

Building Council Retreat
June 27, 2011
Library Classroom
8:00 – 2:30pm

Attendance: Colleen Kane, Valerie Wadsworth, Nancy Pearse, Lindsay Armbruster, Penny McDonnell, Janet Bianchi, Connie Safford, Shauna Bryk, Marie DiCristafaro, Amy Clark, Suzanne Rayome, Diane Alois

Topics:

1. Welcome to new members
2. Review Shared Decision Making protocol and checklist
3. Standing committee reports & recommendations
4. Update on building and district initiatives
5. Evaluation of goal achievement 10-11
6. Evaluation of building SMART goals 10-11
7. Recommendation for 11-12 building goals
8. Goal development for 11-12
9. Open floor

We are happy to welcome Marie DiCristafaro to council. She is taking the place as 6th grade representative due to Melissa Fiaschetti's maternity leave. We will welcome Linda Dowery as the new 6th grade parent representative, Connie Safford will remain with us as the 7th grade rep and Carol Frost-Cyrus will move to 8th grade.

2. Shared Decision Making

A discussion of how best to communicate building council initiatives, progress of initiatives and communication with staff was brought up. We decided that we would add "building council" to our monthly faculty meeting agenda and dedicate time to discuss our meeting progress. We also talked about introducing council members at the initial opening day faculty meeting to give new teachers a face/name and re-introduce the function and purpose of council in our building. This gave way to a conversation about CSEA membership, and Amy mentioned that she has a large group to communicate with. One of the solutions will be having a staff (CSEA) meeting each Tuesday following a faculty meeting. This agenda can be modified specifically for non-instructional staff. This way all building initiatives, goals and issues may be discussed.

Another issue of meeting times being changed came up. Suzanne brought up the conflict we ran into this year with the summer curriculum recommendations. In order to get the paperwork in on time to Dr. Evans, we needed to hold a meeting earlier than the originally scheduled date. This in turn created conflict with department meetings. The other issue brought to my attention was that traditionally, faculty members who request summer hours would have an opportunity to present their requests in person to council to help answer particular questions or address concerns. I was not aware of the practice, so next year I will make sure we accommodate this.

All of the recommendations will help us continue a transparent system of communication, and allow us to properly continue with shared decision making guidelines.

3. Committee Reports

- a. **Technology:** The tech committee met several times this semester to discuss the Innovative Technology grants that were awarded by Dr. Evans. We managed to accommodate everyone's requests in some manner. Patty Henderson called a final meeting in June to get consensus on how to spend the monies that John Capano made available to the middle school. Her recommendation was to get the upstairs lab new computers. The new computers will be faster and better equipped to handle our growing needs. We agreed, and she made this recommendation to John. This year, we were able to bring in more projectors, I-Pads, ELMO document cameras, and other technological pieces of equipment for our staff. We used some extra funds to purchase 2 iPads and an ELMO camera for faculty use. The district tech committee, as reported by Patty Henderson states that our closets will be replaced over the summer to help our bandwidth speed.
- b. **PAT:** The PAT team met infrequently this year, partly due to the administrative transitions and the lack of referrals. There seems to be a sense of frustration/confusion in respect to the role and purpose of the team. On May 20th, as a response to the need for clarity and purpose, our building had a ½ day conference day to dedicate to the re-introduction of Response to Intervention and PAT team's role in determining or recommending a more restrictive learning environment for students. We talked about the creation of an instructional support team (IST) in helping the classroom teacher design strategies for student success when they have exhausted their own comprehensive bag of tricks. This led us into a larger conversation about student success/student achievement and the practical ways we could support teachers. We talked about the difficulty with after school mandates for students with the large number of itinerant teachers and the reluctance of students to stay after. We talked about the HS academic detention room run by Tim Brunson, and determined that we could, in fact, modify this to a certain point for our middle school students. Nancy Pearse discussed a mandated activity period idea that she brought to the 7th grade. The contract she drafted was initially declined by 7th grade staff. In fairness, the staff felt reluctant to force students to stay, when they have many who want to stay for extra help. Teachers don't want to take away the opportunity to reach several because they are busy disciplining or redirecting the one who does not want to be there. We talked about other ways to get students to stay after and try to keep them connected. We talked about the OASIS program and its goals for the 11-12 school year. In the folders provided to the council members, I made packets of articles to read. One of the articles came from SAANYS journal from June, 2011 that talked about the program created at Shaker Junior High in North Colonie. This program is very similar to ours, but has more resources and dedicated staff. I shared with the council that I've encouraged Tracy McCarthy to make a trip to North Colonie to investigate what they have and see how feasible this program (in scope) would be for BHBL.
- c.
- d. **Transition:** The transition team has worked for the past few years on streamlining school practices related to student transitioning from grade to grade. Some of these practices are, but not in total: color coded notebooks, organizational strategies, study skills, agenda changes. Before discussion of discontinuing the committee, we will present the transition team's goal for 2010, the polished product alignment to 21st Century skills to the faculty on the next building wide conference day. The council has agreed that the polished product and all of the recommendations of the transition team become common practice on September 2011. It was brought to vote and passed unanimously.

- e. **Wellness:** The wellness committee has successfully implemented two student activities this year. **26.2** 208 students walked at least once. 6th and 8th grade participation exceeded that of the 7th grade (only 11 7th graders signed up as opposed to 66 6th graders and 83 8th graders). No 7th graders completed a half marathon. 67 students completed at least a half marathon. 5 students completed a full marathon. The party was a great success with about 70 students attending. **PPTS** Lunchtime power-points were created to provide information about various health topics. **STAFF** The staff wellness initiatives were not as successful. The Pilates class was popular, but interest waned. We discussed the potential for PTO sponsorship and volunteers to help with student activities. We talked about the possibility of bringing another parent forum to our community. The fall parent forum on depression was very popular and appreciated by the community.
- f. **Anniversary Celebration:** Resounding success! Thanks to Lindsay Armbruster, Nancy Pearse and the committee for a most successful party. The student participation, the time capsule and the culminating event with over 100 community members and retirees was exceptional.
- g. **Power School:** The district power school committee has made their final recommendations to the Superintendent. One of the suggestions to come from the district committee is that each building create/provide their own PS team. We have 5 turn-key trainers in our building. (Armbruster, North, Sprenger, Bucci, Gestwick) The district staff development committee is working on providing the training necessary for all staff on the opening days. Kate sent out a sheet for all staff to sign up for workshops reflective of their comfort level and proficiency in the power school system.
- h. **Class Night:** Penny McDonnell has indicated a desire to step down as chairperson. She's willing to work with a co-chair next year to transition after...23 years on the committee. We need more members. Penny has offered to continue with the artwork in the entrance and the design of the invitations. She said that at least four members of the committee are necessary in order to get everything accomplished. She and Katie Z. were the committee this year, and with the yearbook and other responsibilities, it was too much for Katie as well. We talked about presenting what class night is at the first 8th grade town meeting, so student enthusiasm and participation will increase. It was reported that many students did not come to the dance. This could have to do with finances? We talked about the Cinderella group at the HS that collects gently used formal wear for girls, and has student volunteers to help out with make-up, hair, etc.
- i. **Committee for Academic and Personal Excellence:** Nancy Pearse stated that this committee has not met this year. But, with new teachers and administration it is a good time to review the purpose of the PDA grades. It was decided that everyone needed a refresher on how to use the rubric and how grades should be reported. We agreed that the 9/29/11 staff day would be a great time to review PDA grades in conjunction with the refresher on the transition team's presentation of the polished product.
- j. **Health & Safety:** Katie Z. has asked to step-down as chairperson. Her yearbook and class night responsibilities have become enough for her to manage with her teaching responsibilities. The committee did not meet actively this year. We should look to bring back Cynthia Holmes for table top drills to improve our response to crisis/evacuations. We have one wheelchair bound student who will need classroom access upstairs, so bringing the group together in the fall to work out an emergency plan for her and other

students with life-threatening illness will be a priority. Next year, the committee will meet regularly to refine protocols for school safety.

School Climate: Nancy Pearse met once with the School Climate committee. The attendance that day was almost every male teacher in the building. Their primary concern is the dress code. It is duly noted that we do need to make an effort as administrators and a building staff to address the chronic “offenders” of the code. We have made language changes in the student handbook that are consistent with BH-BL high school. The changes were simple, we moved sentences and phrases in strategic areas and added the “knuckle-rule” to make sure we have a place in which to make fair and appropriate judgments as a staff. It’s important that faculty members address students only if they’re comfortable and setting up a protocol if they’re not. This will be an ongoing conversation next year.

A suggestion was made to change the name of PAT, to IST for next year. This new committee would broaden the scope of instructional support, and could be responsible for leading and reporting out on the progress of the following:

- ✚ Compliance with district Response to Intervention
- ✚ PAT Team
- ✚ CSE/504 Updates as they pertain to instructional/building goals
- ✚ OASIS
- ✚ Update on primary/instructional team goals
- ✚ Staff development

We have decided to merge character education committee and school climate, keeping **SCHOOL CLIMATE** as an umbrella for:

- ✚ Student expectations and responsibilities (including code of conduct, PDA & report cards)
- ✚ School programs to support positive school climate (character ed programs)
- ✚ Dignity for All legislation as it pertains to our code of conduct and anti-bullying programs for students

We will remove from the building council official committee list:

- ✚ Anniversary Party: Task completed successfully
- ✚ Sunshine: Non-instructional committee.

Once we present the polished product to the staff, it is possible that we will eliminate TRANSITION as a building council committee?

Much of our focus centered on building relationships with students. We agree, and believe as a council, that engagement at every level either in or out of the classroom is what keeps students in school. Lindsay is looking to bring the Dove self-esteem program to our students, and we talked about motivational speakers and building-wide spirit days for our kids.

We have many clubs and activities for kids that they and/or their parents are unaware of. We also talked about generating a power point/web based list of clubs and activities for families. Back to School night will be used as an additional venue to present clubs/activities to parents.

4. Updates on Building Goals

Included in the packet of information given to members of council, was the power-point presentation from the April BOE meeting. Nancy and I made the comment that we (as a building) did take some criticism on the issue of 8th graders failing two or more of their core subject areas. Although we have seen a decline in recent years, this year the number of students failing at the time the presentation was made was alarmingly high and a board member brought attention to it.

In our defense, the numbers presented at the time of the meeting are typically not reflective of final fourth quarter averages. But, unfortunately our numbers *were* higher when calculated at the end of the year. The data collected from guidance on July 1st, reports:

	<i>No. Students 2+ Failed Courses</i>	<i>No. Students 1+ Course</i>
Grade 8	14	12
Grade 7	4	9
Grade 6	1	3

As a result, this year we have 18, 8th grade students enrolled in summer school, and 12, 7th grade students enrolled. This begs the question of why so many 8th and why not so many 6th? We discussed putting our own team together to evaluate the data, and look at the measures taken to prevent failures from grade to grade, taking into account the master schedule, student to faculty relationships and interventions that we could incorporate into our building practices.

Included in the packet of information given, was an article submitted to the SAANYS journal about the At-Risk Program at Shaker Junior High School at the North Colonie Central School District. I have had discussions with Tracy McCarthy about proposing a “road trip” to Shaker to see in person how their program runs, find out what financial and staffing needs are required and how to best enhance our own OASIS program moving into next year.

We had a brief conversation about APPR. We are coming back to school in September the way we left in June; our District APPR will remain in place until such time that it needs to be changed. Conversations have started at the district committee level and have been on-going. Any changes would be expected to be shared early fall.

We shared the minutes from the Anti-Bullying Task Force, and discussed the results of the surveys from students, and the staff development that each district employee will receive in the fall.

5. Evaluation of our building SMART goals and Area of Focus:

SMART Goal No. 1:

To reduce the number of students failing two or more subjects by 10% by June of 2011
As stated earlier, our number of students, overall, went up. 19/791 students failed two or more in 2011, up from 15/823 in 2010.

SMART Goal No. 2:

By June of 2011, the O'Rourke Middle School will reduce by 10% the number of students whose personal development grade average falls below a 3.0 by establishing adult/student connections.

Concentrated Areas of Focus:

The areas of focus are more a philosophy of middle school educators, rather than a specific action plan.

6. Development of 2011-2012 Goals:

After much discussion, it was decided that we would change our SMART goal. We mentioned earlier that we should concentrate on one cohort of students to best identify what we can do to intervene and assist in making sure students are successful. We decided student achievement will be our top priority, and our council will demonstrate their building leadership by creating and continuing committees that will support students and faculty.

2011-2012

By 2014, 97% of all O'Rourke Middle School 8th graders will have passed three or more of their core subjects.

Culture

Building Council Strategies to Support Goal.

- a. design/redesign the committee structure. Provide leadership in designing action plans that will support building and district initiatives including, but not limited to APPR, RtI, 21st Century Framework, Power School, Dignity for All, CCLS
- b. reporting out by council co-chairs at faculty meetings each month on progress made at the committee level moving the building goal forward

Team

Build council collaboration with building staff

- c. set council reps as co-chairs of each committee to share knowledge and ideas with staff members
- d. look to each other for support, build relationships throughout the building and celebrate our successes

Data

- e. As a council, design yearly action plans to support the SMART goal, District and SED initiatives. Forecast potential disruptions and plan strategy to alleviate potential pitfalls. (master schedule, staffing, technology, communication, team time)
- f. Measure and monitor data on a quarterly basis