

Lawrence School Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

8:00-9:00 am

Library

AGENDA

- 1. Public Comment**
- 2. Approval of the January 12, 2016 Minutes**
- 3. Update on MCAS Transition**
- 4. Continuing the Conversation on Challenge**
 - Notes from November Conversation
 - Gather information from teachers about where/how they would like support
 - Focus on how best to inform and educate parents

Remaining Meeting Schedule – Tuesdays @ 8:00 am

March 8

April 5

May 3

May 31

A Conversation About Challenge
School Council Notes
November 3, 2015

Council members shared their reactions and thoughts to notes from June Parent Focus Group:

- Feeling from some parents that students who need extra support get more attention.
- New ECS model is focused on providing engagement and challenge for ALL students (not just high achieving students). All students need to be challenged – regardless of their current level of performance.
- New ECS coordinator is sending out resources to teachers and parents – including out-of-school options.
- Is ECS in High School? (No, it's a K-8 program).
- High school provides more opportunities to pursue your own interests.
- Challenge work should be *instead of* some assignments, not *in addition to*.
- Some kids are uneven in their performance – may be advanced in one area, but struggle in another. Or struggle with social-emotional needs. This may be a source of conflict between parents and teachers if both parties don't recognize the need for work in some areas and challenge in others.
- Project-Based Learning – getting more emphasis in district (Gr. 6 team at Lawrence) – has potential for engaging kids. What does this look like in primary grades?
- If we want students to develop grit, some students (and their parents) may not be comfortable with taking a risk. Keeping a growth mindset.
- Harvard Medical School has redesigned its program to be more challenging, but with more support for students.
- Challenge is hard to define because it looks so different for different students.
- Importance of asking questions to engage students.
- How do we use our resources better to engage students?
- Need for collaboration with specialists. Lawrence has a plan to have teams collaborate on differentiating one unit with the ECS and Inclusion Facilitator together.
- Challenging for elementary teacher to sustain energy and enthusiasm across all subject areas over the day. How can we use specialists to help keep energy levels high?
- Need to help students recognize and understand what they are working on and why.
- Provide exposure to different things in order to spark an interest. Get kids engaged and then set the bar.
- Some parents are anxious that their children will somehow fall behind and not be ready to compete with others or ready for the world.
- Concerns about Russian Math. Parent “peer pressure” to enroll children, but disconnect with Brookline math curriculum. A focus on algorithms does not promote thinking flexibly.
- Parents need to be better informed about what their children are doing – and how they are being challenged. If homework is only the lens parents have, they are not getting a complete picture.

Grace described some of the work done as part of the ECS Program Review for which she was a parent representative. She pointed out that Lawrence is already doing work with habits of mind. The goal of the revamped program is to increase teacher capacity and to apply a “Response to Intervention” model to challenge. It needs to be made more clear to parents who ECS will be different. Can we develop a way to communicate plans to parents as is done in special education?