**NEWTON NORTH SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Eighth meeting Monday May 2, 2016, 6:30pm

1. **Attendees at School Council meeting**

Mark Aronson, NNHS Interim Principal & Co-Chair

Jean Wood, parent representative & Co-Chair

Kathy Baron, parent representative

Sally Brickell, PTSO representative

Albert Cho, teacher representative

Jenny Chou, parent representative

Rex Clark, PTSO Representative

Laura Holt, parent representative

Max Kozlov, student representative

Vicki Ritterband, alternate parent representative

Bev Spencer, community representative

Jeff Zabel, parent representative

Joanna Mandinova, David Bedar, Irene Wu, and Liam Macintyre, did not attend the meeting. (Liam Macintyre has since resigned from SC.)

Also attending the meeting were a number of parents/guardians that are running to fill slots for next year’s School Council. Also in attendance were four students from VOICES, a NNHS club that strives to foster cultural competence and respect.

1. **Acceptance of minutes from April meeting**

A motion was proposed and seconded to accept the minutes of the April meeting. The minutes were then passed by unanimous vote. These minutes will be posted on the School Council website.

1. **Opportunity for Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

1. **Announcements from Mark Aronson**

Principal Aronson made two announcements at the beginning of the meeting:

1. Jean White has agreed to serve as Community Representative on the School Council. This position is appointed by the principal and serves for as long as the principal deems appropriate. Jean replaces Bev Spencer who will be leaving SC in June 2016. Many thanks to Bev for serving many years on SC.
2. Jenny Chou will serve as co-chair (along with Principal Turner) for the 2016-2017 academic year, replacing Jean Wood whose term on SC ends in June 2016.
3. **Teachers Comments Regarding Growth Mindset**

Albert Cho asked 15 faculty across the English, History, Science and Math department about growth mindset. Their feedback is included at the end of these minutes in which all growth mindset activities are described.

1. **PTSO update**

Sally gave an update on PTSO activities: beginning to work on directory for next school year; teachers are very grateful for the Chromebooks that were recently delivered; Celebration, the after prom party, needs donations; SC elections are underway; Operation Bold Paint painted 19 classrooms.

1. **Cultural Competency at NNHS**

Four students representing VOICE, a club at NNHS to promote intercultural competency, attended the SC meeting. It was formed in response to recent events. As Mark Aronson stated, events can create *moments of response* but what is needed is *sustainability* to constantly promote, support and cultivate cultural competence. This can’t be an “add-on”. Teachers and parents alike are already booked up. Parents need to get involved. The question is what would be sacrificed?

SC asked the VOICE representatives what SC could do to support them. Some SC parent reps indicated they don’t know what it feels like one a daily basis for students who feel their cultures are disrespected. It would help SC reps to learn more about what the problems are. Are tensions greater than they used to be? What percent of the student population is affected? SC could certainly assist in setting up parent forums to exchange information.

It was discussed that the atmosphere in the building is not blatant disrespect. It is more subtle—“micro aggressions”. One student told about a teacher not knowing an Asian student this late (i.e., May) in the school year because the teacher confuses the student with other Asian students. Another story was about teachers not pronouncing names correctly and that the students accept whatever pronunciation is used. It was also discussed that this is not true of all teachers and that some really take time to be sure they are pronouncing a student’s name correctly.

Rather than “cultural competency”, Mark suggested that what we are really talking about is a student’s *mental health*. Others suggested that it’s *respect* for all students. **At the end of meeting, there was clear consensus that SC should take on the “cultural competency/respect” topic during the next school year. This will be discussed with Henry Turner at the next SC meeting.**

**8.** **Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting**

The last SC meeting of the school year will be held on Tuesday, May 31.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00PM

**NNHS School Committee**

**Our work on *growth mindset***

***October 2014 – June 2016***

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| **Overview/**  **Summary** | Beginning in Fall 2014, in partnership with Jen Price, Mark Aronson, and several teachers, Newton North’s School Council has been sharing information with parents/guardians about growth mindset. We held several events geared towards parents and in School Year 2015-2016 began to explore the impact growth mindset was having on students and teachers. Below you will find background information on what we have done to date. |
| **History and School Council events** | After Newton Public Schools’ superintendent suggested that faculty read *Mindset* by Carol Dweck in the summer of 2014, NNHS School Council designated growth mindset (GM) as its focus in 2014-15. To educate parents/guardians about GM, we hosted three events: (a) Getting up to speed on the GM: a parent/guardian workshop (12/3/14), (b) a “book group” on GM (3/24/15), (c) and a repeat of Getting up to speed on the GM at Bigelow Middle School (4/29/15). On 10/28/15, we held Experiencing the Growth Mindset: Workshop for parents/guardians and students. |
| **SC focus in 2015-2016 on student and teacher impact.** | **Current situation:** SC student and teacher members have pointed out that when GM meets the reality of the classroom, things are not always seamless. We are asked to read <http://www.salon.com/2015/08/16/the_education_fad_thats_hurting_our_kids_what_you_need_to_know_about_growth_mindset_theory_and_the_harmful_lessons_it_imparts/>  In addition, we know that people lose patience with topics they perceive as fads (“initiative fatigue”). Let’s continue looking at GM for another year and develop a deeper discussion of how it plays out in the classroom. |
| **Student Panel discussion:**  **March 2016** | **Format & Questions**  Format: 30 minute discussion with a panel of student representatives from Student Faculty Administration (SFA), moderated by School Council student representative – Irene Wu. 5 questions, spending 5-6 minutes per question. First question is asked to all panelists. Moderator asks next question to 1 person and the rest add to the discussion. Moderator selects next question and directs the question to a different student SFA rep. Each round of questions is directed at a new SFA rep with others on the panel weighing in as appropriate.  Goal: to learn about the practical/actual application of Growth Mindset at Newton North HS. What has been helpful/useful and where could we utilize the concept more or less.  Intro: Moderator introduce format of panel. Quick reminder on the main concepts of Growth Mindset and how it has been discussed/used at NNHS.  Questions:   1. How many of you have heard about growth mindset at Newton North? (asked to all panelists show of hands). 2. Are your teachers encouraging you to adopt a growth mindset in your classes? If yes, what practices are they using? 3. Have you tried something new as a result of encouragement from a teacher/coach/staff member? If yes, how did it feel? What did you learn about yourself? 4. What gets in the way of trying new things or taking risks—in your classes and in other areas? 5. What else could teachers/coaches/staff members do to encourage students to adopt a growth mindset?   **Summary of student panel discussion:**  The purpose of the SC/SFA joint meeting was to have a student discussion about how the growth mindset is being used in the classroom.    Irene Wu, SC student representative, moderated the discussion.   A summary is below.   All students had heard about growth mindset (GM), although it seemed to be more pronounced last school year than this year.  (This isn’t really a surprise given that Jen Price introduced the concept during her last year as principal.)  Several examples were given about how GM is used in the classroom.  In chemistry, for example, students are encouraged to do test corrections and those corrections are factored into their grades.  Retakes are optional—up to the student.  In some classes, the teacher takes 2 out of 3 test grades.  Although this isn’t explicitly called “growth mindset” by the teachers, the students see that it is geared to allowing the student to learn over time and receive credit for it.   Students thought that it was easier to incorporate GM in math and science courses rather than in English and history, for example.  However, in English classes, students submit drafts (sometimes multiple drafts) before a final paper is submitted.  This is also incorporating GM.   To the question:  Have you ever done something “risky” academically to push yourself?   Although it wasn’t academic, one student talked about going out for the track team and doing something she had never done before—and getting better at it.  That was a positive experience.  As she put it, there is “lots of opportunity for growth” on the track team.  Regarding a math class, a student talked about having his teacher encourage him to move up a level after freshman year.  Another student recalled an English teacher recommending that the student take AP English rather than Honors.  *There were not, however, any examples of a case where a student took a risky class (risky in the sense that they were really pushing themselves and risking getting a less than great grade).*   An interesting story was about a new organic chemistry class.  Students talked about not taking it because it was an ACP level course and they were on the Honors or AP track.  Although the course was something they wanted to take, they didn’t because it was at a lower level.  They were striving for Honors and AP courses because of college admissions.   Students said that attitudes of teachers paly a big role.  Some really “want” to help the students and others are “available” for help.  There is a real difference, say the students, and it impacts whether or not they seek help from a given teacher.   Students say they “tune out” when GM is mentioned.  They have “heard it before”.  Better to “just do it” rather than talk about it.  First impressions about GM weren’t great.  It got “hammered” into them.  *GM was summarized as “working hard in a healthy way”.*  ***Suggestions going forward:***  ***-  Introduce Growth Mindset in Freshman orientation - Talk about it during course registration***  ***- Have mandatory counselor meetings for course selection*** |
| **Teacher discussion with Albert Cho:**  **April 2016** | 1. What are you currently doing to encourage students to push beyond their perceived limitations and try new things, even if they have to struggle or risk experiencing failure?  * Encouraging students to move up a level during registration. * Before tests, they are going to do well on it. * Drafts of essays (3) – encourage them to meet with me – rewrite policy – they can rewrite only if they have met with me before final draft is due. * Personal goals at start of the year and midway in year as well * Extra credit questions throughout the year. * Class activities that push them out of their comfort zone. * Encouraging students to do extracurricular activities – checking in with them about outside activities. * Meeting with students during X-block.  1. What gets in the way of your incorporating more opportunities for students to correct and resubmit their work, try new things, or take risks—in your classes and in other areas?  * All the other” stuff” we have to do. * I’ll meet with students after tests to go over tests, but I do not do test corrections. * I do infinite retakes on map quizzes because it’s important for them to know countries – I can do that because it is simple to grade – time is a big issue. * The velocity of the curriculum makes it difficult to do retakes – when they resubmit there past work; you want them to focus on the current stuff. * Students are less willing to take risks because they will get a bad grade. * Time for students – many know they should rewrite – but when they think about the time it takes to revise – they often settle with what they have. * Time – how to balance on moving forward, how to make sure students don’t just focus on raising their grade. * Time – grading takes a very long time. * How fair is it to have students take a make-up exam – equity and time.  1. Do you talk with colleagues and department members about growth mindset, and do you feel a focus on growth mindset is useful? If so, what are some best practices you and your colleagues have used to encourage your students to adopt a growth mindset? If not, why not?  * Yes, we talked about it earlier in the year about teaching skills and how to use that as a growth mindset avenue. * It’s implicit in a lot of the conversations we have with our colleagues – how to improve their self-confidence and their estimations about their own abilities – we do not use the jargon, but we feel like we already do this in our practice. * I do so with my PLC, cluster group of colleagues – how we can support all students, etc. * Not directly with that terminology – but the work we do as a department directly connects to growth mindset.  1. How have you experienced growth mindset in your own professional practice at Newton North? How have you been encouraged to innovate and take risks in the pursuit of your own learning?  * We are all encouraged to reflect back on our own practice and we are always encouraged to try new things in the classroom * We use STRETCH goals. * Has anyone encouraged us to innovate? NO! * There is a culture among staff of being self-motivated – no one is saying from above, “I want innovation.” The faculty is self-motivated. * Yes – I’ve chosen to make my goals that push my teaching, took on creative writing and vocab teaching as goals – our dept. chair encourages us to do things that stretch our mindset – but not sure how it is reflected in our evaluation. * The language of growth mindset exists in our department, but it’s not always clear that we are going to be supported in our pursuit of learning. * Yes – we’ve heard a lot about it and goals we need to are focused on growth mindset.   Warren Buffett: Encouraged his children not fear failure. “I’ve told them that unless they had failures, they *were* failures.” “It’s the nature of philanthropy – that you’re going to fail. In business, I’m looking for the easy pitches. I can look at thousands of investments and just wait for the one that’s very easy and in my sweet spot. Philanthropy is just the opposite: You’re dealing with problems that are huge and that have resisted easy solutions.” |
| **Next Steps** | **Celebration of Growth Mindset**  To close out the School Council work on Growth Mindset |