

School Council Meeting #4 Minutes: December 14, 2020

In attendance: John Smith, Nicole Kepnes, Michael Jaffe, Donna Strouse, John Lin, Anita Lotti, Brendan O'Hagan, Amal Sharfi, 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.

Hybrid Teaching and Learning Updates

- The district is closely monitoring the recent rise in Covid-19 cases. The high school has experienced only a handful of cases and the remote system has helped to prevent exposure.
- The high school nurses, Ms. Chandler and Ms. Fedor, are keeping track of cases and potential exposure to Covid-19 in the high school.
- Around 62 students have chosen to go remote until February 1st, 2021. These remote students are still allowed to participate in school-organized athletic programs.
- The hybrid system has prepared teachers and students to continue remote learning on days when snowstorms make it dangerous to drive to school.
- Following the release of interim grades on Friday, December 18th, the mandatory Wednesday sessions for grades below 80% will become optional, allowing students to attend sessions at their discretion.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force

- The task force was created to take action as a school district in a movement toward social justice and includes all principals and superintendents.
- Subcommittees include groups based on curriculum, policy, school culture, and supporting and hiring teachers of color.
- DS is partnering with a teaching college to form a relationship that could encourage candidates of color to consider DS as a career option. This will help to diversify faculty and supply support to new teachers.
- DS is considering taking part in a teacher exchange program to bring new voices into the community.
- Teacher retirements in the next few years will make it easier to bring in new voices in a short amount of time.

Budget update

- DS is not adding staff this year but may be looking at additions in a year or two. These additions would most likely be partial.
- The regional school committee still has some capital challenges and other pieces of the budget to address.
- Fortunately, there was no need for drastic budget cuts despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Program of Studies Update

- A new, project-based financial literacy semester course open to Juniors and Seniors will be added to the curriculum and taught by a member of the math department. This course can count as either a math or elective credit at the CP or Honors level and will cover areas including credit, loans, budgeting, investment and banking.
- Another business/math semester course is being considered for addition (after the financial literacy course is added) to provide more opportunities for students who wish to pursue this subject.
- These courses will help prepare students for the next steps in job placement and higher education.

GPA discussion

- Following the principles of Challenge Success, DS is considering making a switch to non-weighted GPAs.
- The Academic Standards Group wants to move toward an unweighted GPA to prevent stigma around GPA and class level.
- Several other local school districts have made the switch to unweighted GPAs.

Pros: Weighted GPA	Cons: Weighted GPA
Students have a greater understanding when using Naviance as to where their grades fall in the admissions process.	Large pressure makes it difficult to have a love for learning.
Pressure may come from so many factors besides weighted GPA (for example, pressure from a college/university itself) that removing it would not make a difference in students' mental health.	Removing weighting could help decrease or remove the pressure/stigma surrounding class level.

Next Meeting:

Monday, January 25th, 2021