

**Oak Hill Middle School
School Council Minutes
February 10, 2011**

School Council Attendees: Eva Thompson, Risa Shames, Steve Siegel, Susan Kane, Elaine Whalen, Maureen McCann, Elizabeth Matera

Public Attendees: Chip DiMarco, Laurie Katzman, Mark Nacht, Elyssa D’Andrea, Betsy Blagdon, Bruce Henderson **Note-taker:** Elaine Whalen

Public Comment: Chip DiMarco discussed the NSHS School Council subcommittee on stress issues and how South is dealing with this. He mentions all the info in news including “The Race to Nowhere”, the book by the ‘tiger mama’ and methods other states are using to make sure their students are “college ready”. The risk survey done in Newton focuses on stress inducers including students reporting academic stress. South has established a committee to manage results, increase resilience and reduce counter-productive stress. Lexington & Needham schools have rolled out programs which we may be able to borrow from. We can also utilize Project Interface. Eva responded that one area we see stress in middle school is from 8th grade students as they begin thinking about transition to H.S. She mentions that providing information in a timely way is key to reducing stress. Several group assemblies will also be held and HS students will come to OH to present options where they exist (course selection, curriculum, etc). Guidance counselors will provide reassurance and information to students and their families.

Bruce Henderson floated 2 ideas; have HS students come back to OH and have focus groups with students to interact and give them an insiders’ view to high school. The second idea was to have a HS parent interaction with 8th grade parents to share information on what they need to know.

Group discussion ensued around stress levels and ways in which Newton succumbs to the pitfalls of stress.

Student Transition – Risa mentioned that a wonderful packet arrived home with 5th graders including the opportunities to become familiar with OH. Eva outlined what was included: student led tours for parents in April, orientation night in March for parents, meetings at the feeder schools with a morning coffee to discuss any concerns. 5th graders attend the OH musical, Mar. 9, then have step-up day, June 10. Peer leaders go to feeder schools to meet with students. In August, after receiving placement assignments, students will be able come to see where their classroom is located; date TBD. Eva recounted how great the teachers are in managing the new students once they arrive at OH.

Some discussion around blending teams so that there is more than one or two students on each team from every elementary school.

Visiting Mornings – among the 4 middle schools, 3 have a visiting morning where parents can come in for 2 periods and see what the school day is like. The Oak Hill teacher leadership team felt this was an important event so OH will proceed. The dates will occur in first week of March and parents will be notified soon. Eva floated the preliminary plan for this event and more information will follow.

Items that were not covered will be picked up at the March meeting:

Ongoing discussion on the articles Eva passed out last time – “Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community” & “What is a Professional Learning Community”
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Parent survey – revisiting content as action items
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Next meeting: Thursday, March 3rd, 4-5pm
Note taker – Susan Kane