

L.M. Nixon Elementary School Site Council 2011-2012

Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2011

In Attendance

Mary Pat O'Connell

Judy Koelbel
Jodie Harrier
Ginna Park
Kevin Stevens

Laura Nicolls
Mike Grady
Athina Peiou-Quake
Tina Sugimoto
Melissa Wilkinson

Agenda Item 1: Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Council reviewed the draft Minutes of the October 2011 meeting and upon motion made and seconded the Minutes were unanimously approved as drafted.

Agenda Item 2: "Secret to Success is Failure" article – Parent Discussion/Program with PTA.

Mary Pat suggested that the Site Council take the lead on organizing the parent community discussion night regarding the New York Times article entitled "What if the Secret to Success is Failure?". After discussion, the Council decided to tentatively schedule the discussion event for Tuesday, January 24. Mary Pat will ask the PTA if they will provide the funds to pay for childcare at the event. Ginna volunteered to try to translate the article into Spanish with Google Translate. A discussion was held regarding the format for the event, and it was suggested and agreed that Site Council members would prepare some discussion questions to facilitate small group discussion of the ideas raised in the article. It is envisioned, depending upon the number of attendees, that individual Site Council members will lead several small group discussion circles. The Council also discussed whether to hold the event in the theater or in the library, given that there is no heating in the theater. It was agreed that this decision would be made closer to the time of the discussion event.

Agenda Item 3: Review of Site Council Description on the Nixon Website

Mary Pat distributed the text of the description of the Site Council that is currently posted on the Nixon website, and it was agreed that an update of the description was in order. Mike volunteered to prepare a revised description for the Council to review at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 4: California English Language Development Test (CELDT) results

Mary Pat distributed a summary of the CELDT results for Nixon students and explained that this is a test given to students whose native language is not English. The purpose of the test is to assess whether a school's program for helping English learners to become proficient in English is succeeding. Mary Pat described the test populace, explained the test results, and answered various questions from the Council. The test results show that Nixon's program for English learners is working very well.

Agenda Item 5: STAR Test Results

Mary Pat distributed a summary of the spring 2011 STAR Test results showing the (very small) number of Nixon students in each of grades 2 through 5 whose scores fell into the “nonproficient” category for English Language Arts and/or Math, and explained that the vast majority of these students were from non-English speaking households or are in the Resource Specialist Program (special education). Mary Pat further explained that the test results would be used by Nixon staff to help identify specific students who may be in need of further intervention steps to try to bring them up to grade level proficiency.

Agenda Item 6: Palo Alto Unified School District Update

Mary Pat informed the Council that the PAUSD is funding, on a trial basis, new online computer based tutoring programs in reading and in math to assist students in need of extra learning support. She advised that Nixon would be participating in the math portion of this new program, but that Nixon would be sticking with its existing after school small group reading development program for first grade students in need of extra support because that program has been very successful.

Mary Pat also informed the Council that the District is forming a task force to update its Homework Policy and is looking for parents who are interested in participating on the committee. The intent is to try to provide further policy guidance for teachers in order to avoid swamping students with multiple major assignments coming due simultaneously.

Agenda Item 7: Progress Toward Implementing Mission & Vision Statements

Mary Pat reported on recent contacts which she has had with Stanford professors in furtherance of our goal of enhancing collaboration between Nixon and Stanford. These contacts include Professor Shelly Goldman of the Stanford Design Program whose research focus is on failure as part of successful development processes, and Carol Dweck, who has developed a “Brainology” program designed to help instill students with a “growth” mindset to build resilience and to help them embrace challenges. Mary Pat advised that Nixon would be using the “Brainology” course this year with the 5th grade class. Mary Pat will also continue her efforts to find Stanford students who are willing to help tutor Nixon students in math.

Athena mentioned that she recently learned of a new mathematics tutoring application for the iPad which Mary Pat will investigate further.