

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Community Review Committee (CRC)**  
**Wilmette Public Schools District 39**  
**October 5, 2009**

**Committee Members Present:** Debby Atwater, Maria Baird, Steve Becker, Cassandra Black, Kathleen Boehm, Laura Born, Rebecca Boyd, Beth Cormody, Romy DeCristofaro, Marlene Dondinval, Mindy Douthit, Katy Forsyth, Susan Fortier, Debbie Greif, John Gridley, Julia Grosh, Jane Hornstein, Melanie Horowitz, Raymond Lechner, Chris Leutz, Daniel Murray, Frank Panzica, Pam Rezek, Harvey Schmidt, Carolyn Sennett, John Walker, Karee Wallach, Denise Welter, Barbara Unger. Also in attendance: BOE Representative Keith Dronen.

**Committee Members Absent or Excused:** Beth Burke, Adam Denenberg, Tracy Peacock, Diane Phillips, Derek Zukowski

**1. Introductory Remarks/President's Report**

Susan Fortier called the meeting to order at 7:00. She welcomed the group and asked members not in attendance/new since last month to introduce themselves. The Minutes from the September 14, 2009 meeting were approved.

**2. Superintendent's Report/Village-Wide PTO Report**

Dr. Lechner discussed the latest information concerning the H1N1 vaccine, explaining that the Department of Health had approached District 39 about distributing shots but that, due to its small size, the District was not expecting to receive any doses until January. He was, therefore, planning to encourage parents to have their children vaccinated by their private physicians as soon as the vaccine was available.

Dr. Lechner noted that the Village-Wide PTO was not going to raise any new funds this year and was currently trying to find a suitable purpose for the excess money it has collected to date.

**3. Board of Education Report**

Keith Dronen, School Board President, explained that the Board takes the CRC reports seriously and noted that they are looking to incorporate last year's reports into a new Strategic Plan for the District this year. He reminded the committee that the building of new science facilities for the Junior High, a project currently underway, is a direct result of work done by the CRC two years ago. The plan for the project includes

adding 8 additional rooms and reconfiguring existing space. The Board is in the process of reviewing preliminary drawings from the architects and intends to have final drawings by the spring.

#### **4. Committee Discussion**

Susan Fortier explained that tonight's work was to flush out the ideas brought up at last month's meeting and make final decisions on what topics this year's committee should address. Before getting started on that task, however, she wanted to be sure that the new committee members had a good understanding of the work done by last year's 21st Learners sub-committee. To that end, she asked the subcommittee co-chair, Pam Rezek, to give a brief presentation.

Dr. Rezek explained the origins of the subcommittee's work -- the thought that things had changed significantly since we, the parents, were young, and that, with this in mind, we should investigate if there are "additional things that our children need to learn now to prepare them for the future. She described how, after much research, the group had identified 8 themes that are critical to our children's future success. After describing the 8 themes -- Global Awareness and Perspective, Technology, Collaboration, Communication, Teaching Style and Learning, Learning Environment, Social Responsibility, Value Added Skills -- she stressed that while the themes may not be truly new, they are significantly more important than they were in the past. She also noted that throughout District 39 schools many of the themes were already being incorporated into the curriculum by our teachers, but not necessarily in a consistent way. As a result, the subcommittee recommended that a next step was to take stock of where we really are and bring our teachers into the process. Dr. Rezek proposed that the teachers were the best resources for helping the CRC prioritize the themes in preparation for a "deep dive" into one or more of the themes. She noted that it would first be necessary to educate all of the teachers on the information in the report.

Mrs. Fortier asked that the group now discuss the topics suggested at last month's meeting starting with the idea of the CRC tackling the Strategic Plan (Topic A) Dr. Lechner began this discussion by remarking that in his opinion work on a new Strategic Plan is critical and informed the group that a consultant from the District Management Council was available to help the group develop a process for the plan development. He noted his opinion that work on a "deep dive" should come after the work on the plan as teacher training on the concepts and surveys/focus groups to nail down the priorities should come first.

Dr. Rezek reminded the group that parent education and ongoing communication about the nature and importance of 21st Century themes was also something that last year's subcommittee had identified as critically important. Committee member, Jane Hornstein added that assessment of the current state of what is being done in the District was also necessary before setting priorities and beginning additional work into

any one theme.

Several committee members commented on the idea of parent education and asked if setting up websites, workshops and other forums might be helpful for this goal. Others reminded the group that community education beyond just the parent constituency might also be important. Student input was suggested as important.

Turning to the idea of the group taking a “deep dive” into one of the eight themes developed in last year’s report (Topic B), Mrs. Fortier stated that this type of work was essentially another research project and noted that it posed a challenge right now because it would be difficult to choose a specific theme before we are clear on the priorities. She suggested the teachers serving on the CRC might already have a clear idea of what the priorities should be and asked for their input.

Committee member Debbie Atwater, a teacher at Highcrest, described the importance of several priorities, including collaboration, but suggested that the themes were so closely interwoven that it would be difficult to separate them into individual research topics. As an example, she highlighted the fact that when you talk about collaboration you almost certainly end up discussing the technology.

Central School Principal Melanie Horowitz suggested that circling back to the curriculum maps would be important in order to ensure we have consistency across the District and reminded the group that although the themes were not necessarily new, packaging/teaching theme in new ways was the key issue.

Reminding the group that the educational/survey aspects of developing the Strategic Plan entailed quite a bit of work, Mr. John Walker, suggested we might be better off stepping back from the idea of a deep dive this year.

Turning to the idea posed in the previous meeting that the CRC help with review of the District’s science curriculum (Topic C), Dr. Lechner explained that another committee was already in place and working with consultants on this effort. It was anticipated that it would take two years for that committee to complete its work. He noted that the CRC might be able to help by looking into the state of science instruction outside the area, even globally.

Mrs. Laura Born noted that we might want to be careful taking on a project someone else is already working on. She emphasized that such work would require considerable effort to clarify tasks and ensure that the CRC’s work was not redundant.

Topic D, the idea of doing a best practices study to see what schools around the nation and around the world are doing to incorporate 21st century themes into their educational systems, was discussed briefly.

Deciding that the topic of the deep dive should be tabled for this year, the group decided it was time to vote on which of the other topics to tackle this year. Members

were asked to vote on their preferences among the following choices:

- A. Strategic Plan -- including teacher training, teacher survey/focus groups, plan writing
- B. Parent/Community communication on 21st Century Learning themes
- C. Science curriculum review
- D. Best practices review

The results of an anonymous votes were tabulated, with Topics A and B garnering the largest number of votes.

The committee members were then asked to determine what aspect of the two topics they were most interested in working on. The options included:

1. Determine Strategic Plan format/structure with help of consultant and write plan
2. Teacher education
3. Teacher surveys/focus groups
4. Parent/community communication plan

Each committee member wrote his or her preferences on a sheet of paper that was collected by Mrs. Fortier.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

Mrs. Fortier indicated she would make subcommittee assignments taking into consideration member preferences. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.