

Academic excellence minutes - 2/25/14

Present: Jill Gellert, Cybil Howard, Matt Fuller, Sally Williamson, Kim Chirichella, Rob Green, Bonnie Torchia, Sandra Gardner, Angel Rubet, Marie Digirolamo, Jeannie Altshuler

Minutes from 1/27 accepted.

The committee agreed to recommending weighted grades to the policy committee at the previous meeting.

The committee is comfortable with the current mission statement.

Protocols were reviewed. Concern was expressed about committee members wearing multiple hats. Some felt rushed to make a decision regarding weighted grades because of a deadline for the course catalogue. There was consensus that more time is needed for discussions.

The role of the committee was discussed and there were differing opinions about the responsibilities. Do we agree to the topic and move that opinion forward to the governing body to determine next steps or do we present recommendations with the topic?

- Action Item: It was determined that the subcommittee on weighted grades should present bullet points highlighting why the committee is in favor of weighted grades along with recommendations backed by research. This will be discussed at the next meeting for 30 minutes.

Sandra Gardner presented to the Policy Committee. She read the statement regarding weighted grades per the previous meeting and spoke about the role of the committee and the agreed protocol.

Angel Rubet will be presenting to the BOE on 2/26. He will talk about the mission statement, the definition of academic excellence and the current priority of issues: weighted grades, grading policy, web page communications, and self-esteem (longer term project).

The committee wants to focus on all grades, including elementary. Current focus is on issues pertaining to the Jr/Sr High School.

Marie Digirolamo updated the committee on the distance learning program. Distance learning allows students to connect with other districts where TH can be a participant or host via webcam. Additional new programs include an online partnership with Marist College. A potential collaboration with Excelsior College is also under way providing an online test to show proficiency in a course and receive college credit. Cost for test \$95, practice exams \$75 and textbook can cost up to \$300. Marist cost is \$400. College courses are currently not included in rank. Credit is received but pass/fail. Distance learning is included in GPA.

- Action Item: More discussion at a future meeting is needed regarding how this would affect weighting and class rank.

Homework and grading policy

Sally Williamson talked about the homework policy and the first step recommended is to survey the teachers. Then perhaps recommending policy ranges around homework. The committee is not suggesting how to assign homework but more helping define the purpose. Surveying the students and parents was also suggested.

- Action Item: The subcommittee on homework and grading will create a Google doc survey to present to the committee.
- Action Item: All committee members are to review the homework policy from Merion school district.

Cybil Howard presented the updated grading policy charts. Marie collected the missing information and many websites have been updated as a result. The research was very helpful for Marie and the departments. The report also highlights the questions we had with answers highlighted in red. The following issues were discussed:

- Midterms are included in the 2nd qtr. grade but are highlighted separately on the report card. Percentage weights differ by class and that is being addressed.
- Separating out knowledge areas and other highlights for report cards is being discussed

Grading and homework policies will be discussed at the next meeting for 30 or 35 minutes.

The course catalogue will be reviewed at the next meeting.

The self-esteem subcommittee (Sandra Gardner and Bonnie Torchia) will present at the next meeting for 10 minutes. Cybil will update the subcommittee on the latest plans per Paul Mossman.

The next meeting was set for April 1st at 6:30.