

## West Local School Advisory Team

### Meeting Minutes 4/6/21

**Attendees:** Principal Jackson, AP Bryant, Octavia Wolf, Aisha Alexander-Young, Tekiah Brabham, Carol Paige, Kehinde Dosunmu, Raquel Smith, Hannah Carloni, Tacora Snell, Amanda Rush, David Schwartz, Jordan Kelly, Kristen Degan, Alexia Harris, Kathleen Sears, Julio Jiminez, Shannon Sheridan, Paulette Ocean, Barbara Arbiter

#### Welcome and Norms

- Introductions

#### Community Builder

- Millionaire hypothetical activity

#### Term 4 Updates

- New classrooms and student selection
  - ECE will be 6 cohorts, 2 days per week for children
  - Kindergarten (Ms. Dosumnu)
  - Most seats have been filled at this time, but need to wait in some cases to give families time to decide
  - Pre-K families will be notified of which days their child is assigned to this week
  - Expanding seats in upper grades classes, currently a waitlist in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms

#### LSAT Priority Around Equity

- Ms. Alexander-Young: People can speak for themselves. People who have privilege of any kind should not try to speak for others.
- Ms. Wolf- We've been doing design thinking in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. One of the things that I'm interested in would be empathy interviews with families. This would be having an honest conversation with families and asking about obstacles. This would give us idea of current barriers. It starts with listening.
- Ms. Kelly- Agree with Ms. Wolf. Wondering what we have done in the past and what we've done recently in terms of listening. Urban Teachers training has taught me that all families want to be involved but there are limited supplies of energy. Listening is important.
- Ms. Paige- The in-person Principal's Coffees had a diverse group of parents. How do we make that happen virtually?
- Ms. Degan- We have some tools. Love the idea Wolf. Home visits. With COVID, Wellness started doing calls. Maybe new families don't know how they want to engage. Maybe community members, PSCO members, can do mid-year check ins so that it's not falling onto staff.
- Ms. Paige- Agree with Ms. Degan. Now that Wellness is back in the building, how can we continue that?

- Ms. Wolf- personal invites are very meaningful. It demonstrates care and time conflicts can be addressed and resolved.
- Ms. Jackson- What are the root causes? I was very involved with Tai's schooling and PTA meetings. I think all parents feel this way. We get to create a system so we can design a program that works for people. Getting parents to show up is one thing and getting people to engage is another. Our naming committee was not diverse. Why are these roles not being filled by diverse people?
- Ms. Alexander- I appreciate this. I think it goes back to listening. We need multiple options. One thing that is an issue is starting with something that is only going to get feedback from certain people. A survey, phone calls, and home visits would be a good combination to find out what families need. In these initial conversations, when you are thinking about people from different backgrounds, it can be helpful to put people in small groups where there's less fear of judgement.
- Ms. Smith- What words would get people involved? Different people want to hear different things.
- Ms. Alexander- People want to be cared for and valued. People want to know that they are bringing value to the conversation. It comes down to what is done with the information. Does my participation end up changing something or being reflected?
- Mr. Schwartz- We have a tremendous need for help. LSAT seats have gone uncontested.
- Ms. Alexander- I hear there are needs, but it would be good to ask people how they want to serve.
- Mr. Schwartz- We had a lot of inertia wiped away so it is a good time to rethink how we do things. I'm thinking about the PSCO since that's what I know. We have reimaged the Harvest Fest, Tree Sale, etc.
- Ms. Snell- I want to speak for my own education and explain my student experience. I started being responsible for my own education in third grade. If I was excited about something, my parents would come. If we want parents to be involved, the children need to be invested and have their interests peaked.
- Ms. Wolf- I agree with Ms. Snell. The play started with students and next thing you know a third of the student body is involved. Then the parent involvement follows. I could do better about getting families involved in current projects. We have to be intentional and think bigger and backwards plan to include families in STEM.
- Ms. Snell- Whatever the kids care about, the parents will be right there and support. Parents are stretched thin, even pre-COVID. Some people leave the school to do the school's job. We can convey to families that we don't want to do this without you.
- Ms. Sears- I wonder if we could form some kind of student committee. They could design the Harvest Fest or other events.
- Ms. Wolf- We could invite student to BHM committee meetings. I haven't done that and part of that is being swamped but that's how bad habits are formed. I'm going to push myself.
- Ms. Snell- Where the kids go, their parents will follow.
- Ms. Jackson- At Watkins, the students had elections and campaigns and met monthly with admin to discuss student concern. Kids have great lenses and we could leverage their voices. It came up in FELT that we could do affinity groups.

- Ms. Brabham- Yes, Ms. Montes brought up affinity groups in FELT so that we could hear from more diverse kids.
- Ms. Jackson- The question that keeps coming up from me is “Do families at West really feel valued?” If I’m an immigrant, new to the neighborhood. I am struggling with this and I don’t think I can definitely say yes. It is hard for me to be a leader of a school where I can’t definitely say yes to that question.
- Mr. Schwartz- It breaks my heart to hear that. The idea that the culture is not welcoming to families is so opposite from what we came here for. I think it’s true but it hurts.
- Principal Jackson- I think we are welcoming and kind. We greet people at the door. But do families feel comfortable asking hard questions and having their voices heard?
- Ms. Alexander- It spans from little things to big things. Does the website reflect me? Are the communications in multiple languages?
- Principal Jackson- This is a big undertaking and change is hard. It is not easy. What can we tackle here? What would be high-leverage for us as a group?
- Ms. Paige- I would like to bring Nat and Mr. Herschberg here and the way they included parents of color and dads. I don’t know how they did it but they did it. I would love to know how they did it. They made all families feel equal and welcome.
- Mr. Schwartz- How do you get different families there? I don’t celebrate Christmas so with the Tree fundraiser we included wreaths and said these can be used for many different holidays. We need authentic voices telling us how we can all celebrate together.
- Ms. Rush- To get parents involved, I agree with what Snell said. We can create fliers and spread the word to parents about meetings. Some parents don’t really know what those meetings are all about. It can start with teachers too because we have that relationship with parents.
- Ms. Snell- I have to agree with we shouldn’t reinvent the wheel. We should take some things we already do like APTT and the Christmas Tree sale and diversify it.
- Ms. Alexander- I want to take it back to the original question which is how do we listen.
- Principal Jackson- We have designed systems and things change over time. Needs from last year could be different. We need to figure out how to get more insight and find out what students really want from us.
- Ms. Alexander- Could we make a committee to answer some of these questions and bring it back to us?
- Ms. Degan- Could room parents be involved? Do we have room parents?
- Ms. Snell- Could we send surveys to find out more information about what students and families are interested in?
- Principal Jackson- Based on a recent ECE survey, only about half of parents did surveys. The surveys responses have not been diverse. Like Paige said, Principal’s Coffee participants got frequent reminders and personal invites. It used to be more collaborative, but online is harder.
- Ms. Alexander- Personal calls are one way to communicate value.
- Ms. Paige- Maybe during pick up and drop off, especially with 4<sup>th</sup> quarter we’ll have more parents and kids.
- Ms. Carloni- I know we only have two self-contained classrooms but we are about to have four. My parents feel connected to me but I’m not sure they feel connected to the larger

West community. If I called them and said Jackson and Bryant want to talk to you, they would love to talk to you.

- Principal Jackson- What you're describing Carloni is a listening session. I could see this with ESL community as well.
- Ms. Carloni- Right, letting parents talk about positives and negatives and listening.
- Ms. Degan- Someone would need to capture the results and compile them and look for trends. This requires a lot of work.
- Ms. Wolf- Like Snell said, could we leverage things that we already do? Could we use some time like vertical planning to call families?
- Ms. Rush- Some of it is like we are already doing it. We have these relationships and we could mention it then.
- Principal Jackson- Like Ms. Degan said there are limits in terms of human resources. How do we keep this a priority? How do we make it manageable?
- Ms. Paige- Maybe we can each be charged with bringing two parents or two students to the PSCO meetings.
- Principal Jackson- What can we commit to? Who is signing up? (Hands and verbal acknowledgement from Kelly, Brabham, Wolf, Paige, Snell, Ocean, Smith, Carloni, Arbiter, Giovanni)
- Ms. Brabham- We had listening sessions before and we need to bring that back. Five years ago we did that.
- Ms. Snell- People only want to speak up when they feel safe. Could we make some kind of list to say how people can engage.
- Mr. Schwartz- There used to be a Yahoo listserv but it is gone. It is intimidating to send out a blast to all parents.
- Mr. Jimenez- I could create a group of Spanish speaking families and tell them that the school wants to hear from them.
- Ms. Alexander- Also asking parents, what do you need from the school?
- Ms. Ocean- I was just thinking about maybe have a cultural day. Do some kind of activity or event. Kids can dress up. Celebrate holidays and get people included.
- Ms. Arbiter- People come together over food. I would like to see this as an international day where people come together over food although that might not be possible with covid.
- Principal Jackson- It goes back to listening. If I were a parent what I would want would be different than somebody else. Some of what we are already doing works for people.
- Ms. Dosunmu- People in the chat are talking about creating anonymous boards. There is some value to creating safe places where people can be anonymous.
- Ms. Alexander- I do this often when talking about race and culture. People can participate on their own terms. It's like a collaborative board. People can answer on their own time and in their own way.
- Ms. Mills- I remember the greatest parent engagement activity was when we had a Civil War activity. Many parents came and that's because they felt proud of their child. I like the idea of capturing feedback anonymously. A lot of time there is shame around having students with IEPs so when we say no we value you we care about you and everybody else.
- Ms. Snell- I agree Ms. Mills. Parents are the experts and how can we demonstrate to them.

- Principal Jackson- This connects to FELT so Brabham will follow up with the people who volunteered. We will set up time frames and deadlines to stay on track for a busy Quarter 4. This will need to be a team effort. Our staff is dedicated to inclusion and diversity. It's why I chose West and why many staff members chose West.