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**Muscota New School  
School Leadership Team Meeting  
January 20, 2010**

Present:

Tomasz Grabski, Muscota Principal

Staff: Emmy Matias, CTT - 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Victoria Dallas Stephenson, 2/3 Grade teacher, Dayna Goldberg, drama teacher

Parents: Guita Ranjabaran (Chair), Shannon Park (P.A. President), Kari Steeves, Bri Mitsuoka

Absent: Christopher Wilson, Kindergarten teacher – Muscota UFT Chapter Leader, 2009-10

Silent Observers: Margaret Peeler (silent observer), Cari Fershing

**Call to Order and sign- in:**

Guita Ranjabaran announces she must resign as Chair of the Muscota SLT as of this meeting; Kari Steeves agrees to serve as Acting Interim Chair for ONLY next meeting; Approval of use of “preferred form of communication” (ex.: email, cell phone);

**School Environment**

Chair introduces the topic in relation to complaints raise at December 23, 2009 meeting. Regrets that Principal did not attend.

Teacher states that she does not feel safe, nor are children safe in the present school environment.

Principal questions validity of 12/23 meeting as out of scope of SLT. Principal leaves the meeting.

**Proposal:**

Parent suggests that SLT investigate mediation and table discussion for now.

**Action Item:**

Someone should make the suggestion to Principal and invite him back to the meeting. Bri Mitsuoka does so.

Principal returns. Principal resumes discussion, expressing unhappiness that he has “put up with you people for 16 months” and is not being listened to by anyone.

Discussion is heated. Some discussion revolves around what topics are prohibited for the SLT to discuss, in particular matters of personnel.

**Approval of Minutes for 12/23/09**

Request to approve 12/23/09 Emergency Meeting Minutes. Because topics

addressed at the meeting have been tabled, notes are approved without further discussion.

## **Principal's Report:**

### **Budget Update:**

There will soon be further budget cuts of 1%; Funds were set aside and unused funds originally intended to cover per session payment to teachers have been used (\$25K) to cover loss.

### **Interim Assessments – Trends:**

Worried that many of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders will not pass the NY State exams in 4/10 and 5/10. There is new promotional criteria; we do not have enough funds to implement a summer school program at Muscota due to the citywide budget cuts; children who require summer school will have to attend 50 blocks away with staff they are unfamiliar with. We will only be allowed 4 promotional exemptions.

Parent asks for clarification.

Teacher: Detailed explanation of implementation of Math “2 Pen” *Periodic Assessments* administered in:

NYC - DOE *Empowerment Zone* schools (like Muscota) versus “Interim Assessments” *Used in NYC DOE Instructional Division Schools, since 2007. Different from Interim Assessments, Periodic Assessments* are not intended to predict success or failure on standardized tests.

Teachers usually know who will pass and who is struggling well in advance by making daily observations and keeping archives of student work; they also account for adjustments needed for children with special needs;

### **Lunch/Recess Summit:**

Principal: school aides and para-professionals have all been reassigned to supervise students during lunch and recess; (refer to letter to staff and families sent 12/09); No one received letter.

#### **Action Item**

Principal will ask Denise to send again.

Parent: Aides supervised in past years; this problem has persisted for years. Aides must be trained; assignments for adults responsibilities should be made available.

Parent: lunch and recess conditions are dangerous; there is an atmosphere of chaos; makes two recent incidents possible (referring to a child suspended for bringing and dispensing live ammunition to peers during recess in 2009.)

Parent: requested principal to address repercussion of incident with parents in workshops or at PA meeting, etc.

Parent: We need one person in charge, held responsible for other supervisors.

Principal: Principal is ultimately responsible, then Migdalia and Denise and the support staff.

Children now have more options: They can choose to go outdoors in 30 degrees and above; Clubs run by teachers & voluntarily chosen by students

Clubs: drama, (Dayna), comics, (Toby), Marian (literacy teacher), Eric, (ESL)

Teacher)

Questions about the logistics and children doing work, homework during this time are asked

Chair: lunch and recess symptomatic of tense school atmosphere, as addressed in SLT Emergency meeting 12/23. Meeting intended as part of SLT's duty to resolve conflicts internally.

Tense and contentious discussion ensues about poor atmosphere at school.

Principal leaves meeting again. Principal returns.

Parent: suggest seeking mediation from group such as International Center for Creative Conflict Resolution, (ICCF);

### **Bylaws:**

Discussion about what constitutes a quorum;

Teacher: two is acceptable in case someone is absent (such as has occurred on this day) , it doesn't stop the work of the group.

Principal: principal is solely responsible for everything. Goal is to save the school.

Chair reminds members that tone should remain respectful at meeting.

Questions that the school needed saving; recommend we seek mediation in order to improve communication, between Principal and those who have been here longer and who know the school well, as it was originally designed. Would like to see a mediator who knows school historically, such as Jane Andrias, Kyle Haver, Maggie DeLucca, Vincent Brevetti; any of these parties are well equipped and know the school/are independent and have the school's future well being at heart.

Parent suggests we should use as qualified a mediator as possible, so that a professional abitrator may be better qualified.

Are there funds to do this in light of upcoming budget deficits?

Teacher: asks for clarification on who is in need of mediation.

Parent: what are our goals for mediation.

Principal: Goals have not been discussed properly.

Heated discussion about school governance, goals, failure of collaboration, appropriate topics for SLT discussion, and quorum. Searches for regulations to answer some questions are done on iPhones/Blackberries but all regulations found provide open-ended rules as to quorum and discussion topics.

Principal will get a copy from downtown.

Principal requests that agenda be provided in advance of meetings.

### **PA Report**

- 2009-10 Muscota Memory Book: Fordham Publishing Co. to print at low cost; to be sold to other than graduating students in order to raise funds for Clearpool – 5<sup>th</sup> grade trip;
- Shared space: Cafeteria no longer available for P.A. Meetings; access to all common spaces more stringent this year. Have no shared space options.
- Permits: addressed custodian with problems regarding permits. He claims they are either not submitted in time or with wrong times.

- Safety Council: requests that a P.S. 314 & P.S. 311 Safety Council be established to improve safety and conditions in the building for all.
- New playground – great collaboration between two schools; construction to begin April – September, 2010; includes a garden, slip - free ground cover;
- Recess and Lunch plan: requests a detailed, written plan for Muscota recess for Spring/Summer, 2010;
- Prospective Parent Open House reports that it went well; excellent coordination, great presentation/collaboration between staff and parents.

Meeting adjourned: 5:20pm.