

Hillcrest Community Council
January 9, 2014 - 7:00 A.M.

Attendees: Cort Christensen, Eric Markworth, Tom Rohr, Julie Benson, DeAnn Lichfield, JoLyn Carter, Reed Olsen

Welcome: Cort Christensen

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve made by Julie, Tom seconded, Minutes were approved unanimously

Focus groups discussion – Eric decided not to have a discussion on these at the December meeting. Instead he had a breakfast the day before Christmas break to send everyone off on a good note.

We have a team of teachers who will look at the survey on programs. Mrs. Kent the refocus specialist will chair that team. Smaller groups of teachers will give their input, then it will come to a larger group, and then a report will come to the community council hopefully by our next meeting.

What exactly are the focus groups addressing? Cort - programs, environment at the school, what we being done, how we are going to approach it in a unified fashion. We want everyone to be able to feel comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas without fear of retaliation. Taking the discussion to a large group you either get a mob mentality or silence. We felt in smaller groups that more honest opinions might be shared.

What are our focus groups? Our grade levels. We will leave it to Eric to address how those focus groups will function.

We talked last meeting about the programs and the list is in the minutes, it is arduous in itself, Are we doing the right things for the right reasons or are we just doing it because it is someone's pet project. Did this discussion happen because of the report of Reed's committee at our last meeting? I followed up with Reed's committee and only 3 of the 7 people were able to give their input.

I hear that the high school is looking at another grading system. Will that affect us here at the elementary? At the current time it appears that it won't. They are looking at CANVAS.

Cort, if it is okay, I will start. I met with the Superintendent in Decembe, he showed me a letter that he had received with anonymous concerns from staff members here. I then contacted Cort and told him I was pleased with how the situation was handled by the community council and also conveyed the Superintendent pleasure with how this group handled things. I felt supported by the Superintendent. I have been working with a Leadership coach. In conversations with her I would like to get more specific information from the staff. There will be a third party come in and give a survey to the staff regarding my effectiveness as a principal and the climate here at Hillcrest. The results will be tallied by them. Then it will come back to me and they will help me to better my leadership skills and to improve the culture here at the school. In saying that, Cort, with your permission, I would like to open it up and let you voice concerns you might have as a group.

Tom - We appreciate that when we come to the school you are always out there welcoming the kids in and you know each of their names. A general feeling that students are welcome. My child is almost violent if he has to miss school. Wish the staff could feel as good about coming to school as the children are.

Julie - From my discussions with staff they feel that their ideas aren't heard. They are asked for their input, but the decision has already been made. If people feel like they have had a voice in the process, people will more likely support the outcome.

JoLyn - I feel like we are moving forward. I'm enthusiastic about where things are going.

Cort - I am in awe that you know all the students in the school.

I just wanted to say, we intentionally left the teachers out of our visit to the Superintendent because we wanted it to be strictly from the parents standpoint.

Is there anything else from the letter that you are concerned about? No other comments.

Julie, in her capacity as MLMS council chair, received this letter from Paula Plant that lists specifically what trust lands money can be used for. Can we use the trust lands money to fund professional development for Leader in Me? We had this discussion in the principal's meeting yesterday. We have Leader in Me as an action item, but not necessarily as a goal which is okay. The SIP is a living document, we can write a fourth goal with leader in me addressing behavior goals that will improve academics. I think either of those is appropriate, we just need to discuss it and determine which direction which we want to go. It is appropriate to have a behavior academic goal. However, speaking for the staff it is better to have less goals. I think it would be better to tie it into existing goals.

Where are we in the Leader in Me grant process? I talked to them yesterday. They were impressed with what has been done so far. In talking to Lauren Myers she would be looking at donors to try to have a decision in the next month or two. She asked, "Whether you receive the grant, do you still feel that you will implement the principles of Leader in Me?" That was a reflective moment. I think we will move forward, but of course we won't have the professional development that currently they provide.

Did you get any feedback on the survey that we were invited to text our opinions to them? I didn't about that specifically. That survey was to get baseline data. If we get the grant they would give the same survey at the end of each year to make sure we are moving in the right direction.

Do we need to make a decision today on how to spend the remaining Trust Lands funds? Let's wait, if we get the grant we can have that discussion, if not, there is no need for the professional development.

Do we need to come up with plan 2 of how to spend the money? The high school is using trust lands money for compensation, perhaps we can pay our teachers for our leader teams. It will help morale, but not academics. Perhaps with our low scores, it will improve academics if morale is raised.

Tom reported that one of his students came back from a student teaching conference where the presenter was a former administrator - they have noticed that as young teachers came out they had been exposed to the newest technologies; they feel that they know all this new stuff and look down on older teachers because they aren't comfortable with the new technology. However, this presenter said, "There is no substitute for one-on-one teaching. A good teacher can teach anything. It is truly about the ART of teaching." The climate at the school needs to respect the ART of teaching. It takes 5 years to develop good teaching skills.

Eric did you talk to Sundee about our discussion last month? No, I haven't met with her. I will do that.

Cort will write the letter to the legislators and get it out to us.

If the Leader in Me is not the plan, you have \$7,000 in your budget. It is a use it or lose it. I think we should use it for science. I think we should seriously target one of these areas that we have goals for. Bring in professionals to help the kids really get a grasp on this concept. The district gave us money for science. Chris Davis has ordered books for that purpose. Third grade would like some hands-on science things. Have them look in the basement. I found my second grade science bin in the basement just a couple of months ago. The third grade would like hands-on activities: field trips, SDL, etc.

Will you and your staff come up with a Plan B of what the greatest need is and how we can address it? Can we spend it this year with the hope that it will bring benefits next year? It will be too late this year to make any difference on the students test scores.

Are the students that attend the after school club those students that are most at risk for low academics? Can we use some of the funds to have trained personnel there to help those kids get up to speed? Some schools pay teachers to stay and work with students and they get paid for that. Those are great options. We currently have 5 teachers we pay to stay after school, we could increase that number. Would they have to be After School Club students or would these "clubs" be open for all? We targeted specific students for math and science, but we could open it for all. Could it not be a specialist? No, they aren't allowed to work over 30 hours or they qualify for benefits. Hire someone specifically to come in and teach music, science, etc.

What I can do is put together a couple of proposals of what we would like to spend the money on. Proposal 1 - Leader in Me professional development, Proposal 2 - would be what we would do if that doesn't work. Is that okay if I do that for the next meeting? Yes

Assignments: Eric - Proposal, update from Sundee, report on focus groups

Cort - Letter to legislature will be sent out during the next week

Eric said that Tom should bring refreshments, Cort, "I second that."

Give Jason an assignment since he missed the meeting, let's have him do community council T-shirts.

Adjourn: 8:00