
Mansfield High School

School Council

February 24, 2010

2:10 pm, Room 185

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Heather Burgess (student)

AJ Calvario (student)

Nathaniel Michener (student)

Mitch Negus (student)

Julia Ready (student)

Amanda Zieselman (student)

Nancy Breef-Pilz (parent)

Vicky Burgess (parent)

Julie Cline (parent)

Jennifer Dempsey (parent)

Deborah Snyder (parent)

Sheila Newton (teacher – music)

John Pontes (teacher - English)

Joanne Vacirca (teacher – math)

Mary Watkins (teacher – social studies)

Tina Karidoyanes (guidance counselor)

Catherine Capolupo (intern)

Dr. Joe Maruszczak (principal)

Agenda:

- Old Business
- 21st Century Skills: What Are They and Why Are They Important?
- Update on FY 2011 Budget
- Brainstorming/Suggestions

Distributed:

- NEASC Standards for Accreditation
- Sun Chronicle Article *Tax Hike for Mansfield?*
- Minutes from the January 27th School Council Meeting

Dr. Joe Maruszczak welcomed the attendees (listed above) and reviewed the previously established agenda. He acknowledged that he had not yet had the opportunity to post the brainstorming results from the core values exercise & noted that the results would be posted next month on Google docs for comments and feedback.

Dr. Maruszczak then introduced a PowerPoint on 21st Century Learning Skills. He noted that the skills outlines were not perfunctory for re-accreditation, but necessary to prepare our students for their futures. The PowerPoint began with the video clip “Shift Happens.” The version shared, 2.0 (2006) as well as the most current versions may be found at shifthappens.wikispaces.com.

Dr. Maruszczak explained that 21st Century Learning Skills were those that will be required of all students, both in furthering their education as well as employment.

In defining these skills Dr. Maruszczak introduced several texts and their authors, and noted the skills noted in their works. These texts included: *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman, Daniels Pink's *A Whole New Mind* and Tony Wagner's *The Global Achievement Gap*. Dr. Maruszczak noted the highlights of each of these works, as well as defining the positions of the authors relevant to public education. He then further emphasized the need for educating our student for the future with data.

- In reading literacy we rank 15 out of 29 OECD countries and 25 out of 30 in math literacy
- Today on 48% of students who pursue any postsecondary degree do not complete their degree
- The statewide average for students entering state colleges who require a remedial math or English course is 40%
- For Mansfield High School graduates this applies to 22%

Dr. Maruszczak then noted that a survey of 100,000 employers who hired high school graduates of 2003 specifically noted that employees needed the following skills (collaboration, critical thinking, work ethic...). He challenged the committee to consider if the current high school setting provides students with enough opportunity to develop these skills (specifically using the limited opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary studies as examples). This discussion included increasing the rigor of the high school education. In contrast to volume of work, rigor is regarded as greater depth, quality and asking the right questions and finding solutions to problems. The implications of change would be reflected in more project based learning and learning framed around essential questions but would require professional development for teaching staff, a significant and sustained investment in technology and changes in structure to foster interdisciplinary connections.

The Committee then referenced the NEASC Standards for Accreditation. Dr. Maruszczak explained that Mansfield High School will be measured by the newest Standards since the site visit will take place in the spring of 2012. The cost of re-accreditation is approximately \$4,000 and requires a site visit every ten years. In between visits, schools must submit reports based on recommendations, self-assessments and progress. It was noted that we must not only define which 21st century skills our students will have, but must also define how the students' progress and skills will be assessed.

It was noted that the reaccreditation standards present particular challenges in light of the FY11 budget deficit and already limited resources. Discussion reflected concerns about where cuts would take place and members presented comments from their observations from the February 23rd School Committee Meeting and referenced the *Sun Chronicle* article, "Tax Hike for Mansfield?" It was noted that the School Committee had approved the first tier of cuts, but had not acted on additional tiers. An edited version of the document is available via the following link.

<http://www.mansfieldschools.com/pdf%20files/Budget/FY11Budget%20Gap.pdf>

Additional documents relevant to the budget of the school system may be found at the following link as well. <http://www.mansfieldschools.com/>

The committee expressed concern that limitation on opportunities would negatively impact their preparation for selective colleges, noting that failure to meet NEASC Accreditation standards (and subsequent probation) would diminish the reputation of the school system and the town (driving down home prices and desirability). It was also noted that significant losses in resources would diminish gains in the improvements of the school system in past years.

Dr. Maruszczak responded to questions by the committee on the impact of the budget cuts on the high school. These questions revolved around anticipated cuts to extracurricular activities, limitations on elective courses and engaging students of all types (who are more active participants in the community because of elective courses such as art & music). It was noted that, even after all cuts proposed were enacted, there would still be a \$900,000 deficit.

Upcoming MHS School Council Meetings:

March 31, 2010
April 28, 2010
May 26, 2010

Upcoming School Committee Meetings:

http://www.mansfieldschools.com/central/school_committee.htm

7:30 PM Town Hall Rooms 3 B & C

Please note that the agendas for previous meetings are also posted on this site.

March 9, 2010	May 4, 2010
March 23, 2010	May 25, 2010
April 13, 2010	June 15, 2010