

GSF General Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2017

Called to order: 7:05 p.m.

Present: John Dasher, Adam Treewater, Chris Levash, Cielo Kirk, Sarah Brewer, Andrea de la Fuente, Leslie LaFontaine, Stephen Roth, Michael Mink, Wilhelm Klesius, Kim Goodhope, Chris Welch, Keely Everett, Karen Russillo, Suzanne Maloney, Tami McCall, Dan McCall, Anita Bair, Tom Bair, Chris Murdick, Anne Mueller, Katie Pohl, Dan Lyons, Jaclyn Guelfi, Heather Hutchinson, Phil Pesavento, Denise Pesavento, Erica Smith, Keala Landry, Sondra Lewis

New members: Dan Lyons and Katie Pohl – Congratulations!

Approval of January 2017 Meeting Minutes: Jaclyn Guelfi moved to approve, Tami McCall seconds the motion, minutes approved.

Welcome Principal Bob Marcucci, who is here to do his presentation on Davidson Middle School.

Bob Marcucci: Want tonight to be a combo of info I provide and a question and answer thing. I am proud to be the president of Davidson. It IS San Rafael, and it reflects the SR community. This is my 3rd year as principal. We are starting to see some of the changes we began to institute a couple of years ago. We are seeing the culture of the school shift in a positive direction. Overall I think we do a really good job getting kids ready for high school and to succeed in the real world.

Basic facts and figure - As of today, we have 1216 students in grades 6-8, so about 400 in each grade level. Our administrative team is excellent. We have two Assistant Principals, Aaron Feldstein and Susan Akram. We added a position this year, an Administrative Dean of Students, Tom Kordick, who handles 95% of the discipline at the school. He is the point person. Having consistency and a person that the kids love and respect has been transformative. Allows the rest of us to focus on the business of teaching and learning. We have 57 teachers, TAs, registrar, data processor (helps with class schedules), library clerk, district nurses, and campus security personnel who help with supervision between classes, check bathrooms, and so on. Over 5 counseling interns so lots of mental health support. We have a 6-period day, from 7:50 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. On Thursdays we get out at 12:50 so the teachers can have meetings. It is a large campus of 13 acres.

We have instituted a training called “capturing kids hearts” asking teachers and staff to reconnect with the fact that relationships drive the schools. Teaching skills to build relationships. One example of this is having the teachers greet the kids when they get to class. The goal is to have a self-managing group of students and that know how to hold themselves and each other accountable. Focuses on 5 universal fears and needs – i.e. chaos. From age 11-14 is a very complex time in a human’s life where so much going on. Fears manifest themselves in different ways on campus. Students need to know there is leadership. Fear of being an outsider. An example is when a teen is begging for a particular pair of jeans, it is about wanting to be in with a group and to belong. How are we creating community with our staff and students so people feel they belong. This Friday is “no one eats alone” program. Programs on success in middle school and how that leads to success in high school. Fear of loss and change – making them feel safe and secure. Fear of insignificance – how to effect change for themselves and their community.

Electives are offered at Davidson. We are in talks about changing the offerings and increasing access to electives. Possibly a “wheel” which offers a class on skills they need to be successful middle school students. We need to work on transition from 5th to 6th grades as there are lot of changes. 2 of the 6 classes in 6th grade are “core,” where they are back-to-back with the same teacher (2-period block). These core classes are English language arts and social studies. Everyone in 6th has this core. Everyone takes math 6 and science 6. Everyone has PE. Students can take music, band, chorus, steel pans OR can take exploratory wheel, which is art, woodshop (a maker space) and media arts. Some students through IEP may be taking a support class. We are trying to resolve this issue – if you need that extra support it takes the place of an elective, which isn’t right. There is a dedicated 6th grade lunch other than on Thursdays when all the grades eat together. Some examples of positive culture are catching kids doing good things all the time and weekly Paw awards, where teachers elect kids and the mascot goes around giving awards. Also give out \$5 Starbucks cards as prizes, which are extremely popular. We also have morning announcements, similar to Glenwood, over the loudspeaker and led by students.

In 7th grade we have the concept of “challenge days.” These are 3 days where students came into MPR and break into small groups and go into deep work on breaking down barriers to see all we have in common. We also have a program where 7th and 8th graders work with 6th graders to get them acclimated. We offer a day where 6th graders come and meet with leaders before school actually starts so they feel more comfortable on their first day. We have guest speakers and have screened “screenagers.”

We offer a support system for organization, which is a special binder for each student that has dividers for every class with the class’s agenda. Teachers in every class make sure the kids understand what should be in there for every class. We meet on Thursdays to make sure binders are organized. This really helps students learn to be organized. Managing 6 different classes, homework, projects, studying, your notes and so on is a big shift and we are doing a better job in helping them be successful. We offer a class called AVID - Advancement Via Individual Determination. The note-taking method taught is “Cornell notes” and focuses on how to turn notes into essential questions. When students leave Davidson, they know how to take good notes.

Behavioral responses – I spend time talking to other middle school administrators and the kids all try to get away with the same things. Culture and climate of the school is where it all starts. If it is positive, it helps guide the choices the kids will make. There is a cougar culture that we refer to. Restorative circles – when there are conflicts, we believe in getting the kids at the table. What do you need, what does the other person need? Follow up is the tricky part – we need to check back in with you in X number of days to make sure both ends meeting their part of the bargain. We do see conflict but we don’t see repeated patterns of bullying. We do employ “peer court” which is a way for us to not just be punitive but how to repair harm to the community. The hope is to have this be In lieu of suspension. Peer court helps them thru the process. The Court goes through a line of questioning and offers line of restitution in order for their suspension to be diverted. The hard part is when the student is told to talk to their parent about how they were affected and the parents talk about it. Very emotional for the students and the parents. Teaching and learning – Davidson has moved away from big textbooks and into units of instruction from the teachers. We follow a rigorous curriculum. I rarely get any emails that any children are bored. Kids are prepared for high school. We have a very collaborative staff. We have award winning music programs – band, jazz band, chorus, steel pans, 2d and 3d arts, industrial technology program (formerly woodshop) – now uses robotics and electronics, more maker-like. Mr. Adam Singer is well-known for his

program. We also offer Media Arts, computer lab, coding, and how to use Google aps for education. Additionally, there is yearbook, and Spanish as an elective, taken in 7th and 8th grade. Students can get a HS credit if you take those 2 years of Spanish. We also offer many clubs, including, garden, math, marching band, Pokemon, various leadership opportunities, and peer court. 8th grade has a trip to Washington DC for spring break. Support opportunities – tutoring, academic support class as an elective, strategic English class. Intervention at Davidson. We teach to the high and provide intervention to those who are struggling. We have other classes to support kids who are struggling. Kids start playing sports against other middle schools. Enrichment classes – we have a before school Spanish class. We also have color guard. Lots of after school stuff. Boys and Girls club is another option and is very affordable, something like \$45 per month. 5th grade orientation is march 15 for Glenwood. 5th graders will come, see band, visit classrooms, will hear from me and will get excited about middle school. That night is also a parent orientation. Will also have a panel of teachers who will talk about what they do. There is a PTA Parent Line. Camp Cougar is in August which is an important part of the entry. Follow us on Twitter!

Questions:

Can you walk thru the language arts and math progression?

Language Arts – Take Core 6, English 7 and English 8. That’s the path if you are on track. In Math, everyone takes Math 6. At end of 6th grade we give a diagnostic test and thru grade and teacher recommendation, some kids take compressed math pathway. Very fast paced 2 year course which is 3 years of math in 2 years. At end of 8th take algebra the 2nd half. Many parents want their kids to do this whether ready or not but need to emphasize that it is difficult and fast pace and can do harm by pressing them into it. We usually have 2 sections, so about 50 kids out of 400 kids. Means a freshman takes geometry, so you are a class ahead.

Do peer mentors stay with kids throughout the year?

They do. The WEB leaders come into the 6th grade lunch and make sure nobody is eating alone.

How and when is Measure A money being spent at Davidson?

This summer will be repairing roof on one wing. Will break ground on a new science and art wing. 10 science classrooms plus a central 2 story open art space in the middle. Will be at the front of the school. Next phase is building multi-use space, cafeteria etc. Science art wing looking at breaking ground summer of 2018.

What changes have you made in the last 3 years and what would your next be?

Climate and culture, capturing kids hearts. Rewards and incentives habe been big. I am working on master schedule that should offer extra electives and offer targeted intervention that kids need. If we can have support of staff and district that will transform the school. When there is a school where 1/3 of the kids don’t have an elective that’s a detriment. We want all kids to have that opportunity and kids to have different opportunities if they want to try something different. Going back, going schoolwide with AVID strategies has been transformative. Want Davidson to be a positive space. Remind people of the good work that we do. Show we trust staff to make decisions, brining new staff in that share your visions. When I got to Davidson I was impressed with the academics. Was from elementary school and

it was an adjustment going into middle. Have been really impressed with the teachers and how they work together.

Is there any sex education? Is there anything about kids starting to volunteer?

In 7th grade science they have “family life”. In terms of volunteerism, there have been discussions on how to incorporate this. Hasn’t been done yet but will come.

Glenwood is a homogenous community as we all know and Davidson is very different. What will students be dealing with in making that transition and what issues should we know about?

The change was made to put it into homogenous community. We had an advanced track, on level, and below. A decision was made to put them together. Diversity of thought and background breeds a truly diverse learning environment. Some kids may come from a home where they are doubled up in a bedroom, and others higher up the chain. Kids learn to work with other kids with other levels of English knowledge. This diversity is great. There will be things outside their “normal” experience, but in the end if we have done our job, they will see the commonalities and will see themselves as one community. We are a model of SR.

Looking at student population, do the populations really connect or socially are they really still in their little zones, you are here, we are there.

It is not perfect. They integrate in the classroom really well. At lunchtime you can pick them out by elementary school tables...first the schools mix pretty much with their own. By 8th grade you see the students with different backgrounds hanging out. Kids on either side of the spectrum cross over. It isn’t an easy transition right away.

During middle school, how can the parent best support the kids during that time.

Be steadfast...you think they aren’t listening, but they are listening to every word. I have come to realize they see everything you do and hear everything you say. When you are not getting the feedback you want is the moment you need to be steadfast and be there every step of the way. When they need you they will come.

Is there a program for social-emotional learning?

There isn’t a formal one but we have provided pieces of various curriculum. It wasn’t as successful as we had hoped. We decided we needed to back up and do capturing kids’ hearts.

Regarding diversity – if there is a class with 25 kids who are more advanced than others, if the teacher teaches to the top, what happens to the other kids?

Much like what happens here at Glenwood, we need to make sure there is multiple access points to the concept that is being taught. Many of the kids with the more advanced needs are getting other intervention, such as extra English learning. They are learning from others around them, encouraged to put their thoughts forward. Concern seems to be that time will be taken away from teaching to one group vs the other – this will happen in every single classroom wherever you go. Want to make sure kids are performing at their level. Invite you to view a 7th grade English class – have to see how they interact.

School starts early – any talk about starting the day a little later?

Yes, there has been talk but would need to be a community decision. I am in favor of middle school starting later, research shows that its better. Elementary schools would need to start earlier. You would need to reach out to school board and let them know it's something you would want.

Are any of the kids walking to school and is the area safe and have there been incidents?

Some kids walk, take school bus, public transport, bikes. One group we formed was Downtown Streets team. Along Woodland we had a lot of RVs parking there, kids were freaked out walking by them. Also had kids walking through the "snake path" and encountering homeless people. We partnered with City of SR and got them to put up a parking restriction so that got rid of RVs. Worked with Downtown Streets team to sweep the snake path, talk to their peers and tell them that kids are coming through. Has been much better after that happened.

Can you talk about the prevalence of drugs, weapons, etc.?

There is an incident once in a while but it's rare. Once in a while there may be a kid who has used drugs on way to school. This happens around the County, at many of the high schools. Marijuana use has increased. We have amazing campus security and they know most of the stuff that is happening before it happens. It is a small group of kids involved and it manifests itself on campus but 99% of the kids are not coming across this.

Are there many teen pregnancies and is it true that there is a childcare for students' babies?

We have had a couple of pregnancies, but no, we do not have a childcare at Davidson.

What would happen if a kid got caught with weed on campus?

It would depend on the history of that student. If there was a record, the outcome would probably be more punitive. Referral to counseling and a suspension. If selling, would be mandatory recommendation for expulsion. Other lighter offenses might be peer court.

How do you deal with bullying?

We have a good sense of what is really going on. How many people are involved, what is the nature, is it a provocative target? Is it a restorative circle type of thing? How do we support this student? Mostly that is effective. Rarely do we come across a true bullying situation. It is more prevalent with the girls. Social media issues. NOTHING GOOD HAPPENS ON THAT PHONE. PERIOD.

We have done some education on social media. The rule with schools is it doesn't matter where it starts, if it manifests on campus we have to respond. We can usually trace it back to something that happened at a night. As soon as 7:40 bell rings, if we see a phone, we take it. Can get it the next day. If again, can get it at end of week. Social media thing is a struggle.

What else does the dean of students do other than discipline?

That position runs our positive behavioral incentive program. He doesn't suspend a kid unless he talks to me. We discuss the response. It is a team approach.

Why do you think so many people because they can elect private school over Davidson?

I don't know exactly why...I would love to see the numbers. I think middle school freaks people out. Glenwood is an idyllic amazing place. The idea of going to a 1200 student school with students "not like my kid" is scary to a lot of people. People look for ways to mitigate my fears. I will pony up the money and will send my kid to schools where the kids will look like my kid. Your kid will have diversity of experience and thought at Davidson.

Please email or call me with questions you have later.

Principal's Report – Kim Goodhope – We had 2nd annual Global Playday – kids really enjoyed it. Playing without structure. We are in the year of kind...focusing on being kind. Nobody eats alone. Find a new person to sit next to. Random act of kindness day on Feb 17. One class has been doing a 30-day kindness challenge. 5th grade came to me with some ideas...she wanted to increase spirit at Glenwood. That motivated us to start a new program called PEP – Positive Eagle Program. Jake and Ben Brooks are in charge of the media part. Also have a cheer committee who will work on cheers to present to other kids. Also have a push for spirit wear – showing pride to be an Eagle. I will be working with them as well as Boardley and Erlich. Now have 22 5th graders who want to be part of the squad. Kindergarteners will have a full day program starting next year. Registration is next week. We are working on how to support the kindy teachers with the transition to full day. 4th grade is in middle of Kids Cooks with Heart. Work on kitchen skills, salsa, smoothies, Greek pasta salad, whole wheat pancake with banana. 3rd grade is doing native American dancing. 2nd grade growing own vegetables. K and 1 are going to be tourists around the world. We are now on Twitter. We have 20 followers. Christina Ramos is taking it on. It is linked to FB page. You don't have to have a twitter account to see updates. Can click on link and see it. G3 (Glenwood Grandparents Group) is starting up. Will have database set up. Invitations for grandparents will come out soon. Next next day will be in March during Morning gathering. SEAL program – SR city schools is looking it unify across the schools, want to academically challenge kids. Will receive coaching support etc.

Teacher Liaison Report – Adam Treewater– Lawrence Hall of Science is here this week. K and 1 doing Wizards Lab and math around world for rest. 100th day of school was last week and we were visited by Zero the Hero. Upper grades working on mission projects and Google graphs. Colonial Glenwood for 5th graders is 2/17 and will be in MPR. 1st grade going to symphony and they will go by bus.

President's report – John Dasher - Thank you so much for coming and please keep coming. These are the types of concerns we want to hear here. Our next GSF meeting is March 8th. Monday is Dine and Donate at Terrapin Crossroads. Finally, thanks to Cheryl Riley and Kelly Merrick for the awesome crab feed!

Katie Pohl – Heads Up is a nonprofit that helps with enrichment for all the schools.... Rock n Run will be happening after our auction. I would love help. It is very easy and fun – music. Announcement will go out to ask for volunteers.

Meeting adjourned 8:37 p.m.

Submitted by Sondra Lewis, Secretary/Parliamentarian