

## **Dean Rusk School Council Meeting**

**Date:** Tuesday – Sept 25, 2018

**Time:** 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM

**Location:** Dean Rusk Front Office Conference Room

**In Attendance:**

Dawn Weinbaum - Principal

Elizabeth Castrillon – Certified Teacher

Melissa Christensen – Certified Teacher

Diane Ellicott – Parent Representative/Business Person

Susan Whitfield – Parent Representative

Larry Blase – Parent Representative/Business Person

Jenna Cavin – Parent Representative

Terri Jacomine – Parent Representative

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Weinbaum who welcomed new and returning members. Each member introduced themselves and their association to the school. Ms. Weinbaum discussed her background and philosophy as an administrator. She also discussed her experience in working with school councils and the key role they serve as liaisons to the community.

### **School Council Bylaws, Organization and Procedures**

Ms. Weinbaum provided each member a hard copy of the Cherokee County School District Handbook for School Councils along with the bylaws and guidelines. Ms. Weinbaum gave an overview of how the council operates and the procedures that are used. Ms. Weinbaum also went through the PowerPoint presentation that serves as the required training for all student councils. Ms. Weinbaum will send all members a copy of the training presentation.

A question was raised regarding the number of members on the council and if there was a maximum number of members. Ms. Weinbaum explained that there was not maximum but rather a minimum. The current council exceed the minimum requirements.

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the positions required on the council and the responsibilities associated with the positions. The required positions are Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. A nomination was made for Susan Whitefield to server as Chairperson, the nomination was seconded, a vote was held and passed. A nomination was made for Terri Jacomine to serve as Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded, a vote was held and passed. It was determined that Diane Ellicott, who served as secretary last year would continue in that position.

A member raised a question regarding communication from the School Council to the parent/guardian stakeholders in the school. Ms. Weinbaum explained that School Council dates are published by the school and county and that the meetings are open to the public. She also explained that all meeting minutes are posted to the Dean Rusk webpage for public viewing. It was further discussed that most parents/guardians do not access the Dean Rusk webpage but rely on social media for information. It was suggested that the School Council should either have a Facebook page or utilize the PTSA Facebook page to communicate the results of the meetings. It was determined that having a School Council member manage a dedicated Facebook page was not likely feasible. It was suggested that the School Council utilize the PTSA to distribute information through their Facebook page.

### **Beginning of School Year (Gateway/Bus and Car Riders)**

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the change in “first day” paperwork and the implementation of the Gateway by Cherokee County Schools. It was an improvement for parents and from teachers and administration having to collect/process each student’s beginning of the school year paperwork. There was significant emphasis on this digital platform from the county and schools processed paperwork electronically instead of in hard copy whenever possible. In addition, the new Gateway allows parents/guardians to make updates to student information without having the contact the school for new hard copies of paperwork.

Another high-point of the new Gateway system is allowing schools to more easily access student dismissal requirements for inclement weather. A discussion was held regarding parents/guardian’s ability to update dismissal requirements for their students as we head into the winter months. It was suggested that a reminder be sent out to parents to review and update their students inclement weather dismissal requirements.

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the changes in the bus dismissal for this school year. For this year there are two wave of bus dismissals. The new waves are about half and half of the bus rider population. This is a much larger second wave than in the past. A member raised a question as to why the wave is so much larger and if increased student population is the cause. Ms. Weinbaum explained that there are many contributing factors including bus drivers, route changes, number of buses available, etc. These factors are determined at the county level and largely outside the scope of the school and administration.

Ms. Weinbaum explained that the first bus wave is leaving the school about 4:09 and the second bus wave is leaving around 4:18. She explained that the second wave buses are waiting at Sequoyah East. Once the first bus wave pulls out of the parking lot, the second wave buses enter in order to begin loading students. Ms. Weinbaum explained that this larger second wave of buses has changed the procedures for student dismissals. Student no longer wait in the lunch room but rather stay in their classrooms and are dismissed directly from classrooms.

A member raised questions regarding the bus tracking app that Cherokee County Schools has released. A discussion was held regarding the inaccuracy of the app and the difficulties with the app.

A discussion was held regarding the improvement in car rider drop-off and pickup this year. The driveway signs suggested by last year's school council have been implemented and seem to have made some impact.

### **Georgia Milestones**

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the GA Milestone testing results and that individual test scores were sent home to parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year. A discussion was held regarding the timing of testing results and when the school receives the information versus the parents/guardians. Ms. Weinbaum explained that the school receives a very preliminary result in May, but the full grading and analysis of the tests is not completed/available until after the school year begins.

A question was raised by a council member regarding the student growth information that is provided to parents/guardians. Ms. Weinbaum indicated that the models were just updated but had not yet been released. There was continued discussion regarding the student growth models and the benefit of the growth information versus straight milestone test scores. Ms. Weinbaum explained the SLDS used in the growth reporting and how it allowed for individual student growth to be compared to "like" students instead of the general student population.

A question was raised by a council member regarding the Georgia counties (particularly Cobb) that are doing away with the milestone testing and if Cherokee County Schools has any plans to eliminate it as well. Ms. Weinbaum explained that while she has not been made aware of any plans to eliminate the milestone testing, the school superintendent has a committee to look at testing at the county wide level. A continued discussion was held regarding the instructional time used to prepare for the milestone testing, the usefulness of the testing for students, and the testing measurement of school performance.

## **School Improvement Plan**

Ms. Weinbaum explained the school improvement planning process and indicated that the school is currently working to finalize the improvement plan for the 2018-2019 school year. She reviewed how the milestone testing information, student growth information and comparisons to other schools are being reviewed by the administration and subject department chairs. Some of the information used in the analysis include CCRPI, attendance, Lexile Levels, overall school performance, etc. Based on the data, the improvement plan looks to increase performance in areas where Dean Rusk Middle School scores lower than other Cherokee County middle schools. Last year's testing data shows Dean Rusk Middle School's performance was at the top of all Cherokee County middle schools for ELA in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade. However, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores were toward the lower end of other CCSD middle school's performance. A discussion was held regarding why the math scores are a lower performing area for the school. Additional discussion was held regarding the 8<sup>th</sup> grade scores and how having many students in high-school placement may slightly alter the math data. Ms. Weinbaum indicated that the primary focus for the improvement plan would be Math and ELA and that the improvement plan will be ready to review at the next School Council meeting.

## **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

Ms. Weinbaum gave an overview of the school's implementation of PLCs within the teacher community at Dean Rusk Middle School. She explained that these communities meet by grade/subject per week and collaborate on classroom and instructional strategies. She indicated that they have implemented Data Teams for Learning which look at formative assessments to determine how students are performing throughout a learning unit. Looking at these formative assessments assists the PLCs in determining if students are grasping the concepts of the unit prior to final testing on the learning unit. This allows the teachers to compare how individual students and classrooms are performing and share teaching strategies to assist any students that might be struggling with a learning unit.

## **Digital Learning Day**

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the digital learning platform that Cherokee County Schools is working to implement. This would allow teachers to post assignments to Canvas and have students complete the work remotely during Digital Learning Days. She indicated that the school system has asked each school to run several practices of the platform with students. The first practice at Dean Rusk Middle School will be on September 26<sup>th</sup>. Each teacher has been instructed to create a 5 to 7 minute digital assignment that students will complete in class. As Dean Rusk is a 1 to 1 initiative school, with all students having a computer, this should be easily accomplished. There will be additional practice in classroom assignments and homework assignments in the coming

months. A county-wide practice session will be implemented in October to assess the impact of simultaneous county wide usage.

### **Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD) – Lit Comp and Literacy Workshops**

Ms. Weinbaum explained the implementation of the new curriculum for Lit Comp and Literacy. She explained this new curriculum was implemented in the elementary school last year and is being rolled out at the middle school level for this current school year. This new curriculum includes 7 units with engaging activities. A discussion was held regarding some of the differences this new curriculum has from previous ELA instruction. A question was raised by a council member regarding the roll-out to the high school level; however, Ms. Weinbaum indicated that it has not yet been rolled out at county high schools.

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the current activity which includes students interviewing a classmate, completing a writing assignment regarding their interview, then culminating in preparing an award and presenting a speech about the person they interviewed. She indicated the overall roll-out of the new curriculum has gone well and she felt that the implementation of this first unit went very well at Dean Rusk.

### **SEL Survey**

Ms. Weinbaum discussed the recent social and emotional survey given to students. All Dean Rusk students took the survey the prior week; however, the results from the survey have not yet been received. The information will provide the school with information needed to determine the current social and emotional status of the overall student body. Ms. Weinbaum indicated the school is waiting on the results to fully implement the required Teachers as Advisors, as these results will help focusing the social skills lessons that need to be implemented.

### **Basketball/General Discussion**

Ms. Weinbaum gave an overview the upcoming basketball try-outs and season at Dean Rusk Middle School. A discussion was held regarding activities at the school and the upcoming homecoming dance. Ms. Weinbaum explained that the homecoming dance is not a school coordinated activity but rather a program sponsored by the Jr. Chiefs Cheerleading Program.

A council member inquired about the locker decorations for football players and cheerleaders. Ms. Weinbaum indicated these were done by the Jr. Chiefs program as well. A discussion was held about coordinating school sponsored locker decorations for student that have school involvement (i.e., band, orchestra, drama, etc.). Ms. Weinbaum indicated she would be open if parent volunteers wanted to take on that kind of project.

A brief discussion was held regarding curriculum night and the improvements made this year. The council members felt that teachers were better able to cover their class

material since there was a homeroom session covering overall school information. It was also noted that it was helpful to have the high school teachers available for curriculum night.

### **Principal Leadership Qualities**

Ms. Weinbaum explained that the Principal Leadership Qualities for SY 2018-2019 is currently under-review. She briefly explained how the qualities are determined and indicated the council's role in reviewing and revising the requirements. She provided council members with a copy of last year's leadership qualities document for review. The new document will be available to review at the next meeting.

Ms. Weinbaum thanked all council members for their participation and closed the meeting. The next council meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2018.