

Minutes of the Site Council

Sycamore Elementary School

August 7, 2014

Present:

Erica Irby (EI), Assistant to the Principal (non-voting member)

Mary Fosdick (MF), member – President 2013/2014

Melanie Stewart (MS), member

Andre Mixon (AM), member – President 2014/2015

Tori Janes (TJ), member

Melissa Verbridge (MV), member

Rajka Corder (RC), member

Organizational Meeting of the Sycamore School Council

- i. **Call to Order** – Mary Fosdick called the meeting to order at 4:28 p.m.
- ii. **Election of Chair** – MF opens the nominations for the office of chair. Rajka Corder nominated Andre Mixon for the office of chair of the Sycamore School Council. Tori Janes seconded. MF called for vote. MF moved that Andre Mixon is an elected chair of the Sycamore School council.
- iii. **Election of Clerk** – AM moved to accept nominations for the office of clerk. MF nominated RC for the office of the clerk. Tori Janes seconded. AM called for vote. AM moved that RC serves as the clerk of the Sycamore School Council.
- iv. **Adjournment** – AM had a motion to adjourn the organizational meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:33pm.

Site Council Meeting of the Sycamore Elementary School

1. **Call to order** - Andre Mixon called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.
 - a. **Pledge of Allegiance** at 4:37 p.m.
 - b. **Approval of minutes:** None
 - c. **Administrative & Member Reports**
 - i. **Member Report:** Sycamore PTA donated \$250.00 to new Esmond Station Elementary School PTA to help them start-up! Sycamore PTA will organize Bike Rodeo on August 9th as the first fund raiser. The biggest fund raiser is expected to be Read-a-Thon coming in the Fall. The goal is to use some of the PTA money for the classrooms.
 - ii. **Administrative Report:** EI - Sycamore had a smooth start of the new school year! Welcome back night was a success with food track (and no rain!). Group of teachers is

going to each classroom to test students' fluency and identify type I students, thus providing extra support for classroom teachers. Tutoring program for math and reading started this week for 3rd-5th grades. Friday mornings are for craft fair.

d. **Call to the public** None

e. **Recognitions**

- i. MF recognized the front office staff for the 1st day of school for providing a notable positive vibe and addressing all kiddos by their name! The front office staff members are: Hannah, Tori, Keri, Janessa, and Melanie.
- ii. EI recognized the group of teacher that are performing student screening. The other districts are amazed how the Sycamore does it! The recognized teachers were: Dr. Julie Duvall, Adri Brack, Sarah Irvin and Stephanie Paget.
- iii. EI recognized our new teachers coming from other districts and their effort to come up to speed with VUSD. Our new teachers are: Ru Vigilant (5th grade, came from Florida), Kristin Breinlinger (Special Needs teacher), Matthew Kreamer (PE teacher) and Jill Smith (Resource teacher).

2. **Consent Agenda** N/A

3. **Old Business**

- a. **Enrollment update:** On the last day of school year 2013/2014, Sycamore had 990 students. In the beginning of the new school year 2014/2015 Sycamore started with 961 students. The school boundary changed last year and Sycamore had 42 kids transfer to Acacia and Esmond Station Elementary schools. In addition, we had ~30 kids move out of state or abroad. Currently Sycamore has: eight sections of Kindergarten, seven sections of 1st grade, six sections of 2nd grade, seven sections of 3rd grade, six sections of 4th grade and six sections of 5th grade.
- b. **Staff Update:** Sycamore had couple of changes in staffing. Ann Walters became 3rd grade teacher, Kristin Breinlinger came from the Old Vail Middle School to teach 3rd grade, 2nd grade downsized from seven to six classrooms (sections), and 5th grade downsized from seven to six classrooms. Ru Vigilant moved in from Florida. The specialists and Special Education teachers are listed with FTE number. If the FTE=1 then the teachers are employed full time by Sycamore Elementary. If FTE>1, the teachers have additional contract days. If FTE<1, the teachers are shared between different schools. The listed teachers are the ones with certifications (as opposed to classified or not certified teachers). In addition to two special education teacher, Sycamore hired one crossing guard. The team leads are: Mrs. Tepper (K), Mrs. Kershner (1st grade), Mrs. Mueller (2nd grade), Mrs. Parker (3rd grade), Mrs. Connelly (4th grade), Mrs. Stewart (5th) Sarah Irvin (Specials) and Krista Fields (Student Services). Sycamore staff will work more closely with parents to define when the parent grading is proper when volunteering (for example, formatives should be graded by teachers and student confidentiality should be preserved).
- c. **Facilities Update:** Traffic flow is very important, especially in the beginning of the year, and it was very smooth so far. Ms. Irby pointed that typically cars are backed up between 7:30-7:35 am, while the rest of time the flow is really smooth and steady. She also pointed that dismissal takes only 15-20 minutes! The traffic flow has some relief due to the fact that some kids ride buses or bikes. It helps to have Corona Middle School for overflow parking. The current concerns are related to number of parking spots, since Sycamore added a few teachers to its staff. Additional actions will be directed to place traffic signs, to make sure that morning drop off goes smooth. Corona Foothills side had some classrooms that were flooded during monsoons (just because of

the terrain drainage). We had no issues with pre-school classrooms. In addition, some thermostats had to be replaced due to electrical storm surges.

4. **New business:**

- a. **Clubs and Activities:** Sycamore has 26 different clubs!!!! These clubs are results of teacher's educational enrichment plans. At the end of the school year, teachers are asked to write educational enrichment plan for afterschool clubs. The plans are rated and ranked in order to establish the funds for each individual club. Thus, the teachers get paid for extra work they do. The new clubs this year are: Art MAD Club, Stinger STATS, Stage Stingers Club, Harry Potter Book Club, Stinger Kitchen and Wright Flight (YEAH from RC!). Ms. Irby noted that two years ago Sycamore hired 13 teachers, last year 18 and once they are introduced to VUSD they are ready to implement their ideas related to the new clubs (which are often reflections of their own personalities and interests). For all parents: the tax credit money can be designated to Sycamore clubs as well. In addition, Golden Bell Award recognizes school excellence and it is based on the things schools do with respect to currency, jobs, clubs, etc. Sycamore is having increasing number of opportunities for K-2nd grade. AM noted that having clubs in elementary schools prepares kids for High Schools much better – since the students already know their interests and club functions. MF noted that students also learn very early how to efficiently manage their time. In addition to clubs, Sycamore offers Tutoring, Math Nights, Curriculum Nights and Reading Nights with Melanie Stewart. Unfortunately, there is not much involvements of parents, therefore, Sycamore will try something new this year – and that is to have several events at the same time, so parents can get involved with different events for different grades. Hopefully, this will be easier on parents and will increase participation. Maybe PTA can sponsor snacks on tutoring nights (MF).
- b. **Bond Election:** Andre Mixon is on the community team related to the bond election, organization called COVE – Citizens of Vail for Education. VUSD is growing by 300 students a year and State of Arizona has taken out \$18 million of capital budget. Sycamore Elementary was built for 650 students and current enrollment is ~1000 students (with preschoolers). Sycamore was able to borrow five classrooms from Corona Foothills Middle School, which is helpful but not enough. All parties are encouraged to study VUSD Bond Facts. If the bond election passes, the goal is to use the money for the first phase of building a new elementary school in Corona De Tucson area as well as adding classrooms to Andrada Polytechnic High School. In addition, some capital is planned for updating communications (laptops, telephones, projectors, cameras, audios) and buses (that are over 10 years old and have no air conditioners). On top of that, some capital will be used for efficiency improvement, involving aging heating and cooling units and equipment for workers (such as fleet vehicles, movers, garage equipment). AM pointed out that the team is looking into 5-10 potential sites for the new school and as a community we need to catch up and get ahead of incoming residents to promote why do people want to move to Vail. Part of this outreach is to engage other parents and residents of Vail and Corona De Tucson and involve them in conversations and discussions based on the facts. Current funding from State of Arizona does not include capital upgrades. MV brought to our attention communications between teachers and community. Teachers of VUSD cannot comment on bond elections during regular school hours, only on their own time. All teachers are encouraged to share with parents the fact sheet, but cannot share opinions during school time and in school environment (has to be private environment).

- c. **Calendar of Events:** The current Sycamore Elementary School Calendar of Events is working calendar, so please have in mind that events might change throughout the year. The music performance dates were established for all grades, Spring Concert and Talent Show. Upcoming PTA events are: August 9 – Bike Rodeo, September 5 – Family Movie Night, September 11 – Conference Dinner for Teachers, Read-a-Thon kickoff is on October 15th, to mention a few.
 - d. **AIMS Results:** Sycamore Elementary got A rating and is second top school in the district!!!! VUSD is number three in AZ. There is a great jump in 5th grade Reading AIMS from 91 to 96%. There is a jump in Science AIMS results from 78 to 84% for the 4th grade! There is an excellent jump in Math AIMS from 78 to 91% for the 3rd grade students! Joann Parker did a great job being a 3rd grade team lead, especially with prioritizing and math effort. In math AIMS 4th grade students kept the score of 83%, while 5th grade students increase score from 83 to 89%! In writing AIMS, 3rd graders got a score of 81%, 4th graders 90% and 5th graders increased score from 73 to 74%! This year, Sycamore will experience change in reading scores due to transition to common core standards. MF suggested that reading curriculum could be addressed in the next Stinger. The discussion proceeded towards parents really understanding the curriculum and grading system. It is important to educate parents, and MF suggested having curriculum night early in the school year with the goal to partially present curriculum and to have parent corner, where parents can get current curriculum information.
 - i. **Special recognition:** MF recognized 5th grade team for reading AIMS results, 4th grade team for science results, 3rd and 5th grade teams for Math AIMS results. Special recognition goes to the last year team leads!
5. **Next Meeting:** Wednesday, September 3rd at 4:30 pm.
6. **Adjournment:** AM had a motion to adjourn. TJ seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 pm.