

Hawthorne High School

Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2011

In attendance for CVSTA: Tali Sherman and Tania Cabeza

In attendance for Administration: Mark Newell

Meeting began at 3:13pm

I. Testing:

A. Non Tester Activities:

At the last FAC meeting, Dr. Newell communicated to teachers that teacher input regarding the lack of preparation for non-testers would be solicited and it was not. Again, teachers have commented that they were instructed to send students out that were not testing in a particular subject area, yet teachers have no idea as to what these students will be doing during this time. Instead of taking advantage of this time to hold workshops, it is often an afterthought and a lost opportunity. Teaching does not happen only in content classes. Again, for CST non-testers, we are told they will go to a room for a quiet activity, which is? Details provided to teachers would have been logically effective in holding students accountable during this time.

Response: Dr. Newell responded that non-testers were sent to the computer lab to participate in “study hall.” He admitted that there was no real accountability for what students produced in this “study hall.”

B. Testing Schedule

FAC raised the issue regarding the vote for next year’s schedule. The teachers discussed and voted on the preferred staff schedule for the month of May (2x2 format) and the vote was completely disregarded without notice nor explanation.

Response: Dr. Newell stated that this schedule was a district mandate/directive and recognizes that teacher input was not implemented.

II. Focus Walks

FAC reported that some teachers feel the administration does not provide feedback to teachers after a focus walk visit. Teachers understand that focus walks are “non-evaluative” and intended for teachers to learn about DII. Why then do some administrators refuse to talk with the teachers that were observed? At least one administrator said he was not at liberty to discuss what was observed when a teacher asked for feedback. If this is supposed to facilitate effective instruction, teachers that were observed should have the chance to know what was seen (or not) in their classrooms. Most importantly, we need to know how to take the information gained through the focus walk and use it to validate/modify/enhance instruction. In addition, teachers feel that using disaggregated data in a meaningful way to impact instructional practice is SEVERELY lacking by the administration. Administration needs to be more transparent with how they use the focus walk process to engage teachers in meaningful, ongoing discussion about what they see. Finally, with impending transfers teachers feel that the number of observations OTHER than focus walks has dropped off significantly.

Response: Dr. Newell recognizes that for next year IF focus walks continue that they need to occur on a more consistent basis throughout the entire year. He also recognizes that there needs to be follow through with teachers if the goal of a focus walk is to improve instruction. He will also address the lack of transparency with administrators.

III. Transfers

On behalf of bargaining unit members, FAC asked how teachers are being chosen for transfers to other sites? When will they be notified of their sites and assignments? Will assistance be provided in moving? It has become clear that site principals have input as to who is and isn't chosen to stay at a site. How is the principal making this determination? How are teachers going to be selected for transfers if some administrators have yet to complete their formal observations?

Response: Dr. Newell refused to comment on this concern.

[Executive Director's note: CVSTA is taking the District to arbitration over last year's contract violations related to Involuntary Transfers. Meanwhile, the District continues to violate provisions of Article 7]

IV. Saturday School

Dr. Newell provided a summary list of instruction topics covered during Saturday school, but teachers would like to know how students are selected and who is selected in an effort to support administration with enforcing Saturday school. What happens when a student is late/simply fails to attend? FAC is still requesting data to support admin claims on the effectiveness of Saturday and the number of students in attendance.

Response: Once again, Dr. Newell stated that he would communicate this concern with Mr. Martinez and the deans.

V. Tardy Policy

Teachers feel that with the end of the year quickly approaching, they would like an opportunity to revise the tardy policy to address the issues with the first block of the day. Teachers also feel that tardy sweeps might be more effective in reducing the number of tardies if they are not announced and if they were held at the period MOST affected by tardies. What's the point of ignoring the fact that the first period of the day is the most heavily impacted by late students? FAC was told months ago that staff input would be requested in revising the current policy to make it more effective. With less than two months of the school year left, it is clear that, once again, teacher input is not valued and promises made by site principal in FAC are often left unfulfilled.

Response: Dr. Newell recognizes this is an issue that administration has not been able to rectify. He claims that administration is exploring solutions. One possibility FAC suggested is the implementation of a survey for teachers to complete regarding the current tardy policy and possible solutions. The results of this survey will help administration discuss possible changes for next year's tardy policy.

VI. Cell Phone Policy:

After discussion on this item at the last FAC, Newell assured us that the policy written in the student handbook would be firmly followed. However, phones are being returned to

students on the first offense WITHOUT a parent present or parent contact in violation of the school policy. FAC would like an explanation from Newell for this lack of follow through.

In addition, why is classified staff and not an administrator still responsible for collecting, logging and returning phone? Shouldn't this be handled by the admin responsible for discipline? Wouldn't students take the issue more seriously if they had to approach and administrator and were held to the policy as dictated in the handbook? This also places our classified staff in a difficult situation when they enforce holding the phone until a parent requests it, yet the student goes to an administrator who later returns the phone to the student.

Response: Dr. Newell agrees that a classified staff should not be responsible for holding students accountable for not following the cell phone policy. Starting next year, Dr. Newell commits to having an administrator responsible for collecting, logging and returning cell phones in compliance with the policy as outlined in the student handbook.

VII. PA

A teacher clarified that this year's bell schedule includes six minutes in the second block and five minutes to period six to allow for announcements. Teachers also appreciate that a directive was sent to all coaches informing them that the PA would not be used during testing days to release athletes. Teachers would also hope that this applies for instructional days.

Unfortunately, no additional time was included in the testing schedule for the month of May to allow for announcements. Instead, announcements have been made during testing on each and every day. How can teachers/students take the testing period seriously in light of the "business as usual" tone this sets?

Response: Dr. Newell will discuss this with ASB and communicate that announcements should be shorter and less repetitive.

VIII. Referrals

FAC reported that teachers are not receiving copies of referrals back from administration with the resolution, if at all. In addition, the timeliness in which referrals are addressed is a concern since some students return to the following class and it appears as if the student did not receive any consequence for their behavior.

Response: Dr. Newell will communicate this to the deans and commits to providing teachers with referral consequences within 48 hours.

IX. Passes

Teachers like the large passes student are supposed to use while out of class.

X. Scantron Machine

Teachers are concerned that there have been occasions in which the Scantron machine has disappeared from the teacher work room and administration did not resolve the issue in a timely manner.

Response: Dr. Newell commits to sending a reminder email to teachers regarding this issue.