

School Improvement Council
January 20, 2010

Attendees:

Linda Weene, Principal
Terry Stewart, Assistant Principal
Michael Benadon, Grade 2 Parent
Alanna Bravman, Kindergarten Parent
Jennifer Golden, Grade 1 Parent
Ken Robinson, Parent Representative
Officer Dave Gatchell, Community Representative
Heather Dalton, Guidance Counselor
Betsy Usherwood, Grade 2 Teacher
Ellen Ahern, Elementary School Librarian

1. The January meeting of the 2009-2010 Placentino School Council came to order at 3:50PM.
2. The minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved with Jen Golden abstaining.
3. Linda updated the Council on recent events at Placentino. She advised that:
 - a. The 1st Placentino Preschool Parent Information Evening was held on January 12, 2010. This meeting was an initiative that is part of this year's School Improvement Plan. The evening was very successful. Twenty families responded that they would attend. A cursory count revealed at least 75 people present. The Preschool registration period is open until January 22nd. At that time, we will be able to determine if any lottery is necessary. The Office staff has reported many parents submitting registration forms. Questions arose about the Placentino Preschool Program - the cost of the Programs (\$3175 this year, but the tuition is reviewed annually by the School Committee; the types of programs (5 day, 4 day and Montessori 3-6); what about children already in our Preschool Programs do they have to reapply? (NO. They are automatically enrolled unless they indicate that they will not return. We typically have a section that meets the needs of older Preschoolers.)
 - b. The information evening for next year's Kindergarten class will be held on January 25th. These children will be the class of 2023! At this time we anticipate 180 families have children of Kindergarten age. The Kindergarten teachers attend; Winnie Carey prepares a video which provides a glimpse into each classroom/program. Jen Golden advised that the video is very helpful for parents. She advises parents to come to the meeting to see the video as it is helpful.
 - c. On Friday, January 22nd, the Principals will be presenting their "New Initiatives" to the School Committee. This is the beginning of the budget process for next year. The Superintendent has requested "realistic" initiatives this year - keeping in mind the current economic issues that impact the budget. Linda advised that she will be presenting a couple of new initiatives and requesting the return of positions lost over the past few years, such as the full time librarian, a second grade teacher, the full time school psychologist, etc. She advised the Council that she cannot share the exact information until after the presentation to the School Committee.

- d. At the recent Administrators meeting, the Principals, Assistant Principals, and Central Office staff discussed how to support the needs of the people in Haiti who are suffering such devastation from the recent earthquake. Linda advised the Administrators that Linh Pond at Placentino brought forth the possibility of collecting blankets to send to Haiti. Linh works with Partners in Health who are working in Haiti and this is a need that they have brought forth. The need for blankets are a concept that the young children at Placentino could understand. Alanna Bravman asked if the issue of the earthquake is something that the children are talking about. Linda explained that we would “nest” this activity in the lesson of helping other families just as we do with the Food Pantry collections. Betsy Usherwood added that in her classroom they are focusing on “deliberate acts of kindness.” She had read the book Heartprints to her students to support this theme.
 - e. The Grade One, Two and Montessori 6-8 teachers are very busy administering the assessments that are needed to provide parents with the information that will be going home in report cards on February 5th. The Kindergarten and Preschool teachers will be meeting with parents for their annual Parent Conference over the next two days - January 21st and 22nd.
4. Linda reminded the Council that she and Terry Stewart presented the update of this year’s School Improvement Plan to the School Committee on January 6th. She advised that it is always interesting to hear what the other schools are focusing on in their School Improvement Plans. Since the plans are all focused on ensuring that we meet the goals of the District Strategic Plan, the consistency in focusing on curriculum, school culture, communication, and technology is supported by these threads of similarity.
5. Linda opened the discussion on the Council’s need to create the 2010-2011 School Improvement Plan. She explained that we will need to present this Plan to the School Committee at the end of the school year. Ellen Ahern advised the Council that she emailed the Placentino staff asking for input on the goals/objectives that they would like to see in next year’s plan. She provided them with the overarching goals that the Council had established: Curriculum, Communication, Health, Safety and Well Being. Several teachers responded, and they recommended focusing on the Social Studies Curriculum, suggestions on including more energy conservation in the school, and working on comprehension strategies across the grades.
6. Linda reviewed the January 12th Professional Day presentations. Teachers worked in grade level groups with Winnie Carey on websites and programs that can be used in their classrooms; Pat Rourke reviewed Math focus points and classroom strategies that supported the focus points. The Paraprofessional staff were scheduled into either a day long program focusing on our social competency curriculum, Open Circle or two half-day sessions on CPR/AED certification led by our school nurse, Cathy Porcello and then an ELL class that was led by Linh Pond that focused on understanding the cultural differences in our community.

Linda applauded the excellent quality of the programs on this day and reminded the Council that all of the presentations were planned and led by staff members. She reflected on the amazing resources that we have internally to support our staff and students.

Michael Benadon questioned if there was any way to share this information with parents thru

“Backpack Express.” He indicated that some of the discussions of the Strategic Plan Committee

focused on providing parents with information on “what is going on.” Ellen Ahern supported Michael’s idea by sharing that she had heard some parents stating that “teachers were working on report cards” that day. Linda indicated that she referenced the Professional Day activities in “Elementary Essentials” and the Community Newsletter that was sent out by the Superintendent. Ken Robinson asked about “Backpack Express,” and Linda explained that since we were working on “going green” we now use this method of providing information to parents rather than paper memos. She added that all parents are informed about this at “Back To School Nights,” and this information is in the Parent Handbook.

7. The Council then focused on how to begin to develop the 2010-2011 School Improvement Plan. Three sub-committees will be needed - Curriculum, Communication, and Health, Safety, and Well Being. Linda explained that we can “roll-over” any issues from the 2009-2010 plan that the Council feels still need to be addressed next year. She suggested to the Council that they may want to look at “a narrower group of achievable goals” rather than some of the broad goals that are present this year.

The Council established the following sub-committees:

Curriculum - Ken Robinson, Ellen Ahern, Betsy Usherwood, Heather Dalton, Terry Stewart
Linda Weene.

Communication - Michael Benadon, Jen Golden, Heather Dalton, Betsy Usherwood,
Terry Stewart. Linda Weene

Health, Safety and Well Being - Dave Gatchell, Alanna Bravman, Ellen Ahern, Heather Dalton,
Betsy Usherwood, Terry Stewart, Linda Weene

Linda indicated that the Council could begin their discussions as sub-committees at the March Council meeting. Terry will send an email to each Council member indicating the members of each sub-committee and their email addresses.

8. Michael Benadon advised the Council that the Strategic Plan Committee is hoping to present the new Strategic Plan to the School Committee in late February. If this does happen, the Council will be able to review the new plan in relation to the School Improvement Plan that we will be working on.
9. The question of whether the sub-committees should meet before March arose. Linda advised that it was up to the members. They could certainly communicate by email and then bring those ideas to the March meeting.
10. Ken Robinson questioned if “fundraising” in the school is appropriate. He will be running in the Boston Marathon to support CASA, a group that assists children “stuck” in the court/legal system. Linda advised that involving the students in individual causes such as this can be problematic. How to decide which cause to support and which we would not support can be confusing to the children and parents. She added that the school certainly supports any parent who participates in the Marathon, but the fundraising is an issue.

Discussion ensued on supporting activities that focus on “keeping fit” and providing role models from the school community that participate in these activities.

11. The meeting adjourned at 4:40PM. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24 at 3:45PM in the Placentino Library.