

Booker T. Washington Middle School 54

103 West 107th Street
New York, NY 10025
Phone: 212.678.2861

SLT Minutes

February 5, 2021
7:20 AM

SLT Members

Core SLT Positions	Teacher Representatives	Parent Representatives
Elana Elster, Principal	Elizabeth McNulty (co-chair)	Andy Weinstein (co-chair)
Jose Beauvais, UFT rep*	Rachel Weisz	Alexis Freeman
Laura Adams, PTA Co-Pres	Kirby Mason (co-secretary)*	Brad Roberts
Peter Armstrong, DC37 rep	Erica Williams	Hudson Roditi (co-secretary)
	Sara Lichtman	Karen Saltser
		George Schneiderman**
		Jacqueline Shannon**

*Late

**Absent

Observers: Alison Gardy, Kyle Clayton, Anne McIntosh Pejovich, Marni Aarlev, Randee Johnson

Minutes from previous Month: minutes were approved and will be sent to the PTA Corresponding Secretary for posting.

Agenda:

The Draft Agenda contains the following items:

- Approval of January Minutes: approved
- Principal’s Update/CEP:
 - Push for more kids in schools (5 days), still same issue of staffing is the same problem.
 - There won’t be much notice before we know school is back in in-person session.
 - Polled teachers about how they felt about live zooming with children from school.
 - Teachers were open to doing that, or at least trying it out.
 - Planning on bringing in a group of kids who need a stable environment (internet/quiet) to work.
 - This room will be monitored by paraprofessionals. They can be alone in the rooms to supervise the kids.

- Building reopening for current school year
 - Teacher: Is there an expectation from the city that kids can be in 5 days or is there not enough staff for that?
 - Dr. Elster: The city continues to ask for that. There is no official word.
 - UFT Rep: There is a desire to have as many kids come back as possible. There is no expectation that schools can do that, the city wants it but know the current safety guidelines don't allow for that.
 - One factor is the number of kids who have opted for blended option. If the number is low, then school might be more able to achieve bringing those kids back to in-person.
 - Some schools have percentages of blended participants dropping.
 - Teachers with accommodations, even if vaccinated, wouldn't be required to come back to in-person prior to end of school year.
 - Elementary schools have been closed sporadically once there is a positive case. Parent said school has been closed about half the time since Thanksgiving. How would this affect middle school after reopening? Teacher: if there are 2 cases in separate classrooms, unrelated, the school is shut. No shutdown if the cases are related/same family.
 - Parent: any issues with how SHSAT went? Dr. Elster: It was all hands on deck, it worked smoothly, we have 5 students taking makeup on Tuesday. There was a lot more regulation. There were 217 students taking the exam, and it was good they were in the school doing it. Some kids took it at Booker T who might not have taken it at other locations. Teacher: The test has the most protocols, regulations. The DOE provided the instructions that were needed. Parent: seeing how happy the kids were to see each other, it made me think of how important it would be to ensure there is an in-person graduation-related event before they go to high school.
- Planning for 2021-22
 - Talk of how to best support students when we don't know much about them?
 - Dr. Elster: Multiple meetings about various issues, including equity and planning for next year. Things raised at Equity meetings come back and are brought up here. We need a formalized person to attend Equity and come back to the SLT meeting--to keep the lines of communication open.
 - Dr. Elster: PTA board had a discussion about planning for student needs and ways we can make the school more inclusive. Equity discussion, how can we make a more inclusive school? Is the culture of "hard work" incompatible with making an inclusive school environment?
 - Teacher: Two big takeaways - parents seemed concerned with the screening process being taken away. Big idea to build on, how can we include the new students through support and taking them in?
 - Academic needs and social-emotional needs of new students.
 - POV: Not everyone comes from the White upper-middle class, how do we make sure to include all students?
 - Parent: How do we determine the characteristics of the incoming students?

- There is no hard data on this yet. Not given contact information for the families who have “liked” BTW.
- In the past, Booker T has been asked to not seek additional information about incoming families, such as report card information. We would know ICT/IEP but not economic information.
- Teacher: desire to know student info outside special needs is not relevant because we already have all learner types present at our school right now. As long as we’re prepared for all situations now, then we will be prepared for the incoming group of students.
- Dr. Elster: the discussion at the last SLT meeting. The diversity of students now are not what we might expect of a screened school.
- Teacher: Advisories next year, are we considering piloting strategies next year? Teacher: we’re trying empathy interviews to build connections between students. If we think about the scaffolding we put in place, the academic support we want in place, supporting the academic rigor. Teacher: one way BookerT defines academic rigor is through a large amount of homework. However, not all learners have parental support that may be needed for the large amount of homework.
- Parent: one reason we had Wednesday’s meeting of leaders of SLT, PTA, Equity, is because every year there is fear/concern about the incoming 6th grade group. But every year we do well; it’s frustrating that it keeps coming up. We can get past this.
- Teacher: brought up in the Equity meeting is there seems to be fear-based response to incoming students. How do we look at incoming group as an opportunity to include new learners that haven’t been part of the community before. Voices of part of the parents aren’t hear, they don’t speak up, because they don’t feel safe for whatever reason. They may not want so much homework, feel they can’t support that level of homework. How can we support expression of those viewpoints so we can have representation of those views?
- Dr Elster: given issues raised at Equity meeting, we need to ask the Equity team what we can do as a leadership team to guide our work. Need someone who can take responsibility to bring Equity concerns ideas back to the leadership team.
- Teacher: I wonder if we feel a consultant might be able to help us because we’re immersed in it.
- Parent: When we know who the incoming group is, maybe we can market the SLT beyond what’s done now to recruit.
- Dr. Elster: At Equity meeting there were a couple of parents who aren’t regular members of the group. Perhaps we can call parents to include them in smaller conversations in smaller groups.

- Teacher: Do we want to change the bylaws of the SLT to include members of the Equity team?
- Dr Elster: Is there a member of the SLT who would commit to attending Equity regularly to report back? (Teacher (Rachel Weisz): Yes, I've been attending so yes I would volunteer.)
- Parent: Relating to a consultant, does the DOE have expertise where we would be able to lean on them for consultation?
- Parent coordinator: About assessing incoming students, is part of the problem how to form the classes in relation to academic differences?
Teacher: Yes, ability grouping is an effective way to target all learners, but concern is we end up tracking students and they end up stuck. And I don't want my choices to reflect biases. Teachers who have a wide range of academic levels in a class... worry is that this isn't something that teachers need more professional development or resources to address this, but rather that it isn't an effective way to educate kids.
- Parent: Are you allowed to assess kids before start of school? (Elster: high schools bring kids in for placement tests).
- Teacher: In terms of ability grouping, we're often teaching Humanities at the same time. In such cases, we could coordinate... you take this group, you take this group, etc.
- Teachers (math): This isn't flexible. If you're with a group for a couple of weeks, often there is a divergence. And it becomes logistically difficult.
- Elster: What might be more feasible is the ICT model. Kids see both teachers as the teacher. It's seamless.
- Teacher: another limiting factor is group size. I wonder if we could have all the kids in school for a month, and then we group them by ability after that. But that has challenges.
- Teacher: Could an orientation work, where they don't develop that attachment to a class, teacher, etc.
- Parent: Would we think of having a different grouping model next year based on who the incoming students are. Could we group by level (1,2,3,4)?
- Elster: Group by level is not ideal.
- Parent: There are no test scores so we won't know the levels. There is a lottery, but after the 25% lottery the city will try to match students with their ranked choices.
- Parent: There seems to be
- Teacher: DOE will continue to "match" kids to a title 1 school because that's where the kid "should" go. The DOE places students following biases they have.



- Assessing & meeting student needs
- Budget/Additional Funding
 - Dr. Elster: Because we have 2 unfilled teaching positions, our budget is in a good place. I'm trying to get permission to roll over our funds.
 - Teacher: can funds be used for technology? Teacher: DOE doesn't support our models. How we're moving forward is an unknown.
 - Dr. Elster: We're going to stock up on material and supplies, equipment. There are 2 large grants (AC for gym and cafeteria, redoing the music room). Teacher: textbooks? The return of 7th grade textbooks was not the same quantity as were sent out. We may need to replace a lot of textbooks. Dr. Elster: I can move money around to support these needs.
- Wellness Update:
 - Kindness Week beginning 2/8: asking families dropping off fresh baked cookies and pantry items for families in need. Can teachers open up the idea of sharing in the week with their classes?
 - Trying to work alongside Equity, Ambassadors teams.
 - Home life is a need that cuts across all students.
 - What is the spirit behind the DoEs request? Can we create bonds between students beyond the academic rigor?
- Equity Update
 - Admin: Should Equity Team be a part of the SLT?
- New Business:
 - Bring to the floor new topics that we haven't spoken of before; ie. autonomy of students.
 - Can we put a button on the school website that links directly to the health screening:
 - Parent: Yes, we will do that.
 - We got new air purifiers in each room.