

Woodrow Wilson High School LSRT Minutes  
August 26, 2008

Present:

Administration: Pete Cahall

Faculty reps: Lisa Grymes, Julie Caccamise, Gloria Gibson, Mary Ball

WTU rep: Erich Martel

Parent reps: Mary Froning, Carmen Carrera, Margot Berkey, Verna Clayborne

PTSA liaison: Sarah Whitener

Community rep: Norgie Bigger

Guests: John Howe, Katharine Lum (AALEAD), Maureen Thompson, Harry Travis, Greg Bargeman, Jim Leonard, Charlette Butler, Jack Koczela, Barbara Hunt, Ginny Callanen, Lisa Tabaku, Jamie Josephson

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m.

**I. Adoption of August Minutes**

The minutes of the LSRT meeting of August 5 were adopted.

**II. Additional Member**

Ms. Caccamise reported on the working group to fill the remaining slot on the LSRT. After some discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Ball and Ms. Katharine Lum from Asian American LEAD would get together and try to identify an Asian student to ensure that that community is represented on the LSRT.

**III. Principal's Report**

**Opening Day**

Mr. Cahall reported that the first day of school went very well. Members of the LSRT were not aware of any complaints. Many mentioned that both students and teachers appreciated the evidence of structure and accountability. Mr. Cahall stated that he is spending many hours each day visiting classrooms and speaking with students and teachers, reporting that his presence seems to be appreciated. The orientation for students meant that they all knew the rules on the first day. They also learned from Mr. Cahall's power point presentation what their achievement numbers were, and they seemed to have taken notice of them.

Our enrollment as of the meeting was 1573, but the administration is trying to count bodies, which might be a lower number.

**Vacancies**

Mr. Cahall announced that we have a new Assistant Principal for the year, Sah Brown. Mr. Brown is from New Leaders for New Schools, which means his salary is covered by DCPS. The Chancellor reportedly sent Mr. Brown to Wilson because of Principal Cahall's record of mentoring those on a principal track.

One of our counselors has chosen to take maternity leave so we hired Leslie Sargent to replace her. We are missing one Spanish teacher, but interviews are already taking place. A Latin teacher, Mr.

Steel, was hired. The Alternatives to Violence teachers are certified, one as a teacher and one as a substitute. In addition, two excessed, certified social studies teachers sent to Wilson by the school system will be assigned to those classes to handle those tasks that must be done by a certified teacher.

#### **IV. Update on Master Schedule**

Office Assistant has been eliminated from the master schedules but it is still possible for individual students to become Office Assistants for community service credit. Also, although the goal is to engage all seniors throughout the day, some seniors will be allowed to leave school early if they have a good reason. Every transcript was evaluated over the summer so that holes in their requirements could be filled this fall.

Mr. Martel brought up the concern about balancing class sizes. He noticed that some of the language classes, such as Italian, Latin and Chinese, are very small, and suggested that they be doubled up. Ms. Butler pointed out to him that the Chinese teacher is paid for by the Chinese embassy. Dr. Froning pointed out that while Latin I classes might be small, the Latin teacher is not certified to teach anything else. Mr. Martel also expressed concerns about two courses being taught in one class period—e.g., Physics and Sign Language. Ms. Butler explained that AP Physics C, with only 5 students, was scheduled for the same time slot as AP Calculus BC. If the physics teacher was not willing to combine Physics C with Physics AB, then it would have been dropped. In this case, the teacher was willing to teach both Physics courses together. In the case of sign language, the teacher is also our hearing specialist, and thus only has one period to teach both levels of sign language.

Two special ed teachers were transferred out of Wilson by the school system. The teachers were originally sent to Wilson because we were out of compliance with special ed requirements in the middle of last school year. Ms. Butler said that the DCPS compliance officer was meeting with Ms. Clemmons (Wilson Special Ed Coordinator); it was hoped we would regain those teachers out of those discussions. There was consensus that the LSRT would be willing to take action to encourage DCPS to ensure proper Special Ed staffing. Mr. Cahall said that the inclusion model requires more staff, and that unless we get more staff we may have to return at least partly to the self-contained model.

#### **V. Update on STEP**

The new lunch program (Student-Teacher Enrichment Period) has been going smoothly. There is a new provider for meals, and average daily student purchase of meals has gone from about 200 last year to 400 this year. The cafeteria needs more staff in order to cut down on lines. Teachers will be making a lunch and after school schedule for office hours.

#### **VI. Facilities Report**

John Howe reported that by the opening of school, all work orders dating from 2002 pertaining to health and safety were complete. This included wiring issues in the library. Other major projects this summer included lighting in the library and hallways, hallways being painted, maps and signage being updated throughout the building, and custodial staff making pickups from the classrooms while teachers were moving in. Mr. Cahall noted that students are now allowed to use the restrooms on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Floors; students were told that it was up to them to keep that privilege. Mr. Cahall was also pleased to say that as of that day's lunch period there was not a single piece of trash on the floor of the cafeteria.

Jack Koczela, Wilson Management Corporation Chair, was invited to speak. He reported that the WMC contract with DCPS ended August 2. It is a 5-year contract with four option years. The WMC is in contact with DCPS' General Counsel and OPEFM to work out contract issues, with Mr. Cahall supporting the continuation of WMC. Chancellor Rhee believes that a school of our size should have a COO and thus appears willing to absorb the cost of the salary of John Howe for the current school year. WMC may keep a small amount of money for repairs and, possibly, money for the next stage of design for modernization. Mr. Martel expressed the concern that in the next school year, we may either lose separate funding for the COO or be required to balance those funds with those for teachers. Others echoed this concern, with Mr. Koczela noting that keeping the COO in WMC would not guarantee funding for a COO either.

## **VII. Report on Summer Transition Programs**

### **Orientations**

Orientation sessions were held for incoming parents on August 20 and for incoming students on August 21. The programs, designed by Greg Bargeman and Margot Berkey, were successful, thanks to their efforts and those of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade team teachers. Over 200 students attended, including about half of the new 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. An evaluation showed where improvements could be made next year. Mr. Cahall suggested that Ms. Berkey and Mr. Bargeman meet with him next week to go over the pluses and minuses, so that they can be incorporated into the planning for next year before people forget the details.

### **Jumpstart**

This program also occurred during the summer. Mr. Bargeman and his teachers identified 45 incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders who scored Basic or Below Basic on their 8<sup>th</sup> grade DCCAS tests, and each one was called and invited to Jumpstart. Eleven students attended. The students were led by their teachers through four sessions covering how to be a successful high school student, including subjects like time management and setting personal goals. Each student had an organized notebook ready for the first day of school. Their mentors will meet with them throughout the year. Mr. Bargeman believes that if Summer Bridge is funded next summer it will be a good way to raise enrollment in Jumpstart.

## **VIII. Office and Lab Assistants**

The working group submitted some ideas on how to structure the office assistant program. There was consensus that they be seniors who have open periods and may need community service hours to graduate. Besides actual office work, other duties were outlined, including lab assistants for science faculty. One idea was for them to wear a badge or armband for identification so that they could move around the school and be easily identified. Ms. Gibson suggested that they could be trained to do regular copying for teachers, but Mr. Cahall said that the copiers are being moved into the faculty work room and it would not be appropriate for students to be in the same room as the teachers' mailboxes. He underscored that students would not have access to any confidential material. Mr. Cahall will discuss the working group's ideas with the administrative team and come up with a plan for Office Assistants, including identifying them, tracking their hours, and placing them.

## **IX. Local School Plan 2008-2009**

The committee members will make a 2-page school plan to send downtown. There is no deadline yet. Dr. Froning indicated that there would also be a longer document from which to choose action plans for projects to be completed during the school year. This would rely on Mr. Cahall's 90-day Strategic

Plan categories, as well as the work of the ThinkTank on Restructuring and the Chancellor's Restructuring Plan for Wilson. The Chancellor is asking that schools use the planning model from the UVA Turnaround Schools program, but Mr. Cahall indicated that this does not preclude using High Schools That Work (i.e., the organization recommended by our restructuring proposal) to help us meet our goals.

## **X. Landscaping**

Ms. Bigger and Katherine Lum will contact faculty members at UDC about their cooperative extension program. Throughout this year they will: 1.) send out formal mailings asking for help at Wilson; 2.) design an action plan; 3.) get a professional landscaping design, keeping mind things like using only drought-tolerant plants; 4.) recruit students to help install the plants in the Spring; and 5.) evaluate the project and make improvements for the next year.

Dr. Froning will put Ms. Bigger in touch with Grimm + Parker architects so that the plantings will not be put in areas to be disturbed by the modernization. Ms. Clayborne said that the Sweep program at the DC Department of Public Works could help. Mr. Cahall suggested that during a planned expansion of the academy offerings, there might be an academy of horticulture. Ms. Clayborne responded by suggesting one focused more broadly on the Environment. Mr. Cahall also said that the students are allowed in the Rose Garden at lunch, when it is supervised, and he would like to see that area improved.

### **Plus**

1. Covered a lot of topics in brief
2. Time management of topics good
3. The larger meeting room is better than Room 124

### **Delta**

1. Not enough time for in-depth discussion
2. Our meeting table should be a square, not a rectangle which makes it hard to see everyone
3. Making 2 LSRT meetings a month is difficult for some - could some committees report only once a month to the LSRT so attendance is only required once a month
4. When we discuss staffing, it would help to have a document to review—e.g., the official Schedule A

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Whitener