

MSA Academics Committee Meeting - Minutes  
Wednesday, January 6, 2016, 8:00am, Room 12

**In attendance:**

Romelle Pornschloegl, John Gawarecki, Steve Pullar (Science), Hannah Kostichka (SPED), Maria Sustic (Spanish), Maggie Burggraaff (English), Jen Heydt-Nelson (Art), Bronwen Williams (Math), Lisa Anderson (Social Studies), Tom Johnston (PE/Health), Noelle Haland (Chair)

**Absent:**

Jerry Shelton (Music), Cathy Moos (SPED), Marci Patchett (Parent)

**Reminder of Academics Committee purpose (Noelle)**

- Individual teachers and departments create the curriculum taught at MSA. This committee approves any changes to the curriculum. Significant changes to the curriculum are approved by the BOD. The Academics Committee defines and redefines what academic excellence means for the school. The committee works with the Director and department heads to set annual academic achievement goals which are presented and approved by the BOD. This committee also works with the Director to devise clear and consistent ways to measure progress toward academic achievement goals.

**CIS Physics teacher search update**

- Position will be posted tomorrow (John).
- Lisa said she is in contact with a possible candidate
- Steve shared process on U of M's end: After MSA fills the position, the new hire will interview at the U with representatives from CIS and the Physics Department, which will likely take a month or two after we make a hire. After being approved by the U, then the new teacher will be able to start teaching CIS Physics. The new teacher will need to complete 2 summer workshops as part of the U's CIS approval process.

**ELL & new English teacher update**

- The part-time English new hire will teach electives only and not core classes (Speech, Storytelling or a combination of the two).
- The posting will close tomorrow; there are two applicants.
- Maggie will be part of the interview process, with a goal of the new teacher beginning the first week of February.

**Curriculum mapping update**

- Departments and teachers have shared their curriculum maps with John.
- Not all are in the same format, so ROMELLE and NOELLE will follow-up with "translating" each into one common "language" to make mapping consistent school-wide. One goal is to create something that can be easily shared with the school community (on the website) and with our authorizer.
- Meanwhile, the BOD can share our mapping process with the authorizer, if needed.

**"Horizontal mapping" & "collaborative learning" discussion**

- John reported that there are currently 24 "blended lessons" either already occurring or identified as possibilities (eg. between art & Spanish departments).
- How do we do "blended lessons" and do we need more professional development for this? In the past, we used an entire year of professional development for each department to create a "blended" lesson plan (MLA lessons across subjects).

- Need flexibility for curriculum planning
- Grade-based collaboration may be best bet for those subjects where it applies.
- Could also do a school-wide (or grade-wide) theme over a month, semester, year, etc.
- Possibly start with single lessons versus whole units for collaboration.
- Think of collaborative learning as an opportunity for enrichment, offering more depth of learning and conscious connections between different aspects of learning, instead of as a replacements for current curriculum.
- NEXT STEP: At tomorrow's staff meeting, departments will meet with focus on grade-level teachers beginning exploration for collaborative opportunities.

### **Grading, transcript and report card discussion**

- Romelle asks why do we have semester 1, semester 2 and a "final grade" on transcripts? It's confusing for many families. Currently, the cumulative GPA on transcript is based solely on averaging S1 and S2, which may be slightly different from the "final grade" that teachers can input into Skyward.
- Teachers can setup the "final grade" according to total points or weighted grades (ie. some courses weight grades more heavily towards S2 because of difficulty of material, etc), which can lead to slightly different calculations of GPA.
- CIS Physics is a year-long course at MSA but only a one semester university course, so there is only a year-end "final grade" and not semester grades.
- Bronwen researched what universities and colleges prefer to see on a transcript. She says they mostly only want to see a "final grade" and don't care about semester grades for year-long courses.
- Math department wants to eliminate quarter grades, make semester grades only "progress" grades, and use the "final grade" as the only grade that counts towards the GPA.
- GROUP CONSENSUS: For 2016/2017, we will remove S1 and S2 grades from the transcript (for 2-semester courses) and have only one grade as the "final grade." Teachers will still setup that final grade according to either a total points model or a weighted points model. Accordingly, we will have to adjust Skyward to calculate GPA by "final grade."

### **ACTION ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

1. Noelle and Romelle will work on putting all departmental curriculum maps into common format
2. Noelle will invite Shannon Froberg to our next meeting to discuss extracurricular transcripts.

### **TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Quarterly grades - should we eliminate?
- Extracurricular transcripts
- Elective courses for 2016/2017
- Collaborative learning - results of department meetings regarding possibilities
- Update on new teacher searches (English, CIS Physics)
- Review of committee goals from 2014/2015
- More Skyward orientation/training for parents and students (update from Romelle from Tech Committee)

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 2/3/16 at 8:00am in Room 12**

**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS:**

***First Wednesday of the month at 8am in Room 12:***

**February 3**

**March 2**

**April 6**  
**May 5**  
**June 1**