

School Council Meeting #5 Minutes: January 25, 2021

In attendance: John Smith, Nicole Kepnes, Michael Jaffe, Donna Strouse, John Lin, Anita Lotti, John Soragan, Sterling Williams, Liza Birmingham, Lilly Caplan and Emily Waugh

Start of Meeting Procedure

1. Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m.
2. All members were introduced.
3. The new members were introduced.

Superintendent Search Update

- Three finalist candidates from MA, NY, and PA are being considered for the superintendent position.
- Candidates will tour the school and meet with members of administration (if travelling from in-state) and meet over zoom with teachers, students, staff members, and parents in the DS community.
- A joint school committee meeting will be held in early February to discuss the three finalists.
- Next steps could be to select a candidate or continue to search. Twelve out of sixteen school committee members must vote to approve a superintendent candidate to hire them.

End of First Semester Update

- At the end of the first semester, students will receive set grades with a depository weight.
- Grade trends from last year to this year will be observed to determine the impact of the pandemic and new schedule system.
- Many students will receive new schedules as they begin the second semester.

District Vaccination and Covid-19 Response

- All nurses have now been vaccinated with their second doses of the Moderna vaccine.
- Jill Fedor, our head nurse, has negotiated an opportunity to open five spots for testing available to students or faculty to help DS community members get quick, accurate testing.
- Specialists and counselors will be able to get vaccinated with the Moderna vaccine. Faculty as a whole could take around two weeks to get vaccinated to accommodate for the 48 hour symptoms associated with the vaccine.
- Superintendent Dr. Keough will survey the community to determine interest levels in the vaccine.
- The district is moving away from disinfectant wipes and will instead use disinfectant spray with paper towels. Some departments who rely on tangible learning materials will continue to use the wipes.
- With new strains of the coronavirus, the goal remains to stay two days in-person each week.

Weighted/Unweighted GPA Discussion

- Needham's change to unweighted GPA did not impact the courses that students took, but it did help to solve some of the stigma around CP classes and move toward equity by valuing all classes equally.
- Departments at DS have been discussing the switch from weighted to unweighted GPA with the goal of reducing stress, increasing balance in course load, reducing the stigma around CP classes which receive lower GPAs, as well as how this change will impact the college admissions process.
- It is a possibility to show two GPAs, one weighted and one unweighted, or to use a phase-in process to smoothly transition from old to new GPA scales.
- Generally, students have been hesitant to make this change, despite the fact that this will not impact the admissions process as most colleges already recalculate GPA using their own system.
- Surveys will continue to be used to receive community input as the change in GPA is considered.

Student Feedback on Recent Events in Washington D.C.

- With current events in Washington D.C., many students and adults have felt overwhelmed.
- Community members agree that Amanda Gorman's poetry provides hope and demonstrates how hard work and perseverance can pay off.

Next Meeting:

Monday, February 22nd, 2021