

# Task Force on Student Academic Performance

Hudson City School District – Board of Education

Meeting 6 **MINUTES**

October 14, 2009

Hudson High School Library

---

1. Open: 6:30PM. Present were Bill Ebel, Mark Brenneman, Bob Conte, Nicky Genito, Martha Lane, Di Stewart, Annabel Lee, Florence Berth, Peter Meyer

2. Minutes from last meeting: No corrections.

3. Business not on the agenda

--Nicky asked what we are going to get “done.” It still seems to be a b.s. session. We don’t do anything. Peter suggested that we look at the minutes of previous meetings, and focus on those as a record of what we’re trying to get done. And he read from the June 10 press release about the Board establishing the task force, saying that all we had to do was to suggest to the board “ways to advance our students’ academic achievement.” We don’t have to solve the world’s problems – or all the problems of the district. “We just need to make some suggestions to the board about ways of improving things,” said Peter. We had discussed various approaches to the mandate at our first meetings and decided on the current approach: to investigate several different subjects, in an orderly fashion, and make suggestions based on those investigations. We are in the process of doing that and need to finish the job.

Florence handed out a memo she wrote called “The Baby Step Approach” (attached). It included a number of suggestions for school improvement, including After school or Saturday Locker Clean out, Tutoring labs, Case loads, Late to class seminar, Career Information and Exit interviews. There are lots of things we need to do that we’re not doing, she explained. Kids don’t know what they have to do to graduate, she said. They don’t know how much a college education costs. “Let’s start asking, `Are you making Honor Roll?’” she suggests, “and not `Are you passing?’” Bob suggested that we have a “Code of Achievement,” something that explains what student needs to do in order to get to college.

Nicky complained that she couldn’t even get math tutoring for her child. We need to help children succeed.

4. Old Business:

--Where are We Now data? Mark says that Theresa M. has the data. Looking at the list (from my 9/22 email “WWAN Data”), he says that the difficult data to retrieve will be the “in-house grades and pass rates,” the “college acceptances,” and information about the GED diplomas. Peter suggests that

we get all the data we have (i.e. the stuff already presented at the meetings) and get it to Theresa. We'll work on the difficult stuff later.

--Bob Conte reported on the plans to visit the Elmsford (Westchester county) school. Bob passed out an interesting sheet of data comparing Elmsford ELA and Math scores to those of Hudson (see attached). We have the same demographics, he showed, but very different test results. Bob's waiting to hear back from Dr. Peters, superintendent, about a possible visit, but he says she's very receptive. Bob suggested that we have people (on the visiting team) to cover K--2, 3--6, and 7--12, but there was some discussion about whether our team should include folks who only know something about those grades and their curricula or members of the TFSAP who don't have any particular expertise. To be continued. When Bob pointed out that his son-in-law (a math teacher at the school) thought that "expectations" accounted for a big part of the Elmsford's excellence, it opened a discussion about what we meant by expectations. Teachers? Parents? Students?

One difference, Bob suggested, was class size. Another, perhaps, was percentage of kids in Special Ed.

Bill suggested that the big question on the test score sheet was how Hudson 8<sup>th</sup> graders managed to jump from 35% pass rate in ELA in 2008 to 52% in 2009; from 26% in Math to 54%. Bob suggested that there was a "gap" in the curriculum in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, which started a discussion about "the curriculum" and why there were gaps. Peter recalled Mark's answer to that question at an earlier meeting: curriculum. Peter suggested that we still don't have a curriculum; Bob disagreed, saying that the district did have a curriculum. The ensuing discussion (robust) led Peter to conclude that he needed to do a better job of moderating!

Bob said that next week (10/21) a person from State Ed's math section would be visiting Hudson to consult on our math curriculum/practices.

## 5. New Business:

--Topic reports: how's everyone doing? Schedule?

--Curriculum. Peter reported that he had tried to get Anne Schiano, assistant director of curriculum, instruction & Technology at State Ed, and Erik Sweet, an ELA curriculum associate in that office, to visit. They were both very excited about doing it, but needed at least a three-week advance notice, due to new state regs. We agreed that we'd let them give us some dates. Peter also suggested that we get Department Heads to come to the Task Force and discuss curriculum. He will work on that. Next Curriculum topic meeting will be, tentatively, in December.

--Teachers/teaching. Martha reported that she had invited Patricia Price from College of Saint Rose and that Price had tentatively committed to coming to a TF meeting on 11/18. We need to work on travel reimbursement. Peter said that he had broached this with the BOE, but had heard nothing.

--Communication. Since Elizabeth wasn't here and Bob didn't know anything about the plans, we tentatively scheduled this topic for December.

--School Culture. This was scheduled for the next meeting, 10/28. Nicky and Anne will lead the discussion.

--Administrative Practices. This was scheduled for 11/4. Jack and Maria will lead the discussion.

--Other. Florence expressed her interest to tack this topic anytime. We tentatively scheduled it for December, but she said she would gladly do the "Other" presentation on 11/4.

--"TFSAP Action Plan" and "TSAP Session Coordinators" updates. Nothing new. See attached.

--Schedule: writing the report. Peter suggested that the minutes will form the basis of the report and encouraged everyone to get engaged in the minutes.

7. Next meeting: 10/28. Topic: School culture.

8. Adjourn. (7:30pm)