

# West Hillsborough Elementary School Site Council Wednesday, March 26, 2014

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

### Members Present:

Roger Avedon(Chair/parent) , Katie Pierce,(parent), Sarah Adams(parent), Jay Beams(teacher), Don Geddis(parent), Anu Hoey(parent), Jamie Adams(Principal), Sheri Gavin( teacher), Leslie Huie (parent), Sorita Murphy(staff). Teachers Chris Flores and Megan Medvitz were absent. Other guests: Mike Luxton (parent), Richard Miller (parent), Lynn Esselstein(HCSD School Board Member) Gaythari Ghoutam (parent), Toni Bones (parent), Theo Kotseroglou (parent), Chris Koo (parent).

## 2. APPROVAL of MINUTES for FEBRUARY 26, 2014

## 3. CURRENT BUSINESS:

### DISCUSSION ON GENDER, LEARNING AND STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS)

#### A. GENDER DIFFERENCES:

-58% of the population in the USA is women

-more than 50% of women are taking higher degrees, yet lower percentage in engineering, ---physics, computer science, etc.—more in biological sciences

-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics):

(30 years ago—20% women in Engineering—hasn't changed much)

-The STEM skills are considered highly important for executive functioning. These skills are needed yet not always inherent, for boys and girls.

-Katie Pierce: three women in Biomedical department at CAL, moved to other engineering department with 25% women, then systems thinking 10% women.....

-Lego and other companies spend huge resources on research, including spatial development and mathematical learning to produce enriching educational products for children....example: the pink FRIENDS Lego kits of girls gets their attention.

-Jamie thinks each child is hardwired differently.

-Some might be interested in sciences, yet don't feel it's available.

-Are kids adopting stereotypical gender roles in the schools?

-Observation of Kindergartners at West school's computer lab from parent Sarah Adams: When the 4 & 5 year old children are guided/exposed to the math/engineering computer learning games and applications **by the teacher** as part of class work, the boys and girls do it. When left to explore on their own, the boys, in general, continue in that field, and the girls, based on my observation, divert to art and reading applications. This observation of the TK/Kindergarten level demonstrated to me that girls can/will do the more scientific learning games but when left to their personal time chose non-science games. As a parent, I want my female children exposed to as much science and engineering in the classroom, as part of the curriculum.

## B. SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING CHANGE AND IGNITING THAT SPARK AT WEST SCHOOL?

-Gamification....excites/invites children to interact with science, etc. (parent, Rich Miller)

-Make it interactive, engage kid, new interest, give exposure...

-How to exploit the community? Role models, mentors...

-Nueva School had a Robotics competition (50%boys/50%girls)...

## C. DISCUSSION ABOUT STARTING A SCIENCE FAIR EXPERIENCE AT WEST:

-Jamie would like to see more STEAM (STEM plus Arts) than STEM, wants student-generated projects, wants parent involvement in different ways, and really needs to talk with the Staff first. This is a good topic to discuss at next year's Site council.

-Esselstein: parents started the Science Fair at North based on South School Science Fair. Had professionals in field come and interact with the kids....to see if kids can articulate about project. It takes a special faculty member to lead the Science Fair...

-Need ways to engage entire family. Perhaps a parent can co-chair a science fair.

-Jamie: doesn't like the judging aspect.

-Other concerns from past experiences are that parents were too involved; that it really needs to be the child taking ownership of the project, yet it does remain

largely a family project. The student needs to understand thoroughly and be able to discuss the project and demonstrate the HOW-to's confidently.

For parent Katie Pierce the science fair was inspirational as an adolescent... she became well-versed and specialized in her topic, excited to share; parents very involved. When science/tech is forced as part of a curriculum, it helps generate interest....exposure, capability, makes functional, opportunities, opens the door for mentoring.

While waiting to hear back from Jamie and staff about a science fair (STEAM-focussed?), the on-going projects can be show-cased and high-lighted a bit more...we are referring to the projects from I Lab and classrooms, and there is no judging involved.

The Tech challenge is for each of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders, which gives some preparation for what's to come at Crocker Middle School.

#### D. THERE'S REVERSE GENDER DISCRIMINATION—LET'S DISCUSS HOW TO HANDLE THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THAT.

-Can you create an educational/social environment to avoid that?

-Are we sending the right message for science/ technology that reach out to both genders?

-Need to teach kids to interact socially together...give choices and mingle with both sexes...socially Mindfulness needed (Sherry Gavin, first grade teacher)

-ILAB...imbedding social justice ...equity....may be the teachers can reassess the critical thinking and biases that they are teaching.

-Ex: buddying up can be invaluable.

-Family projects, problem solving, change the mix socially and of materials, need to provide the materials

-It is successful to mix up student partners for working together on projects, while at the end of day, they can return to their usual friends.

-Has the educational environment become more difficult for boys?

Fine motor skills and writing? Boys in general want to stretch more...

- Having less recess, less lunch time...Is it a problem? Self-directed learning is appealing...

-Can we address individual child's needs/interests outside the classroom? Can address with teachers, want to know what staff can do better.

-Individual teachers over the years have posted info on their website classroom.

#### E. OTHER GENERAL QUESTIONS:

-What are STEM related studies for level of expectation at the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade levels. FOSS (?) curriculum, ILAB, another is STAR testing in science in which district does well.

-Are our kids spending enough time with STEM?

-Our Hillsborough Recreation Department helped by offering Mad Scientist and Engineering, Programming...

Tony G. willing to try out supplemental classes through the Recreation department , so please share ideas with him if you have some.

-HCFORWARD,

-One topic is TECH.

Amount of technology per classroom increasing...more gizmos as long as it's considered a viable model.

There is constant change in technology access.

-Getting to the Essential Outcomes...

girls and boys need to be willing to tackle the problem. Successful people are authentic.

-Jamie: Culture of Innovation. Doesn't want to get stuck on one discipline. Ideally, could have a program to appeal to each kid's need.

-Why don't we ask the question of each kid's needs and celebrate for what it is.

-Exposure...letting them play with it...

-“How Children Succeed” is the topic of tonight's book club discussion at MPR? How can we develop these skills—muscle through?

-Challenge is to hold firm with expectations. Family values, to stay AUTHENTIC, children will get grit.

-Slowing down is okay, let them struggle (don't overly protect), making mistakes is good.

#### F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Q; Can we technically run a meeting without staff?

Q: What are by-laws related to Quorum?

Need answers (if you answer this, we'll know you've read the Minutes!!! (;)

## G. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

-Improving student writing

-Review the metric data

-The three people ending duty of Site Council at end of year: Jay Beams, Katie Pierce, Anu Hoey.

-The possibility of STEAM fair.

## H. ADJOURNMENT

The Minutes are submitted for approval by Sarah Adams.