

Thunderboard Minutes - November 3, 2016 - 4-5:30PM, THES Library

In Attendance: Kim O'Driscoll, Tonya Penney, Lisa Robertson, Julie Ulrich, Beth Gerlach, Will Myers, Wes Papparone, Daniella Locone, Daniela De Jong, Melissa Bowman, Ms. Benevides, Alex Garza, Kathy Lippencott, Mrs. Benavides

1) Welcome and Introductions (7 min)

2) Approve minutes from last meeting (3 min)

3) **Community Input (5 min)**-- testing 4 way interaction, no movement of Tenants at THE HEIGHTS, tenant association has started

4) **PTA updates (5 min)**-- Successful carnival over, Unveiling of t-shirt community event to be planned, Tamalada, Cultural fest (Art Trail is being run by a different organization); looking for volunteer leaders for next year's carnival.

5) Reports (30 min)

a) Staffing Turnover & New Teachers – *Lisa Robertson & Beth Gerlach*

i) Ms. Geiger has a life change and is moving out of state, Ms. Morrison is pregnant and is leaving in December to have her baby, and one of our half time counselors is going to Mexico to get married.

ii) Thunderboard Concerns expressed: Where will we find a high quality teacher this time of year? How long will our commitment to keep the teacher be for?

iii) Responses: Will, "That is why Team Fit is important?" Mrs. Robertson includes the grade level teachers in the interview process. Ideally, THES will be retaining this person for a couple of years. The district has built in probationary contract for new teachers to protect our school.

iv) Mrs. Gehrlach discussed turnover and hiring issues. She asked us to think about what kinds of teachers to look for and what supports the new hires as a transition onto the campus (including trainings regarding SEL, PBL, and pillars). Ms. Lippencott shared the business view on hiring practices and Ms. Ulrich discussed need for teachers with skill in dealing with a varied population like the one we have here.

v) Mr. Meyers and Ms. O'Driscoll discussed where these would fall in our goals for the year:

(1) Turnover/school climate

(2) Hiring (transparent process/training manual)

(3) Training (prioritizing pillars for new teacher/sustaining mentorships/team-building)

vi) Ms. Ulrich discussed presenting an explanation for families that we are in the process of becoming a PBL /Blended Learning Campus, and that teachers vary in their level of implementation as they learn to be more skilled

b) Recess Policy & AISD – *Ken Zarifis: Mr. Zarifis was not present*

- c) Policy FAQ: Homework, Recess, WOW, Absences, STAAR - *Lisa Robertson: see attachment.*
- d) Dr. Cruz's "Report Card" - *Lisa Robertson*
- e) PBL & AISD: Promoting THES as Trailblazers modeling PBL –*Ken Zarifis: Mr. Zarifis was not present*
- f) October Workload: How do we minimize demands on teachers? - *Lisa Robertson: Lisa suggested replacing fall report cards with student-led conferences. Beth Gerlach expressed concern for students applying to middle school magnet programs.*
- g) AISD Calendar proposal for 2017-2018 - *Lisa Robertson: Lisa shared 2 versions, voting is coming up. Ms. Gerlach questioned whether we wanted to revisit the early release idea. Barrier is transportation funding. First step can be to survey teachers for support.*
- h) Facility planning - *Lisa Robertson: tabled until we get the report, which is probably a 20-year vision rather than immediate changes.*
- i) Announcements and Moment of Silence Observations – *Julie Ulrich asked about announcements in Spanish when parts of the school is not fully DL. Mrs. Robertson shared that announcements have been reduced to pledge and moment of silence. M/W is in Spanish only.*
- j) Special Needs – *Melissa Bowman: Present at November Coffee Chat to support families with SPED children.*
- k) Advocacy Team – *Colin Clark*
- l) To be or Not to Be: Universal Breakfast - *Lisa Robertson: Tabled to next meeting.*
- m) Cafeteria Monitoring: Help Wanted - *Lisa Robertson; Melissa Bowman will find volunteers for cafeteria (11:00-1:00) to allow Lisa time to write info on school blog.*

6) Data Available for Review (5 mins)

- a) STAAR Testing Results - *Lisa Robertson:*

7) Upcoming events (5 min)

- a) Austin Interfaith Events: Next meeting TBA
- b) SRCC: Monday, 11/7 @ 7:15 (Life in the City United Methodist -205 E. Monroe)
- c) Advocacy Team Meeting, 11/16 @ 6:15; Location TBD

8) Goals for 2016-2017 (30 mins)

a) Recognition from AISD as an innovative school & Our 4 Pillars Now

- Branding tool for prospective parents, AISD support, possible grants
- Informational tool for current parents.
- *Cathy Lippincott, Mary Friedman, Kim O'Driscoll*

b) Academics/Funding

- Master Schedule to support teacher planning
- Master Schedule to consider adding Spanish/PE daily rotation
- Creating clear policies for campus: Homework, Recess and Wow
- Sustainable funding/mentoring (training DL, PBL, BL, SEL; PSS, technology, software)
- *Julie Ulrich, Will Meyer*

c) School Climate

- i) **Relationship building**

- Support for teachers; Support for students/families; Special needs population
- Open, supportive, and safe communications among individuals: Admin/Teachers, Teachers/Admin, Teachers/Parents, Parents/Teachers, children/teachers
- Supporting SEL schoolwide; Mindful practices (*moment of silence*)
- *Beth Gerlach, Daniela De Jong, Kim O'Driscoll*

ii) **Cross-cultural outreach**

- What resources are in Austin? Refugee services in north Austin for Arabic bilingual, Arabic college students (St. Ed's, UT).
- Are there communication Apps? What are other schools doing to enhance cultural relations (e.g., Matthews, Hart, Doss)?
- *Tonya Penney, Daniella Licon, Wes Paparone, Rosa Rostro, Melissa Bowman*

9) **Next Steps/Action Items and Agenda Items for next meeting (5 min)**

- a) Communicating about absences & attendance policy & STAAR results.
- b) Communicating to parents about movement from DRA to Lexile level (ISIP)
- c) Move teachers in to reporting Lexile levels on to report cards
- d) Send out conversion chart with parents.
- e) Lisa will survey teachers for interest in early release for professional development.

Language of Announcements-Revisit at the next Thunderboard meeting. Mr. Paparone, Mr. Meyers, Ms. Penney, and Mrs. Robertson will talk to DL teachers about translating announcements into Spanish, if they are only made in English.

THES Policy Update for 2016-2017 School Year

Homework Policy: Our campus goal is to ensure homework is specific and purposeful. Our teachers have this goal in mind when they assign homework for their respective grade level/classroom. Best practices recommend 10 minutes/grade level starting at Kindergarten (adding 10 minutes thereafter per year). Reading at home will always be a component of the home to school connection.

If your child is struggling with homework or cannot complete assignments on her/his own or without a great amount of assistance, it is very important that you speak with your teacher so she/he can modify work or differentiate the work. Homework is meant to reinforce skills, not to discourage a child. If homework seems too easy or you are looking for ways to enrich your child's learning, please speak with your child's teacher as well. Should you have questions/concerns about your child's homework after working with your child's teacher, or if you need help speaking with your child's teacher, please contact an administrator (Parent Support Specialist, Counselor, Assistant Principal, or Principal).

Recess is 30 minutes of unstructured time for socialization and play every day. It is valuable for your child's health and social-emotional growth. It is not to be used to complete homework nor is it to be taken away as a punishment (unless an altercation occurs during recess which requires a cool-off period/reflection). Should you have questions/concerns about your child's recess, please contact her/his teacher first. If you continue to have questions/concerns or need help speaking with your child's teacher, please contact an administrator (Parent Support Specialist, Counselor, Assistant Principal, or Principal).

WOW Time is separate from recess as it is structured time for teachers to engage children in body/brain breaks during the learning process within the school day. WOW Time is integrated throughout the day with brain breaks and active physical movement such as dancing or physical exercises. Many teachers pair WOW Time with learning activities or access ideas from websites such as "Go Noodle" which parents can access from home for free. Check it out!