

Leadership Council November 5, 2009

Present: Katie Culley, Rich Hemphill, Edith Brozosky, Emina Okanovic, Danielle Armstrong, Shannon Strong, Gideon Goldman, Annie Johnston, Dwayne Byndloss.

Meeting began with check-in and appreciations. The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and approved. Each constituent group then reported on current issues and concerns:

Parents: Last meeting the community building, fundraising and communications committees got up and running. The main concern was with some teachers not posting homework, and parents took on talking to those teachers about the situation.

Students: Meeting regularly, working on fundraising to support student activities, about to produce a CP Academy Hoodie, and planning volunteer work around the holidays.

Teachers: Discussing the trimester schedule proposal, and focusing a lot on student support. Working to integrate more up-to-date technology skills into integrated project-based curriculum.

Equity and Achievement Goals: Leadership team proposed that the Leadership Council consider adding a new equity goal in science. They prepared and sent data for the Leadership Council to look at that showed student grades in CP Academy science over the past two years. The Leadership Council was introduced to a cycle of inquiry process, in which looking at this data would be a beginning step toward understanding the roots of the problem and developing a theory of action, and some plans that could affect the problem.

The Leadership Council broke into cross-constituent teams to look at the data to figure out what it said. Here are some of their observations:

- The number of Fs for both biology and chemistry almost doubles in the second semester both years.
- Overall students seem to do worse in the second semester.
- Biology has more Fs than Chem overall, but they are about even when Ds and Fs are combined (Chem as some more).
- Failure rates range from 30% D/Fs in Sem 1 Bio and 28% D/Fs in Sem 1 Chem to 40% D/Fs in Sem 2 Bio and 50% D/Fs in Sem 2 Chem.
- About one half of second semester Chem students were getting Ds or Fs, and therefore not meeting a-g requirements for college eligibility.
- There were more Cs in 07-08 and Fs in 08-09—what was going on with the teachers that shifted things so much?

Overall the Leadership Council was not surprised by this data, because we knew we had problems and many people had ideas about the reasons for these problems. We were surprised by how high the failure rates are, and agreed that we wanted to continue to study this, and to develop goals and an action plan to try to change the situation.

The questions that were raised by our analysis of this data included:

How did the change in teachers affect student performance?

How does attendance relate to performance?

What are the grades based on? How much does homework count?

Would it make a difference if there was more support available for students in science?

How much do grading policies affect student success?

-- Do students know how grades are calculated?

-- Can teachers agree on grading policies?

How much connection existed between parents and teachers? How does that affect grades?

Is the science curriculum motivating?

We finished the meeting with people taking on responsibility to come back with more data so that we could begin the conversation about root causes of the problem.

Ms. Johnston will get attendance data and try to find out about how much homework counted. Attendance at the labs after school, after the first trimester, can be correlated to grades to see if those students who used the after-school time experienced an improvement in their grades. This is more likely to be useful for 2007-2008, since we can contact the science teacher we worked with then. We are no longer in touch with the three science teachers we had in 2008-2009. That will also limit data on the parent/teacher connection for 2008-2009.

Amina and Danielle will develop questions for the teachers, which Mr. Goldman will bring to the teachers' professional development meeting for discussion regarding grading policies in general.

Ms. Strong will talk to the other science teacher, Mr. Boltz, about what motivates students to perform better in science, and bring back data.

That data will be brought back to the next leadership council meeting on December 3rd, from 5 to 7 in D218. At that time we will explore the root causes of the problem and develop a theory of action.