

## Notes from the East High United Meeting on September 10, 2009

*Note: to save space and reduce repetition, discussion topics have been grouped together.*

Following a few moments of discussion of the broadcast of **President Obama's education speech** (MMSD had left the decision to listen to the speech up to individual teachers; the 11 am broadcast time was awkward at East with lunches), Jill Jokela began the meeting with around the room introductions of the eleven or so people who were initially in attendance (by the time the meeting ended, the number had risen closer to 20.) **Mary Kelley, East's interim principal** for the 2009-2010 school year, introduced herself, explaining that since there is another Mary Kelley in the district, people should be sure to email her, Mary M. Kelley, at [mkelley@madison.k12.wi.us](mailto:mkelley@madison.k12.wi.us) Ms. Kelley added that she has a sixth grader at Whitehorse Middle School, and that she is committed to the east side of Madison. She has been the principal at Black Hawk Middle School for the last four years, and was principal at Toki Middle School for four years before that.

Ms. Kelley then gave an **abbreviated version of the Powerpoint presentation she had given to East staff** on her first day with them. The presentation included an overview of "what to expect from Mary Kelley": she is in classrooms and hallways, her door is always open, she will celebrate with you, she builds trusting relationships, she is a good listener, and she laughs with you. Another slide outlined her focus for 2009-2010: literacy work; building, with the leadership team, on the strong foundation left by Alan Harris in developing an action plan and department goals; progress on the REaL (Small Learning Communities grant) goal; AVID; improving the "safety net" for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to ease the *huge* transition from middle to high school; four hours of professional collaboration time once a month; and embracing MMSD's new TAG policy. Other highlights: Ms. Kelley is a "servant-leader", who wants to support teachers however possible. She is committed to sharing positive experiences, because negative experiences spread like wildfire. The staff needs to know that the administrative team—Ms. Kelley and the four assistant principals—is "all about customer service", and the students are the customers.

After the Powerpoint, there was discussion of **possible topics for this year's East High United meetings**. Ideas (and some spinoff discussion):

- **East staff could come in and talk about their departments**, possibly having received a list of questions in advance. Staff could **highlight year by year what each department is about**. Ms. Kelley said that the goal is for all departments to finish their **scope and sequence** by the end of the year. The **English and History Departments are working on curriculum alignment**—like scope and sequence, but more in depth—to make a coherent four year whole. The presence of East Math teacher Mary Paulson at the meeting led to some questions about **math in the district**. Ms. Paulson said that East's Math Department is happy that they are all together on the third floor, instead of being spread out on different floors. Ms. Jokela, who served on the district's **Math Task Force**, noted that the Task Force **recommended that all of the high schools use the same textbooks and teaching methods**, as is done at the middle school level with Connected Math (CMP.) District Math Coordinator Brian Sniff is trying to get everyone on the same page with math; trying to have more or less the same things taught in the same semester across the district, in part because student mobility is such an issue. It was suggested that the district should not just look at how many students are passing required math classes (versus failing the classes), but at the passing grades received. Another Math Task Force recommendation, about middle school "math specialists" (requiring all who teach math in grades 5-8 to have a math specialty, e.g. a math minor) was also mentioned in passing.
- An **update on the Small Learning Communities (SLC) grant** (also known as Project REaL), by SLC Grant Coordinator Lauri Weis. As was discussed by the leadership team at their Day Away, more data is needed; working on how to find the data and what to do with the data once found.
- Anne Von Bank, TAG coordinator at East, will come to EHU to talk about **Honors, AP and TAG classes at East**, as well as the Talented and Gifted Program. School Board member (and East parent) Ed Hughes commented that the revised TAG plan adopted by the district includes an analysis of AP and Honors offerings at the high schools; working on getting these more consistent across the district. (The plan is available online: <http://tagweb.madison.k12.wi.us/files/tag/TagPlanAug27Revision.pdf>) Ms. Kelley noted that her sixth grader is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade algebra, so this is an issue of personal interest to her.

- In the spring, Ms. Kelley will walk through the **allocation process**.
- There will also be an update on the **Facilitated Language Study pilot**.
- The **current safety plan at East**. Ms. Kelley explained that this year, the security guards who have always been in the building are assigned to specific floors; there are now guards on all floors to sweep the halls and get students into class. Principals also make sweeps. The halls are quieter. **East's hallways** were rumored to be a "mess", but Ms. Kelley has not found that to be the case, although she is frustrated with the trash littering East's grounds—there is a trail back and forth from the PDQ—and the student smokers across the street from East. She would like to get students involved in trash pickups, so that they feel more ownership. It was suggested that this might count towards Service "E" credit.

Other points:

There have been two administrative changes at East: **Martha Olsen took over as Safety and Student Discipline principal**, replacing Rick Rogness, who moved to LaFollette; and there is a **new (to East) assistant principal, Jay Marinan**, who came from Racine and Milwaukee. Mr. Marinan's official responsibility is "Student Transitions"; he is a curriculum principal for English and History, and also oversees Special Education. Ms. Kelley said that she would like for **everyone who works at East to know everyone else**. Asked about staff numbers, she said that there are 125-150 staff people at East, not including secretaries or educational assistants. Student numbers for East are very raw right now, but enrollment was projected at 1600, and that is probably fairly accurate. Ms. Kelley will have information from the third Friday count for the October East High United meeting. It was noted that East's demographics make it a perfect match for MMSD demographic statistics.

Some other questions:

Q: **High school redesign**—what is going on with it? It was replaced by, or really more morphed into, the SLC grants. The *structure* of the SLC is about the same at each of the four high schools, although they all look a little different, and have different names. Ms. Kelley said that while East is "not there yet with the structural piece", by next fall, it should look different. Some systems, e.g. the Purple and Gold teams, are in place. For parents, some of East's restructuring will be apparent in changes and clarifications in who they should call for what, and what resources are available. Mr. Hughes: West High School has individual learning plans for all students—will this go district-wide? Ms. Kelley: these are called "student portfolios" at the middle school level. A freshman parent then noted that she felt like a kindergarten parent again. For instance, what *are* the Purple and Gold teams? It would be great if there were a "Freshman Parent 101" to explain.

Q: what is going on with reaching out to the diverse parts of the East community, the **"getting voice" initiative** that began last year? Ms. Kelley might try to go to different communities, such as Packer Townhouses, Vera Court, working with Bilingual Resource Specialists as needed.

Q: **What does East do for juniors and seniors?** There are separate meetings with the East guidance department for students and parents, which outline deadlines and other information. Check the East website—there is a lot of information there.

Responding to a question from Mr. Hughes as to what **her biggest surprise has been in moving into the East interim principal position**, Ms. Kelley said it was the number of meetings. It is really important for her to get out and about, to feel the pulse of the school. The amount of information to absorb can be overwhelming, and she isn't new to Madison or to the school district.

Finally, there was a brief update on **planning for the post-prom party**. Background: for three years, but not last year, there was a post-prom party at Dream Lanes with bowling, karaoke, food, door prizes; the party went until at least 2 am, was lots of fun, very well-attended, not expensive, and very popular with kids. Dream Lanes is already booked for 2010, and planning meetings have been held. There will be a post-prom party this year!

The meeting ended before 8:30.

**Following up on the parent suggestion, above, the topic of the October 8<sup>th</sup> East High United meeting will be "East 101."**