

MINORITY STUDENT ACHIVEMENT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 21, 2006
MEETING MINUTES

The minority achievement committee held its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday November 21, 2006 in the Library. Mr. Mark Richardson chaired the meeting. The following members were present:

Richardson, Mark, (Committee Chair)
Thomas, Tim (Principal)
Clelland, Sonja (Teacher)
Peterson, Celeste (Parent/newsletter editor)
Taylor, Roger (Parent)
Greer, Kim (AP, Sub-school 4)
Campbell, Jennifer (PTSA president)
Dillard, Zoe (Teacher)
Olmstead, Katie (Teacher)
Hobbs, Shelia (Parent)
Dawson, Marnie (Counselor)
Hawkins, Ephraim (Teacher)

The following agenda items were covered:

1. Fall Parent Coffee Recap:

The committee recapped the Fall Parent Coffee, which was held on Wednesday October 25, at 7:00 pm in the Lecture Hall. The turnout was the largest ever since the inception of the Minority Achievement Committee. However, Hispanic parents were noticeably absent. Principal Thomas stated that the primary reason for the lack of Hispanic parents was due to a failure in the automated calling telephone system. The system apparently crashed after completing the calls to African American parents. He indicated that the system was being replaced by a newer more efficient system with more features. The new system should be in place around January, 2007 and will be used for the Spring Parent Coffee. The existing telephone system will be used to place automated calls for the December Holiday Meeting.

The personal telephone calls made by committee members and the school were well received by parents. Many complements were given to callers for both the automated calls from the principal and the follow up calls by committee members. The formation of the chairs was also noted as a positive impact on the coffee. Having the chairs in a circle encouraged more participation among coffee attendees. More chairs will be needed for future coffees. It was very encouraging to see the many faculty and administrative staff at the coffee. One recommendation to improve the flow and effectiveness was to have the school staff disperse themselves among the parents. Most if not all of the faculty were clustered in a corner amongst themselves. The student performances and the door prize raffle were also a nice touch. We would like to continue with this trend at future coffees, but it is uncertain how future door prizes can be funded.

2. Status of Subcommittees:

Two subcommittees have been formed to assist in developing processes and implementation the developed processes. Each provided a brief status update. Little has been accomplished to date, but the committees are now up and running and are expected to meet and identify processes and ideas to increase parental involvement and also ideas to ease the transition of rising freshman students. Addition parents and teachers were added to each subcommittee. The two subcommittees and updated committee volunteers are: I would like to have at least one Spanish speaking parent or teacher included in each subcommittee to assist in communications with our Hispanic parents. Please contact me or any listed subcommittee member to volunteer. I have taken a little chairman liberties in appointing a chair to each subcommittee. I ask that the subcommittee chairs contact their respective subcommittee members to set up a meeting to get the subcommittees moving out on the many suggestions that were raised at the meeting.

- a) Increasing Parent Involvement (Outreach)
Susan Pike (Susan.Pike@fcps.edu)
Evelyn Spain (Evelynss@yahoo.com)
Roger Taylor (taylorrm@cox.net) Chair
Mark Richardson (maramr@cox.net)
Marnie Dawson (marnie.dawson@fcps.edu)

- b) Student Mentoring
Celeste Peterson (Celeste_r_Peterson@raytheon.com) Chair
Jennifer Campbell (JCampbell@aol.com)
Sheila Hobbs (SaH6811@aol.com)
Kim Greer (Kim.Greer@fcps.edu)

We are seeking students to serve on these committees as well so if you have a student to recommend to any of these subcommittees, please send me an email.

3. Winter Newsletter.

The next release of the MAC newsletter will be distributed via the Westfield Watchdog newspaper. The deadline for article inputs to Celeste Peterson is Tuesday December 5th. Please email your articles to Celeste_r_Peterson@raytheon.com. We will have the following articles in this newsletter release:

American Indian Heritage Month	Celeste Peterson
Student perspective articles	Alicia Richardson, others
Chairman's corner	Mark Richardson
Principal's note	Tim Thomas
Macbeth Article	Zoe Dillard
List of Important MAC dates	Celeste Peterson/Mark Richardson

ESOL Article
Subcommittee Articles
New Faculty Articles
Parent Experience

Suzie Pike
Celeste Peterson/Roger Taylor
Kim Greer/Ephraim Hawkins
Celeste Peterson

If I have missed anyone or if anyone would like to submit an article, please email Celeste Peterson or myself. Please try to have your articles in to Celeste by the December 5th deadline. Approximately 3200 copies will be required for delivery to Mr. McCarthy

4. December Holiday Parent Meeting.

It was recommended last year after one of our parent coffees that we should get parents together more often than twice a year. Following up on this recommendation and also in keeping with the MAC tradition, the committee will use its December monthly meeting as a means to celebrate the Holiday season and afford parents and students another opportunity to come out and meet the committee members and school staff.

A **Pot Luck** dinner meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 13, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. We are asking all committee members and invited parents to come out and bring their favorite dish or dessert to the meeting so all can taste the wonderful foods of the world. In order to ensure that we have enough food for all and a wide variety of foods to sample, I ask that you please email me with your intended dish or dessert so that I may compile a list of items and send them out to others so that we do not have too much of the same item.

We once again will use the automated telephone calling system to notify parents and students. Tim Thomas has ensured the committee that calls will be made to both African American and Hispanic parents. We will also make personal calls as was done for the Fall Parent Coffee. I am again requesting support from committee members to assist in making calls to parents. Anyone who can assist, especially with calls to Hispanic parents are asked to call or email me so that I can coordinate this with the school. We really want to fill the house and we are emphasizing that students should attend with their parents.

We are trying to have several student performances including the Latino Dance team, the Step team and a musical performance. Language translation services will also be available. We have no set agenda for this gathering other than to mingle with parents and share with them how the MAC is working hard for them. I will look into the possibility of door prizes, but this will not be finalized until after I meet with the PTSA.

We may have available a short parent/student feedback form at the gathering to obtain some inputs from parents and students on how they perceive this committee is helping them. This is not yet confirmed, but is in the works. I need the subcommittee on outreach to work on this and deliver a draft for review prior to the gathering.

6. Open Discussion:

Hilda Ventura, the Hispanic parent liaison at the school inquired about hosting a separate gathering for Hispanic parents outside of our regular parent coffees. The committee discussed this and encouraged Mrs. Ventura to coordinate this through the committee. The primary concern is that a separate meeting may lead to isolation or separation of ethnic groups. The committee serves all minority groups and to be most effective, we should attempt to address the concerns of Mrs. Ventura within the committee. It was recommended that the committee use one of its parent coffees to focus specifically on the needs of Hispanic parents. Tim Thomas will discuss this alternative with Mrs. Ventura and respond back to the committee.

Mark Richardson received a telephone call from a soon to be parent at Westfield High School that is moving to the area in January. The parent wanted to obtain more information on the status of minority achievement at Westfield and also the current state of racial discrimination at the school. The latter topic was raised as a result of an article that was found by the parent on the Wikipedia website, which stated that Westfield is a racist school and has done little to address the issue. I discussed this with the parent and indicated that the article he read does not represent the true state of affairs at Westfield. I felt it was important to bring this to the attention of the school during the meeting because if there are articles like this circulating on the web, there may be an untrue perception of Westfield High School. While no one, including myself that will state that this school is free from racial issues, the article is truly misleading and not representative of what this committee and school has accomplished through its continued partnership. The parent is looking forward to having his child joining the Westfield Bulldogs and has already committed himself to joining and becoming involved with the minority achievement committee.