

Lucille M. Nixon Elementary School Site Council 2010-2011

Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2010

In Attendance

Mary Pat O'Connell

Stephanie Han
Ginna Park
Sarah Patanroi

Alli Deeter
Mike Grady
Laura Nicolls
Julie Tomz

Agenda Item 1: Introductions

- Introductions of new Site Council members were made.

Agenda Item 2: Site Council History, Responsibilities, and Roles

- There was a brief review of Site Council By-Laws, which each Site Council member has.
- The group reviewed the overall challenge for Site Council: Can we make improvements, and where should we focus our effort?
- Elections for Site Council roles were held. Mike and Julie will share the recorder role, Laura will be next year's chair, Vicki Sandin will be the PTA representative.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of June, 2010 minutes

- Mary Pat noted that she still needs to change the by-laws to reflect the change that Site Council elections will be held in "the Spring" rather than in the month of June.
- Minutes were approved.

Agenda Item 4: Review of Student Achievement Data

- The student achievement data are based on the STAR tests.
- Mary Pat highlighted several findings:
 - Mary Pat noted that there is a dip in 3rd grade test scores across Palo Alto,

the county, and the state. It's unclear why, but could be due to how the test is given in 3rd grade, the first year students are asked to read the instructions on their own rather than the teachers reading instructions out loud.

- Nixon generally performed above average within the district schools, with the exception of 2nd grade.
- Math scores were strong, giving an indication that Everyday Math is, at minimum, not a problem, as some people had feared with its implementation last year.
- Nixon's API (Academic Performance Index) was 952 in 2010, compared with 955 in 2009. The API is based on a complex formula and reflects a very tiny drop in the percentage of students scoring "advanced" or "proficient." The state goal for schools is 800. Overall, the score of 952 is very strong and among the highest of Palo Alto elementary schools, and Nixon should be proud of this performance. The slight drop could be due to a shift in demographics. We had a slightly higher number of beginning English Learners (who typically take more time to do well on the STAR test as they become proficient in English). Also, we had special day class students in second grade who took the test last year for the first time. While their scores tend to be lower than children who do not need to be in special day class, they should feel proud of their performance as well.
- In comparison to "similar schools" with high numbers of children with high parent education and low numbers of children with socioeconomic difficulties, we tend to have a lower API, but this is largely due to our higher number of English learners, since Stanford draws families from around the world.
- The Council reviewed the Summary of Progress on Goals 1, 2, and 3" by the PAUSD. This is available from Mary Pat.

Agenda Item 5: Review Single Plan for Student Achievement

- The Council reviewed The PAUSD "Focused Goals for 2010-2011" as recommended by the superintendent to the school board. Nixon's goals should be in alignment with PAUSD goals. Mary Pat presented her suggested changes to Nixon's SPSA goals. She noted that we can always adjust our activities during the year – we aren't confined by what we've put in the plan.
 - In language arts, an added activity is for teachers to review alignment of reading instructional practices from K through 5th grade. Also, instead of merely offering "further training" for staff, we will state that "follow-up training with specialists in small group reading instruction will meet with grade level teams to address specific needs in fall, 2010."
 - In math, an added activity is that one of our professional development days will focus specifically on differentiation strategies in math. There was some discussion of a frequent complaint that when students move to 6th grade, they are not challenged in math, possibly because secondary

teachers are not typically trained in differentiation. Some Terman 6th grade teachers observed Nikole Manou's math instruction last year and were very impressed. At Nixon, we teach not necessarily more math, but extended ways of approaching math problems, to build a sense of the variety of ways to solve problems.

- In learning environment, an added activity is to explore ways to participate in Project Cornerstone as part of a communitywide project to support the healthy development of all of the youth in our community. Ruth Daines and Kristina Hayes are taking the lead on exploring how Nixon will participate in Project Cornerstone.
- Mary Pat pointed out that Nixon will hold its Kid by Kid meetings in October, prior to parent-teacher conferences.
- Proposed revisions and additions were moved and unanimously approved by the Council.

Agenda Item 6: Budget Review

- Mary Pat presented the proposed budget plan and answered questions from members of the council, after which the proposed budget was moved and unanimously approved. (Copy is attached to these minutes.)

Agenda Item 7: Project Cornerstone

- This had been already been explained by Mary Pat under item #5 above.

Agenda Item 8: General Thoughts, Ideas, Etc.

- The council discussed the book Nurture Shock, which had been recommended by Mary Pat, and the consensus was that the Council would recommend it to all Nixon parents and teachers to read.
- Discussion ensued as to how best to communicate the Site Council's recommendation and foster further discussion within the Nixon and broader community about possible ways to improve our schools based upon the information and ideas presented in the book. The Council is considering sponsoring a community-wide discussion night in early November to help start such discussions.