**NEWTON NORTH SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

6th meeting 7am Wednesday, March 6th 2013

Room 103

**1. Attendance of School Council Members**

Jen Price, NNHS Principal & Co-Chair

Jo Doherty, parent representative & Co-chair

Melissa Hannenberger, teacher representative

Chris Alberg, teacher representative

Sally Brickell, PTSO representative

Irene Golden, student representative

Sonya Jampel, student representative

Margaret Albright, parent representative

In addition Wendy Lai & Anthony Oliver, Principal interns to Jen Price attended the meeting specifically to report on agenda item 4.

Apologises were received from Ellen Gibson, Andrea Steenstrup, Lynne LeBlanc, Bev Spencer & Jackie Gelb sent their apologises for not being able to make the meeting.

Given their interest & likely contributions, Jen Price extended an invitation to the SFA – Student Faculty Administration board – to join the School Council meeting for agenda item 4. Consequently this item was dealt with first & then members of the SFA left the School members to continue their meeting.

**2. Acceptance of minutes from last meeting - February 4th, 2013**

The motion was proposed and seconded and the minutes were passed by unanimous vote. These minutes will be posted on the School Council website – action discharged.

**3. Opportunity for Public Comment**

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

**4. Update on last years School Council communications survey: sharing of results, data & outcomes** - **Anthony Oliver & Wendy Lai**

The results of this survey were distributed to School Council members ahead of this meeting.

Anthony & Wendy reported that although the respondent sample size was fairly small - 226 parent, 109 teachers and 91 students – the survey yielded some strong themes. In general, respondents were very satisfied with the quality of courses offered at NNHS and the sense of community but overall experienced dissatisfaction with communications.

As a result of this Jen Price launched an initiative directed by Wendy Lai & Anthony Oliver to investigate the various communication channels currently used at NNHS & to identify how these channels can be coordinated and then to recommend & establish a coherent and more streamlined communications policy for NNHS. This initiative involved personnel from the NNHS faculty, the PTSO, & the Newton Education Department.

The results of this initiative are summarized in the first addendum, which was distributed at the meeting & is attached to these minutes. It identifies the various communication channels currently in use at NNHS & the challenges associated with them. As a result of this exercise it was evident there are many email distribution lists being utilised at NNHS all of which lack the ability to be integrated. Therefore, any changes/updates to one list do not get reflected in any another. The major goal therefore is to generate an integrated master email list for NNHS, which needs only have one point for updates and changes and can then be utilized as required by various groups. Although the attachment does not reference it, the PSTO generated NNHS Student & Family Directory was included within this initiative. Students emails in grades 10th through 12th will be exported from Naviance and emails will be collected from all freshman during freshman seminars to compile a complete student email listing. The second addendum to these minutes, also distributed at the meeting, identifies the actions being pursued to achieve this goal.

Discussions are also taking place with students in the school’s Innovation Lab to brainstorm their ideas of which channels would be most successful to get information to students. Their initial feedback was to suggest the use of a school face book page &/or a twitter feed. Currently students do not use just one main channel as their source for information. For example, each graduating class has its own face book page to update classmates on various activities & events, & sports teams use a variety of twitter feeds to coordinate with their athletes.

The school is mindful of those with no regular access to the Internet. And so in an effort to reach these families, NNHS staff is contacting every family who has not accessed the Parent Portal to schedule parent – teacher conferences or student reports to find out what alternative means of communication would work best for them. In addition, on any face book page or similar alternative used the Google translation application will be installed.

Of note – although neither of the addendums makes reference to the PTSO Directory it has been included as one of the channels.

One communication link reported in the survey as perceived to be weak was that between NNHS to the student. Principal Price asked the students present at the meeting whether they thought the use of a Face book page by NNHS would improve school to student communication. Students asked about what kind of content is envisaged to be on there & were told that initial thoughts were to include which teachers would be out for the day, ½ day schedules & other important school dates. The major obstacle to the success of a school face book page is to get the students to ‘like’ it. It was suggested that student surveys in place or planned could be used to ask students which information they think should be on the face book page that could really drive the success of this communications channel.

Several students thought the site should include any flyers or promotional information that are produced by clubs or classes of students. And it was also felt that it would be important to get each class President & its officers to endorse the school face book page. To that end homeroom teachers could also help promote the site. Another strong proponent driving student usage would be to get the Athletics department and coaches to use the site as a main source for team updates/info. It was suggested that various groups, classes, & clubs etc could post their information/flyers to a pool with then a recognized moderator authorizing which are legitimate to post.

A concern raised was that it should be easy for clubs & departments to post information on such a site & not present them with another layer. In other words using this site should not require them to post the information more than once. The more streamline the process can be made the more likely people will use the site to post information. Students from the Innovation Lab are beginning to develop the site’s initial construction with factors like these in mind.

The issue of security was raised with the concern that anyone who liked the page could then get access to school information such as which teachers would be out that day. Wendy said that the group is working with the school district specifically on the issue of security. And it was suggested that other schools should be investigated who have established a similar face book page communications policy in order to learn from their experiences. Margaret Albright shared the following websites that might be useful resources in establishing NNHS’s face book page:

<http://edbuzz.org/sroner/2009/11/using-facebook-to-improve-school-communication/>

<http://mashable.com/2011/04/26/facebook-for-schools/>

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Social-Media-Tips---Using-Facebook-For-University-Communication&id=3540501>

<http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2009/09/schools_turn_to_facebook_twitt.html>

In summary, those attending the meeting felt that the relevancy of the content of any proposed NNHS face book page would be a huge factor in driving students to like it. Wendy Lai thanked the meeting for their suggestions & acknowledged how useful the joint SFA & SC meeting had been. Jen Price indicated that she, Anthony & Wendy will work on a statement reporting feedback on the communications survey results & the resultant updates to NNHS’s communications strategy.

**5. Documentation - Melissa, Chris, Sonya, Irene, Jo**

Melissa Hanenberger reported that the group met for the second time recently & has now developed the first draft for the majority of the chapters identified to be in the on-line college handbook. She commented that the handbook will encompass all the information included in the ‘Naviance’ document currently posted on the NNHS website & will still feature the ‘Timeline’ (the only other document currently posted on the NNHS website) albeit in an updated form. Other sections of the handbook are being written for discussion at the groups next meeting planned for the end of the month. It is anticipated that when a working draft of the booklet has been written it will be made available to School Council members for their comments.

In addition, it was identified that the group will probably adopt a phased approach to extending the scope of the on-line handbook to include most post-secondary options pursued by NNHS students rather than concentrate solely on college. To this end Margaret Albright made available to the meeting the following information about the type of program which could be a useful resource to a student considering something other than a typical 4 year college experience.

The Arioch Center @ Wentworth signed an articulation agreement with Local 103 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to offer an associate degree in Applied Science in Engineering Technology (AENT) to graduates of the Inside Wireman Apprenticeship Program.

“Our ongoing efforts to provide Local 103 members with as many meaningful education and training opportunities as possible is reinforced in this agreement,” said Michael P. Monahan, business manager, IBEW. “We look forward to the success of this program and expanding educational opportunities in the future.”

The agreement enables graduates of the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC) of Greater Boston to advance their careers through a professional degree program designed to enhance skills, supplementing the content of the JATC. Those that have completed the Inside Wireman Apprenticeship Training Program will be awarded 27 credits, which can be applied for the total 60 required to obtain the AENT degree.

Recognizing apprentices’ full-time work schedules, the program’s flexible design is structured so that all courses are offered on Saturdays at the IBEW Training Facility in Dorchester. Students will take two courses each semester for five semesters, and will complete the associate degree program in less than two years.

“Building on the success of the certificate in managing construction projects with the IBEW, this degree program addresses the educational needs and interests of professionals in the electrical industry,” said Dr. Michael Kupferman, associate vice president of academic affairs and associate provost at Wentworth. “Students will benefit from a program that fits into their busy professional lives and offers the opportunity to gain an important academic credential, which will be helpful for management-level jobs and for building a more educated workforce.

**6. Pilot Program - Sally, Lynne, Ellen, Wendy & Jackie**

Sally Brickell provided the update on the pilot program & identified that the group has developed a list of suggested topics to be covered at the monthly meeting for mentored families & their mentor to attend. These topics included:

* Alternatives to four-year college to include two-year degree, work, internships, travel & apprenticeships;
* Gap year ideas;
* Standardized tests – PLAN, ACT, PSAT, ACT;
* College visits – how to, group visits;
* Financing college – how to, forms;
* Writing a college essay;
* Online resources such as Naviance;
* Working with guidance counselors & college & career center.

The pilot group has connected with the ELL department to ask them to identify 12 families as potential families to be mentored & are working with The Newton Partnership to identify which aspects of running & leading the mentoring program the Partnership can be responsible for.

Wendy Lai is organizing a meeting with some NNHS seniors who represent the populations of low-income &/or ethnic students to have them function as a focus group & help identify what aspects of the college process they consider would be helpful to address.

To ease the burden of attending monthly mentoring it was underlined that transportation can be provided & if the meetings can be held at the YMCA then childcare can also be addressed. The suggestion was raised to have the group consider asking people other than those in the group to be responsible for designing the content of the monthly topics & organizing speakers etc,. Margaret Albright was given the action to investigate the topic of financing college & what resources might be available to include.

Jo Doherty was given the action to contact Newton Community Education & the Counseling Department to pursue whether other seminars on financing college to the general NNHS parent audience would be helpful.

**7. AOB & Next Meeting**

There was no other business to be discussed.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 1st at 7pm in room 103. An agenda will be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting on both the PTSO & School Council websites.

**Attachments to the minutes – see next page for attachments**

Addendum 1 Assessment of current communication channels used at NNHS

Addendum 2 Identification of actions & timeframes to achieve a more comprehensive communications strategy



