

End-of-year Report
to the
School Board of the Hillsborough City School District
about the
2011-2012 School Site Council
West Elementary School
376 Barbara Way, Hillsborough, CA 94010
June 3, 2012

Outline

1. Site Council organization
 - a) Staffing
 - b) General topics of discussion
2. Single Plan for Student Achievement
3. Local West topics
 - a) Differentiated Learning
 - b) Operation RISK
 - c) GATE
 - d) Budgetary impacts to the district and West School

Report Summary

The 2011-2012 academic year has been a very productive one for the School Site Council at West Elementary in Hillsborough. The SSC meetings can be roughly divided into two parts. In the first half of the year, we discussed possible topics for the council to focus on for the year as well as worked on our primary goal of updating and publishing the Single Plan for Student Achievement, with particular focus on differentiated learning, a key topic for the rest of the year. In the second half, we reviewed specific topics of interest to the West community including a variety of aspects of differentiated learning such as the school's writing rubrics, Operation RISK and the district's GATE program (or lack of one). Focus concentrated on ensuring that each student receives a sufficiently challenging and engaging curriculum and learning experience across the myriad of mathematical, lingual and social skills. A common thread running through each of the meetings were updates (at the district and then local school-level) for the major budgetary challenges facing the district and the impacts they would have on specific programs at West School.

The 2011-2012 members of the West School Site Council included:

- Steven Gans (Chair, parent)
- Deb Kelly (Secretary, parent)
- Marlene Tuzar (parent)
- Theresa Pai (parent)
- Ingrid Kitahata (parent)
- An Chang (parent)
- Dr. Jamie Adams (Principal)
- Jeannie Ainsworth (teacher)
- Angie Padian (teacher)
- Kristina Kaufman (teacher)
- Betsy Miller (staff)
- Sherry Lyons (counselor)

During the school year, more members of the parent community became aware of the role and value of the SSC. Every meeting included at least one member of the school community actively participating in discussions. Another result was increased interest in parents volunteering to serve as members for the upcoming 2012-2013 year, with four parents volunteering for the three open slots. The last result was the inclusion of parent-generated discussion topics during the last several meetings during the school year.

Single Plan for Student Achievement

Reviewing 2011-2012 Goals and Planning 2011-2012 Goals

As the initial Site Council meetings progressed, we began a process of educating the members (especially those whose terms had just begun) on the previous Single Plan, and the current performance of students at West school. Judy Pappas reviewed with the council the scores corresponding to first 2010-2011 measured goal of proficiency and advanced scoring on the STAR Testing Program in the area of Language Arts and on the Language Arts assessments. After discussion, the council chose to raise the bar on the target threshold to 95%. Discussion based on a review of the mathematical assessments led the council to not feel the need to set a goal for Proficiency/Advanced thresholds since the school was already achieving a high level of success in those areas.

After a review of the new District Report Card standards (templates) the council decided to alter the Communication Skills goal to be a measurable goal related to the new Essential Outcomes grading, and the existing goal of enhanced communication (Collaborative Communicator). It was felt that there is some lee-way in the District definition of *Consistency* regarding confidence compared to proficiency in this area. Since this section of the report cards (aka progress reports) is new, next year's council would review the scores and possibly realign the goal.

Differentiation was a common theme for the council all year (see below). The council chose to keep a Differentiated Learning goal.

Social and emotional learning was also an area the council felt that a goal should be kept.

2011-2012 Single Plan Goals

After discussion in the October and November meetings, the following goals were adopted, voted upon and approved:

- 1. Academic: 95% of 2nd –5th grade students will score proficient or advanced in the area of language Arts in the STAR Testing Program. 80% of ALL students will meet District benchmarks at each trimester window on Language Arts assessments.**

Programs addressed in this goal: Economic Impact Aid/English Learner Program, Instructional Time and Staff Development Reform, Peer Assistance and Review, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting, Title V: Innovative Programs

- 2. Essential Outcomes: Implement instruction that supports student to become effective communicators where 80% of students can receive and exchange ideas and information openly using the appropriate modes of communication as evaluated on the new report card with a grade of 3 (“consistently”)**

Programs addressed in this goal: Title V: Innovative Programs, Peer Assistance and Review, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting; School and Library Improvement Program Block Grant; Instructional Time and Staff Development Reform

- 3. Differentiated Instruction: Teachers will proactively plan and implement a variety of approaches to the curriculum that address student differences in readiness, interest and learning styles.**

Programs addressed in this goal: Title V: Innovative Programs; Peer Assistance and Review, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting; School and Library Improvement Program Block Grant; Instructional Time and Staff Development Reform.

- 4. Social Emotional: Meet more fully the social and emotional needs of students, Kindergarten through 5th grade, through curriculum and instruction. Teach and use appropriate emotional vocabulary when supporting students through conflict resolutions and social pressures. Teach coping skills so students can face situations that create anxiety or**

stress at school. Create and maintain an environment at school where students feel safe to learn and grow academically and socially.

Programs address in this goal: Instructional Time and Staff Development Reform; Peer Assistance and Review; School and Library Improvement Program Block Grant; School Safety and Violence Prevention Act; Tobacco–Use prevention Education; Gifted and Talented Education (GATE); Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting; Title IV, part A: Safe and Drug–Free Schools and Communities; Title V: Innovative Program

Differentiation

Throughout the year, the council was concerned with reviewing the existing academic and social/emotional programs and seeking strategies to ensure that all students get an experience that keeps them continuously interested, engaged and challenged by the curriculum. Discussions concerned both the “struggling” child as well as the “high-learner”. It has been pointed out that kids may be high-learners in certain subjects or domains and not in others. This includes kids who may have distinctions in the academic vs. social/emotional areas. For example, in October the council heard from Deborah Craig about differentiation at PE including such items as task differentiation, grouping, and student choice.

Writing Rubrics

In the November meeting, the council reviewed the Writing Rubrics associated with each grade (K through 5th). We discussed both the formal structure associated with each program and how to measure success. The focus was on expository writing and not on creative writing or other forms, such as poetry. The council also discussed aspects of grading and feedback of writing projects across the grades on writing samples and their impacts on development.

Operation Risk (KENT Award)

Jamie Adams passed out our application for the J Russell Kent Exemplary Program Award and explained both West’s Operation RISK program and the application process. Dr. Adams proposed the Operation RISK program – it has been ongoing for the last three years and encourages/challenges both teachers and students alike to take risks. The Kent award committee enthusiastically reviewed the application, and conducted a school visitation in February. In March, the council was notified that West School has won the award.

Teachers shared with the council some ways in which they’ve implemented Operation Risk as well as how it has changed their teaching. Kristina spoke about the sharing of ideas by teachers within and across grades, including the sharing of constructive

feedback and the encouragement by the staff and administration to stretch themselves and the program. Jeannie spoke about the Kindergarten's Challenge/Fun Fridays, a new program wherein classrooms are mixed up a little. Angie spoke about giving the older students more control and responsibility to allow for chaos in the name of letting students stretch themselves.

Each teacher commented on the perceived results including such items as:

- Eliminating perfectionism and the realization that first drafts require updating
- Increased maturity as the year goes on in increased autonomy in allowing students to form their own groups
- Specific new "more fun" / "hands on" curriculum for covering the basic standards material

The council was curious about mechanisms to get the parents to follow up and take more risks themselves and to engage in these programs. Participation would vary by family, of course. In general, the key is for people to be pushed a little outside their comfort zone for effective learning/growth.

GATE

The District does not have a formal pull-out GATE program. It does follow the state standards for identifying students as being GATE (based on two years of STAR testing scores.) These identifications may formally be useful for students as they move to other districts or the high schools since they remain in the student's permanent record. Teachers have a good understanding of areas in which students already excel, and the current curriculum attempts to provide learning experience commensurate with their differentiated skills, even if the student doesn't qualify under the strict GATE standards. Mary Maher addressed the council in the May meeting and answered questions related to the GATE program and standards. The team also discussed in the May meeting possible (and existing) usages of Kahn Academy as augmentation to the classroom learning experience. Currently, most teachers make ad-hoc usage of its programs.

Some of the existing GATE-like programs (open to all students) include Mathletics, additional reading programs, iLab, leadership/ Ambassador programs and the Tech Challenge. Many classroom-specific programs augment the curriculum under the auspices of Operation RISK.

Additional Topics

New Progress Reports

In the October meeting, the council was introduced to the new progress reports (aka report cards) which are more concise and data-oriented than before. Much of the discussion focused on the new sections related to the District's Essential Outcomes and how those would be scored, reported and discussed with parents. The council agreed that it would be beneficial to track the range of scores across the different Essential Outcomes to use to identify gaps in the program and future areas of focus.

Budget-related discussions

Throughout the year, Dr. Adams reviewed the current budget process and possible impacts to the West program and staffing. In the April meeting, she gave a more detailed program update including information about possible teacher retirements, assignment changes, and curriculum updates. The main known impacts to West School for the 2012-2013 school year are changes related to a few teacher reassignments, the alteration of the Spanish program and the usage of the computer lab. Dr. Adams handed out the updated district computer specialist schedule (at West on Tuesday) and we discussed the plan for providing services by the teachers. The council also discussed the usage of the lab during library time, and the teaching of standards, keyboarding, and specific application programs for different grades.

Additional Topics

In March and April, the council reviewed the proposed (and then implemented) School Pick-up policies. In general, the feedback from both parents and teachers has been very positive in regards to safety, consistency and flexibility. Dr. Adams has been very satisfied with the adherence to and results of the new policy in terms of playground safety and management, as well as in ease of the drive-through pickups.

In February, the council reviewed challenges of 2nd-grade homework which seems to be the biggest shift/challenge for many students and parents (in terms of their needed involvement). Kristina Kaufman (2nd-grade teacher) commented on how she and the other 2nd-grade teachers have been working directly with parents to flexibly change the scope and quantity of assignments on a per-individual basis. The council proposed that the teachers should spend more time emphasizing this flexibility during the What to Expect Night (aka Back to School Night) in the Fall and during all parent-teacher conferences. Dr. Adams pointed out that different families might have different preferences for modifications, for example in doing adjustments / providing individualized writing assignments. There was also discussion about better communicating writing assignment expectations to the parents, including the possibility of modifications. An Chang suggested the use of Counselors Corner as another mechanism to communicate this flexibility with parents.

In April, the council discussed volunteering and how the burden usually falls on a disproportionately small group of parents. There are many parents interested in

volunteering but work full-time and are not readily available during school hours. Ideas to increase participation include:

- Providing more pre-fixed (smaller chunked) slots in the classroom for working parents to sign-up for and schedule well in advance
- Publishing volunteer requests for the off-hour (e.g., Welcome Back BBQ) activities as non-school-hour opportunities
- Being more efficient about the current opportunities and usages
- Prioritizing volunteer opportunities more in Dr. Adams' newsletters and school communications

2012-2013 West School Site Council

The 2012-2013 council parents are:

- Roger Avedon, Chair
- Leslie Huie
- Katie Pierce
- Anu Hoey
- Ingrid Kitahata
- An Chang