

Van Hise Elementary PTO General Meeting Minutes November 4, 2014

Present: 9 parents, 3 faculty, 7 board members

NEXT MEETING: January 6, 2015, VHE Cafeteria (Game Night) NOTE: The December 2, 2014, meeting has been cancelled.

Principal's Report

Mrs. Keeler reported on progress toward VHE's School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals, based on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests taken by all students in grades 3-5. She reports that we are right on track to meeting our goals by the end of the year.

- The overall school goal for reading is 73% of students at proficient or advanced by the end of the school year. As of November, 72% are at proficient or advanced.
- For the focus group of African American students, the goal for reading is 54% of students at proficient or advanced by the end of the school year. As of November, 50% are at proficient or advanced.
- For the focus Group of students receiving free/reduced lunch, the reading goal is 50% at proficient or advanced by the end of the school year. As of November, 53% are proficient or advanced. A new goal of 58% has been set for the end of the year.
- The overall school goal for math is 84% at proficient or advanced by the end of the school year. As of November, we are at 77% proficient or advanced.
- For African American students, the math goal is 64% proficient or advanced by the end of the school year. As of November, we are at 50% proficient or advanced.
- For students receiving special education, the math goal is 48% proficient or advanced by the end of the school year. As of November, we are at 43%.

The goals are meant to be reachable and attainable over a school year and are often suggested by the school district. Assessments happen several times throughout the year. The teachers use schoolwide benchmarking. Students who need intervention are known to the staff, and staff has a good sense of where the kids are for learning.

Teachers are working well in their teams. 4th graders are taking Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE), which is what leads to the report cards for schools. (Van Hise is the #1 school in Dane County, and also highly ranked in the state). The WKCE is being phased out, to be replaced with Smarter Balanced Assessment, which students take on the computer. There is currently no social studies or science component. The Smarter Balanced test will be given in April. Results become available in a week, as opposed to several months for the WKCE, so

they can be acted on much more quickly. There are several kinds of assessment: assessment, pre-assessment, and summative assessment. The WKCE is summative. But the greatest share of information about students' progress comes from teachers' daily interactions with the kids.

The Smarter Balanced test is typed, but it is an untimed test. Typing Pal (an app for typing practice) is meant to help them prepare to do this kind of thing. Typing Pal is a licensed app, available through the library portal.

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS): The theme in November is self-confidence. There was an assembly today (11/4). Mrs. Keeler suggests talking to your kids about it.

The last school day before Thanksgiving (Tuesday, November 25) will be Fashion Disaster Day.

Schools of Hope: Paul Benjamin

Paul Benjamin is an Americorps volunteer at VHE. He is 1 of 19, all but 2 of whom are recent graduates of the UW. Schools of Hope was developed in Madison nearly 20 years ago, through the Wisconsin State Journal. They asked the question, how can the community get involved in schools/education? Schools of Hope has spread around the country since then. The Schools of Hope volunteers are tutor coordinators in the schools. The idea is that teachers don't have time to recruit/train tutors. Volunteers talk to teachers, help them. They wait for assessment to decide which kids will be assigned to tutors. They find kids on the cusp of proficiency for literacy and help them get over the hump. One-on-one, One-on-two, and one-on-three tutoring seems to be successful. Paul talks to the volunteers and teachers, and helps get kids assigned a tutor; Paul also does some tutoring himself. He also does the reporting, since it's a Federal government grant. Paul collects the data, provides it to Schools of Hope and to Centro Hispano; people there assemble the data and do the reporting.

Tutoring feeds back into providing insight into what goes on in the classrooms, what the students might need. They are serving 18 kids right now. Not all are placed, but he has a couple interviews for tutors coming up. Right now there are 8 tutors. They need more.

Contact Paul to volunteer: pbenjamin@schoolsofhope.org; pbenjamin@madison.k12.wi.us The job is very rewarding; in the regular work world, you get paid, hope you get along with your coworkers, do some good. But the meaning of the work becomes more important with the volunteering. The requested commitment is 1 semester, which is about 15, ½-hour sessions. Tutors work with students on reading and math. Van Hise is lucky to have the depth of involvement and commitment. (Mrs. Keeler mentioned that when she first came here, there wasn't Schools of Hope at VHE, it started 6 years ago. The district made a

commitment to make sure the program is in every school. Before that, Mrs. Keeler and the Instructional Resources teacher did the coordination).

Questions from meeting attendees:

Q: When do sessions take place? After school? A: Some can - for example, at Midvale where there are some Bhutanese kids who need support.

Q: Is it based only on MAPS? A: No, it's really the teachers identifying the kids. Some kids are identified as needing special education, Schools of Hope doesn't work with them officially, but if something comes up when a volunteer is there, they will of course help out.

Q: Do you need more teachers who speak Nepalese? A: There are 2 Nepali communities in Madison, 1 from Nepal, 1 from Bhutan. Schools of Hope would like to recruit tutors from the Nepali community.

Event Update:

Scholastic Bookfair: Monday-Wednesday, November 10-12. Monday is the teacher preview. Volunteers are needed, the Sign-up sheet is outside Mrs. Keeler's office. There are 3 timeslots. Van Hise gets points for everything we buy, teachers can use the points.

December 12: The K/1 teachers host a parent's night out, where parents pay for a night of babysitting at the school by the K/1 teachers. The money is used for literacy play equipment, multi-cultural dolls. This year, Tien Thai has a voucher for a magician that he'll give to the school to use for the event.

November 5 is Pasqual's night/day from 11:00am -10:00 pm. You must bring a flyer.

December 13 is the SERRV benefit day all day at the Monroe St. location.

We now have 2 recruits to organize our Vendor Fair: Jeff and Shelley Maxted. We still have some logistics for people to think about: 1) Verify the space we'll provide - will it be the same as the Art Fair? Can vendors pay extra for a double space? Is the cost per vendor of \$100 acceptable? Is there anyone we should not contact because of the carnival? It was decided that the vendor fair and the Carnival are different enough that it's ok to approach some of the vendors for both events, but that it would be a good idea to coordinate efforts. The idea of the vendor fair is that Van Hise would rent out table space to organizations in the community with activities that kids could be involved in, so that they can advertise their offerings. Groups such as martial arts schools, or organizations that run summer camps could get the word out about their offerings. This information is no longer sent home on paper in "backpack mail" so it could be a valuable service for families.

The vendor fair is scheduled for Saturday, January 31. The cafeteria is reserved from 9:00-2:45 - this includes set up/tear down time. Right now, the gym is not available for the vendor fair, because the gymnastics equipment will be set up until the

following Monday. If we want to use the gym, we'd have to come in on Friday night (1/30) and help Mrs. Koval take down the gymnastics equipment. The fair will run from 10:00-1:00. We'll advertise to parents via backpack mail. We'll also invite families from other schools, to make it more worthwhile for the vendors.

Garden/Grow grant:

The garden has been put to bed. Jane Koval did her Harvesting the Heart week (exercise stations and targeted activities in the garden). Some UW students who were doing their capstone projects on community gardens, came to school to see some students doing the work and interviewed the students and Mrs. Keeler.

The Grow Grant is \$8,000 to make enhancements to garden. Updates are given at PTO meetings. There is also a newsletter, but soon there will be info on the bulletin boards, including ideas, a tentative plan, a map of our grounds (the idea of expanding the garden or moving it closer to the playground is being considered); there are lots of places for feedback. Also, there will be garden sheets at conferences, polling whether people garden, asking if people are willing to talk to the Green Team to offer input.

Grow Coalition: The GROW grant was funded by the Grow Coalition; we are in the third year of their grant cycle along with 4 other schools. As part of the grant there are monthly sustainability sessions, which are open to everyone. On November 17 there will be a sustainability session at Thoreau from 4:15-6:15, focused on planning for wildlife and an additional grant for \$1000 to put in a pollinator garden. On December 15, the sustainability session will be held at VHE (also from 4:15-6:15), and will be about strategies to engage kids in sustainability in school.

The green team has also applied for another grant (from the Wisconsin Medical Foundation). If we secure that grant we will put in kitchen features in the outdoor classroom (food prep and rinsing areas). We will find out mid-December if we get that.

Playground improvement: On November 20, The Playground Team and the Green Team will come together with district people (Mike Hertting and Mike Barry) to talk about this stuff. We want the district involved because of the potential changes to the school to address crowding. The group will explore how the garden can be more connected to play.

Classroom Representatives:

This is our second year of having classroom representatives. So far, two questions have gone out to/through the reps: 1) How do you communicate? The answers were all over the board. This is probably for the best - each representatives should work out what works best for each teacher/classroom. No comments came back that there wasn't communication. In classes that don't have all the emails, the teachers will send home paper to families that don't get email.

The group had a discussion about how best to get parents emails to the classroom reps. One suggestion was putting a question on the intake forms about sharing emails. We tried that this year but it didn't go very well. We didn't catch all the classrooms with that form. It was generally agreed that, "Do you want emails from the pto board?" is a separate question than "Do you want to get emails from the classroom rep?" The conversation that continues; what is the best way? November conferences might be an opportunity to do some information-gathering. One task for the school-based leadership team is to develop an exit slip for post-conference. There will be a bank of iPads, to share how the conferences are going. Maybe we could add a question to the exit slip? Or have some way to allow people to opt in to having their emails given to classroom rep? Ms. Miller prefers something separate to go home, given the time limits of conferences. We decided to leave it as is for now, and consider other possible approaches for next year. Maybe since the classroom reps are new, people don't know how others are doing it; they're trying things out.

The reps also asked their teachers about the technology available in their classrooms and how they use it, and whether they are happy with the amount/type of technology they have. A summary of those results will come later. Carousel reminds the reps that January is carnival time. The reps help to organize classroom representation at the carnival, and we will try the basket idea again this year - it was a success last year (themed baskets of items donated by families to be auctioned off at the carnival). Will there be volunteers from the UW for the carnival? Yes, but we will still need some parent volunteers. We have a connection with at least one UW service fraternity and will get in touch with them at the beginning of 2nd semester. The parent volunteer component won't disappear, but will be reduced, hopefully.

PTO Website update:

The PTO website is not finished yet, but will hopefully be done for December. At that time, if any of the PTO board wants to learn how to maintain their own pages on the PTO website, Jolynne will schedule a training - it's not necessary, though. (Peg will send an email to Jolynne about some vulnerabilities in Drupal 7 that the school district sent out a notification of; Afan stated that Drupal 7 is vulnerable to an SQL injection attack that would allow access to the core operating system. District has to destroy their system and rebuild from scratch. Anything loaded since Wed. on the MMSD site is gone - not the PTO site).

Financial report:

Highlights and updates: Early this year, the PTO board talked about getting a better rate on savings account, but it turns out that's only for individuals, not organizations. Dana was able to get the Quickbooks update for \$25, not \$200 through Tech Soup. Birthday bracelets were not put into the budget, so they've been added. They had been voted on previously, but were accidentally left out of the budget sheet.

Teacher Grants:

Teachers have the opportunity to apply to the PTO for grants twice per year, first in October then in February. There is no stipulation on how much the grant is for, partly because the PTO doesn't know right away how much money will be available until after the grant applications are received.

The following grants were approved by the PTO board:

- The ESL team requested MONDO Info Pal Kits for ESL staff to work with small groups of students below grade level.
- The ESL team also requested 50 sets of headphones. Ms. Chia-Wen Hsieh will start a Chinese reading program in K/1, and will purchase some books in Chinese, and some lower-level English books to help the Chinese-speaking students in K/1 learn to read.
- Mrs. Keeler requested 4 Walkie-talkies for the playground there are now enough walkie-talkies for each grade to have one for use on the playground at recess.
- The 4th and 5th grade teams requested more advanced books for students who have tapped out of MONDO.
- Dana Prager (school librarian) requested funds to ramp up the school's collection of graphic novels. The grant will cover more books and a cart to store them.
- Jenn Savage (1st grade teacher) requested some stability balls for her students, to allow them to move in an appropriate manner while remaining focused on their work. This will be a test case to see how those work, and other classrooms may follow suit.
- Kristin Ensminger (the school social worker) and Shelby requested funds to start a weekend food program for the kids at school who are homeless. The program will provide food to send home in their backpacks for the weekend.

There was one grant request that the board decided should be discussed at this meeting. Ms. Mileham and Ms. Masha have requested 3 iPads, to increase the number of iPads in their classroom to 6. The group discussed the request, then Shelby closed the discussion and called for a vote. She proposed that we do fund the 3 additional iPads for Masha/Mileham. Kristin Ruedi-Krause seconded. VOTE: 15 yea, 2 nay. The motion passed; the grant for 3 iPads for Ms. Masha and Ms. Mileham's classroom was approved.

REMINDER: The December 2 meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting will be January 6, and will be a board game night if it can be pulled together.