**NEWTON NORTH School Council Meeting**

8th meeting Monday May 6th 2013

Room 103

**1. Attendance of School Council members**

Jen Price, NNHS Principal & Co-Chair

Jo Doherty, parent representative & Co-Chair

Lynne LeBlanc, PTSO representative

Sally Brickell, PTSO representative

Margaret Albright, parent representative

Chris Alberg, teacher representative

Jackie Gelb, parent representative

Melissa Hanenberger, teacher representative

Andrea Steenstrup, parent representative

Irene Golden, student representative

Sonya Jampel, student representative

Bev Spencer, community representative

Ellen Gibson, parent representative.

**2. Acceptance of minutes from last meeting - April 1st, 2013**

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

**3. Opportunity for Public Comment**

The only member of the public present at the meeting was Archana Szpak who declined to address the School Council. Archana identified herself as a candidate in the current School Council elections for the seat being vacated by Ellen Gibson.

**4. School Council Communications Survey**

Jen Price summarized the results of last years School Council’s survey as positive in general, with both teachers & parents reporting the school as doing a good job in communicating with them through a variety of channels such as reverse 911, the Parent Portal, email, & Tiger News. If parents had concerns it was with teachers, who on an individual basis they felt did not communicate sufficiently often with them about their child. Students however reported that they felt there was little or no direct communication between them & the school.

In addressing the outcomes of the survey Principal Jen Price created a working group led by her Principal intern Wendy Lai to identify both the manner & the means by which the school communicates with faculty, parents & students.

One such method is via the School Messenger System known as the Parent Portal – the system via which Jen Price sends out emails or reverse 911 to NNHS families. Generally emails are used to communicate school information to families whereas reverse 911 is used when the information has a time constraint.

As part of this working group initiative contact has been made with every single family who this year has not yet accessed the parent portal. This has been done to determine if they have internet access & if not to establish an alternate means of conveying school information. It found of the approximately 1600 NNHS families, 20 remain unconnected on a regular basis to the internet.

Students are asked in seminars during their sophomore year run by the NNHS Counseling dept to register an account on Naviance using their own email addresses. This does not always happen. All students in grades 10 & above have now registered on Naviance, & Wendy Lai has now downloaded these student emails enabling NNHS for the first time to contact students en masse. So for the first time students were advised directly when their 3rd semester grades were posted, in addition to the separate notification their parents normally receive.

Every encouragement is being used to get parents to access & use their Parent Portal. For example, at Back to School Night when parents follow a shorten schedule of their child’s, rather than being sent this information parents were asked to obtain the schedule by logging into their Parent Portal. For those either not sure how to do this or who do not have internet, access & help was provided in the NNHS library that evening prior to the event commencing.

Other initiatives in response to the survey are:

(i) Jen Price has started writing a blog on the Newtonite – NNHS’s school online newspaper – specifically directed to students.

(ii) investigating whether to establish a Principal facebook page – NNHS’s Innovation Lab have been asked to suggest a suitable platform to host.

Chris asked whether he could use the SMS system to send out a blast email to all his students. Apparently although SMS is capable of sending texts NNHS does not have the capability to text students – do not keep students cell phone numbers.

Jen Price reported that she will be communicating the survey results & subsequent changes & amendments to NNHS;s communications strategy to parents, teachers & students in the Fall. That communiqué, along with a brief summary of the survey’s results, will be posted on the School Council’s website when available.

**5. Update on progress of the Documentation group – Melissa & Jo**

Melissa reported that 9 of the 13 chapters have now been drafted & the handbook is currently estimated to be 70-80 pages. The group is considering using the editor suggested by Jen Price to ensure conformity & consistency throughout the handbook & the goal is to have a draft available by early to mid June. The group responded positively to the School Councils idea to promote the handbook at events such as Back to School Night & the various grade parents nights held during the school year.

Andrea Steenstrup was actioned to draw up a proposal, coordinating with PTSO representatives Lynne & Sally, to identifying the logistics of these promotional ideas & submit them to Beth Swederskas, Head of the NNHS Counseling Dept. for approval. It was requested that this proposal be sent to Beth in time for her considered response to be be discussed at the next & final School Council meeting of the school year on June 10th, 2013.

**6. Update on the progress of the Pilot Mentoring Program – Sally & Lynne**

Sally Brickell & Lynne LeBlanc presented a list of meeting topics to be addressed at the monthly meetings in the program – refer to Attachment 1 to the minutes.

They reported 12 students & their families, along with 12 mentors have been recruited & screened & the process of matching up mentors with mentee families is under way. Both the student mentees & their families are enthusiastic to be involved in this program. The 12 mentee families are diverse in range comprising 4 Boston students, 4 ELL students, 3 academically struggling students & 1 Principal appointed student.

A training session is planned for mentors followed by a kick-off meeting with the mentee families meeting their mentors. To date the response of the mentee families have been very encouraging & positive.

It was agreed that School Council members should take responsibility for organizing the content of a meeting. Jen Price offered to identify NNHS alumni to attend June’s meeting & enlisted Sonya’s assistance. Jackie agreed to be responsible for September’s meeting & in order to do so suggested it made sense for her to attend the meeting in June. Bev offered to organize the meeting in October & Margaret has the responsibility for April’s meeting.

Wendy Lai, Principal intern, has spearheaded this pilot program & Jen Price indicated that whomever is her Principal intern next year from Harvard’s School of Education they will assume the responsibility. It was determined that everyone involved in the running of this program should document any work they undertake, in order to facilitate the program’s sustainability & the ultimate successful transfer of the overall responsibility for the mentoring program to a paid FTE position within the NNHS Counseling Dept, once funding has been found.

**7. School Council Membership**

**7.1 Election for vacated Parent Representative Seats**

Sally & Lynne reported 3 candidates had submitted papers & the election is currently ongoing with about 100 votes reported so far. The election closes Thursday, May 9th at noon & the results will be announced on Friday, May 10th by the PTSO.

**7.2 Suggestions for increasing student presence on School Council**

Currently there are 2 students positions on the SC – Irene & Sonya, who are both sophomores. It was generally thought that it would be beneficial to the operation of the SC if there were more students members from other grades. At the last meeting Jen, Irene & Sonya were charged with exploring ways in which students from other grades could be recruited. They reported a possible channel for recruitment could be the end of school year student government elections. Jen has asked the housemasters to each identify up to 2 students from each house – except Beals House – that were not successful in the elections but whom they consider great contributors & suitable candidates for SC membership.

**8. AOB & Next Meeting**

The date of the next & final meeting of the current school year has been re-scheduled from Monday June 3rd at 7pm to Monday June 10th at 7pm due to the Senior Prom being on the 3rd.

It was identified that at this meeting Jen Price will provide the meeting schedule for 2013/14.

**Attachment 1**

**Topics for mentoring group monthly meetings**

Time: 7-8:30 p.m.

Location: Newton YMCA (and possibly a Boston location)

* **May:** Working with guidance counselors and College and Career Center/academic support/ABCs of post-secondary documentation and timeline (test deadlines, fee waivers)/online resources (Naviance, etc.)/what is the PTSO and using your community
* **June:** Standardized tests (PLAN, ACT, PSAT, ACT, TOEFL, etc.)/test prep/schools that don’t require tests/ meeting college freshmen
* **September:** College visits (how to, group visit)/attend senior parent night
* **October:** Gap year ideas/alternatives to four-year college (two-year degree, work, internships, travel, apprenticeships, etc.)
* **November:** Narrowing your list/college applications/writing a college essay
* **December:** College visits (how to, group visit)
* **January:** Financial aid applications (how to, forms, etc.)
* **February:** What makes teens tick/teen stress/parenting tips/matching teens to the right program
* **March:** Making a decision about next year
* **April:** Financing college (how to, forms, etc.)/financial realities
* **May:** Holding on and letting go/thinking ahead/success factors in college