

Frelinghuysen Home and School Association

Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2016

Committee and Attending: Lucy Webber, Gale Grennan, Patty Haralampoudis, Ellen Hays, Christine Sicat, Kristen Cunningham, Beth Sparacino, Karen Scott, Betiana Capriol, Mechelle Oledge-Evans, Kathleen Kalaher Humbert, Maiken Gehsmann, Sharon Cain, Jess Raiz, Anne McDonald, Maryellen Briscoe, Amy Craig, Pam Elliott.

Meeting called to order at 7:07pm: Lucy Webber

Minutes Approved: Karen Scott and Mechelle Oledge-Evans

President's Council Update: Lucy Webber

- Regarding security issues at FMS, Superintendent Mackey Pendergrast felt that information from the police department was received in a timely fashion. He emphasized that he is all about transparency. He shares whatever information he has whenever he possibly can. The safety of the students and staff is first and foremost.
- The Honeywell System - please check and update your settings. Unfortunately, it did have a failure the evening when the security issues were being communicated, mainly through the phones. Parents/guardians are encouraged to update settings to receive emails, texts, phones, etc. so that all bases are covered.
- FMS homework changes - children need to be well prepared going into high school with better reading and writing skills.
- MHS bleachers need to be updated. The current bleachers have been condemned. Temporary ones have been rented. A permanent solution is to be determined.
- The new MHS wing - one portion is a dynamic space that can be closed and act as an intimate classroom or it can be opened up completely to create a larger space. The new wing includes a state of the art tech center that students have been enjoying.

HSA Co-President: Gale Grennan

- Volunteers Needed
 - afterschool snack bar - from about 2:00-3:00 everyday. It's a great opportunity to see the kids. Sign up through the Signup Genius link at www.fmshsa.com. Or, email fmssnackstand@gmail.com.
 - The mural - walls are primed and ready to receive the mural on Nov.1. Please keep an eye out for the Signup Genius requesting volunteers to help out with the students. The mural will really help to beautify the space and create a more inspirational environment for the students. The underlying theme of diversity and community was determined through surveys with the students, faculty and parents.
- Fundraising
 - Magazine sale has been launched - renewing subscriptions count as sales.
 - Operation Outside/Just Write a Check - contribute towards an outdoor space for kids to get some fresh air.
 - Please spread the word about these fundraisers. No donation is too small.
- Translation discussion - even though most digital information can be translated through Google

Translate, feedback has been that it does not do a good job. There are various suggestions including seeking out volunteers to translate or creating an audio file to attach.

- Upcoming dates
 - 10/6 at 7pm at MHS - MEF event "CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap"
 - 10/7 at 7pm - 6th Grade Social
 - 10/13 at 7pm at MHS - Discover MHS for 8th Graders
 - 10/25 at 7pm at MHS - MEF Event "Changing the Game"
 - 10/31 - Spirit Day

Communications: Ellen Hays and Patty Haralampoudis

- School Updates are sent out on Thursdays. The HSA updates are sent out on Sundays. So now only 2 constant contact emails are sent out per week. The Thursday school updates contain school information for the week. The HSA update contains Mr. Uglialoro's weekly message along with fundraising and volunteering information. The formats have been redesigned to be more organized and mobile friendly.
- Sign up for the updates through the websites at <http://www.morrischooldistrict.org/domain/9> and www.fmshsa.com
- Parent suggestion - please post the daily announcements on the website.
- Gale thanked Patty and Ellen for all their hard work.
- There's an option on the websites to translate, but it is Google translate.

Principal's Update: Joseph Uglialoro

- Thanked the board for all their help and feedback.
- Homework Policy - moving to a consistent school wide program across the grades.
 - The focus is on:
 - Reading and writing, with writing responses based on analysis and supporting claims with evidence from the text.
 - Key mathematical skills to be successful at higher levels of math.
 - Developing academic vocabulary with higher frequency of words that kids will encounter in texts. Vocabulary lists through research have been determined for each grade level.
 - The feedback
 - based on performance reports on how FMS students are doing compared to students across the state has shown that FMS students are lagging in reading and writing. Students are entering at 6th grade reading and writing at proficiency and leaving after 8th grade with less proficiency. The goal is to ascend.
 - Through vision meetings last year with families, it was heard consistently that parents did not see their children writing enough and are concerned about their high school readiness.
 - The new homework program involves repetition in reading and writing in response to the reading.
 - It's a wellness issue as well. The school day is rigorous. Students are encouraged to participate in activities outside of school. The new homework policy may alleviate some of the stress associated with completing large amounts of homework. Homework is important but it must be meaningful and targeted. Higher volumes of homework can

- cause stress and do not equate to meaning and better understanding.
- The homework policy page has gone home with the kids:
 - Night Write 3 nights a week - 2 in language arts and 1 in either science or social studies (alternating weeks). Weekend homework includes practicing vocabulary.
 - Math homework assigned every night that the student has math class. There is a problem of the week given the beginning of the week and reviewed the following week.
 - No homework in World Language - focus of the work at this early stage must be in communication and using the language during class time.
- Teachers, students, and parents will have an opportunity to give feedback about the new homework policy to see how it is working and how it can be improved.
- PowerSchool - parent portal
 - parents/guardians can see attendance and academic records for each class, including individual assignment grades. Parents/guardians are encouraged to utilize it to open up conversations with their kids.
 - All grades are posted through PowerSchool
 - There is a PowerSchool app that parents/guardians are encouraged to install - PowerSchool Mobile.
 - Parent question: Are there any expectations that students know their grades before grades are posted so that they can find out before their parents? This would encourage them to own their own grades.
- Canvas -
 - is being used at the MHS for assignments and grades but at FMS there will not be any grades inputted.
 - Teachers will consistently be using canvas to post all class assignments. It is a single location for students and parents to refer to for all homework.
 - This was a response to parent feedback obtained at the visioning meetings last year. Parents requested having a single consolidated place to find class information and assignments.
 - There are no plans at this time to use Canvas at FMS for posting grades. All grades will be posted through PowerSchool.

Parent/Guardian Comments and Questions

- Maybe words of the week can be placed on the FMS website and weekly bulletins.
- Thank you to Mr. U for hosting the vision meetings last year. In response, Mr. U pointed out that parent feedback was the impetus for hiring an additional counselor to interact with students regularly.
- Will students be prepared for the workload/volume of high school homework? Mr. U shared that there have been discussions between the superintendent and the high school administration regarding adopting a similar policy for incoming 9th graders, possibly upper grades in the future. The discussion is still open. But, most agree that volume of homework does not equate to rigor. It's more important for homework to be meaningful.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:27pm.