

# **MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION TEAM**

**October 24, 2006**

**Meeting Minutes**

## **Addendum to Previous Minutes**

Ed Donohue, Paul Brinkmann, Sarah Jensen

Name corrections for those listed above

**Present:** Chuck Lisk, Carol Sinton, Paul Reed, Tally Swanson, Michelle Reid, John Kilzer, Paul Brinkmann, Ed Donohue, Donnette Hope, Butch Webb, Penny Fiscalini, Bryan O'Donnell, Shirlene Fitzwater, Bonnie Hansen, Lisa Cornelson, Mike Knowles, Mimi Tiderman, Brooke Hendry, Michelle Devlin, Sarah Jensen, Brenda Manson, Campbell Kirkman, Jeff Lunt, Diane Metcalf

## **Welcome/Check In**

Team members checked in and reacquainted themselves with one another. Name tags and snacks were noted as improvements.....finally.....:>0)

## **Review of Minutes**

The team reviewed and discussed the minutes from the last meeting. Norms were deemed as being maintained.

## **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.

## **Hot Topic(s)**

Michelle shared two hot topics for this meeting. The first concerned how teaching assignments for next year would be made- how will they be decided; e.g., seniority, certification, years in the building or level, etc. Michelle clarified that the process would be worked primarily by Mary Hebert and Barry Burnett. Essentially, this was not the work for this committee.

The second hot topic concerned peoples' response to the recently completed school board hearings. How do we want to respond? How do we deal with our conflict between board recommendations, support, and responsibilities and our personal feelings? Team members want to remain positive and committed to the team process; yet, also want their personal voice heard.

We must continue to live in the truth. The middle school transition team table must definitely be a sanctuary for the true and courageous discourse necessary in these tough decision-making times. We will continue to work in the truth and extend grace to one another as conversations are more and more spirited. It was made clear that the board is still asking for our opinions and feedback until November 27. Clarify if you are speaking for yourself or the team (stick with the developed and agreed upon norm in this area).

It was also noted that it was important to keep communication going early and often. We recognize we are living in a relatively small town, and/or small community. We reminded ourselves that we are creating a new school, and the fact that two schools are closing—things can be combined (i.e. scheduling, teaming, classes)

Another topic we had with regard to communication was to potentially give an interview/story to the paper to be more pro-active, invite the press in to talk about “our story.”

**Review of rationale regarding why the facilities are being changed for both staff and public to help people understand, as well as information regarding how the decision was made, such as a clean paragraph that synthesizes the facility efficiency committee report to let people know how the decision was made, (Michelle will do this).**

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

The team reviewed the text, *Managing Transitions*. We began with an analysis of Chapter 3. The MSTT divided into two groups, the before page 33 group and the after page 33 group.

1. Before page 33 group noted:
  - a. Grieving process-overreactions are due to what they are losing, what they have lost, or past experiences can contribute to their emotional response.
  - b. There are different levels/processes of grief and loss in the transition process.
  - c. Issues that come up are closest to people’s hearts.
  - d. They need to be expressed, but we need to focus on the positive effects, even when that’s hard.
  - e. Hard to know who is losing what? Everything will be grieved until we know specifics of what will actually be lost.
  - f. How do we compensate for people’s losses? This becomes an essential question as we move forward.
2. Page 33 and beyond group noted:
  - a. We need to treat the past with respect.
  - b. Big losses felt for the RMS family, harder than it seems on the surface.
  - c. Define what’s over and what isn’t: careful to define that, so people don’t give up on entire parts (the job of the MSTT).
  - d. Keep giving information, continually visit same ideas, repeat over and over what our purpose is.
  - e. Specific set of points from page 33, the three points we must not lose sight of.

3. Chapter 4:
  - a. We are in a kind of neutral zone right now, between what was and what will be, people are in limbo emotionally at both schools, especially since the final decision has not yet been made.
  - b. Neutral zone is a time of creativity (will be helpful for compensation).
  - c. *We will debrief this chapter further as a large group next meeting. This may be the salient point of the text we are working with.*

Dr. Cohn joined the meeting and shared he supported the text selection thoughts. Each change decision needs to be responded to selectively, in a unique way, as the items the team discusses become ripe for decision-making. We need to continually remind people over and over again about why we are doing this and what progress is being made to get our message across to the community at large and internally. These are important conversations to the future of our school district and community.

### **Work Plan Content and Implication**

1. Need to make sure that the work plan is complete and accurate.
2. Can be amended and modified as needed.
3. Includes topics of FTE staff numbers, professional development, sports, activities, music, special education, team building, etc.

### **Review and Conversation Regarding LID Afternoon Info:**

The team worked on two tasks intended to inform the work plan for the MSTT. Both tasks connected to the work done on the LID day, Friday, October 13, 2006. Team members chose between working on the developmental characteristics of adolescent children or the concern/question topic.

Gingerbread people represent best practices for adolescents, based on their identified developmental needs. (Mimi will type up). Team members reviewed those and concern clouds to make sure they were complete; will be integrated into the work plan by Michelle and middle school administrators.

*How can we reach out to custodians, secretaries, and other support staff to make sure their input is being included and valued? Also, how do we support those teachers and staff not on the Middle School Transition Team?*

*Communication Expectations for students and parents, Wonder Years article will be dealt with for next meeting.*

### **Thanks and Gratitude**

Thanks and gratitude for the continued generous contribution of time was again 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 6 and 7 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? We will be discussing this, for reals.....