

MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION TEAM

October 10, 2006

Meeting Minutes

Present: Sara Jensen, Michelle Devlin, Brooke Hendry, Tami Schmitt, Jeff Lunt, Lisa Cornelson, Mimi Tiderman, Penny Fiscalini, Katie Ross, Donette Kessinger, Mike Knowles, Nikki Tomason, Paul Brinkman, John Kilzer, Ed Donahue, Shirlene Fitzwater, Jody Smilay, Brenda Mansen, Paul Reed, Brenna Mack, Campbell Kirkman, Chuck Lisk, Bryan O'Donnell, Tally Swanson, Carol Sinton, Bonnie Hansen, Jeri Goebel, Diane Metcalf, Michelle Reid

Welcome and Check-in

Team members checked in and reacquainted themselves with one another.

Review of Minutes /Board Report #2

The team reviewed and discussed the minutes from the September 26, 2006 meeting. The team then turned their attention to the review of Board Report #2 as it was delivered the previous evening. Of particular note was the two board information request items described in the report.

As the team reviewed these items, it was made clear that the information and analysis regarding both the athletic and science questions presented was the product of Michelle Reid and Scott Brodhun's analysis and work. The MSTT will take these topics up in more detail at such time as the work plan indicates. It is important to note that there are many topics we will yet investigate as time passes.

Review of Evaluation from Previous Meeting

The MSTT reviewed the evaluation results from the previous meeting. The team is committed to reviewing and working within the norms established. High performing teams review not only the content of the work they do, but also the way in which they do their work.

Suggestions for improvement included:

1. Speaking louder. There are many team members in a large room.
2. Name tags: never gotten to ... maybe next time.
3. Keep kids the focus.
4. Suggestions for norm adjustments: NONE
5. In general, team members believe the norms are being monitored effectively.
6. Treats remain a desire for the meetings.

Review of Reading Text to be Studied

The team reviewed the article, *When Leadership Spells Danger*, by Heifitz and Linsky

1. Two different types of challenges
 - a. Technical: reside in the head (physical)

- b. Adaptive: reside in the stomach and heart (emotional), this was defined as where hard work is: people's beliefs, emotions, values.
2. We cannot wait for the change from the 'leaders' to make the decisions (pg 34, first column)
 3. Pg. 35 second column: the real work of leadership is giving the work back to the people that have to work in the new system, buy in and owning changes is critical.
 4. Pg 36, first column: "the people whose perspectives are those who are most upset by your agenda": when they get into their mind they may be able to get in their head and plan how to deal with their perspective on the issue. Our tendency is to avoid people who feel differently (page 1: deal up front with the issues)
 5. By opening up a dialog then people can deal with the issue that really bothers someone. Need for objective conversations.
 6. This group needs to surface what is really important.
 7. Acknowledge other's feelings or respond so the other person knows you have heard their issues
 8. 5 tactics of success, a real important point of the article.
 9. Don't do it alone: you need people to help you.
 10. Pg 36: we have to accept casualties: we need to choose as an organization as a whole, not just us as individuals: "If you signal your unwillingness to sustain casualties, you invite people to ignore your goals" A significant point in our thinking.

Review of Communication Expectations

1. Students:
 - a. SMS: (Tally): went on the SMS news video program and explained what MSTT was and fielded questions, agenda for next Thursday will be discussed further. Kids do not seem to have lots of questions
 - b. RMS: (Brenna): 3rd update @ ASB: more reps are getting back to students, Newsletter submitted and published, Talking points from the meeting brought to ASB
 - c. 7th grade student concern @ RMS (*did an assignment about fears: music, locker sharing, athletics, etc.*): *therefore we have a responsibility to the student's emotional concerns. NEED more thought about the students and their transition process. Parents also need an outlet for their transition process. Work plan wasn't thoughtful about the emotional aspect (Michelle notes an adjustment will be made). We recognized the need to be careful not to pass on our adult fears about the transition. Thoughts about mascot, name of new school issue would be pushed to the spring: maybe considered fun and another way to involve them in the transition. Students didn't get to pick their mascot, etc when going to their neighborhood school: may be a big buy in to the change. Some parents don't seem pleased with all the aspects of the transition of the closure of Monroe School: awareness of those past Monroe students that have been through a transition AND careful not to blindsides Steven's students who may not have been through the transition. Monroe's mascot was designed to be 'mushed' with Franklin's mascot and it may not feel as one yet. Kids and ownership of the name of the new school are important, but overall kids should have ownership. Students take in information when obvious and need to be educated about the terms and vocabulary (ex: transition). Concerns that students walk*

out of the building knowing that we've done our best job, not opening up the decisions to everyone (premise that some want to put out a product)

2. Parents:
 - a. SMS (Lisa/Nikki): PTO, only 2 parents present, not much has been done to give anything for the newsletter slotted for end of October (snippet planned to be entered); busing issues (today some kids are on bus for 50 minutes, so how long is it going to be for Stevens?)
 - b. RMS (Penny): PTO, put article in September month-end newsletter and will continue each month. Parents seem to be voicing their concerns about sports, name, concern stemming from Monroe changes (not good feeling coming from some of those people: lack of trust, a bit of a feeling that in some cases kids were left out when they did get to the next school: therefore, challenge to also continue once we are a new school), How we make this work is as important as we continue to make it work. An acknowledgement was made that the transition process may well go beyond this year and the next. Jerry Eldred will join us at a future meeting to discuss busing issues further.

Review of Work Plan with Time Markers:

The draft work plan will be finalized at the next meeting. Several of the items require synchronization with the elementary team work plan. It is a great reminder that our team work is not being done in a vacuum; rather it is part of a larger district wide plan for the well-being of all our students.

LID Plans for Text Study at Roosevelt

The team discussed the plans for the afternoon session of the LID to be held at Roosevelt Middle School this coming Friday. The LID plans direct all of the district middle school staff to meet at Roosevelt Middle School at 12:30 pm for the afternoon session. The afternoon session will run from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm. The entire group will start in the small gym at Roosevelt for a whole group introduction to the afternoon work.

The middle school staff will then be divided into five groups as they wrestle with the topic of the developmental characteristics of middle level children. The staff will review two pieces of research on Friday afternoon. One is from the National Middle School Association and the other is an article on the wonder of the middle school years.

1. Article: *Understanding and Appreciating the Wonder Years*, by John H. Lounsbury. Of the characteristics for this age group, revisit these particular kids and filter what characteristics are most important through this transition.
2. Text: *This We Believe*, by the NMSA. Review the developmental characteristics for children in the age group we are working with (10 – 15 year olds.)
3. Activities
 - a. Staff will be able to begin to mix and know each other within small group assignments.
 - b. Inform this group (MSTT) from the expertise of the two middle school staffs in the district.

- c. What is best for middle school kids will become a collective definition informed by both research and the staff engaged in the work.

Checklist from *Managing Transitions*

The team acknowledged the checklist is valuable, but difficult to fill out because we haven't gone through the process yet. It is clear that to have a beginning, we must mark an end. Our challenge will be to do this well should it become necessary to do so.

The team talked about the importance of having a blank checklist to go through as we go along in our process. It will be increasingly more important to be thoughtful as to how we are going to handle these items as we move into the process. Some things on the list are yes and no and we all come from a different angle. We may have an opinion about it in a month or two.

Can we fully answer these with all of the unknowns? (Example: students, parents, no hot topics: is it because so much is unknown? Can we anticipate what there is to lose when there is so much unknown?) You may need to know where you are going to be (teaching/do you have a job) before you can answer these questions. It is clear we need to be mindful of the challenges raised by this checklist.

Review of Reading Text to be Studied: *Managing Transitions*, by William Bridges.

1. Chapter One: *It isn't the Changes That Do You In:*
 - a. Failure to identify and get ready for any losses. Prepare for those issues.
 - b. Neutral Zone is the time where most innovations are possible and one is able to renew and revitalize ourselves.
 - c. We are in the neutral zone, because of the 'business' we are in by necessity.
 - d. Changes trigger many additional changes and we need to anticipate unfamiliar ways of doing things. Because of our successes this may be more challenging (pg. 6, third paragraph). Both schools are doing really well. Managing loses of strategies and/or structures that each different middle school has created may be in conflict with each other.
 - e. Letting go of the old and a new beginning will be a challenge.
 - f. Organization and the sense of loss is a topic to note.
 - g. Trying new things/innovation.
 - h. Focus on the positive.
2. Chapter Two: *A Test Case*
 - a. Perception of how we are going to present information to others will be important. Start at where you are and feel positive in order to step up and be better.
 - b. Pg. 15: Category 1: very important: "you have to figure out how individuals' behavior and attitudes will have to change to make teams work."
 - c. Pg. 11 "We think in generalities, but live in detail". This is a dichotomy we must struggle with in this process of transition leadership.
 - d. Loss is going to happen and it is part of the transition. Thinking purely positive doesn't allow the grieving process to occur.

- e. Keep people that disagree close is important, because those people allow us to not see in tunnel vision.
- f. Casualties need to have a line: how long do we let issues go because we have heard enough. When do we let the issue and/or person become a casualty?

The team expressed a need for a place to put individual detail concerns.

Thanks and Gratitude

Thanks and gratitude for the continued generous contribution of time was acknowledged.

Evaluation

MSTT members completed the meeting evaluations that assessed our commitment to keeping the norms while we deliberate.

NEXT MEETING:

Assignment(s):

1. Read and think about the article, *Understanding and Appreciating the Wonder Years*, written by John Lounsbury.
2. Read and come ready to discuss Chapters 3 and 4 in *Managing Transitions*, by William Bridges.
3. Give some thought to a transition that you are experiencing in your position, world, and/or family that you are willing to share and how it is playing out? What are you learning from this transition?