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**Muscota New School  
School Leadership Team Minutes  
Special Meeting May 5, 2010**

**Read and Review minutes from April 14, 2010**

PA President: add word "Minutes"

Accepted with that one change.

**Principal's Report**

**Recycling**

Robert Lock, Citywide Recycling Coordinator, of Grow NYC, spoke at the Muscota staff meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. He wants to help Muscota develop a long-term recycling plan. Alli is our Sustainability Coordinator. Each cohort must choose a representative to meet once per month to fulfill Chancellor's regs on recycling in schools.

**Professional Development**

Jamie Boyer (Bronx Botanical Gardens) wants to provide professional development for Muscota staff. Principal planned to have lunch served at the Gardens; Jamie contacted Principal to relate concern that an elaborate luncheon would leave little time for exploration and discussion. Jamie suggested teacher bring their own lunch.

Principal wants to offer Wilson training for Special Education teachers at Muscota. Wilson is a specialized reading program.

Chancellor's PD Day, June 10, 2010 staff may go to Ramapo (upstate NY) for retreat, or have Music Seminars leaders to speak to staff regarding the services they offer.

**Discussion:**

Wilson training is not specifically for Special Education, but for anyone who wants to help struggling readers. It should be offered to all teachers.

If there is so much money for PD, why not use some of it to pay teachers for writing curriculum, developing curriculum maps, planning on their own time.

Collaborative Team Teachers want real PD around CTT – not visits to other schools but examples and workshops about different models.

### Salvadori Program

Lauren will attend an awards event this evening. Foundation funders visited Lauren's classroom recently. Muscota is a model school. The program, which served eight classes this year, costs \$15,000. The budget is not yet in, but Principal hopes there will be money to fund Salvadori next year.

Discussion:

Staff hopes there will be funding as we are a Salvadori Globe School.

Can PD funds be used to finance further Salvadori work?

Teachers called Albany to request no cuts.

Administrators rallied outside City Hall for no budget cuts.

Next Tuesday, an SLT conference will be held from 8:30-4 in Long Island City. The afternoon session is for parental involvement. Principal asked for 5 members to attend, including 2 staff members. He stated that he would give more information. Attendees can expect networking, presentations, and ways to ask questions, to make our work more effective and more productive. Breakfast and lunch will be served. Interested SLT members must let Principal know by tomorrow afternoon if they'd like to attend. Principal feels it will be worthwhile and a time to reflect. No SLT members volunteered to attend.

Discussion:

Will people be assigned to go if they don't volunteer?

Members need more timely notice to be able to attend.

Teachers are busy with classroom responsibilities and trips.

Chair stated she sent an email to notify members of this upcoming event.

### Testing:

Math make-up will be Monday and Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

Discussion:

Principal was asked if families have this information. Principal replied that parents were not notified. No way to tell what children will need to make up on any given day, it is as there are issues that cannot easily be addressed in a message to families, such as, testing modifications, which part of the test the child missed, the child's grade, etc.

**Action Item: SLT Chair asked that families be notified ahead of time, with as much information as possible so that parents can prepare children by having them go to bed earlier and making sure they have a good breakfast.**

What happens if a trip is planned for one of the make-up days? Staff asked if the deadline can be made more flexible if within time frame. Principal stated that he didn't

want to wait until the last minute to administer make-ups. He wants to revise policy around taking trips on testing days.

Member suggested the school send a notice to families stating, "Your child will be taking the make-up test (which part) on a certain day and time." Direct notification along with date and times is important. If the make-up falls on the same day as a trip that is on the calendar, we can be more flexible.

Principal stated that calling in subs on test make-up days is very costly.

PA stated that subs will be needed to allow teachers to attend the upcoming SLT conference. PA asked what is more important, subs for the conference, or subs for make-up days.

**Action Item: Notify families whose children miss a standardized test: "Your child will be taking the make-up test (which part) on a certain day and time."**

### Dual Language

Principal stated he has spoken to the Parent Coordinator regarding email blast stating Muscota will have Dual Language program beginning September 2010. He has scheduled three parent workshops and 2 for staff to explain how it works. Principal stated he never intended for this proposal to sound as if it is definite, but that the Parent Coordinator sent the mail out (email and snail mail).

Principal stated that we are mandated to open a bilingual class if there is a percentage of interested parents of immigrant kids.

Transitional Bilingual – once the child reaches a certain level of proficiency that program is shut down. That means we would probably not have children in the program by grade 3. The lower grades would look different than upper grades.

Dual language is more sustainable – research shows that immigrant kids in ESL programs in NYC underperformed compared to children in transitional Bilingual and or Dual Language. Dual Language is open to English and Spanish speaking families. The purpose is to acquire academic skills in both languages. Some programs use the "Roller Coaster Model" – on alternate days or morning/afternoon lessons toggle between English and Spanish.

May 13<sup>th</sup> 3:15-4:15 Staff workshop on Dual Language.

Principal talked to Miriam Pedraja, Amistad Principal, who found out about it and worried that her students would be siphoned off. This would not happen, he assured her, as Muscota will never be Amistad. Principal stated there would be a monolingual strand and a dual language program. Muscota would be the first progressive, dual language school in the network. Resources and PD would be made available; the speakers who will attend our PDs would be able to provide those resources.

Discussion:

Staff member stated that the Language Survey that asks if a family speaks another language at home, does not automatically make the child eligible for the ESL or bilingual services. They are simply eligible to take the test.

15 families across the grades must have been in the school and requested bilingual education (a mandated service). If you go to a dual language program, they still must receive ESL services. Dual Language is not a mandated service, does not fulfill mandate.

Point of order to clarify facts, inserted at May 26 meeting: Dual Language program does fulfill some mandates of ELL students.

Dual Language is designed to represent 50% English dominant, 50% Spanish dominant students. The students must be completely dominant in their home language for the program to work. We have high proportion of children who speak Spanish and also have English.

3:15 on May 13<sup>th</sup> the proposed PD time – is teacher's personal time.

Teachers who are qualified will not be willing to teach in another license, and will lose seniority. Teachers' union representative advised against it. Changing license puts teachers on the bottom of the seniority list, making them vulnerable.

Sent out notification that a Dual Language program is offered here, before talking to SLT. It is false advertising to tell incoming families that this is a program that is in place. Never mentioned in tours or admissions process. Undermines our school reputation.

PA President – Reached out in email to ask if Tomasz had something planned that he did not notify PA or SLT. Attends all meetings held by Principal. PA stated the Principal told incoming families before informing PA and SLT; feels the Principal was very secretive until Monday Staff meeting.

This plan goes against our CEP. Already discussed putting all ELLs in same class; SLT said no at that time. We do not segregate; we integrate. Read letter from Latina mother who is also a Philologist. (Attached) Principal should lead the workshop. Why have DOE people lead it? The program leads to tracking. Who will teach these classes?

SLT member: Clarifying layoff issues. You can be excessed. Union has advised teachers NOT to change their license.

SLT member - asked the Principal "What was basis behind the decision to bring in Dual Language. With all the other problems at our school, why are you bringing this into the school at this time?" Families are asking her about this change. The member wanted to know why, she, as an SLT member did not know? Why not fix other problems first. The member is worried that there will be more alienation and anger. How will you pay for this? How will teachers be included?

Principal – This is our obligation to inform families who need bilingual services. This is not my choice, not your choice. This is their civil right to have access to dual language

education. I have thought of the staff, it gives the staff five years to look at their licenses and upgrade their licenses if they choose to. I was the person from the district who told the former principal that a bilingual program must be in the school. The former principal stated she did not want Spanish in her school.

There is a video that must be shown to all incoming families. This has never been done. This is not secretive; this is more transparent.

The letter was sent yesterday to the families entitled to this information, who qualify for program. The day after I'm meeting with SLT. Principal spoke to his superiors two weeks ago and to Miriam yesterday.

Segregation – Our ESL program is not working in this school. I don't want to segregate anyone. Just like CTT is an integrative program, Dual Language is as opposed to Transitional Bilingual. Bilingual Education begins by teaching in English 10% of the time and gradually increases to 90% over the course of several years. Dual Language is not an obligation, as SLT member stated. Dual language brings the Spanish and English learners together.

The Principal told the membership that this idea did not come from him. We realized we have not been servicing the children of our population as well as we could. The Principal then related the history of his English language learning. Having immigrated from Poland as a teenager and finding himself in a California high school in which he was the only Polish-speaking child, he struggled to learn the dominant language. Principal stated he learned English from translation because there was no one he could speak to. We at Muscota have the privilege and opportunity to give children the best of both worlds, so they would not have to go through what he did.

#### Discussion

Staff member - Children at Muscota do not have the same experience. You cannot cover the services that are mandated for language services. Children speak many different languages here, Russian, Albanian; those children still need ESL.

Many of the children need more services, perhaps to address learning issues. Some do not test out at third grade.

Sat on a planning committee to design a Dual Language program for FOUR years; took four years to plan program. When Muscota became a school, we were told we needed to take on a Special Education component. The class that was available was a Special Education /Bilingual Education class, to accommodate overflow from Amistad. We took them on happily and it did not work.

SLT member - Majority of K and 1 parents have specifically asked to be in all English speaking class. Concern for many Hispanic parents is "how is my child's English?" Experience with ESL teacher has been excellent. What happens if not all children test out at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade?

SLT member – One reason our school is so language rich is because we don't have children sitting face-forward in desks. So much conversation in

classrooms, during project time, on school yard. Movement from Muscota to Amistad doesn't happen. Movement from Amistad to Muscota happens every year, at least a couple children every year. Students must be able to function within both Spanish and English. What happens to children who can't function in both? Testing children in both languages. How will we support these children?

Principal: There is a huge difference between the two programs. There would need to be a lot of conversation and an agreement to make this work. The Parent Coordinator, at registration, was asked if our school offered Spanish instruction and/or bilingual/Dual Language instruction. If families want to go ahead with this the Principal would do everything in his power to make sure that it is successful. Kids who are not succeeding would receive SETTS bilingual.

Principal stated he had looked at everyone's seniority list and licenses. We have capacity now. If the families of monolingual kids want this, we should do this.

#### Discussion

Chair asked, "Will the incoming families decide this? Will they re-write the CEP?" Bilingual Education is mandated. Dual Language is a program, changing the way we educate.

Principal said families can choose either. By the time we meet at the next SLT we will know.

PA talked about having given the Muscota tours, no one asked about Dual Language, Principal never announced it on any tours, never having heard about this. Asked when he got the idea. SLT meeting April 21, did not announce it.

Principal stated he discussed it in-depth within last two weeks with Superintendent, Network Leader and Parent Coordinator.

PA President took issue with the fact that parents who are not part of school are making decisions for our school.

Principal stated that this idea is under the language allocation policy in CEP, specifies how language instruction is distributed in our school. Not up to us how that will be. Parents will decide.

Chair – Which program are we talking about? Let's please be clear about what you are advocating.

Principal – We must show the video. If 15 families express interest in the bilingual program, we must offer this. But it is in best interest of school to offer Dual Language.

Chair: Decision should be made after we have 15 families asking for a Dual Language program.

SLT member's son is an incoming Kindergartener. "This is not what I signed up for." Member answered the survey incorrectly, but her child took the NYSELAT and passed it. You don't know whether you have 20 parents because children test out. "What will these classes look like?" "Will there be 15 children in one

class and 33 in another?” “You’re telling me my child will start in a program with no one who knows how to run this program?”

SLT member: flabbergasted that Principal would unveil this without consultation with this community of people who have worked so hard in this school, it’s an insult to teachers and parents and it’s manipulating incoming families. Dual Language school in our building and another five blocks away.

SLT member: We don’t have dual language at Muscota We have ESL. Letter suggests the program exists here. Why not start with translating the notices that go home into the many languages that are spoken by families at Muscota, Chinese, Albanian? Why don’t we look at how our CTT is going? We are our numbers increasing there? We have to analyze current services before we put something else in.

SLT member: My child is going into kindergarten I checked bilingual on my application, and we speak German. My family does not need this service. What is the data on how well our ELLs are doing. I see that they are doing well in the classroom. If we’re achieving what we need to, let’s look at other areas. Has heard rumors, not nice things being said by Principal about white middle class families causing trouble. This is separating us, not what Muscota is about.

SLT member: Bilingual services are mandated but doesn’t have to look just one day. ESL at Muscota doesn’t adequately serve ELLs.

Principal: We need two full time ESL teachers.

SLT member: However, Dual Language does not supercede mandates.

Principal: Not entirely true. Depends on teacher’s license. In our program now, we have fifth graders with kindergartners to target all kids. A 12 year old with 5 year old reading same book. Takes ESL half period to gather all kids. Has only 15 minutes with them.

SLT member: sounds like our staff would need to grow and grow, not at all the small school we are now, since services need to grow. Right at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is when we begin to know whether something is a maturity issue or a learning issue. Must be addressed in both languages.

The marketability you said this program will bring to our school, by offering the service you are advocating, will grow our school, and we need to keep adding personnel; what happens when a child does not flourish or is found to have learning issues requiring bilingual Special Education, or bilingual reading intervention? We will need to hire so much more staff to support that child.

Chair stated that the tone of today’s meeting might be different if the Principal had not sent out the letter to incoming K parents first but had come in to speak to SLT first. This action was disrespectful to SLT members as individuals and to the SLT as an Advisory Board to the Principal. The Principal replied that he thought he was informing the families first before the staff or SLT. He did not expect the kind of reaction Muscota has shown.

PA stated she has a responsibility to families and must have an emergency meeting to let them know what is going on. PA requested permit for Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 PM,

**Proposal:**

- 1. Gather a committee of experts in our community to better service our ELLS**
- 2. Look into hiring a second ESL teacher to give Eric more support as the demand is greater.**

Chair proposed an agenda change for next meeting:

PA report  
Old Business

Principal stated his concern that he might not have the chance to speak if these agenda items preceded his address. Chair requested Principal I Chair to propose that he have time to speak and give updates.

PA

Although there was no time for a PA report, due to length of Principal's report and discussion, PA asked to make a request regarding graduates' Memory Book. Funds must be made available to pay for book to be printed.

**Action**

**Request to Tomasz from PA a check from senior dues fund \$1500 to be reimbursed**

**Proposal**

**Next meeting we will pick up on the agenda from where we left off to finish the agenda.**

**Letter from Latina mother, Ginette Quesada.**

As you are all aware I am a native Spanish speaker. You may not know that I am also a philologist. I spent many years studying not only classic languages but linguistics and Spanish literature. In this field I consider myself an expert. As an expert I know that this ill conceived notion that you can decide to implement bilingual education with a flip of a switch is not only ridiculous but also absolutely detrimental to the students. I cringe everytime I read the Spanish translations that are sent home. At the risk of sounding snobbish, in order to teach a language correctly you need native speakers or instructors that have been immersed and understand not only the grammar but the cultural nuances and vision of the world that come with every language on earth, otherwise you are just perpetuating the Spanglish that we all use (including myself) and that is not the purpose of bilingual education. For that matter I don't think even Amistad does a good job at that and they have a developed curriculum.

Tomacz invoked (incorrectly by the way) the desegregation of public schools to support his position. Ironically, in my view this separate class would result in a language/racial separation of the children. As a Latina mother the implications of having a separate "bilingual" class makes me wonder if we are going backwards instead of forward.

Excuse the typos. I am not a native