

School Improvement Council
Minutes
January 22, 2009

Attendees:

Linda Weene, Principal
Terry Stewart, Assistant Principal
Dawn Nebrosky, PreK Parent
Jen Golden, K Parent
Mary Killelea, Grade 1 Parent
Maureen Gonsalves, Grade 2 Parent
David Gatchell, Community Representative
Heather Dalton, Guidance Counselor
Ellen Ahern, Placentino School Librarian

1. The meeting came to order at 3:50PM. Betsy Usherwood and Michael Benadon were absent. Mary Killelea and Dawn Nebrosky arrived after the meeting began.
2. The minutes of the December meeting were reviewed. Maureen noted that the discussion concerning regulations for keeping children who were ill at home was not included in the minutes. The discussion was added to the minutes, and the minutes were unanimously approved as amended.
3. Dave Gatchell reminded the Council of the Safe Routes program that he discussed at the December meeting. Ellen Ahern indicated that the Unified Arts teachers were working on a common theme for later in the school year and perhaps the theme of "healthy body, healthy world" could include the Safe Routes Program.
4. Linda presented information on the FY2010 budget. She explained that the Administrators met at 4PM on Friday, February 23rd, in the High School Library with the School Committee to present "New Initiatives" that they felt were important to keep their schools moving forward. A representative from the Board of Selectman and a representative from the Finance Committee were also present.
Linda advised the Council that Superintendent, Brad Jackson, had asked the Principals to be sensitive to the current budget situation but not to lose the vision that they had for their schools. Linda explained that at this time there may be a "local aid reduction" from the State for this school year that could impact the schools as well as the uncertainties that revolve around next year's budget.
4. Linda presented the three "New Initiatives" for Placentino.
 - An overall literacy plan that would pull all the resources that we have together to provide a focus on direct interventions and supports that may be needed in the Classroom to ensure consistent progress for all children in Reading and Writing. This would include new and/or updated school-wide testing protocols that would allow a deeper interpretation of data to assess individual student needs. This Initiative also included the cost of implementing a "Positive Behavior Support Intervention" system that would address behavioral issues such as "bullying" and "inappropriate behaviors" on a consistent school-wide basis.

This initiative would also include Professional Development for classroom teachers to provide them with a broader range of classroom interventions in the areas of Reading and Writing.

- A request to increase the School Psychologist position back to a full time position at both Miller and Placentino. Due to budget cuts last year, the two schools now share one School Psychologist. This has impacted the service provided to children who are in need of this level of counseling.
- Increase the ESL tutor to a full time position. Given the increase numbers and needs of the children for whom English is a Second Language, a full time tutor is very important.

5. Maureen Gonsalves stated that she feels strongly that focusing on behavior issues at this level begins to build a foundation for future years. Linda added that the staff at Placentino is very serious about intervening in both academic areas and social behavior areas to ensure a successful school experience for the children. Heather Dalton indicated that children need both social and emotional strength to succeed academically. Linda explained that these issues have been goals in the Placentino School Improvement Plan for the past few years, because they are so important to student success.
6. Linda advised the Council that the Superintendent would be presenting his initial budget for the 2010 school year at the School Committee meeting on Thursday, February 5th. This meeting will be televised on both Comcast and Verizon cable. Any member of the community is welcome to attend the meeting in the High School library beginning at 7PM.
7. Linda presented the "Kids Care" concept. This program would provide a weekly reminder to the children about Placentino's commitment to the Holliston Food Pantry, the boxtops collection, and collecting Shaw's receipts for the Holliston Library. As part of the "Monday Morning Announcements," Linda would remind the children about one of these programs. Each classroom would receive an envelope with pictures that corresponded with the weekly focus activity. The appropriate picture would be posted in each classroom as a daily reminder for the children.
8. Linda informed the Council that the Preschool registration had been held on January 8th. Forty-one children were registered for next year, and there would not be a need for a lottery in any of the Preschool programs.
Linda also shared that on January 20th, Inauguration Day, the children were able to watch the inauguration on their classroom televisions. Ann Prete also set up a laptop that was connected to a projector and the children were able to view the Inauguration in the cafeteria during lunch. Mini-assemblies were held in the morning and afternoon to celebrate this historic occasion. Some of the Second Grade classes celebrated by having the children dress in their "fancy clothes," and they held "Inauguration Balls" on the second floor.
9. Discussion then centered on the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan.
 - The Council focused its initial discussion on three main topics: Writing between the grades at Placentino and Miller, having some of the Miller children visit Placentino classrooms and "role play" scenarios around bullying, friendship, etc., and increasing as much as possible the Placentino/Miller connection for children.
 - The Council decided that the three main goals that are in the 2008-2009 School Improvement Plan would stay the same: Curriculum and Instruction; Health, Safety, and Well-Being; Communication.

- Dave Gatchell indicated that under the Health, Safety and Well-Being goal he would be meeting with the children in assemblies in the spring that would focus on: bike safety, wearing helmets when riding on bicycles, skateboards, scooters – anything with wheels. A memo to parents will go out in the spring to advise them of the assemblies and the topics.
- Dave also reminded the Council that the new law for car seats requires any child under 4 feet 9 inches or under 8 years of age to be in a car seat/booster seat. Children may ride in the front seat of a vehicle only after the age of 8.
- The enVision Mathematics program was discussed with a focus on differentiated instruction. Maureen Gonsalves was concerned about children who excel in Math, and Linda explained that this program is embedded with activities for the needs of all children. There is a very strong Technology component with this program that is aimed at all levels and is available for children to access at home.
- Ellen Ahern advised that when she taught 2nd grade she led a "Math Club" after school. Suggestions for looking at after school activities – Math Club, Technology Club, Writing Club, Running Club, etc. were forthcoming.
- Under the Health, Safety, and Well-Being goal, Dave brought forth the "Safe Routes Program" that he is working on.
- There was a suggestion to begin a "Preschool Information Night" very much like the "Incoming Kindergarten Information Evening." This could include the Placentino Program but also other Preschool Programs in town. Dave offered that tables could be set up with each program represented. Linda explained that there was an Early Childhood Council in which many of the Town programs were represented, and they hold an information evening. Dawn explained how helpful the "Back To School Night" in Preschool was for her. She used the handwriting information as an example of an area where she had little background information before the meeting and with the resources provided by the teacher was now able to support her child more effectively. She indicated that areas of this type could/should be part of the evening.

10. The meeting adjourned at 4:55PM. The next meeting will be on February 11, 2009 in the Placentino Library.