

Minutes
Homestead Parent Club Meeting
January 15, 2015

Present: *Kathy O'Shaughnessy, President; Heather Wilcox, Alicia DiGuilio, Vice-Presidents; Kim Brown, Secretary; Judy Fehlhaber, Treasurer.*

The meeting began at 11:00 am.

Welcome by Kathy O'Shaughnessy.

Principal, Park Ginder

- Grading Scale at Homestead
 - We have had the current grading scale for 8 years.
 - It was designed by the teachers.
- Same presentation that was presented on October 21, 2014 to the SACS School Board. It was also presented to the teachers at Homestead. There was a Spartana News Article on this topic so students have seen some of the information in some form.
 - We need to think about the philosophy, what it means, what our community thinks it means, what our students think it means about grading and the grading scale.
 - What is the purpose of a grade scale? What does it say about what a student has learned or what they can do?
 - When we were in school there was extra credit. It was about how many points you could accumulate.
 - At Homestead we don't let you get extra credit in lieu of credit. Used to be able to bring in tissue for extra credit.
- Questions we are asking?
 - What is the purpose of our grading scale?
 - What is our philosophy in assigning grades?
 - What is it that we know about grade assignments?
 - What do others in our league do? List of schools in Indiana similar to us. Initiated a conversation with these schools last year. Now they talk all the time. Penn came to visit us during first semester.
 - What do colleges say?
- PURPOSE
 - Is it our purpose to sort or to rank? Is it to provide feedback so students learn? Or is it something else? Helping the student know that they get it.
 - Want teachers to rethink due dates. The end of the semester is the terminal due date. Not the date they turned it in. It is a chance for that student to relearn and for the teacher to reassess it.
 - What is the goal? Is it to rank them and move on? Is it to help every kid get over the bar?
 - Math, Science, Marines, Navy, Army – How often are you allowed to re-do things? Response: I have to be precise. But how often does your boss tell you to redo it? In the armed forces, you keep redoing it until you master it or you wash out.
 - Do they represent us helping the kids build confidence toward learning? Everyone is gifted and talented in different areas. We migrate toward those areas. Think back to high school to the things you were least interested in. Do an assignment, get a grade back. The student thinks – I knew I wasn't any good at this.
 - Grades represent learning and help us build confidence. They shouldn't say, you are a failure and don't belong in this class.

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- PHILOSOPHY
 - Grades are always subjective.
 - As HHS, the teachers are working together to make their assessments more and more similar. For example, if five teachers are all teaching the same English class, then the assessments should be similar. So that students are being measured the same. We are trying to become more and more similar in our grading practices.
 - A B is a B regardless of the scale. It is a subjective endeavor. There is a human element. If we change the grading scale, we aren't changing the grading scale.
 - University personnel point out that there is no scale at the university level. Therefore our Dual Credit students experience this because there are different scales at the area universities.
 - Does it help our kids to be held to a higher standard?
- LEAGUE SCHOOLS
 - There is little consistency between schools at any level regardless of demographic.
 - There are three with similar grading scales to ours. Most have 70, 80, 90
 - How many A's and B's do other schools give out compared to us? Do other schools have higher acceptance rates at colleges?
- WHAT DO COLLEGES SAY?
 - Lindsey Lackland spoke with Admission Officers from Penn, Purdue, IU, Ball State, Georgetown Harvard, Duke, and Stanford.
 - Their answers were consistently inconsistent.
 - What role does the GPA play in admissions?
 - Statistics show that the #1 predictor of success in college is the rigor you took in high school.
 - Most say that it's about the transcript and the rigor.
 - Ball State, Butler, IU – GPA plays a big factor.
 - Harvard, Duke, Stanford – transcript is what is most important.
 - Do schools look at local grading scales? Yes and no
 - We don't look at grades and you don't have to get all A's but most of our students get all A's. But what we do like about kids who didn't get an A is that they have already experienced failure.
 - Merit Based Scholarships: varies school to school. Both ACT/SAT are very important. Sometimes GPA plays a role, sometimes it does not. If lacking a strong Act/SAT with an average GPA, they won't be considered.
 - Largest percentage of homestead students go to Ivy Tech. Second highest percentage is Ball State.
- We already changed one of our rules from a C to a C- for the Academics Honor Diploma. It was already presented to the board last year. We will do the same with the B to B- in another area this year.
- What does it mean to prepare our students for a competitive academic environment? That's what this should be about.
- Is our grade scale an integral part of our culture? Does it change the way we feel about ourselves as a community?
- Are our students taking challenging courses.
- If assigning grades leads to sorting and ranking unnecessarily, how might eliminating Valedictorians and Salutatorians and replacing them with Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, Summa Cum Laude benefit our students? Over time, the meaning of this has changed. The first valedictory address at Harvard, the students were asked to select one

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person to speak to represent their class. It happened to be the highest ranked person. We could go back to having a vote.

- The kids are mixed in their comments. The administrative team will make the decision. The change will be in the new student handbook next year. Departments were encouraged and shown ways for kids to test and retest. The understanding and buy in amongst teachers has varied. We shouldn't let kids opt out. Kathy took a vote of the parents to see who preferred the status quo and who supported a change to the scale. The school board members – does changing the scale affect anyone negatively? One board member don't think it does. It could bring about positive changes in any other area?
- HANDOUT – survey done of admission counselors.

Business Meeting, Kathy O'Shaughnessy, President

- Approval of last month's meetings? Heather Herron moved to approve the minutes and Judy Fehlhaber seconded. The minutes were approved.
- Presidents' Council report by Kathy.
 - This spring, instead of ISTEP+ testing, SACS is adopting a new test. CCRA Colleges and Careers Ready Assessment. This is based on our new academic standards. We are unpacking all the data so that everyone is teaching all the standards. Mapping it out so it is the same across all schools. So if you switch schools, you'll be doing the same thing. Differentiating standards for different levels, ie special needs, esl, etc. Processing skill sets to be used on a routine basis by all teachers.
 - Still doing NWEA testing.
 - Some people received a post card about the State Funding Formula and accountability from the DOE.
- We are still in need of a chairperson for Senior Activities.
- Need a co-chair for Academic Awards.
- ACT/SAT needs another chair.
- Heather -- We spent two hours going over a lot of valid grant requests. Alicia investigated alternate options.
- Judy – Treasurers Report. Not a lot of activity. Curriculum grant expenses will start coming in soon.
- Saghi – SAT/ACT Testing went smoothly. Had more take home exams this year. They can return in it March if they didn't get it back in December.
- Kathy – PE Fit, Mike Miller discussed it. They are requesting funding through our teacher grants. The Parent Club has supported this program over the last few years. The data has supported the theories of the program here at Homestead. We want to increase the number of students who can participate as room was limited to one class. He wants a new monitoring system. Smart Hearts PE System. We can afford to help out in a small way. He will be able to come up with the rest of the funding. Kathy moved that we donate \$500. Linnette Godfrey seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.
Respectfully submitted by Kim Brown.