**Loella F. Dewing Elementary School**

Site Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 16, 2017

Attendees:

Terry Gerrish, Jan Fuller, Keri Tuttle, Laureen Hartnett, Jess Ryan, Deb Wall, Skander Kechaou, and Kristen Sullivan

Call to Order

6:30 PM

Public Comments

N/A

Discussion re: articles shared by Ms. Gerrish

* Ms. Gerrish sought the advice of the council on how the school can increase ways to strengthen the social emotional skills of the students. It has been observed by school staff that the students don’t often know how to interact with each other in unstructured settings such as outside recess and that students’ problem-solving skills are often lacking.
* Two articles were presented in order to spark conversation on this topic: “Why adults have to stop trying so darn hard to control how children play” by Valerie Strauss and “25 Ideas for how you can teach your kids resilience” by Chelsea Lee Smith.
* Discussion centered on a possible reason for these social-emotional deficiencies being the lack of play time the students have.
* Potential ways to address this:
  + Add a second recess to the day or even play time in the gym
  + Have assemblies on related topics for the students such as managing emotions, making responsible decisions, etc.
  + Give students more opportunities to improvise themselves such as having them facilitate a learning unit where they might lead a game, figure out the rules, work together to resolve problems/conflict, etc.
  + Send materials/articles home to parents on various social/emotional topics (sending a comprehensive packet of materials home at the beginning of the school year with strategically selected materials throughout the year may be more beneficial than sporadically throughout the year)
  + Offer a parent workshop on social/emotional techniques (6:00 or later with childcare provided)
* There was some discussion about the role that Open Circle plays in helping children to be aware of various social-emotional issues/techniques. This teacher-led activity is focused on strengthening students’ social-emotional skills but there was some concern that some of the topics or the way they’re presented may be going over the children’s heads.
  + Ms. Gerrish asked that the members of the council look at the Open Circle material that is on the Dewing website and provide any feedback.

Discussion of Dewing Preschool Enrollment

* At the beginning of the meeting Ms. Fuller talked about the openings that the Dewing has for its preschool program. There will be an Open House for interested families on March 2nd from 5:30-7:00.
* At the end of the meeting the topic of the preschool was revisited. There is a lot of positive feedback regarding the program. We discussed the importance of enrolling students at the Dewing in the preschool program so they will get an early start to the social-emotional skills that the Dewing staff provides from preschool through 2nd grade. Conversation centered on the possibility of being able to get a full day preschool program at the Dewing.

Other items

* Parents who work in the libraries at the Tewksbury schools were nominated for the Ginsburg Family Award- an award given out to individuals or organizations that make contributions of service to the Tewksbury schools. Any money awarded will be used to buy books for each library.

Future Agenda Items

* Continue the conversation around ways to help students learn social-emotional skills and also continue discussion of communication (how and when best to share information/resources with parents)

Adjournment

7:44 PM

Next meeting will be Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 6:30 PM