

Attendees: **Board Members-** Christine Boure, Kelley Craig, Val Currier, Tom Gilley, Tara Hill, Maureen Morrone, Gloria Nicholson, Patty Normandeau, Sara Perfetti, Brenda Pitcher, Allii Ray, Deb Regan, Melissa Skahan; **Presenters** – Kim Brandt, GMS Principal, Chris Mosca, Greely High School Principal, Dan McKeone, Dean of Students, Greely High school; **and many community members.**

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM. Tom welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

2. Presentation and Q&A

Kim Brandt, the Principal at Greely Middle School, spoke to us about creating and maintaining a middle school program that is academically rigorous and also responsive to students during what is typically a time of big change. She provided us with an overview of what's happening.

- Writing - We know that writing helps clarify thinking, which is one of the reasons there has been a district wide focus on the subject. At the middle school, one of our approaches is to have the content area teachers support their own learning goals while supporting writing. As of 2007, 76% of 8th graders meet or exceed the MEA requirement in writing.
- English Language Arts – 70% of students will be meeting standards by 2009, and we are still working towards bringing that up to 100%. A common misconception about middle schoolers is that we no longer need to teach them how to read. That is just not the case – we still need to teach the students who are not reading well enough. To that end, we have implemented a comprehensive reading program that addresses students reading 1-2 years below grade level. The program includes grade level and special education teachers who work with kids during mastery and then transition them back once they've progressed.
- Math – We are still using the MathScape program which is rated very well in the industry. 75% of students will meet standards in 2008-2009. We like to see 5% exceed standards and we are already ahead of that now.
- Science & Technology – All 7th and 8th graders have laptops which are integrated into their lessons.
- Culture - The middle school has trimester “Staff and Student Celebrations” that are enjoyed so much, that the students have asked to design future celebrations.
- Transition 5th to 6th Grade – The move from 5th to 6th grade is a big transition for most kids. We've learned that there is a lot we can do to make it easier. Some of the things in place are: incoming 6th grade parent informational meetings and tours; teen visits (from the middle school to the 5th graders, which includes peer leaders, school counselors, Kim, and the GMS Assistant Principal, Penelope Abbott-Wheeler); Step-Up Day; Open House in August where the kids can get more comfortable with their lockers and the building; special 1st day of school activities.

- Transition 8th to 9th Grade – This is also a trying time for students, and we take a similar approach including the following: high school counselors meet with 8th grade students and teachers; 8th Grade Transition Night; high school guidance visits the middle school in April; 8th grade Drug and Alcohol classes; Step-Up Day in June; high school Student Service is involved in the process (kids helping kids); Freshman Orientation in August.
- Neighborhoods – The purpose of structuring the middle school into three neighborhoods is to make a large building feel smaller. We are building communities: small schools within a school. One of our goals related to this is that every child will be known very well by at least one adult in the building. 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students can interact with each other in a safe environment, ideally with 8th graders as healthy role models. As we're in the 4th year of neighborhoods we are looking at this model and other structures to see if they've delivered as planned.
- Anti-Bullying – Middle school is the time when bullying behavior peaks. At GMS we have been very proactive on the issue including the following efforts: Rachel Simmons presented to the students, staff, parents, and the community last year; we have district wide, not just school-wide policies and common language associated with the problem; kids are continually encouraged to involve adults; there are guidance programs addressing the issues, as well as a GMS Code of Conduct. We've also specifically trained a team to address consistent problems, and we make sure all staff are aware of problems so we can all help and support the kids who are struggling.

The items covered in the Q&A session are summarized below.

- ✓ One of the ways the writing program is supported by content area teachers is that common written assessments are used across all subjects which also allows for the language to be the same throughout the building.
- ✓ Parents interested in the sports programs at the middle school and how they are administered should contact the Athletic Director at the high school, Mike Griffin, or the Assistant Athletic Director Ken Marks who works at the middle school.
- ✓ There are no current plans to pursue an IB certification for the middle school but that is an absolute possibility for the future.
- ✓ Becky Foley, the Principal of NYMS, and other staff meet with middle school staff to discuss what is involved when students move from the Everyday Math program used in grades K-5 to the MathScape program used in the middle school in an effort to make that transition as seamless as possible.
- ✓ In response to a question regarding how students wind up in a particular neighborhood, Kim explained that neighborhoods are “balanced” much in the same way classrooms at the elementary level are “balanced”.
- ✓ There has been some parent input on the neighborhoods as a concept, and we will also request staff input so that the issue can be evaluated. An open forum in the near future is suggested as a way to fully explore the topic.

Chris Mosca, the Principal of Greely High school, was present to update us on the progress we've made in implementing the International Baccalaureate program at the high school and to educate some attendees who may not yet be familiar with it.

The IB Diploma Program is a challenging two year curriculum that is recognized by the world's leading universities. Students in an IB program learn more than a collection of facts. They're encouraged to:

- ask challenging questions
- learn how to learn
- develop a strong sense of their own identity and culture
- develop the ability to communicate with and understand people from other countries and cultures

The IB program began in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland. There are presently 2,269 schools in 126 countries. There are 500 in North America and we would be only the 2nd in northern New England. Offering IB at Greely is our response to an increasingly complex global society.

We expect to begin offering IB classes to students beginning the fall of 2009. Current Freshman will be the first class able to receive an IB diploma. Students not pursuing an IB diploma may take an IB course and receive a certificate upon successful completion. It's estimated we'll have 50-60 students in the program the first year. The key to identifying IB minded students is not selection, but rather preparation. It should be noted that if a student desires an IB diploma, they must enter the program in their Junior year. It's thought to be a better decision to enter the program and decide at a later date that it is not appropriate (at which time a "soft landing" will be provided) than to not enter the program and miss the opportunity.

Q&A topics we discussed are summarized below.

- ✓ A child wishing to prepare themselves for the program could do so best by following world affairs and doing independent reading.
- ✓ As MSAD51 merges with Falmouth School District we would expect to keep IB at Greely. If Falmouth High wanted to be accredited they would be required to go through the same process we have undertaken.
- ✓ A look at the IB course offerings for the 2009-2010 year appears to be lacking in math and science and probably will for a few years. Initially the program will be more Humanities based and we will see where it goes from there.
- ✓ IB is not expected to interfere with the availability of AP or CP2 courses. In fact, IB will benefit all students, including those not in IB courses as the method of teaching has a tendency to spread across the entire school. It is worth repeating though, that IB is a rigorous course of study for high achieving students.
- ✓ The training of our staff and communication with other IB schools and the IB headquarters continues after certification and will be ongoing. The program continues to be reviewed and we will evolve with it.
- ✓ The difference between IB and AP is that while both are challenging, AP is geared toward the traditional learner and is content based, while IB is for a different, more creative type of thinker.
- ✓ If any level of instruction is phased out as a result of adding IB, it will probably be the Honors level, leaving us with CP2, CP, AP, and IB. These will be hard decisions to make and we'll need to assess all our offerings as we move forward.

Our final guest speaker, Dan McKeone the Dean of Students at the high school addressed the transition from 8th to 9th grade. We have found the 1.) educating the parents on the process helps make both parents and kids comfortable, and 2.) lots of communication between the middle and high schools has been integral in smoothing out what is for most students a major transition.

3. Approval of January Minutes

4. New & Old Business

a.) Welcome New Board Members

It is a pleasure to have several new board members with us this month: Sara Perfetti as the Co-Chair of Events, Ericka Winchester as Boxtops Coordinator, Julie Carrell on the MIW Readerboard, and Brenda Bacall on the NYMS Readerboard.

b.) Open Positions

We reviewed the MSAD51 PTO Board Member open positions list for the 2008-2009 school year. Several position changes were made, including: reducing the Web-site Committee to one person; adding a Boxtop Coordinator Chair; and clarifying the Publicity Co-Chairs' responsibilities. Elections will be held at the May PTO meeting. There was a brief discussion regarding how each of us can reach out to friends and other community members and invite them to take a more active role in the PTO.

5. Committee Reports

a) Volunteer

Deb is having an enrichment meeting shortly to check in with the Enrichment Chairs. She also reminded us that she has compiled an e-mail list of available volunteers that has been very successful in recruiting new people. If you're in need of volunteers, contact Deb and she can help you get the word out.

b) Events

- ❖ On 3/24 Brenda and Sara have scheduled a Family Night Out at 7pm at the Greely Middle School Gym. Wildlife Encounters is coming out and bringing new animals this year. A flyer will be sent home on Friday as a reminder.
- ❖ On 3/26, an early release Wednesday, we will be at Happy Wheels at 2:30.
- ❖ Also on 3/26, Susie Robbins requested that the spa we have supplied for past Teacher Appreciation Weeks be set up at MIW for Wellness Day. A \$50.00 budget was approved for chocolate, magazines, and other small items to stock the spa.
- ❖ May 5th – 9th is the Touch-A-Truck weekend. Gloria is already building the team and working on this fun event.

c) Treasurer

Val and Kelley provided updated balance sheets. All is in order.

d) Fundraising

The PTO Purchase Plus Card will be ready this Friday. We kept some of the participating businesses from last year and added some new players. Order forms will go home with MIW and Drowne Road students. We will probably gift a card to each teacher for Teacher Appreciation Week as they seemed to enjoy them last year.

e) Web Site

The web site looks great. Keep sending your updates and photos.

f) Publicity

It's been very quiet recently, and no one can recall getting an e-mail to check for newsletter updates. Melissa is going to look into it. As it *has* been so quiet, the suggestion was made that we use this time for district wide e-mails of our own.

g) Enrichment

We had many grade level chairs with us tonight. For grades K through 8, the following PTO funded enrichment activities have either already taken place, or are in the planning stages: Dr. Seussical, Max & Ruby, Funtown/Splashtown, Maine Maritime Museum, Popham Colony, Kieve, Southworth Planetarium.

h) Secretary

No report.

i) Co-Chair

Tom submitted a written report, see attached.

6. Open for question/comments

The discussions focused on three main areas: the efficacy of neighborhoods in the middle school; the process of course selection for students entering the high school next fall; the enormous success our Seniors are having when applying to colleges with many being accepted at their school of choice.

7. Adjournment

We adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Maureen Morrone, Co- Secretary, March 30, 2008

Co-Chair Notes March 2008

Welcome to our newest volunteers: Sara Perfetti—Co-Chair Events, Ericka Winchester Boxtops Coordinator, Julie Carrell MIW readerboard, Brenda Bacall NYMS reader board.

My greatest concern at this point are the many positions that will be open for election and the few that have been vacant, please see the list and consider what we are facing at two months away from elections. I will not be returning as Co-Chair next year. I believe that it is a great time for new faces with lots of energy and optimism to step up and keep the PTO thriving and growing. Deb and I will be working hard to find interested people to fill these positions, but I encourage everyone on the board to get out and get people motivated to join up!

Boxtops: Ericka Winchester is our newest Boxtop volunteer-Welcome!
I have submitted 1072.00 for the final check of the year, due in April.

DRS replacement playground equipment is in the planning stages. We have rethought our approach and Gloria is researching some more simple equipment for the playground such as swings, tetherballs, jump ropes. We are also researching a possible wall for handball.

We are planning another IB Forum on April 8 at GHS, 6:30 pm.

I have contacted the Falmouth's different PTOs leadership, just as a gesture to open the door for what may be an important relationship when consolidation is finalized.

No name calling week was an incredible success with many children participating in the poster contest, and many parents participating (and loving) the recess volunteering activities. There has been interest generated to expand this into the Middle School. My sincere thanks to all the volunteers on that committee: Kathy Locker, Dawn Lane, Katie Campbell, Vickie Bell., Lisa and Scott Wentzell and special thanks for Heather Giandrea who grabbed on and really made it happen!

Think Spring, the days are getting longer!

Tom Gilley
Chair