

Notes from the East High United Meeting on Thursday, September 11, 2008

The meeting started with a welcome by Jill Jokela, followed by around the room introductions. At least fifteen people were in attendance including Jill and Principal Harris.

Principal's report

Mr. Harris began his report by saying that the year got off to a good start, with a good first week of school. He was pleased that most teachers were able to attend the freshman orientation presentation in the gym.

Vision 2012 Goals review

Background: In the spring of 2006, two meetings were held with the community to work on a shared vision for East High School. Goals falling into three categories were defined: High Expectations and Accountability (13 goals), Strengthen Parent and Community Relationships (6 goals), and Continue to Improve School Facilities (3 goals.) The "Vision 2012" handout spells out the various subgoals.

At the November East High United meeting there will be discussion of the first subgoal in the "High Expectations and Accountability" category, "Set high-level academic expectations and continue and expand TAG programming and improve writing components of English Dept. and hold students and teachers accountable." For instance, what does "TAG programming" mean to the East community? What would expanding it mean? What is currently offered at East is really more "Honors" than "Talented and Gifted." What goal are we going after?

Parents should also be thinking about what they want to hear people say about East when they are out in the community.

SLC grant implementation

(This section of notes includes questions related to the grant from the Q&A session later in the meeting.)

Background: MMSD has been awarded a five year, \$5.5 million Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Grant; these grants are awarded by the Department of Education to support activities at public high schools with enrollments of 1,000 or more students, with the aim of narrowing the achievement gap. (The first time MMSD applied for this grant, didn't get it, so they retooled and resubmitted the application.) The SLC grant will be shared by East, LaFollette, West, and Memorial High Schools. SLC will look different at each of the four large MMSD high schools: "defined autonomy." The money will be divided among the schools according to student enrollment. The "Madison East High School SLC – Grant Implementation Overview" handout gives a broad overview of how the grant will be implemented at East.

Mr. Harris stated that this is "...an affirmation of work we have started at East already." In 2005, East staff got an Aristos planning grant, and came up with a literacy initiative; some of the CLC money will be used to *fund* this initiative, particularly the staff development needed to actually implement it. What does the literacy initiative mean in the classroom? Consistent practices around reading and writing in all departments; department by department, what would good literacy instruction look like across the curriculum? What are the essential components? What should students be able to demonstrate at the end of the year? This is not just the responsibility of the English Department. Literacy coaches work with teachers to assess early in the year. Ideal goals: 3-4 years out, consistent writing rubrics.

Work on more scope and sequence alignment for English and Social Studies, continue this work with Algebra and Geometry.

With the grant, East will have funds to expand on what has been started with last year's change in the school structure to Purple and Gold teams, with guidance and support staff (psychiatrist, social worker) on each team. There will be an advisory component, looking at what happens and what works at other schools, within and outside the District. How to connect teachers into the process? Need to explore the homeroom component with staff and parents. In some areas, there will be a year's worth of exploration, a year's worth of planning, then implementation.

How does the SLC grant work with the High School Redesign? The redesign has morphed into the grant. There are not a lot of funding sources for high school work.

Half of the Staff Development day on September 16th will be spend on a dialog with staff about the CLC grant. During the second half of the day, staff will learn more about AVID.

AVID update

Background: AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) is a program that, as stated on the AVID website (www.avidonline.org) "...targets students in the academic middle — B, C, and even D students — who have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. These are students who are capable of completing rigorous curriculum but are falling short of their potential. Typically, they will be the first in their families to attend college, and many are from low-income or minority families..." AVID is a prescriptive program; AVID students are taught the Cornell note-taking system, as well as a specific way to organize their (required) binders. Students are taught how to ask effective questions, and how to ask for help. An important component of the AVID program is its tutors, who are given in-depth training.

East piloted the AVID program last year with one cohort of 28 students; there are two more cohorts this year. Ideally, there will eventually be 200 students in the program at East. AVID will be expanding to all MMSD high schools, and this year, MMSD entered into a unique partnership with the Boys and Girls Club which will help with funding and training AVID tutors.

General Q & A with Mr. Harris

(Questions/comments grouped together and summarized)

Study halls have been retooled. The large study rooms (Barrett/Randle) weren't working. So staffing has been increased from one teacher each hour to two, and the number of students in a given study hall has been reduced from 55 to 30. Moving toward guided study halls, in a space with computer, tables, curriculum. Guided study hall teachers will have access to AVID study practices.

By 2009/2010 school year, moving toward having all juniors take the **ACT test**, and all 9th graders take the Explore test. Make sure that everyone has the *opportunity* to go to college! Monona Grove tested all juniors for the first time this year, it is required by state law in Illinois.

An **enrollment** of 1592 students was projected for East, and that is how staff was allocated to East. Per the computer system, enrollment is at 1835, but the actual number is probably closer to 1700 since those who haven't shown up yet haven't been totally removed from the rolls. Every year 150-200 students leave, and don't inform the school, so they show up on the computer, but are not actually attending East. East has about a 30% transiency rate, in part because there are more foster and group homes in the East attendance area than in other high school attendance areas. There are four **new staff** (math, English, special education, ESL), plus one long term sub.

Purgolder time on Thursdays: when students are not meeting with their counselors, the second hour class is extended, and students do classwork or literacy work, with curriculum given to teachers. Another option for this time would be for this to be a homeroom class.

Other questions and comments from parents: When parents have **questions**, for example, from their kid's complaints, they *should* follow it up with the school. Good, positive things are happening with **sports**. **East is the future** of the school district: something like Vision 2012 is being started at the District level, AVID was pioneered here. **Math and music** are intertwined; to raise math scores: music! Madison Symphony Orchestra might establish an endowment to fund half the **strings** program. There is a need to **link technology with careers**. Look at, for example, the **Agriculture program** not as an East program but as an MMSD program, even a cross district program. **Musical theater** at East: show choir is great, but there is no other musical theater at East. **Youth options**: kids can go to another school or to the UW, if class is not offered at East; how should parents do this? The need to develop and communicate a *vision* for **world languages**: there will be more discussion on this at the October EHU meeting.

The meeting concluded with a screening of the video, "Unified by the Eastside" made by student leaders to show to East staff. Each year a group of leadership students meet to determine the year's theme and design a related t-shirt, and to make a video. To determine the number of alumni East has, students went through old East yearbooks and counted up all of the students! The video features East mascot Peppy visiting places around the Eastside including East's three feeder middle schools, Black Hawk, O'Keeffe and Sherman, as well as Superintendent Nerad's office.

Next meeting: Thursday, October 16, 2008 (note date change due to Yom Kippur on October 9th)
World Languages discussion