

Notes from the East High United Meeting on April 16, 2009

The meeting began with introductions from the 14 or so people initially in attendance. By the meeting's end, more than 20 people were there, including BOE members Lucy Mathiak and Ed Hughes; at least half of those present were East staff.

Before moving to the updates section of his **Principal's report**, Alan Harris announced that East has received **two Aristos grants**, one, for \$9820, for the **Facilitated Language Study (FLS)** pilot program, and the other, for \$6898, for the Family and Consumer Education and Work Experience students in the collaborative partnership between East and the Goodman Community Center. The **FLS pilot** has also been awarded a **grant from the Foundation for Madison's Public Schools**, for \$8000. These grants ensure that FLS will have money for computers, training and curricular materials for its pilot year, the 2009/2010 school year.

Mr. Harris introduced Student Activities Principal Bea Bonet, who spoke briefly about this year's East **Prom** (Saturday, May 9th, from 8-11:30 at the Alliant Energy Center) which will have an "Arabian Nights" theme. Students wanted camels, and had a lead on where to find them, but the Alliant Energy Center nixed that idea. Ms. Bonet explained that **this year there will be no Post-Prom**, which has been a tradition at East for several years, organized by parents and East's AODA coordinator, and held at Dream Lanes. This year, there was no funding as there has been in past years, and with the changes at semester time in the duties of the principals at East, as well as the fact that this year's AODA coordinator, Jessie Cudney, splits her time between East and LaFollette, East staff decided that there was neither time nor money to pull off a post-prom. Next year parents will be involved early, and organizers will seek grants and other funding sources. Ms. Bonet noted that Ms. Cudney is starting a leadership group for students around AODA issues; she also reported that **Johnathan Delgado**, an East 10th grader, **is running for the position of student representative to the Board of Education**. In the 70 years of student representation on the Board, no one from an east side school has held the position. Mr. Delgado was motivated to run after he attended a student congress conference where only East's delegation included students of color. The **student leadership** group of which Mr. Delgado is a part will have a day away later this school year; as part of their efforts to access **student voice**, they are working on getting kids involved earlier in student government, and are going to East's feeder middle schools to interest incoming 9th graders in applying to serve on student congress in their first few weeks at East. The group is also working on what student leadership looks like, both literally—do East's student leaders represent East's diverse community?—and how to realistically translate talk about school leadership into action for high school students. With the student leadership piece well underway, Mr. Harris and others have been working on addressing these same issues with **parent leadership**. An African-American parent group has met once already, a Latino parent group was formally meeting the same night as the East High United (EHU) meeting, a Hmong parent group was slated to meet the following week, and Martha Olsen will be meeting with a group of adults who are foster parents and/or who run group homes in the East attendance area. Representatives from each of these groups, plus a representative each from EHU and the Booster Club, will serve on a **Parent Community Leadership Team**. At the May meeting, there will be further discussion of the Parent Leadership Team and the selection of a representative for EHU.

Mr. Harris then introduced Anne Von Bank, who was recently hired to fill the TAG and Literacy Coordinator position, for an **update on Honors and Accelerated Learning** at East. (Note: a brief overview, "What is happening with TAG classes at East?" is posted at <http://eastweb.madison.k12.wi.us/node/3215>) Groups of teachers, parents, and students are working with Ms. Von Bank on the plan for accelerated learning at East. The parameters of the plan: define the learning in accelerated classes, then provide access opportunities, designing the screening process so that it doesn't miss people. Right now, they are gathering data and getting voice; the plan should be ready by the end of October or early November. The teacher group—likened by Ms. Von Bank to a "gathering of superpowers"—includes Paul DuVair (Biology), Chantel Smith (English), William Gibson (Social Studies), Kent Wannebo (English), Evan Gnam (Math), and Tom Kanies (Special Education.) A parent group was to meet April 27th at Manna Café. Students are developing survey questions for their peers, which is a good experience for the students. On May 28th, all of the groups—students, parents and teachers— will meet

together and share. Finally, Ms. Von Bank recommended Jonathan Mooney's book, "The Short Bus: A Journey Beyond Normal."

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a presentation on **special education services at East**. Special Education teachers Amy Clements and Karyn Chacon, Transitions Principal Martha Olsen (who was a special education teacher at Blackhawk for 14 years), and Mr. Harris all shared in the discussion. Mr. Harris began with some background information and beliefs. Every day East serves a full spectrum of students, from those who will go on to elite colleges to those who need to be tube fed. It is the right of all students to have an inclusive educational experience; those students who need someone with them all the time can still receive services with age grouped peers in a positive way. Special education students teach *us*. Mr. Harris pointed out that "inclusion", like "differentiation", is a term that is often bandied about; many such terms with specific meanings (for instance, "full inclusion practices", "least restrictive environment" and "continuum of services") are sometimes used to mean something less specific. He also noted that in the MMSD, 90% of "special education students", or students with IEP's (Individualized Education Programs), attend their neighborhood school; where Mr. Harris came from in California, only 60-70% do; there, special schools are still being built for special education students.

Where East was. When Mr. Harris came, enrollment was about 1600 students, with 25% receiving special education services. There was a 70% chance that African-American students who received special education services wouldn't finish high school in four years. 120 students were *enrolled* to receive services at as many as four alternative sites outside of East, but only about 30 of those students were actually attending the alternative sites. East had about 42 self-contained special education classes; in these classes students received a different curriculum than students in other classes, although students and parents often didn't realize that was the case.

Where East is now. Around 400 students receive special education services, with less than 10% in the vocational area. (The national average: 10-13% of students receive special education services.) There are now about 16 self-contained classes, none intended to be college preparatory; instead these classes are intended to prepare students to enter the workforce upon graduation. While half of East's students with IEP's are now receiving services in a regular education environment, half of East's special education staff still serve students in the self-contained environment. Some of these classes could be taught in a different setting, for example "Life Skill Development", currently a self-contained class at East, could be taught as part of another class—with the useful life skills information shared with all in the class—or it could be taught in the community. The off campus alternative sites were "collapsed" into the VIP program at the Goodman Community Center, where students are developing real world work and other skills (e.g. childcare, restaurant) in an inclusive environment. Purple and Gold Team support staff meet weekly to talk about how to help students who are struggling. East staff are trying to catch students early—not after failure. This year, the large study hall model was changed to a smaller, guided study hall model. Over the next few years, plan to add special education services to guided study halls, and will try to build in tutoring/mentoring. It was noted that the special education resource room is open all day, but that some students with IEP's are reluctant to seek help there.

Amy Clements, a special education teacher at East for the last four years, **shared her experience**. Her current schedule includes four hours of math teaching, two hours of prep time, and one hour of case management time. New last year was the model where she shares an office with other special education teachers, most of whom are, like her, primarily 9th grade case managers. It is a safety net—everyone in the office can talk to students. Ms. Clements talked about their "lens on learning" style, and how they work to ensure that the curriculum presented in the classroom is at students' instructional level, not their frustration level. They try to encourage all students to ask for help, not just students with IEP's. They also meet with middle school case managers to ease students' transition to high school, visit the middle schools, connect with some students.

Where East is going: Over the next year and a half, special education at East will continue to be reevaluated and transformed. (ESL is going through the same process.) 2009/2010 is a transition year; by the fall of 2010, looking to have a **full inclusion model**, with special education staff serving as many students as possible.

Working on a two-pronged approach: **moving away from self-contained classes**, where staff can't serve as many students; and **improving the skills of cross categorical staff to teach e.g. chemistry**, and **the skills of e.g. chemistry teachers to teach students with IEP's**. Trying to be more systematic and consistent in practice, especially with regular education teachers, but there needs to be more staff development around

special education for regular education teachers who are not in a team taught environment. Fourteen of East's 30 some special education teachers volunteered to serve on a **special education leadership team** started by Martha Olsen. A **parent advisory group** would be helpful: parents can teach staff, explain how they got what they needed. Advocacy can be difficult for parents, talking with educators can be intimidating for parents, especially if they lack education, also working parents don't have time to come and talk to teachers. What about students with IEP's who don't have parents to advocate for them? A case manager can be a great resource, especially in regular education situations. Other points raised included support for students with IEP's in high level classes such as chemistry and physics.

Q&A on special education

Q: how do regular education teachers know who needs accommodations, and what they are? The district has created a confidential form that summarizes such information from the IEP as present level of performance and ability level; the form includes information on support and accommodations; how the student learns best; what behaviors one might expect and the best response. Case managers try to get these ready before the first day of school. Regular education teachers can also get support from case managers to help accommodate students.

Q: World Language support for students with IEP's? As needed, but not much.

Q: which classes are team taught? Last year, hand scheduled students into classes that are team taught, which led to a high density of students with IEP's in these classes. This year, trying for classes that reflect East, with no more than 20% students with IEP's in a given class, so students are scheduling themselves. Staff will keep an eye out for students who need to be team taught; these students will be moved into team taught classes. This all happens before final schedules are given to students.

Q: when is it decided to add a special education teacher to a classroom? Look at the needs of the students in the class, for example if the case manager says that a student needs 1 on 1 support 80% of the time, this student would go into a team taught class.

Q: implementation of IEP? Case manager talks with teachers, goal is also to get students to talk to teachers about needs—this can be hard for students, especially 9th graders. Student-driven IEPs may be piloted.

Q: how to work with advocacy skills with students? This is usually done as the need arises. Sometimes, if case manager is present with a student, s/he is able to help with advocacy. Ideally, any student would feel comfortable advocating for what they need.

Q: how about in social situations? There is an environment for social skill building with role playing, lots of conflict resolution, discussing choices with students; work on skill development is both situational and "staged."

Q: Help for students with study skills, organization? Case managers are helping with some of this. Some 9th grade teachers keep, for example, students' binders in their classrooms. There is also HS 101, a summer school option. It was noted that most high school students, especially 9th graders, could use help with study skills and organization.

Q: How do students view students with IEPs? Working on this as part of East's school wide culture: how do we support one another? The student leadership group is committed to getting the voice of all students.

Next East High United meeting: Thursday, May 14, 7 pm

Focus: East High United's role in the new parent leadership structure that is being planned for next year