

DSA School Improvement Team Meeting Minutes
Oct 19, 2013

Attendance: B. Bailey (Math), L. Downing (Visual Arts), D. Hawks (Principal), L. Isaacs (6th grade), K. Jones (History), C. Martin (Performing Arts), C. Martin-Klein (8th grade), M. Maya (CTE), R. Morgan (7th grade), S. Nagel (Science), M. Payan (Foreign Language), W. Tolbert (English), K. Ciccone (parent), H. Cunny (parent, Chair, Recorder), S. Green (parent), S. Vernon (parent), D. Stein (Community rep), C. Fierro (Curriculum), P. Smith (Administrative Intern)

The meeting was called to order and introductions were made. There are many new members on the team and they were thanked for their willingness to participate.

Mr. Hawks gave an update and indicated that each school's academic composite data would be available by Nov 7. Due to the new curriculum and higher standards, it is expected that there will be a drop in scores, but this does not mean students are learning less. It means that the bar has been set higher. This year (2013-14) end-of-grade tests will count for 20% of students' grades (more than last year).

The NC Dept of Public Instruction has created a new formula for grading schools: 20% of the School's letter grade will be based on student growth and 80% will be based on school ACT scores, EOG's, graduation rate, and % of students passing higher level math classes. New tests will be used to measure schools, teachers and students. The new standards are to insure college expectations are met. 2012-2013 will be considered a baseline year.

The state is changing the tenure laws for teachers. Each school will be required to offer 4-year contracts to 25% of its teachers and the rest 1-year contracts. There are still many questions regarding this topic.

Mr. Hawks reported that composite SAT data has been received and the average SAT score for DSA was 1609. This is 25 points higher than last year. He feels this improvement is due to DSA's increased support for students taking SAT prep classes. Statistics show that prep classes are very helpful. The ACT test scores are available and DSA has a composite of 21.5 for all 11th graders. This is an increase over last year's score of 21.1. One of the goals of SIT for 2012-2014 is to see an increase in the ACT composite score of at least 0.2 points per year, so this goal was clearly met.

DGIN Update: 2 or 3 proposals are expected very soon: one for 6th grade-gateway-year support for families with less experience engaging with the school system, one to get ipads with built-in dictionaries for ESL students and one is for supporting students that are first generation for attending college. D. Stein will share proposals with the team when he gets them.

Election of new Chair and Secretary: D. Stein proposed S. Nagel and H. Cunny to be co-chairs in order to have both a parent and teacher representative in the position. This was seconded and the co-chairs were voted in. No one volunteered to be secretary and H. Cunny will ask those absent if they are willing.

Discussion of ACT data: K. Jones and C. Fierro attended a recent District ACT workshop and helped explain the data. DSA's scores were above state and national averages. However, only 24% of DSA students were determined to be ready for college in all core academic areas (vs only 13% of students in the state). DSA's composite ACT score was 21.1 in 2012 and 21.5 in 2013. As a comparison, the average score for freshmen at UNC Greensboro was 21, for UNC Chapel Hill was 29 or 30, and Duke was 30-32.

DSA's ACT data showed stronger scores for English and Reading compared to math and science. Science was the lowest at 20.8 vs 24 as an indicator of college readiness.

Behavior data update: Dr. Nagel investigated questions that came up in the last meeting and the data will be ready after January.

Brainstorming Focus areas for the SIT team for this year: Last year the SIT team had break-out groups that worked on topics of interest for the school such as Literacy, 1st generation and afterschool program. The break-out groups would bring information and suggestions back to the whole team. As for choosing focus topics for this year, the team felt it would be premature to formally choose topics since little data are currently available. We will wait until data are provided in November. After the data are reviewed, the team will also start working on next year's School Improvement Plan.

Team members suggested many possible areas of focus including Critical Thinking and Literacy. Other topics to explore might include addition of a PLUS period (such as time between 6th and 7th period for special tutoring/homework/make-up work, etc-a break-out group could explore feasibility, pros/cons, practical length of period, for example). Teachers had other suggestions to consider such as approaches to lessening workload in the right areas-especially in light of the new testing requirements. Ideas for lessening workload would include departments having set days for tests to lessen the chance of students having too many tests on the same day.

Next meeting: Results of testing data will be reviewed. Mr. Hawks will ask for suggestions from Department chairs as to possible small group focus areas. He will also send information from DPI on the Spring 2013 test results.