

Janney SIT Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2008

In Attendance:

Kirk Rankin, Tawanna Franklin, Allison Feeney, Mary Osterman, Andrew Smiles, Karen Martin, Cheryl Ohlson, Jane Varner Malhotra, Karen Langford, Dr. Crews, Shellie Wood, Karin Kalat, Jonathon McHugh

Student SIT Representative:

Sarah Thompson was unable to attend the meeting and passed along, through Jane Malhotra, that she had no new information to share with the SIT.

Local School Plan:

- Dr. Crews reported that the local school plan documents are currently available on line. She explained that it is not common practice within school systems to require the submission of school plans in the midst of the school year. Rather, school systems generally require schools to create their plans during the summer months, and to implement the plans at the start of the school year.
- Janney's local school plan is a working document, to be revised and changed as the school year progresses.
- Dr. Crews distributed copies of the results of the staff and parent survey, and explained that the school plan committee will review the survey results and, based on these results, develop school goals and reconsider the school's vision and mission statements. Next steps for the committee are to review the surveys; develop a "snapshot" sheets of important elements of the plan; consider how the school has changed since the last iteration of the plan; evaluate additional data; and discuss the school's vision, mission, and goals for the future.
- Cheryl raised a question about the possibility of creating another survey that more accurately reflects the current circumstances at Janney, and Dr. Crews responded that another survey can be sent to parents in the Spring. Cheryl requested that the committee consider additional, more nuanced survey questions that allow parents to provide more detailed responses relating to specific programs, classes, and priorities. These questions should move beyond the "which program to cut" format, towards a format that asks parents and staff members how they think we can / should improve and enhance the services and instruction provided at Janney.
- It was noted that there are some discrepancies in the survey results of the parents when compared to the staff, and that these will be explored by the school plan committee.
- It was also noted that the survey results were quite positive overall, with parents and staff generally expressing a high level of satisfaction with the school's classes and

programs. One exception was the social studies program, about which both parents and teachers had a less favorable response. Mary Osterman explained that this could be explained, at least on the part of the teachers, by the fact that DCPS has this year implemented a new set of social studies standards, which add considerably to the amount of social studies content that teachers are required to cover, and the staff is dissatisfied with the teaching expectations embedded within these standards.

- Andrew raised questions about the Spanish program at Janney, and noted that the Spanish program received much lower satisfaction ratings than other aspects of the instructional program. A discussion ensued relating to the extent to which the teachers' days are "full," and it was explained that there currently is not enough time in the day to cover each content area to the extent which teachers would like. The viability of the Spanish program is something that will be discussed in the future by the school plan committee and the larger SIT.
- Karen Kalat asked how DCPS intends to use the plan. Dr. Crews explained that they are looking for a statement of where we are currently, where we are going, and how we intend to get there. She also stated that the plan should include a discussion of what we have to do to maintain our AYP percentages, and to raise the proficiency levels of some children who may be struggling academically. Finally, she stated that Janney doesn't "gain" anything in terms of resources or support from the school plan process. Mary Osterman added that the school plan process was originally designed to give parents and the community the opportunity for greater participation in school operations and the instructional process, and that Janney has historically benefited from the reflective nature of the school plan process.
- There is no official deadline for the next step in the process, which is the creation of the "action plan" portion of the school plan.
- It was noted that Chancellor Rhee may be looking for a 5% increase in CAS scores at each school, and the SIT discussed what this would mean for Janney, where scores are already very high.
- Andrew asked how much flexibility the SIT would have to make changes through the plan. For example, is there the opportunity to consider the use of time and resources, and the availability of non-mandated programs? (Spanish was again raised as a program that should be discussed.) Karen Langford again stated that the instructional days are already full, and, as an example, the Everyday Math program requires that teachers provide seventy-five to ninety minutes of math instruction daily, though this is rarely possible at Janney. Mary noted how impressed and amazed she has been with the fact that her students are now arriving in the intermediate grades with such a strong number sense and ability to problem solve, and she credits the Everyday Math program with these advances. (Mary also stated that classes at Janney generally average 60 minutes of math instruction four days per week, and language arts is generally taught in ninety minute blocks each day. It was then noted that science instruction was something that received less favorable ratings on the parent surveys.)

- Allison mentioned the International Baccalaureate program that's in the early stages of implementation at Deal, and asked about whether Janney would follow suit. Dr. Crews explained that Janney is not "in line" for the elementary IB program, and also that Wilson has plans to implement the IB program, though it is only in the application phase.
- Several SIT members expressed concern that there will be an instructional and programmatic "disconnect" for students who complete the middle school IB program and then transition to a non-IB high school (Wilson).
- Andrew asked whether there is any interest within the Janney community in exploring the elementary ("primary years") IB program, and stated that it should be explored if such interest exists. He also stated that he much information related to the IB program which he would be happy to share with the school community. Shellie explained that DCPS is currently trying to expand the Readers and Writers workshop models, and that the schools are currently struggling with the implementation of these models. She asked what Janney would gain from the IB program, and expressed her belief that the Janney community needs to "shore up its foundation" at this juncture, rather than taking on new programs. She and other teachers, however, expressed interest in reading more about the program, and Andrew agreed to supply information.
- Someone asked whether or not next year's class configuration will be part of the school plan discussion, and Dr. Crews and Kirk agreed that the class configuration discussion will remain separate from the school plan process.

Security:

- Ms. Franklin stated that, in response to the November 10th letter sent to Mary Cheh, Alan, Lew, and Chancellor Rhee regarding signage and other security issues, Mr. Christman (DCPS Security) and Mr. Hudson (DCPS electrician) have twice visited the school for "walk-throughs". Several security upgrades are in the works, including a lighting upgrade (lights installed at the front of the school, on the parking lot, and beside the demountables); twelve new security cameras; and a large new monitor that will be placed across from the security desk (which Dr. Crews will control). Mr. Christman will be back to follow up on the upgrades, and will likely wait to begin some of the projects depending on whether or not Janney is moved up on the modernization list.
- Language for the signs that will be posted around the campus was discussed. Karen Kalat stated that the PTA may be able to cover the cost of the signs, rather than depending on DCPS, if we need to expedite the sign installation.
- Ms. Franklin reported that a child was scratched by a nanny's dog on the playground, while the dog was unattended by its owner. Mrs. Osterman stated that parents often tie up their dogs near the demountables, and a discussion of the safety of having dogs on campus ensued.

- Ms. Franklin and Karen Kalat agreed to write a notice for the next THT about the following safety and security issues:
 - Leaving dogs unattended on campus
 - Dropping children off in the morning in the street
 - Cars parking in the yellow drop-off area

- Karen Kalat also mentioned that the classes in the demountables have been disrupted by children playing on the playground during school hours. It was mentioned that the St. Ann's children sometimes do not remain within their designated playground space during their recess, and that we may need to request that they do not play near the demountables.

Facilities:

- Andrew reported that Sam Young, from Allen Lew's office, is actively considering the following upgrades to Janney as "temporary fixes" until Janney is modernized:
 - 1.) "Module" bathrooms to be placed outside the building.
 - 2.) The installations of bathrooms on the second floor on the building, in the "empty space" beside the supply closets. This would be a more significant and expensive solution to the bathroom problem.
 - 3.) Plumbing repairs to address the water pressure problems.
 - 4.) Repairs to the roof.
 - 5.) Installation of a door in the demountable between Ms. Etris and Ms. Carrier's classrooms.

With Janney's approval, the city council will consider these upgrades in January, with work to begin in early or mid 2009.

One of the SIT members asked whether these upgrades would effect Janney's position on the MFP queue, and Andrew reported that he was told that these upgrades would not be in lieu of modernization, as the city council's budget is entirely separate from the MFP budget.

Members of the SIT agreed to all of the above upgrades, with the exception of the outdoor module bathrooms, which would likely present significant safety and security issues. It was also requested that the door between the demountables be placed at the absolute top of the priority list, as the absence of a door presents a significant hazard to teachers and children, and this door was supposed to be installed before the beginning of the school year.

- Andrew reported that there has been lots of "activity" downtown regarding the PPP; that DeGuzman has asked Janney to explain its position relating to the PPP; and that others downtown are looking for Janney's feedback about this issue. Kirk reminded the group that the SIT has, on several occasions, invited DCPS to meet with us, and they have either declined or not responded. Allison stated that the SIT withdrew its conditional support of the PPP earlier in school year because we had not been included in the process and our issues and concerns were either not being heard or were being disregarded. She

noted that these circumstances have changed, as LCOR, DCPS, and the Mayor's office have recently attempted to engage the SIT and listen to its concerns. Cheryl noted that the failure of the Mayor's office and LCOR to engage the Janney community was only one element of the cause for withdrawing support, while changing circumstances, namely the increased confidence in Allen Lew's office and DCPS to modernize and expand the school without ceding any Janney land, was an equally significant factor.

- Andrew discussed the joint facilities / advocacy committees meeting that took place on December eleventh, at which time committee members discussed the case it needs to present regarding why Janney should be moved up on MFP queue. Andrew explained that he subsequently drafted a letter which, if approved by the SIT, would be presented to Mary Cheh, DCPS, the Mayor's office, and any other relevant stakeholders, and which would delineate why Janney's modernization should be moved up and why the SIT has chosen not to support the PPP.
- A discussion ensued regarding the mistrust of many members of the Janney community of "downtown;" the fact that the Tenleytown corridor is within the Mayor's plan for increased transit-oriented development; and the need for the SIT and the Janney community to be proactive regarding the PPP and the MFP, and to devise a "Plan B" should the plans for the PPP proceed without our support.
- Allison raised several questions regarding the SIT's position on the PPP, including whether or not the SIT has the authority to oppose the PPP on the Janney community's behalf, and whether the best course of action at this juncture would be to poll the community again before changing our position from "withdrawing support" to a more active opposition to the PPP. Mary Osterman and others agreed that it is the SIT's responsibility to understand the opinions of the community before proceeding with a more active opposition. Discussion ensued regarding when and how this polling would take place (community meeting versus online survey versus survey in the THT), and how much information can and should be provided prior to the vote. A vote was taken, and eleven of the twelve SIT members who were present agreed that a brief document should be sent home in the next THT either summarizing the PPP-related information that we have at that time or directing parents to where they can find current information, and asking them to vote in support of the PPP, in support of the MFP process, or to abstain. Several SIT members suggested that we contact those members not in attendance to explain the plan for a parent poll and allow them to weigh in. It was also noted that the language of the survey or poll should make clear that a vote for the MFP is also a vote to oppose the PPP. Parents will be asked to return the survey and teachers will be asked to collect the survey from each child.
- Karen Kalat cited the importance of acknowledging within our communications to the Janney community that the SIT is not in complete agreement regarding its position on the PPP, and that the language within our communications should reflect the diversity of opinion within the group.

- In the meantime, Kirk agreed to write a brief letter to Anthony DeGuzman reiterating our previous explanations of our position regarding the PPP, and directing him to our previous communications. The SIT position will be more clearly articulated once the results of the poll are reviewed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50.