

Graham & Parks _____ SCHOOL COUNCIL
Name of School

(Official Minutes)

School Council Meeting

Called for 5:45pm at the _____ Graham & Parks School, 44 Linnaean Street
Time Name of School Address

School Council Members Present: Rabell Afridi, Karima Cherguaoui, Erin Garcia, Valarie Ifill (on Zoom), Kathleen Smith, Nasrin Belali, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Matthew Patton, Guy Rosenzweig (on Zoom), Jodi Rich
Names

School Council Members Absent: Fen Portmann-Katz, Lilly Havstad, Arjun Jaikumar, Lauren Morse

Also Present: Paul McKnight
Names

Kathleen Smith in the Chair.
Name

A quorum of the Graham & Parks School Council being present, Karima called the meeting to order at 5:45 and read the call of the meeting

The meeting proceeded with a roll call vote:
Unanimous by those present.

Approval of minutes from 2/12 meeting. Unanimous by those present.

Roles: Ira and Kathleen serve as chairs, Rabell and Erin assist with technology, Matt as secretary.

Review of G&P School Improvement Plan Mini Grants

- Application: 3rd grade teacher requests funds for collaboration time to develop materials supporting WIN (“What I Need”) time for students at deepening and acceleration levels in math.
 - Ira asked if this would be useful with other grade levels. Rabell says yes, and emphasizes that there is interest across grades. Specifically cites that the materials generated could help paraprofessionals go deeper by having pre-made materials for WIN blocks.
- Application: 5th grade teacher requests funds to support a grade-wide book club, planning to read Jonathan Haidt and Catherine Anne Price’s *The Amazing Generation* (a graphic novel based on *The Anxious Generation*).
 - Erin mentions she isn’t sure all content would be appropriate for all students, so thinks it would be good to read thinking with that lens in mind. Mentions it would be good to work with SEL and Health staff around framing discussions.
 - Kathleen supports Erin’s comments and provides context around *The Anxious Generation*. Suggests that it’s important that more staff at school read book before making a decision.
 - Rabell would like clarification around when students would read book, given that day is already scheduled. And would books be for fifth graders to keep or would they be given to future grades?
 - Matt suggests that based on personal experience with amount of 3rd grade reading homework, maybe that’s the expectation but that would be good to clarify.
 - Ira says it’s important to be supportive and that point of mini-grants is to try things.
 - Karima asks if it would be appropriate for SEL students.
 - Erin says that it is not particularly word dense and highlights that it’s in style of a graphic novel. Suggests one option would be to focus on specific chapters.
 - Jodi supports that it’s good to clarify whether book will stay in classroom or go home with students.
- Question arises about whether council votes on mini-grants. Kathleen clarifies that the council does not vote.

Presentation: Review of Family Engagement Goals (PLEASE ADD LINK TO PRESENTATION)

- A key goal in SIP and for district is to improve family engagement emphasizing that we want positive outcomes for students.
- This has also been a focus for G&P school equity team.
- Kathleen highlights slide from Family Engagement Institute around 4 core beliefs.
- On slide showing low and high impact family engagement, Kathleen asks council to think about G&P events, which mostly fall under low impact engagement (potlucks, performances, etc.).
 - How can we improve the engagement at these events?
 - Kathleen emphasizes no events are going away, and low impact doesn’t mean they are bad.
- An example of increased impact in communication has been regular newsletters from specials teachers. December’s parent conference night also cited as high impact. Pre-conference questions also brought up.

- Ira says as a parent, he thinks we could improve on how parents and teachers communicate, as it could be uncomfortable to share student challenges via a home-school communication folder. Kathleen emphasizes that school didn't want perfection to be the enemy of the good with communication and acknowledges room for improvement.
- Jodi asks if there will be another conference night. Kathleen mentions that there can't be this year because of contract restrictions for teachers, but school hopes to build off of this year's success and specifically focus on improving experience for families.
- Ira cites newsletters and says he worries they are a lot of work for the teachers. As a parent, it's hard to keep up with content. Kathleen says expectation is not that newsletters are sent weekly, but that's a cadence preferred by many teams. School has said every two weeks as a baseline. Equity team is also asking for feedback. She also mentions that for grade teams, only one teacher is writing a given newsletter (so burden is shared).
- Matt asks if there could be fewer emails of more length, acknowledging that this is a personal preference.
- Erin mentions there has been a lot of discussion around newsletter templates, but that there is push and pull. When templates are too standardized, teachers dislike them. But when too free-form, there is also push back.
- Ira cites fourth grade Friday Folder (a specific ask for parents to acknowledge they have reviewed student work/comments on a weekly basis) as something that has been very impactful for his family. Anita points out that this is a high impact form of family engagement based on the rubric presented in the deck (weekly data sharing).

Connecting to Thrive! Equity Audit

- One key point of equity audit connected attendance to family engagement. Kathleen mentions that in previous SIP, there was a goal related to attendance. This year Paul is in charge of monitoring and connecting with families about attendance.
- One of Thrive! Interventions suggested is regular home visits. Kathleen suggests these are good idea, but doesn't want to jump in too quickly without training teachers. Ira mentions home visits as an intervention have evidence as being effective in other areas. Kathleen cites Cambridgeport School as already doing home visits and as a place G&P could learn from.
- Kathleen also mentions that for G&P, a lot of chronic absenteeism stems from family trips (vacations and international home visits). Paul mentions that a bad flu season has also had impact. Kathleen clarifies that 18 absences constitutes chronic absenteeism, but that impact across school is felt before 18 days (which is just 10% of school year).
- Jodi mentions there is confusion from families around the definitions of excused and unexcused absences (i.e., informing the school of an absence does not excuse the absence).
- Anita (community comment) asks if it would help mitigate impact on class for teachers to send students with work. Valarie says in her experience students often do not complete work sent on trips. Erin points out this is a big ask of teachers.
- When families have an extended trip planned, it's important to apply with the district for a sabbatical. This process is unique to Cambridge because of the controlled choice program and without approval for a sabbatical any absence of more than 10 days may require a student to re-enroll.

School Administration Report

Facilities update: new carpet coming to library over April break.

Community Comment

None.

Debrief

Plus: Committee members appreciate the summary of mini-grant applications.

Delta: Committee members would like the mini-grant process included with meeting materials (i.e., do we vote?).

Jodi motions to end meeting; Matthew seconds. Approved unanimously.