

Janney SIT Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2008

In Attendance:

Kirk Rankin, Marijke Gero, Tawanna Franklin, Mary Osterman, Andrew Smiles, Karen Martin, Cheryl Ohlson, Jane Varner Malhotra, Karen Langford, Dr. Crews, Shellie Wood, Laure Hunter, Malin Kerwin, Sczerina Perot, Karin Kalat, Mark Popovich, Camille Martone, Anne Sullivan, Danny Carrozza, Scott Cheney, Norman Dong, Jonathon McHugh

Student SIT Representative:

Sarah Thompson was introduced as the student representative to the SIT. Sarah announced the new leadership of the student council, and informed the SIT that the school year seems to be off to a good start.

Teaching Vacancies:

Dr. Crews explained that a .5 art teacher position was still open, and that it is often difficult to fill a “half-time” teaching position. During the week prior five interviews were conducted, and an offer was made. She hopes to have the position filled within a week.

There is also a special education position open, and interviews are being conducted. She anticipated that an offer would be made within a week. Dr. Crews also announced that Mr. Harvey will not be returning to Janney as our PE teacher, and interviews will be scheduled as soon as possible to fill that role.

Instructional Highlights:

- Strategies are being used to analyze and organize the data from the DC BAS and DC CAS in order to identify areas of successes and areas of concern.
- Everyday Math - End of unit assessments are being reviewed to ensure uniformity across classes.
- This year professional development will look at the types of data gathered, and how to effectively use that data to plan for differentiation of instruction.
- Karen Langford will be working with individual teachers who are new to Janney, and others who have raised concerns about meeting student needs.
- Teachers will be reviewing the SST process to develop individual protocols, recommendations, and strategies.
- Karen Langford is teaching a section of 5th grade math to a select number of students from each of the 5th grade classes.
- The Math Counts program will continue this year and will begin next month.
- Andrew inquired about ideas that were discussed last year, including programming designed for kids who would benefit from instructional acceleration. Karen Langford responded by saying that scheduling for this kind of programming is difficult, human resources are scarce, and the values within the Janney community regarding homogeneous grouping would need to be explored. She also explained that she and other teachers are currently exploring curriculum development within the Everyday Math

program, and that Math Counts provides additional challenge to those students who seek it.

- Dr. Crews explained that the tutoring program, which provides instructional support to students who would benefit from additional instruction, has not been pursued yet this year, but will be considered. The availability of PTA funds will be explored before committing to the tutoring program.
- Also relating to the tutoring program, it was reported that Janney's test scores improved last year, though we do not know specifically if the scores of those students who participated in the tutoring program improved. It was suggested that perhaps the tutoring program served to diminish test anxiety amongst participants, and other stress reduction strategies might also be effective in lieu of tutoring. It is also possible that the improvement in math scores may be a reflection of the fact that the Everyday Math curriculum has been in place since 2002. The current sixth graders began with it in kindergarten and perhaps this is now showing a long-term positive impact on math ability of Janney students.
- It was reported that last year teachers analyzed which items on the tests presented the most difficulties for students. Last year was the first year that the constructed response items were included on the test, and teachers worked to prepare their students for these items throughout the year. Last year's test data revealed that these items were not problematic for students at any grade level.
- A question was raised about the possibility of physical education substitute who can provide the children with organized and structured physical activity. Dr. Crews reported that they are actively searching for a PE teacher, and that Dr. King is providing organized physical activity in the meantime.

Budgetary Issues:

Last year we were budgeted for 490 students. Dr. Crews reported that our current enrollment is 490 students. Budgetary adjustments made by DCPS will occur in early October.

Pre-K-K:

It was reported that this year's kindergarten classes are smaller than anticipated, which allowed for a full class of pre-kindergarten students. There are currently 84 students in Pre-K and K, with an average class size near 20 students per class.

Fifth and Sixth Grades:

- There are three fifth grade classes with 26 students in each. It was reported that 5th grade teachers had planned for the larger class size, and the beginning of the year has gone smoothly for these students. The three classes are meeting each Friday afternoon to address any social issues and for team building activities.
- Fifth grade teachers have begun to plan for the transition of the fifth graders to middle school. They are planning a "celebration" rather than a "graduation." The theme of the celebration will be "Stepping up, Stepping out." Efforts are being made to differentiate this celebration from the traditional sixth grade graduation ceremonies. The sixth graders continue to develop their theme of "Legacy" for their graduation activities.

- The 6th graders will visit Deal for a day in October, and the 5th graders will visit Deal for a day in the Spring.
- Deal is on track to receive the current 5th graders next year. Malin reported that she has stressed to the Deal counselors that they need to plan to take into account the developmental differences between seventh graders and the sixth graders who will be enrolling at Deal next year.

Grant Money:

It was reported that DCPS administrators may have failed to apply for the high achieving grant money that recognizes schools for their successes on standardized testing through NCLB. This is a substantial amount of money that Janney has received for at least the past two years and that has comprised a significant portion of Janney's operating budget. Dr. Crews will meet with Michelle Rhee in October and investigate this issue to determine whether it is still possible to apply for this grant.

The Collaborative:

Dr. Crews is scheduled to meet with Scott Cartland and other principals from schools within the newly established collaborative on Friday September 19th. The collaborative is designed to provide professional development for teachers, particularly those who are new to the reading / writing workshop model. A meeting schedule for the collaborative has been set for the academic year.

Local School Plan:

Dr. Crews explained that she is looking at the vision for the school, and will turn to the SIT for assistance as needed.

She also reported that the local school plan will need to be revised this year, and she will likely need a sub-committee to help with this process, and to help monitor the implementation of the plan throughout the year. The format for the plan has not yet been released by DCPS, and Dr. Crews anticipates that she'll receive more information about this at the Principals meeting on Friday September 19th.

She is also considering the creation of a sub-group to look at school-wide data (to document what is occurring instructionally, where the students are academically, and where they need to go) in order to enhance the use of data-driven instruction.

The data gathered for the local school plan and also from the committee that will review school-wide data may also serve later documentation needs, such as an application for Middle States Accreditation or for the creation of an IB program.

Campus Access and Security:

Concerns were raised about issues relating to campus security, and it was agreed that there is a need for the Janney community to examine the extent to which it is appropriate and desirable to have an open campus. The area behind the newer demountables (near the soccer field) was identified as a particularly problematic area, and it was suggested that perhaps a fence could block this area to foot traffic. Although the side gates to the school are typically locked during the school day, people continue to "cut through" the school grounds throughout the day. It was agreed that Janney needs to acquire new signs to be posted around the perimeter stating that there is to be no trespassing across the

school grounds during the school day. Dr. Crews stated that Metropolitan Police have been patrolling the school grounds each day between 5:00 and 8:00 PM, and that having signs posted will make their jobs easier. She will request signs from the Head of Security for DCPS.

It was agreed that a clear statement should be included in the Janney handbook regarding the use of the school grounds during and after school hours, and that this statement should be available to the security guard (and others) to distribute throughout the day to those who continue to use or cross the school grounds during school hours. A statement should also be included about the need for caretakers to closely supervise the children in their charge during afterschool hours. These statements will be reiterated in the THT. The Janney community will hold off on posting a notice in the community listserve.

Issues that remain to be examined by the Janney community include the following: How open, or how “locked up,” does the Janney community want the school campus to be? What are the guidelines set forth by DCPS regarding broader community access to school campuses during after school hours?

JanneyCam – Dr. Crews is currently monitoring the JanneyCam, as the monitors are near her office. She will ask the facilities management people about the possibility of acquiring new cameras throughout the grounds that can access areas that are currently not under surveillance. Sczerina suggested that the PTA can help with this if DCPS does not.

Public / Private Partnership:

Kirk explained that the city’s Economic Development office wants to postpone the stakeholders meeting until November or December.

It was reported that the latest MFP has Janney scheduled to be modernized in 2013 and expanded in 2014.

It was agreed that it is imperative that the SIT communicates to Janney parents what we know about the PPP, and that we create opportunities for parents to offer their feedback, and, similarly, that we communicate with the Mayor’s office. It was also agreed that the current plan set forth by LCOR continues to be unacceptable.

It was stated that the issues and concerns that guided previous SITs are no longer valid; that faith in Allen Lew’s ability to ensure Janney’s much needed renovations has increased; and that the building is currently in much better shape than when the idea of a PPP was first explored. However, it was also recognized that many teachers are still working in very cramped, crowded spaces (some in closets), and that the bathrooms remain in need of renovation.

Some members of the SIT argued that the SIT would be doing the Janney community a disservice by “closing the door” to the consideration of the PPP, and that we should wait until a formal plan has been presented for consideration. Others expressed concerns that continuing to offer our conditional support for the PPP will not result in opportunities for increased participation in the process, and may result in a project that is detrimental to the school community.

It was suggested that the Janney community has the ability to effectively advocate for our school’s needs, and those efforts should be directed towards lobbying DCPS to improve our position within the MFP.

After all viewpoints were heard, it was generally agreed that the position of the SIT will be modified to state that the Janney community is no longer willing to cede any of its

land to the PPP process, and that we will direct our efforts towards pursuing the prompt modernization and expansion of the school through the DCPS MFP process. The SIT's position, as well as the current information relating to the PPP, will be communicated to the Janney community through the distribution of a position statement, an executive summary, and an FAQ's that will be sent home with students, distributed through an email "blast," and posted on the school's website. Opportunities for community feedback will include office hours held after the distribution of the new information. Parents will also be invited to express their opinions by contacting the members of the SIT.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00.