

Notes from the East High United Meeting on March 12, 2009

Jill Jokela began the meeting with introductions from the 10 or so people in attendance.

Principal Alan Harris introduced the first item on the agenda, the **Facilitated Language Study pilot for the 2009/2010 school year**, as one of the joys of being a principal: inspired colleagues who are willing and able to do the work to make inspiration reality. Since the decision two years ago to cease to offer German due to declining enrollment, East has offered only French and Spanish on an ongoing basis. The World Languages Department, charged with exploring how to increase the breadth of East's World Language offerings—a charge that included considering options other than offering additional traditionally taught languages—developed the Facilitated Language Study (FLS) proposal, a pioneering program for MMSD, teacher-inspired, generated and implemented, which responds to the needs and interests of students at East. Mr. Harris then turned the discussion over to World Languages teachers Claudine Clark and Monica Severa, who have spearheaded the development of the FLS idea. Ms. Clark began by addressing **funding**. The pilot class of one section will be taught by Ms. Clark as part of her regular teaching assignment; additional funding is sought for curricular materials, and for stipends for the native language speakers who will, ideally, tutor FLS students for three full class periods a week. Ms. Clark and Ms. Severa have applied to the Foundation for Madison's Public Schools for grants to cover the stipends for the first year of the pilot; they also wrote an ARISTOS grant for 16 Netbooks, which, ideally, will be shared between the students in the (wireless internet equipped) classroom. As soon as they have a better idea of funding, probably by mid-April, they will try to recruit tutors, starting with UW students. Question: if there is no grant money, how will the tutors be paid? The money would have to come from East's budget. Ms. Severa then shared more **specifics about the class**. After an initial survey to determine student interest in FLS, a second survey was distributed to students to determine how many were seriously planning to take the class, and what languages they would like to study. 187 students expressed serious interest in taking the class. **Arabic and Japanese** were the languages with the most interest, with Chinese and Russian as the next most popular choices. There will be only **one section, with approximately 30 students**, divided more or less equally into two cohorts, one to study Arabic and the other Japanese; the class will be aimed primarily towards self-motivated juniors and seniors who have language experience, about 50 of whom were interested in taking the class, with seniors being given priority. Since it is a one section class, **scheduling will be a challenge**; there are other classes, especially those open only to juniors and seniors, that have only one section as well. Ms. Severa and Ms. Clark, working with Randi Kubek (who does the master schedule) and the Guidance Department, are using Infinite Campus to find the time slot with the fewest scheduling conflicts. Ms. Clark and Ms. Severa will attend a conference in Chicago to look at **materials for both languages**; materials for next year have to be ordered by early April. West has taught Japanese for several years, FLS will be able to use some of their materials; they have requested West's scope and sequence. They will follow up on a suggestion to contact Concordia University for Arabic materials, and may also look into the popular but expensive Rosetta Stone series. The FLS parent group will work with them on implementation for the pilot year; and with the pilot year students will help work through the issues that will inevitably arise with such a groundbreaking program. They will also look into **funding sources for next year**; for instance, there is money available from both the Department of Defense and the Department of Education for the study of Arabic. Ms. Severa and Ms. Clark talked with lots of students; students interested in the pilot understand that it will be different from learning a traditionally taught Romance language, and want the challenge. Why Japanese? Because of the popularity of anime in particular, and Japanese popular culture in general. Is this a legitimate reason to offer a language? Mr. Harris: including student voice in elective course offerings is a balance. Ms. Clark talked with UW Madison admission staff, and FLS will definitely count as a **credit for transcripts for college**, but at this point it will not satisfy the two or three consecutive years of language study required by many colleges for admission, nor will it earn students retroactive credits, as having five years of French or Spanish might. For many students, FLS will be an elective taken in addition to another language. Ultimately, assuming that the pilot continues and expands, it will need to be publicized to the feeder middle schools, so that students and their families are aware of FLS World Language options at East.

This is the time of year for allocations, and Mr. Harris began his **Principal's report** with the news that because East's enrollment is *projected* to drop from the current 1700 students to 1594 students, **East will lose staff allocations for next year**: three full teaching allocations, and one teaching allocation in ESL. Mr. Harris is in dialogue with the district about the loss of allocations, especially since this year's projection is almost

identical to last year's (low) projection of 1592 students. There was a question about the effect of East's homeless students on allocations, but Mr. Harris explained that allocations are not based on need, only on numbers. Like many other districts, MMSD has chosen to put all of its Title I funds at the elementary level, so there is no Title I money to help middle and high schools. (Title I is the federal educational aid program to support poor and educationally disadvantaged students to meet high academic standards.)

About 70% of **course selections** are in. Students select courses, then Randi Kubek looks at what courses have filled, and works from there. The **target is to have schedules to students by mid May.**

Bea Bonet is working with the CLASS (Creating Leaders And Supporting Students) student group to **redevelop the student governance model.** CLASS is comprised of nine students, recruited by Ms. Bonet on the recommendation of teachers and class advisors to be representative of the diversity of East's student body. The group includes senior class president Hilary Schroeder, who meets with Mr. Harris twice a month. After only 70 kids bought tickets to a dance, which then had to be cancelled, Ms. Schroeder realized that East's existing student congress was "just sort of her friends", did not represent East, and needed to change. Ms. Schroeder asked other Big 8 principals how they structured student governance to include representative student voice at their schools. CLASS went to a meeting of Department chairs, will survey teachers, and will then survey students. The energetic students plan to have the new governance structure in place by early May, so that student elections for next year will happen in the new model.

East needs a vision for grades 9-12 access to **accelerated learning/programming** across departments. Anne Von Bank, recently hired as East's Accelerated Programming and Literacy Coordinator, was charged with working with staff who teach TAG and AP classes. First, they will change how to define classes: not who the student is, but what the learning is that will go on in the class. Second, they will look at how to expand access opportunities to accelerated classes while still being sure that students have the skills to succeed in them. It is important to balance the need to better serve "top end" students—to be competitive with other schools—with the need to improve and increase access to accelerated learning opportunities for all students. *All* classes need clearly defined, measurable outcomes. East will start rolling out the *process* in fall 2009, but changes will not actually be in place until fall 2010, with a first step being the change in the name of classes from TAG to Honors. (TAG is not a meaningful designation on transcripts for college.) In the fall of 2010, for example, Mr. DuVair will be teaching Honors Biology as he now teaches TAG Biology, but with different criteria for getting into the class. Rumors abound about changes in accelerated programming at East, for instance, that there will be "pods" (each including a "TAG" student, a "special education" student and a "regular" student)—Mr. Harris was curious as to where this idea came from. There are different philosophies among the teaching staff; some would like to define the student not the learning. Staff are concerned about a move towards more AP classes, which are sometimes considered more curriculum and test driven, rather than being exploratory and interest driven, as East's TAG classes tend to be. Parents indicated that they were not clear about the purpose (or the meaning) of the recent letter to East families from Anne Von Bank. Question: are numerous students not properly identified, and so not getting into TAG classes? Students are being missed. There is no systematic approach to guide parents and students through AP and TAG programming at East across all departments. Mr. Harris said that they will try to post on East's website an outline of what is going on with TAG/accelerated programming at East, and where it is going.

Last points and questions: MMSD is looking at one **hour a week of collaborative time for teachers** to work together on scope and sequence, etc.; school would start an hour later that day. The District needs to work with Madison Metro on bus routes, and possibly with MSCR on club and tutoring opportunities during that hour. The District is also continuing a move to **align the essential learning goals of the four comprehensive high schools**, while retaining the character that makes each school special. **Is the English Department making progress?** Mr. Harris stated that they are working hard on essential learning goals and will have a day away at the end of the month. There will be AP English and AP Studio Art for next year. Now that there is **no Purgolder time for clubs, how is it working** to have clubs after school? Some clubs meet before school, some at lunch, some after. No matter what time clubs meet, it will be a conflict for some students. Club meetings are now announced Tuesday and Thursday mornings, which they were not before.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 16 (after break) at 7 pm in the LMC

Topic: Special Education Programming at East