations that we should invite to be sit on the site council. These included: ANS camp 70, and ANS camp 2 (Freida Westman and Marie Olson), the Filipino community (Linda Augustine), and the Hispanic Community (Dr Perez from Urgent Care). She also suggested Joan Pardes from SE regional resource center who oversees staff at SEARC (Even Start). Barbara will draft a letter inviting people to participate in the site council, and Stephanie will sign it as president.

Concerns / issues

We spent a significant amount of time going around the table and asking members for any concerns or issues that they'd like to bring to the attention of the site council. A number of these resulted in further discussion by the group:

Alicia

- Support staff – program is lacking – after school and in general
- Facility improvements – make sure we're still on the list
- Expanding program
- Lottery – always on the horizon
- Noise level in hallway – Is that still an issue? Answer: Laury hasn't heard a complaint since lockers got moved

Anastasia

- Use of turf field
- School lunch – still a ways to go in terms of nutrition – Laury recommended that she express her concerns to Adrienne Schwartz
- Better communication with district
- Need more education opportunities with Montessori and community about program
- Safety concerns

Dayna

- Lottery
- Counselor for AMP – DZ can send one of their counselors if needed
- Materials – where should she go for things like an Algebra book?

Barbara

- Enrollment – under-enrolled for AMP this year
- Recruitment – need to think about next year
- Web site – can we have a site on the district's site (juneauschools.org), rather than having to use JMS's (juneaumontessori.org)? Answer: Laury says that should be fine.

Tori

- Kids need info on which bathroom they should use when they need to go during recess – Chris said teachers will communicate that to kids

Chris

- Nothing not already mentioned

Laury

- Suggests we spend the next year or two settling in and trying not to ask the board for stuff – would be appropriate to send a specific invitation to board members inviting a board member to attend Montessori site council meetings as our liaison

Stephanie – as the SEAFOM representative, she brought a list of SEAFOM’s concerns or priorities as well as her own

SEAFOM’s priorities

- Facilities – want to be involved in planning for Marie Drake improvements – both consideration of needs for future growth, as well as the details of what the remodel looks like
- Wants to bring preschool into the district
- Wants to have a single administrator, not three

Stephanie’s priorities

- Community building – need build up our own feeling of community
- Wants site council to understand the lottery – presentation at a future site council meeting
- Need achievement data for our students

Discussions about specific items of concern

Safety: Anastasia reported that her kids and some others don’t feel comfortable walking through the cemetery alone. At least one child was “mooned” by a HS boy, and other had her arm grabbed by someone. Neither incident was reported to police. Laury strongly urged people to report such incidents to the police, and school district personnel – if the city doesn’t know about them, they won’t know to provide extra police patrolling in the area. Kids are now choosing to walk in groups through the cemetery.

A related issue is the question of safety when there is snow on the sidewalks. 12th street in particular doesn’t have their sidewalks shoveled, and kids walk in the street. Similar issues occur in the valley, particularly on Riverside Drive. Anastasia will send a letter to other site councils suggesting we work together in working with the city to resolve these kinds of safety issues. Also, everyone is encouraged to contact assembly members and ask that this issue be addressed.

The blinking light on Glacier Avenue blinks (to slow down traffic) during Harborview and JDHS start and end times, but not at the times that Montessori kids are walking to and from school. Chris will contact Joe Buck at the city streets department to ask that the light’s timing be changed to slow traffic down when our kids are going to and from school.

Chris pointed out that there is a very useful form on the CBJ website for complaints or kudos, that goes right to Joe or other relevant person depending on the issue being discussed.

Committees: Chris is on a communications group committee with new superintendent designed to address rumors, questions, issues between buildings, etc. There are representatives from each building on that committee, and the Yaakoosge principal asked Chris to attend as a second representative from Marie Drake, since our issues tend to be different than Yaakoosge's.

Laury said that the equity committee is becoming active again, and that there may be a spot available for a community member to participate. If a member of this site council is interested in that spot, we should let her know.

Technology, Supplies, etc: Most teachers still do not have working internet or telephones in their classroom, and the computers in the commons are not yet fully functional. It isn't clear who is supposed to be working on this – the Harborview computer person is getting mixed messages from her supervisors about whether she's supposed to be supporting us or not.

Similarly, Dayna is having trouble getting items such as text books – in past, she's gone through DZ. Barb Mecham thinks we should be getting that support elsewhere. There was a discussion of how the non-personnel per-kid money from the district (that covers supplies, textbooks, phones, copying, etc) is allocated for Montessori students, and whether it would be more appropriate for some of those items to be provided in conjunction with Yaakoosge rather than Harborview or DZ.

Support staff: Support staff for Montessori students is currently being provided by Harborview, and the Montessori kids are included in the Harborview count used to determine the number of support staff positions available at Harborview. In addition to a portion of the general duties performed by the Harborview office staff (answering phones, dealing with mail, attendance) the main use Montessori makes of support staff is for recess supervision and serving the school lunch. No support staff is available for supervision of Montessori students before or after school.

There is a need for more supervision of Montessori students in the 45 minutes to an hour after school while bus riders are waiting for their bus. We discussed whether this supervision would be appropriate to expect Harborview support staff to provide.

The addition of approximately 100 Montessori students to the Harborview count increased the number of support staff assigned to Harborview by about 0.5 FTEs, and the services we receive probably fill that person's time. Barbara pointed out Montessori students represent 20-25% of the Harborview students, and it would be appropriate for us to have access to 20-25% of the support staff's time. We pretty clearly don't use that amount of time.

Enrollment: We are low in our AMP enrollment, though the other classes are full (or slightly overfilled). Laury suggested we contact the counselors and health/gym teachers at Floyd Dryden and DZ and arrange a time to get together with them and discuss the program and how it could help kids who may be struggling with the environment at a large school. She gave the names of Ray Malaby,

Sally Donaldson, Pam Wells-Peters, Bill Byouer, and Molly Box in particular as teachers or counselors who could be useful to talk to.

We discussed putting together a 5 or 10 minute DVD showing what school is like day-to-day in the Montessori classrooms. This can be copied and made available to parents who are considering sending their children to the program, but who may not have had an opportunity to attend a parent info meeting. Dayna will talk with the Yaakoosge principal to see if there is a student in their video class who would be interested in helping with this DVD.

Chris expressed concern about children who enter the program late (in upper El) often as a result of frustration with their prior school, but who only stay in Montessori for a year. This is disruptive to the child and family, as well as both affected schools. Laury asked that she keep statistics showing the number of children who first enter the program in Upper El, and how long they end up remaining in the program. Such statistics would be useful in determining if there should be a policy prohibiting children from entering the program in certain grades.

We had a brief discussion on this issue. Many of these "late-entering" children meet one or more diversity characteristics, and we'd like to see them remain in the program and not leave after one year. We brainstormed about ways to help them and their families feel more connected with the Montessori program and thus more likely to return in subsequent years.

For the next meeting

Outreach and community building: Everybody will have done some brainstorming and will come with suggestions for enhancing a sense of community among Montessori Borealis families, and helping new families feel more involved in the program

Safety: We'll have an update from Anastasia on her contact with other site councils about safety issues, and from Chris on her discussions with Joe Buck about the blinker light

Enrollment update: Laury will bring an updated (for the current year) enrollment report, showing our distribution of students among the different diversity characteristics, as well as other relevant factors (ethnicity? Home school boundary area?).

Public member: We will either have a public member participating in our site council by the next meeting, or will receive an update on the recruitment process for that public member.

Future meetings: Meetings are generally scheduled for the 3rd Monday of each month, though the December meeting will be held on the 2nd Monday, due to the winter break.

Next meeting: Nov 16 at 5:45 in the AMP classroom

The meeting ended at approximately 7:30 pm. Adriana and Lupita left the meeting at about 6:15(?).