

Meeting Minutes- 11/13/18

Morningside Elementary School

Date: **November 13, 2018**

Time: **6-7:30pm**

Location: **MES Media Center**

- I. **Call to Order:** Cara Frattasi called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call; Establish Quorum-** Liz Davis, Audrey Sofianos, Christi Feeney, Cara Frattasi, Shelia Baxter-Holmes, Valerie Taylor, and Catalina Sibilsky were present. Kelli Balloon, Tim Richman and Michelle Wilco were not present. A quorum was established with the members present.
- III. **Opening Public Comment-** No Public Comment was made at the opening of the meeting; Three members of the public were present: Emily O'Brien, Lisa Olmsted-Nunez, and Deonne El-Deiry, all current MES parents.
- IV. **Action Items**
 - a. **Approval of Agenda-** Cara Frattasi made a motion to approve the agenda, Liz Davis seconded the motion, and all members present agreed.
 - b. **Approval of 10/16/18 Meeting Minutes-** Liz Davis made a motion to approve the minutes as edited, with the change of terminology to "we appear to be on top of things as a GO Team." Cara Frattasi seconded the motion, and all members present agreed.
- V. **Discussion Items**
 - a. **Family Engagement & Communications Advisory Committee ("FECAC") Update, and Procedure for Drafting the Existing MES Community Survey-** Christi Feeney, Chair of the Committee, opened by identifying the members of the Committee (Christi Feeney, Catalina Sibilsky, Val Taylor, Sheila Baxter-Holmes, Emily O'Brien and Tatiana Nemo), and described the process of drafting the existing survey. Christi took the comments made by the members at the 10/16/18 meeting, as well as comments emailed from Sheila Baxter-Holmes, to create a Draft #1 of the survey, which was distributed to Cara Frattasi all members of the Committee via email. After receiving comments from all Committee members via email, Christi edited the survey to create Draft #2, and distributed to Cara Frattasi and all members of the Committee. Cara Frattasi and Audrey Sofianos met in person on

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November 8, at which time the two of them edited Draft #2, resulting in Draft #3, the draft discussed at tonight's GO Team meeting. Members of the GO Team agreed that the survey should include only those issues which the GO Team can actually change, as well as only the research questions we want answered.

- b. **Discussion of and Proposed Edits to MES Community Survey-** each member of the GO Team was invited by Cara Frattasi to comment on the existing Draft #3 of the survey.
 - i. **Christi Feeney-** The length of Draft #3 is better, the issues condensed. Query whether expansion of the Spanish program at MES is a real possibility- Audrey Sofianos indicated that it is. She requested a definition for survey takers of "Project-Based Learning" as represented in the survey. With regard to the Field Trips questions, she suggested a broader exploration, i.e. "enrichment", to include field trips both in/out of school, in school assemblies and grade wide celebrations. She recommended that cultural diversity/sensitivity be included in enrichment programming, as well as a question re: whether we need additional enrichment options- quantity, as well as new programming. Query whether all enrichment specials should be added here and/or with specials ("outside the core") questions. She requested a definition of Social-Emotional Learning for survey takers.
 - ii. **Catalina Sibilsky-** Should we use "intervention/extension programming" language in lieu of "learning challenges"? She pointed out that Project Based Learning is actually a learning strategy, beyond mere programming. The survey should include more detail/bullets for Robotics, and explain the incorporation/integration into curriculum via projects. With regard to field trips, she suggested that we add more detail and point out the enrichment aspect (beyond just out of school and in school- currently only High Touch High Tech- field trips). She opined that a major concern is a student/parent/teacher's feeling of comfort and welcome inside the school. She proposed that, with regard to "beyond the core" class options, perhaps more should be made available (theater, dance, movement, step team, etc.) and that students/parents be permitted a selection, or perhaps a random assignment each year, with all critical options ultimately being covered. Our survey shouldn't be used to validate academic programming and the achievement as a school of high achieving students- parent satisfaction is not relevant, nor is

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programming outside that which is reflected in our testing scores with regard to high performing students. Parents' thoughts about rigor don't define our academic success- testing scores do.

- iii. **Val Taylor**- A longer survey would be okay, and should include a section to free write comments and thoughts (final question). She believes that with a 10-11 question survey, 3 questions about field trips is too much and misleading about focus. Her major concern is how parents feel about their students' academic day (6 hours): are their needs met/not met, is the curriculum rigorous enough? Perhaps the best information from parents of students who have been at MES 5-6 years. She brought up the idea of an end of year parent survey per for each grade level. She believes that a question about cultural diversity is necessary .
- iv. **Sheila Baxter-Holmes**- the length of the survey is good. She believes that the issues of diversity/inclusion should be woven throughout the survey, especially with regard to communication with families for whom English is not a first language (i.e. are translation services available?) and whether we are being culturally sensitive overall and being forward thinking, appealing to multiple cultures.
- v. **Liz Davis**- the survey is a good length, and should be a good focus on what the GO Team can actually do. For the "who are you" question she suggests a "select all that apply" format, to include PAST MES parents. She also recommends that the "beyond the core" question include a ranking instruction that a ranking of 1 means most important and a ranking of 9 means least important so that the data is meaningful. She also pointed out that the M in STEAM stands for mathematics, not music. She suggested that the answer options should be less leading in various questions, and merely say "I prefer X" or "I prefer Y". She suggested that the field trips questions might be irrelevant as phrased, b/c parents likely don't even think that much about field trips; do response to those questions actually add value? She also suggested the inclusion of open ended comments. She suggested that, for non-parent community members, an identification of the \$ amount of instructional fees would be helpful. She proposed incorporating questions about whether theater/dance/movement classes should be added to "beyond the core" classes available at MES. She inquired about the fact that while the frequency of communications is included, there is no inquiry about content; this could

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be a school/PTA/teacher differential that is broader than this survey (perhaps a by grade survey for teacher communications). She suggested that the final survey be given a good grammar check, and suggested that the “no plans to change” language from the “beyond the core” question be moved to the introductory paragraph.

- vi. **Audrey Sofianos-** Should we ask a question regarding the amount of focus on the four core subjects versus focus on beyond the core items, and whether we have a good balance? With regard to field trips, she indicating that they should be researched with regard to value, to ensure that they are worth sacrificing an instructional day. She wants to focus on what is/is not important at school- perhaps an open ended question- are there other enrichment items that should/should not be included (ex. Handwriting). She pointed out that the newly integrated (as of last school year) 20-30 minutes per student per day intervention/enrichment time has been very helpful (5th squads, Drop Everything and Read time, add on to lunch time) and, in her opinion, contributed to the rise in CCRPI scores. She inquired as to whether we even want parent input about current and future programming (quality/quantity/additions/removals). She agreed the options should be ranked in order to determine what is the least desired (= the first to go). With regard to the rigor/balance of the academic day, the team discussed whether we use the language from the Strategic Plan, and whether it is “attainable but rigorous” or, as Catalina suggests, “sufficiently challenging”? We should keep the survey within the realm of what the GO Team can actually achieve, i.e. to improve the overall experience at MES.
- vii. **Cara Frattasi-** She wonders whether this survey is the appropriate forum for issues of rigor of academic day and cultural diversity, as it would barely scratch the surface of these topics and would not provide a meaningful context (“if we are going to do a survey on those issues, let’s do a detailed survey specific to those issues”) and whether the GO Team is the appropriate body for such surveys- what could we even do with the responses to those questions as a body? She indicated that there is a GA DOE survey on similar issues and we should encourage our parents to participate in that survey (Mrs. Sofianos pointed out, though, that the data from that survey isn’t available until the following year since it is a state led survey). We need to be able to use the data we are requesting

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in a meaningful and impactful way. Ms. Taylor suggests here that perhaps we need to reframe our school/team mission statements (high performing students) in order to accommodate the data we are requesting vs. what change we can create as a GO Team.

- viii. **Tim Richman**- he provided comments via email notes to Cara Frattasi. He thinks school safety should be included in the survey, specifically whether a new resource officer should be hired (a second; one for each campus). Query by the committee- what resources can/should we, as a GO Team, expend to make our school safer, and is it even something that we can gauge- all we can really gauge is whether parents “FEEL” like the school is safer. We don’t know what resources actually MAKE the school safer (metal detector/check in computer etc.). The team proposed that perhaps we ask where, in parents’ opinion, a second school resource officer falls on the priority list for spending.

VI. Plan/Assign Next Steps – Christi Feeney will incorporate all suggestions/edits into the existing third draft of the survey discussed at the meeting, and will circulate to all members. Cara Frattasi will work with members to schedule a December work session to finalize the survey since our next meeting isn’t scheduled until January 2019,

VII. Closing Public Comment- Public comments were made by all 3 members of the public attending:

- a. **Emily O’Brien**- (Also a member of the survey drafting committee). She suggests that a “just right” or “not applicable option be included in the various answer options. She suggests that ranking based answers may be more valuable than rating, b/c it will give us some framework for the top and bottom parent priorities (forces tops and bottoms). She also suggests a question that asks how interested parents are in taking more detailed surveys specific to EDI and safety issues. She feels that the survey focuses too much on field trips as stated, and suggested that we focus on the enrichment/“whole child” factor. She also suggests that we define Media Center to include the term “library”. Finally, she wonders if questions about safety could inform future concerns as school moves/expansions/renovations.
- b. **Deonne El-Deiry**- She thinks the survey is “way too long”, but then agrees that 10 questions is not too many. She suggests that the survey narrow focus to the current “Hot Topic”, and pointed out that the survey will educate survey takers about the GO Team’s focus and priorities as much as it will gather data, and

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suggests that the GO Team focus on what it really wants to achieve results on this school year for survey purposes. She pointed out that many parents will take the survey on their phones, which will involve much scrolling down (intro section too long!). She proposed an option to fill out a separate form for each child for families with multiple children, as the responses may differ from child to child. She also suggests coding as a “beyond the core” option. Finally, she suggests that safety measures may have a deterrent value above and beyond just the “feeling” of safety.

- c. **Lisa Olmsted Nunez-** She suspects that people move to the area and spend \$ on homes because they know MES is rigorous, and thus we should focus on other matters in the survey. Parent concerns are focused on what they see/hear from their kids at home.

VIII. Announcement- Mrs. Sofianos informed the team that the MES CCRPI scores from last academic year (2017-18) place us as the #1 elementary school in APS, and within the top 10 in the state (out of about 2000 elementary schools in the state). We had 990 students last year (projected 927), with our free/reduced lunch students now at 13% (about twice as much as any other high ranking elementary school). She feels that the 20-30 minute intervention programming per day helped in achieving this high result.

IX. Adjournment- Cara Frattasi made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Catalina Sibilsky seconded the motion and all members present agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

The following designated time periods have been scheduled during each Go Team meeting for public comment: 6:05 - 6:15pm and the final 10 minutes of the meeting. A sign-up sheet is available at each meeting and must be used by any person who wishes to speak during the public comment period. Each member of the public will have two (2) minutes to speak. At the close of the two (2) minute period, the speaker will be asked to take their seat so that others identified on the sign-in sheet can be provided an opportunity to speak. **The public comment period is designed to gain input from the public. It is not for immediate responses by the GO Team to the public comment presented. At the end of each public comment period, the period will be closed and the GO Team will move on to the next agenda item. For additional information regarding public comment please refer to the MES website.*