

# MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION TEAM

November 14, 2006

## Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Brenna Mack, Tami Schmitt, Brooke Hendry, Paul Reed, Paul Brinkmann, Katie Ross, Donette Kessinger, Campbell Kirkman, Mimi Tiderman, Penny Fiscalini, Butch Webb, Jeff Lunt, Jody Smilay, Bonnie Hansen, Shirlene Fitzwater, Diane Metcalf, Ed Donahue, Brenda Mason, Jeri Goebel, Kat Dadd, Tally Swanson, Brenda Manson, Kat Dadd, Lisa Cornelson, John Wagner, Bryan O'Donnell, Michelle Reid

### **Welcome and Check-in**

Team members checked in and reacquainted themselves with one another. Cookies baked and provided by Butch were noted as significant improvements.....finally.....>0)

### **Review of Minutes/Board Report #3**

The team reviewed and discussed the minutes from the last meeting. They were approved as written.

1. The conversation regarding Board Report #3 included the following questions. Questions: Appendix D: Where is the rest of the information from the LID day? Separate sheet (*Roosevelt & Stevens Collaboration Results*) was handed out. We discussed fixing some of the spelling and grammar errors.
2. Why was one part, the physical characteristics information, given to the board, but not the “so what” information? Essentially, the “so what” info was not in the board report because it wasn't done completely. Michelle will get it to the board in an amended form in Board Report #4.
3. Concerns were expressed regarding how we disseminate the information to make sure it won't be construed as future mandates. In other words, though the MSTT collects, describes and reports the brainstorming activity, the team wants it to be clear these are ideas, not promises or commitments for future planning. This is a challenging concept as we move forward; yet, we are committed to being transparent in our work.
4. So what is a good disclaimer for the “So What” brainstorming items?
  - a. Possible Recommendations
  - b. Topics for Exploration
  - c. Brainstorming Ideas
5. It was noted that in the Cognitive-Intellectual Development section:
  - a. Highly Capable needs should be addressed

### **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. Specifically, we do not want to get “bogged down” in “fudge swamp” with topics or conversations that are not focused.

Based on a careful look at the evaluation data from the previous meeting, we committed to:

1. Staying Focused on the Task
2. Staying in the moment
3. Conversation focused on kids
4. Teacher connections to their concern do link to students

### **Hot Topic(s), Discussion and Response Plan**

The topic area for this particular meeting concerned the integration of the cloud/concern topics into the work plan. Specifically, we looked at Appendix C of the Middle School Transition Team Report #3 to the board to inform this conversation. The appendix included a citation called “commitments” after certain topics. Michelle clarified this meant the number of times the particular topic was noted.

The integration of these topics into the work plan will be complete when the technology assistance person returns from vacation.

Items that we can delegate off our list for discussion:

1. Item 27. Process to access Monroe bond money
2. Item 26. Clarification for looping? Teaming? Advisory? Are they all separate?

For some items, Michelle will just respond in writing and then put in front of the MSTT for approval, rather than discussing every topic in detail at the larger table.

It was discussed that members of the MSTT consider what sub group(s) team members will want to participate in, maybe outside of MSTT time. When we meet for the next meeting, the board will have made its final determination. We will then continue in earnest our exploration of discrete topics. MSTT members are encouraged to consider which of these topics they might want to devote extra time to, with the understanding that all of this work will be run by the entire MSTT for endorsement and support.

### **Review of Reading Text to be Studied:**

The team reviewed the text, *Managing Transitions*. We began with an analysis of Chapter 6 and 7. The MSTT divided into two groups, the Chapter 6 group and the Chapter 7 group.

1. The Chapter 6 group discussed the salient points of Chapter 6. This chapter is entitled Transition, Development, and Renewal, and begins on page 76. The following represents a summary of the discussion:
  - a. Page 78: Organizational Life Cycle:
    - 1) Dreaming the Dream
    - 2) Launching the Venture

- 3) Getting Organized
  - 4) Making It
  - 5) Becoming an Institution
  - 6) Closing In
- b. Summary: Dreaming a Dream is more like a nightmare. There is so much up in the air and we haven't gotten into the 'meat' of the ideas. Talk about Elementary TT.
  - c. Page 85: Being a painful troubled time in the organization: people are uneasy and experiencing a sense of loss. There is a sense that past transitions haven't been handled well in the district.
  - d. Keeping proactive and looking toward the future is important. Levy passing: important that it passes.
  - e. Once final determination is made, we can start moving through the transition.
  - f. Still a lot of people that don't believe things. People have heard the 'threats' (athletics going down, no more bussing) and feel as though it is not real. There may be back-lash once the decisions are made and the reality hits.
  - g. Public is leery about trust, because of the Monroe transition process.
2. The Chapter 7 group discussed the salient points of Chapter 7. This chapter is entitled How to Deal With Nonstop Change, and begins on page 99. The following represents a summary of the discussion:
- a. Page 109: 11 things that can be done to build trust.
  - b. What have we not done that we haven't done in the past, to make sure we build trust.
  - c. #3 Listen to people carefully and take the time to summarize what we think we heard.
  - d. #5 Share yourself honestly? How do we talk for ourselves, yet still stay true to the group and community.
  - e. #4 Understanding what matters to people and that what they honor and want protected. Ask questions, where are they coming from, what knowledge base are they bringing?
  - f. #7 Don't try to push other to trust you further than you trust them.
  - g. #10 Trust building project is viewed as suspicious. Previous promises that haven't been kept contribute to this feeling.
  - h. Board needs to be really sensitive to the public, especially because of the levy.
  - i. Levy and transition issues are so different, but they affect each other tremendously.
  - j. #1 Do what you say you will do: don't make promises that you are not ready or able to keep. There are certainly feelings that this was what was done with Monroe closure process.
  - k. Process the board is required to go through put the board in a position to make financial decisions and what is in the best interest of the most students (you can't make everyone happy).
  - l. Page 117: sharing myself honestly, (but not letting honesty be a cover for hostility). Checklist. When we start making those hard decisions, it is important for us to be honest with ourselves and not promote a position that is not good for kids. Ground positions in research and theory.
3. Sharing of own transitions

- a. Transitions can be exciting. Difficult to empathize with others who may have difficulties with transitions. Never had a home base.
- b. Learning styles are different, as are space, and administration expectations.
- c. Retiring and changing structure of the day were identified.
- d. How transitions affect people when they are in different stages of comfort and transition of their own life are important to note.
- e. Even though the transitions and locations might change; if the relationships are intact, the transition will be smoother. “People have to understand that the point of change is to preserve that which does not change.” –William Bridges.
- f. In this case, the nature of relationships (positive powerful and accountable professional learning communities) will carry the day.

ETT: charged with ‘feasibility’. Will things work or fit? Music, space in general and Special Education issues: where, how, space? They are dealing with all of the elementary schools.

### **Review of Communication Expectations**

Review and reminder that communication is critical in this transition work. Staff, parent and student communications continue to be a priority in this process. The communication must be transparent and honest. Michelle will work with district staff to craft succinct messages for both the website and press releases.

### **Review of Work Plan With Time Markers**

We will finalize this when the technology assistance person returns from vacation this week.

### **Hand-out *This Week We Believe* Text**

The position paper from the National Middle School Association was handed out to all members. It is expected that this text will continue to guide our work.

### **Thanks and Gratitude**

Thanks and gratitude for the continued generous contribution of time was again acknowledged. Further, Butch’s cookies were awesome!! They were much appreciated.

### **Evaluation**

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

### **NEXT MEETING**

Assignment(s):

1. Review and think about the article, *Understanding and Appreciating the Wonder Years*, written by John Lounsbury.

2. Read and come ready to discuss Chapters 5 and 9 in *Managing Transitions*, by William Bridges.
3. Note that Michelle is reading the *Breaking Ranks in the Middle Grades* text. This informs thinking with regard to our conversations. If you would like a copy, please e-mail Michelle. Note: we will not be studying this text in detail.
4. Plan to bring your *This We Believe* text to the next meeting. This and the Bridges book will continue to guide our team work.
5. Bring your thoughts about the three to five topic areas you would most like to spend some extra time with regard to sub-committee work on work plan topics.