

WESS SLT Meeting Minutes
January 24, 2018

Attendance: Michele Balsam, Elly Eisenberg, Lynne Galyas Mary Kane, Alison Morpurgo-Cotter, Amanda Rives, Gretchen Skaggs Liz Sutherland, Rebecca Tatistcheff

Absent: Ellyn Lankford

WESS SLT Meeting Minutes

1. December minutes approved.

2. Math

a. 8th grade mathematics

Some parents are concerned that students will not score as high as perhaps they could on the Integrated Algebra Regents exam. There is discussion that some students might benefit from harder work so that they can learn to grapple with problems that are difficult for them.

The school will administer mock regents and believe it will be a good indicator for students of where they are in the curriculum. These mock regents will be the entire regents exam in order to build stamina and find where they need to focus the rest of the year. Difference in student achievement in the curriculum have widened the deeper the students get into the curriculum. For some students, the material is starting to click, and they are feeling more confident. After the mock regents exam, students will be engaged in the process of pacing the rest of the year. Some of the parent concerns are pacing dilemmas and the teachers are aware of this and are working on it.

In high school, the students will continue on to geometry. Taking algebra in 8th grade already accelerates the students at WESS.

Becca and Jessica are committed to integrated classrooms and will not create separate math classes based on ability. Some of the issues around the concerns about mathematics seem to be anxiety issues with parents. The school is striving to create academic balance between social and academic skills.

In response, the idea of having another parent meeting around HS when the high school data is released. This would be an attempt to address it broadly in the parent population to avoid student discussion.

Additionally, Becca encouraged parents to go to the parent engagement event on February 6 that will help parents find normal in conversations with their children.

In crew, 8th graders will be grappling with the idea of change.

b. 7th grade mathematics-

Becca is pulling a small group that could serve as a model for future differentiation in mathematics curriculum. This group is not based on ability but rather selected based on interest, as they are students who like to grapple with math problems. They are currently working in an algebra unit, and this group is working on nonroutine problems that enforce algebraic skills. They are introduced to language that they are not familiar with and must explain their work in more detail, which is a skill that they are not necessarily good at. WESS is looking into how to bring this into the 6th grade.

3. WESS admissions update.

a. High School

1100 students ranked WESS for 9th grade. In the HS process, admissions is blind. We look at the list and apply the criteria that is set. We look at that as a point system and rank approximately 4x the number of potential seats. We are unsure of the number of seats that will be available. We are working closely with enrollment to find the target number. Only 20 of the founding class did not rank WESS #1. This first year will inform program offerings and hiring.

b. Middle School- Numbers are good and comparable to previous 2 years. The balance of elementary schools is not necessarily changing. Interviews have been a positive experience for the teachers who are conducting interviews on the weekends with very few no shows.

4. Update on December CEC meeting regarding changes to middle school admissions process.

a. The CEC invited the DOE to the CEC middle school committee to discuss the changes that are being made to middle school admissions. There will be a shift to blind admissions that is being promoted as a way of improving diversity although the DOES has not been able to address the concerns that increasing the applicant pool might actually disadvantage the students that they are trying to help.

b. Other principals in the district spoke against the change. The district superintendent's response was that it is happening.

c. WESS is supportive of going to blind admissions as it is what is best for parents and families. In response, WESS will come up with a way to still interview kids and will continue to do an initial screen of open house attendance. Not knowing ranking will not change how we select students, and WESS will continue to think creatively on how to insure that there is a range of children and learners. Blind admissions will open the pathway for further diversity initiatives such as allocated seats for free and reduced lunch.

d. There is another Middle school meeting at the end of the month. Liz will continue to go to these meetings and update the SLT. Becca will update as well.

5. The by-law revision was approved.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 14th.

