

Inter-School Teacher Council February 15, 2017

Dr. Simon welcomed all the teachers and started her presentation with updates that were happening in our school district.

New Website – Juicebox was the vendor decided upon to do our new website, which is still in the design phase. We are taking the time to get great results. The website will have a master calendar that will be easy to navigate, a tab for teachers and parents and a home page that displays the students. Dr. Simon showed the council a few samples that are under consideration.

PD Task Force – There will be three calendar proposals by the task force, plus a fourth version that Dr. Simon will add. The final recommendation will go before the BOE on Feb. 27, 2017. The proposals include full professional learning days for staff, and PL days strategically placed in the calendar alongside long weekends to create more breaks for families, as well as a week of spring break. None of the calendars will have early release days. There will be fewer instructional days but roughly the same amount of instruction hours. The recommendation addresses “the how”- the next steps will address “the what” (balance of district time, reading and writing, and building professional time also). This will not be a factory approach. We need our professionals to deliver a scaffolding to build processing, collaboration and planning.

Community Advisory Council - The goal of the community advisory council is to serve as a forum for discussion, sharing perspectives, providing feedback, and exploring new and innovative ways to meet the needs of our school district. It will be a variety of businesses, community organizations, retirees, college educated, military, city/council and healthcare. Serious candidates chosen will develop a think tank for a broader prospective. The community wide survey brought in 4000 responses. One key theme that will be top priority is literacy/reading by the 3rd grade.

Strategic Plan – Dr. Simon would like improved communication and for the strategic plan of vision, mission and core values to grow stronger and better.

STEAM²- The initial meeting in November was to determine interest and feasibility. Now we need to collaborate to form a task force to explore K-12 STEAM².

Questions/Answers

Conferences/Open House

There is a large inter-school United in Song concert scheduled for March 2, which happens to be the same night as both high school and middle school parent-teacher conferences. Considering the concert affects families from most of the secondary school, held at the Civic Center, and booked six years in advance, are

events such as these taken into consideration when creating the conferences schedule?

The master calendar on the new website will help with the scheduling of events. Our leadership team is also involved in the resolution. Brad will look at conference nights and open house conflicts. One suggestion was to send out a survey to parents to get their input. With all the technology so readily available, are conferences necessary? The answer is yes, because most parents want to meet their child's teacher and be involved in what their child is doing.

Professional Development/PLC/Teacher Workdays

Are we still going to have some type of PLC time? Science has just started a new curriculum and we are working on developing the necessary teaching resources and strategies to enhance student learning. Will we still be able to work together to continue the work we have started? If the PLC/In-service days are on a Friday how will the coaches be able to collaborate and benefit from these days?

Yes, PLC is under discussion. We need to use technology more and ask questions like how comfortable would we be being videotaped.

I would like to know if the Wednesday PLCs are gone, are we still doing the Pacing Guides? Now is the time to be more flexible-week long summer institute and having expert teachers teaching and delivering plans and development to the less experienced.

Will we be able to increase the in-state professional development coverage to pay for substitutes on days we miss? This is the biggest challenge for us to be involved at the state level.

More discussion on this matter is needed. Challenge is everywhere when it comes to professional development.

Teacher work-days

Currently we have one teacher work-day between First and Second Semester to complete semester grades. I really appreciated this at the high school level as I need the extra time to complete my grades and getting ready for my new second semester classes. However, this does not equally provide time to help those schools that are on a trimester schedule. How can we create equal work time for all staff?

The calendar proposal does not address additional days. Dr. Simon's version has one day or half day, or up front. The time should be used for organization and clean up. At the end of the year when grades are being done, teachers will need time for checkout-half a day will be on the calendar.

Hiring

Are there any plans for hiring math coaches I middle and elementary schools?

Phase 2 for staffing is being looked at.

I see on the school website for employment they have 39 new positions for intervention and literacy specialists. I would like to know with our budget concerns, where are they coming up with the money to pay these teachers?

They are not new-they are repurposed/refocused positions. These 39 positions will have to reapply.

Are the literary and intervention specialist positions listed for new employment new positions being brought back? If yes, why did Stevens High School not receive an intervention strategist as this position was cut two years ago as well?

There will be no changes in the high schools-just elementary and secondary schools.

Personal Transfer

General Beadle has a number of students attending on personal transfer—many McKinney Vento. Many of these students have attendance issues, behavior issues, and/or are on IEPs. As a result of this, our attendance numbers (including tardies) are affected, SPED needs are impacted, and behaviors are a concern when these students often move from school to school. We are wondering why these students are not placed at a school closer to where they live/their home school vs. being transferred here.

There are many restrictions for McKinney Vento students such as legalities, location, poverty and homelessness that need to be taken into consideration. Dr. Simon suggested that the staff at Beadle talk it over and have the principal give a presentation.

Cancellation of School

What exactly is the procedure for cancelling delaying or postponing school or school sponsored events? Who is involved and how is the decision made?

This is a big process where Dr. Simon works with the national weather service, the county and if the city can get the roads cleared all the day before cancellation. Parents need to have a backup plan for their children if school is cancelled. The streets around Robbinsdale are not getting plowed quickly enough-Dr. Simon will address this with the mayor.

Contracts/Pay

Will we actually be signing contracts this year or will we be required to sign blank contracts that will be filled in at a later date like in years past?

Depends on if negotiations have been completed.

As a 30 year veteran who holds an MA45, has mentored new teachers, mentored and supervised pre-service teachers, and has dedicated over 3 decades to my profession, I received a disappointing and discouraging portion of the salary compensation money last year. My question is, what is the plan to rectify this situation and provide equity in salary compensation for veteran teachers?

Subject to negotiations.

SPED

Is the district looking to reduce the SPED certified staff numbers? If so, have ALL aspects (initial evaluations, re-evaluations, and annual IEP meetings, teaching content classes, scheduling, managing academic/study skill classes with each student having 6 different subjects, extensive communications with other teachers, meeting transition needs as well as the actual case management been considered? Given that high school special education teachers are extremely difficult to fill with qualified teachers, it would be unfortunate to cut onlu to find there is a need later as our case numbers fluctuate.

The new director will need to do an audit concerning staffing, inclusion and if we are doing the best practice.

Programming

How open is Dr. Simon to considering new programs? For example, is the district open to exploring world languages in elementary and/or middle school?

Very interested! Looking at elementary immersion schools, but we're not there yet.

I'd like to know Dr. Simon's views on middle school. It is very valuable to kids that are 11-14 years old. They are in a transition stage from kid to teen and trying to figure out who they are. Cores can provide a personable close knit relationship which can help guide students through this transition. Cores help students that struggle or are at the top of their class.

Dr. Simon is a strong believer in middle schools. Need collaboration back in place-it is on her radar.

Principal Survey

I have a couple of staff members who would like to know Dr. Simon's take on having a satisfactory survey conducted on principals.

She thinks it is very important and good feedback for a principal to have. There will be surprises, but principals are usually open and willing to work problems.

Recycling

Why doesn't the school district recycle? Is this a city or county question?

Dr. Simon will check into this.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Clutter in absence of Shirley Fletcher