

**PTO Council Meeting  
February 2, 2016**

**7:15pm - regular meeting  
Education Center, Room 210**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

**Executive Board**

Betsy Blagdon, Co-president  
Karen Manning, Co-president  
Kim Thurmond, Treasurer  
Christina Hardway, Secretary  
Jen Abbott, Equity Representative  
Caroline Wilson, Website Manager  
Jo-Louise Allen, Special Education Representative

**Other attendees**

Leo Brehm, NPS Technology  
David Fleishman, Superintendent  
Steve Siegel, School Committee

**PTO Presidents by School**

Dana Hanson, Day  
Lindsay Pike, Day  
Emily Prenner, South  
Nora Horick, Franklin  
Sarah Kish, Pierce  
Sarah Healy, Mason-Rice  
Justine Fralkosky, Burr  
Meredith Andrews, Underwood  
Shelly Straight Nissen, Ward  
Sally Brickell, NNHS

**Next Meeting Dates**

Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Introductions**

Welcome to everyone

**Approval of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 PTOC Meeting Minutes—All**

Motion put forward; seconded; and approved.

## **NPS Technology Presentation—Leo Brehm**

**Technology Update:** To discuss needs, Leo and gathered all of the technology instructional people to discuss what each school would need to meet the curriculum needs, and they decided what would be needed and that set the standards that have guided technology purchases.

### **Breakdown by School Level**

The process began at the elementary school level. There are classroom and building standards that are separate, and the building standards are different by size (as determined by the number of classrooms in the schools.) There also music, art, and library needs that are met.

The middle schools have different standards and the goal for middle schools is 2 class sets per team. They are about half-way there.

They are currently supporting a lab model at the High School level. There are rooms or carts that are signed out by the departments or the classes. World Language has a fixed lab at each school that is devoted to language programming needs. There is a lot of discussion about what to do at the High Schools. There is a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) model discussed. The curriculum team continues to evolve, and the curriculum council is working with Toby Romer (new Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools). Each department has its own need and it depends on what they are asking the students to produce. They take it on a case-by-case basis—it varies depending on the discipline.

They also buy hardware with longevity in mind (with faster processors and more memory). Currently, they are getting about 7 years out of their Apple laptops.

They never put in technology for technology sake. They work with the curriculum coordinators to determine what the technology needs are.

### **Classrooms Spaces**

They have worked to make the classroom space efficient, so that the technology is easy to setup, and so that it doesn't take away from instructional time. As part of that, they have integrated speaker systems and that is integrated with the projectors. The microphones reduce the stress on teachers' voices, help all students hear the lessons, and integrates with multimedia. The redcats are part of that system, and they are 65% toward full implementation across the district.

- Q: When will there be full implementation of redcat systems?

- A: They try to do it in a fair way across grades, usually. For example, there were a lot of failing smart boards, and they replaced all of them with interactive projectors. They tend to do make changes by grade, and sometimes the PTOs go ahead and make those changes. Redcat systems are all within the equity policy and can be purchased by PTOs.

### **Schoology LMS**

This is a digital version of the classroom and it is a replacement for the teacher website. Teachers like Schoology and it meets the technology needs.

It has gradebook, curriculum, mobile access, and provides a parent portal so that learning can be reinforced in the home. You can set up your own parent access code, and the teachers have the ability to manage it (that isn't centrally controlled). It doesn't integrate with the student information system yet. The Schoology platform seems to be well-received. The SMS gradebook has been turned off, and the gradebook in Schoology has been turned on. This coming September, they will have the necessary information to integrate across the Schoology and Skyward Platforms.

- Q: Will all teachers be using it?

- A: They seem to like it and many are already using it.

- Q: How will this impact home life?

- A: Still being worked out.

### **Skyward Parent Platform Rollout:**

SIS District ERP; keeps track of all information for everyone across the district. We used to have one

called SMS, and it was the one that Newton had for a long time, and it was problematic for a variety of reasons. For example, the scheduler didn't work well, and they were hand-scheduling the secondary schools. This system was then discontinued by the company. A 30 person committee did a thorough search process, and the implementation has been going on since June. In the last two weeks, it has been used by the district in its full capacity. It means that demographic data can be more easily updated through the portal. It also means that gradebooks can be accessed and historical data will be more easily accessed as well.

• Q: When will it roll out and how will parents know what our passwords will be?

• A: At the end of the month, there will be trainings through the schools. There will also be short but precise videos. They are replacing the functionality that they had, and then they will allow new functionality to go online.

• Q: When parents e-mail PTOs presidents with questions, how will we direct them?

• A: There will be a helpline and info on trainings and links to videos.

• Q: Will communications be sent through the Principals?

• A: Yes, they are totally in-the-know and they are working closely with NPS staff

• Q: Will the registration be available in March for High Schools?

• A: His understanding is yes, the program studies are being put in the system. It needs to be worked into the new systems. The plan is to do a full-on registration in the system.

## Superintendent's Update: David Fleishman

**Safety and Security:** It has changed a lot since the beginning of his career, and the world has generally changed. Students are often faster than the School System in terms of communication re: security incidents because of changes in media (particularly texting). NPS needs to work with Law Enforcement who want to make certain that the information goes out in the right way. They are thinking about how to do that, and they also need to work with the State Police, because they don't like information being sent out during an active investigation unless it has been properly vetted. There is not one right answer, but it is something that they are working through.

Q: Sometimes parents want to know what the procedures are exactly, but it may be ill-advised to post this publically.

A: They treat each situation on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of the situation.

Q: Perhaps communicating to parents about best practices around how to handle this with their kids would help.

A: That's good advice.

Q: How are kids trained to work in lockdown situations?

A: That's also helpful. I'll pass these on.

**Staff Changes:** They are conducting many school searches across several schools, and there are other staff changes as well. Leo Brehm is also leaving, and they are doing an assessment to figure out what they need for that position in the future before hiring. There are people in the district who will cover technology while that is happening.

## School Start Time:

Q: What about regional efforts to change High School Start times?

A: The School Committee is taking that into account.

## School Committee Presentation: Steve Siegel

**School Start Time: State Senator** Cindy Creem has sponsored a bill which will facilitate regional efforts. The Committee has put together a Working Group of people including the Deputy Superintendent in charge of Secondary schools, other members of NPS staff, and other School Committee reps. This was started by Newton South School Council who did a thorough investigation with lots of data that indicates that because of the biological clocks of teens, a later wake time is associated with a host of benefits including lower suicidal ideation, better driving, and other improvements. The Working Group used this as a working idea, and they are doing a thorough investigation of the impact on many groups. They are also working to discuss the science on Circadian Rhythms with these different groups, including the high school students themselves. They are talking with as many stakeholders as they can including teachers, parents, sports teams. They want to learn about the impacts a change in high school start time has on a variety of groups and to work on models that will maximize the benefits to students and minimize the impacts on other groups. They are working on putting together the recommendations, and the Working Group is putting together a series of contingencies and impacts based on different Start Times, and these proposals are based on the anticipated impacts to all groups. They are putting together Open Forums to solicit as much public feedback as possible. They are also working on laying out as many scenarios with anticipated outcomes based on these different, new start times. They are hoping to present these proposals to the School Committee at the end of the school year. They are waiting until they have gathered as much information as possible, and the scenarios with different start times won't be put together until that has been gathered. If they do have a proposal accepted, then it most likely won't be implemented until Fall, 2017 at the earliest.

Q: Does the school committee just decide?

A: Any change would have to be agreed to by the Teachers and staff through collective bargaining before any changes were made by the district. The teachers were already contacted and they will continue to dialogue with them.

Q: Will elementary and middle school parents be surveyed?

A: Yes.

Q: The community forum timeline has been changed?

A: There is a lot of material that has to be collected and processed. It's important not to get ahead of the process. There is a national forum on later start-times with a clearinghouse of information, and this information suggests that the places that have been successful in changing the high school start time have taken the time to make certain everyone is heard and there has been enough input for the public to provide feedback on the impact.

Q: Will there be more public forums when the scenarios are out there? Perhaps some earlier would be helpful. It should be earlier than April (note: when the next is currently scheduled).

A: There will be scenarios that are put out to illustrate the process. There is a strong effort to educate and they can solicit ideas and thoughts from the community, and it will be part of a larger education effort. There is webpage for the Working Group, and there are updates through the webpage. He will share the sentiment about timing with the Working Group.

Comment: There was a forum focusing on this topic at Newton North (on January 26).

Q: I think that communicating through all the PTOs is important because it will also affect the children at some point. This information needs to be gotten to the parents in as many ways as possible, including through the Superintendent visits to schools. Already some kids leave school early to go to Sporting Events. Why is that? It seems to be prioritizing sports over classroom time.

A: What you are identifying is part of the tension associated with the change in the start time. They are in discussions with the Athletics to find out how can this be addressed. It is one of the reasons why a regional or state change would facilitate change at the district level. That's simply one issue that people have very strong feelings about. It's not just athletics—it can be debate or drama or other activities that are important to kids. Different kids themselves have different priorities and as they get older, they have more control.

Comment: If you go to the School Committee website, you can get the contact info for the people on the working group.

### Treasurer's Update ~Kim Thurmond, PTOC Treasurer

All the Dues are up-to-date. There is about \$3200 in the bank. They will be putting together the budget, and it will stay much the same. Expenses include The Special Educators Awards; Mayor's Breakfast: METCO. The budget allows the PTOC to be responsive to various potential needs.

***Treasurer's Best Practices. Please encourage Treasurers to come.***

Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm Panera Bread at Chestnut Hill

Thursday, February 27 at 9am Panera Bread at Chestnut Hill

Open Table discussions have been useful for other topics (e.g. bylaws discussion has been useful).

Please try to attend!

### Open Discussion ~ All