

Booker T. Washington Middle School 54

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SLT Minutes

April 2, 2020
 8:15 AM

SLT Members

Core SLT Positions	Teacher Representatives	Parent Representatives
Elana Elster, Principal	Randee Johnson	Stefanie Goldblatt
Jose Beauvais, UFT rep	*Elizabeth McNulty (co-chairperson)	Andy Weinstein (co-chairperson)
Laura Adams, PTA Co-Pres	**Sara Lichtman	Brad Roberts
Peter Armstrong, DC37 rep	Richard Cappadona	Jeanne Goffi-Fynn
	**Rachel Weisz (co-secretary)	*Jacqueline Shannon
		Laura Adams (co-secretary)
		Hudson Roditi
		George Schneiderman

*Late

**Absent

Observers: Chris Giordano, Joanne Giordano, Jerome Kramer, Anne Pejovich, Alison Merkel

Calendar of Dates

- May 8, 2020
- June 12, 2020

Minutes

February and March Minutes were approved and will be sent to the PTA Corresponding Secretary for posting.

Agenda Discussions

- Booker Tech Update
 - Dr. Elster provided an update on the school's experience with remote learning. While a great deal has been learned in the past two weeks, the teachers have found it much more difficult to teach remotely and establish boundaries. While the regular schedule would be too much on the teachers, teaching combined classes presents other challenges,

including having to navigate dozens of faces on screen. Teachers have found it useful for one teacher to lead while another monitors. Some teachers post a video/recording for instruction, using class time for video-based “office hours”.

- There have been some bombing challenges, but teachers have become adept at booting kids who don't use their camera and/or first/last name.
 - Over 100 devices were given out to students. Twelve families were unable to pick up MS 54 devices and have requested city devices. Equity is not just about access to devices, but also WiFi access and bandwidth, distractions at home, and limited parental bandwidth.
 - The school has several accounts that allow up to 300 kids in a meeting and one super account for 1000 for assemblies and large meetings.
 - Several parents shared their own feedback and feedback they had received from other parents. For the most part, parents have been supportive, understanding, and appreciative of what the school has achieved in a short period of time. Some feel that there isn't enough focus on academics while others feel that too much is being asked, particularly for G8 homework. For the most part, however, it seems to be working.
- Schedule/Allocation of time between Core and Non-core classes
 - The group discussed the current schedule, including the amount of class time and the balance between “core” and “non-core” classes. Dr. Elster explained that the initial schedule was focused on trying to get every teacher an opportunity to see their students. For teachers, the transition to remote learning has been like first year teaching again -- with teachers needing to modify lesson plans and prepare new materials -- and has been incredibly time-consuming even for those teachers who are adept with technology. Teachers are spending longer hours to teach fewer classes, but are managing. Overall, Booker seems to be doing more and doing it better than other schools.
 - The marking period ends on Friday as originally scheduled. Before the shift to remote learning, there were six weeks in the grading period through 3/13, so those weeks will be the determining factor with the past two weeks as a transitional period with those assignments weighted less. The new marking period will begin Monday, April 6, with a new rubric that's still being finalized.
 - Equity issues – Access to resources/services, Meals/Services, etc
 - There are some homelife challenges that the school is trying to help with, like how to find a quiet spot in a busy home. Students in three out of the four self-contained classes all had devices prior to the school closure, so their transition was seamless and they are doing well. School aides and counselors have been assigned to students, and someone is checking in on them at least once a day. Some are sitting in on classes along with the students, following up with students who are not coming to class, etc; there have not been any requests from the community for additional help. Fifty families/day are picking up meals.
 - Exams and Grading - The teachers looked to each other for best practices and shared solutions with which they had had varying success. Humanities teachers have found essays effective because it is more obvious when a student's work is not his or her own. Math teachers are assessing through Google forms, with students getting different forms. Parents might be asked to proctor exams at some point.

- Spring Break - Dr. Elster said she is considering using spring break as a planned enrichment week around various cultural opportunities: Museum, Opera, Concerts, Theater, etc.
- Re-opening school - There has been no word about this from the DOE as yet
- Commencement - Regular standards of promotion are still in place so students need to keep working hard. Hopefully commencement will be able to continue at the end of June.
- High School admissions results - There was a drop in Specialized HS admissions this year. It was noted that every class is different, and this year's class was smaller than last. Admissions from the Discovery Program went from 13% last year to 20% this year, and there was a change in that schools must meet economic need index, not individual families.
- Dr. Elster encouraged parents to try an afterschool session with their kids. Today is baking cookies with Ms. Williams.