

MSA Academics Committee Meeting - Minutes  
Wednesday, March 2, 2016, 8:00am, Room 12

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

**Absent:** None

**CIS Physics update**

- Steve has identified an interested candidate who currently teaches at another school, but he would likely not be willing to start until the 2017/2018 school year.
- Steve is willing to teach the sections of CIS Physics next year (3 or 4 sections) by only “partially retiring,” if we are unable to hire a full-time CIS-approved teacher. His current contract would end June 12, then he would sign a new contract for a part-time appointment next year.
- We would still need a part-time physics teacher for the non-CIS courses.
- If we have a year without CIS Physics offerings, we will likely not get our CIS Physics approval back from the U of MN. The U of MN is no longer accepting NEW applications for these courses; they are only allowing REPLACEMENT applications. (Some other U of MN departments allow new applications and some do not.)

**Semester grades on transcripts**

- We confirmed that our recommendation to the BOD will be to remove semester grades (for year-long courses) from the official transcripts, though they will still be visible on Skyward. Noelle will report to BOD.

**Quarter grades**

- Bronwen reported that staff approves of eliminating quarter grades, and John agrees. Noelle will report to BOD.
- Noelle (and Joell) will work on a streamlined process to have a notification to parents of struggling students at the mid-semester point (twice a year, at our current quarter grades point). Grade thresholds would be set by each teacher.
- There may be several options, with a paper letter in postal mail being preferred for best access to parents who may not access Skyward regularly. First choice would be a letter that specifies the particular class(es) and teacher(s) for only the classes in which a student is having trouble. Second choice would be a more generic letter that does not specify. This letter could/should include language or info from the current letters that students on academic improvement plans receive.

**Elective courses for 2016/17**

- John gave us lists of possible electives courses for both middle school and high school, with various edits made, including noting clearly what prerequisites a course may have. These electives are still not confirmed as we still need to get students’ ranked choices of these options.
- There will be no Geometry elective offered next year. In its place will be AP Statistics.
- Some members maintained that we should make the schedule for all courses first and then get students’ ranked choices, according to what could actually be offered in any given period.
- Timeline for final decision on electives for next year is:
  - Get student interest in ranked order
  - Lock down core class schedule
  - Decide which teachers have openings in their schedules
  - Decide which electives can be offered in those periods of the schedule
  - Assign students to courses

**Zero hour & evening class options for high schoolers**

- Maggie wants to pilot teaching a zero hour course and having no 7th period in her schedule. Jen might be interested in offering a zero hour art course as well. It's not known yet if there's interest among other teachers.
- Lauren Zachman is interested in teaching AP Calc II (BC) as an evening class. Her idea is to have two classes a week, both in the evening, one online and one in person. She would need to research the state requirements for online courses.
- There was uncertainty about whether zero hour courses could be core classes or electives only. All agreed that we would not offer a core class in zero hour if that was the only section of the course offered. Maggie will research this question.
- Jerry Shelton's recommendation is to offer an 8th hour..... ?
- Maggie & Jen agreed to form a small working group to investigate details of alternative schedule issues such as space and staffing and report back to the committee.

#### **Revising some course titles**

- Romelle will update the course titles to more accurately describe course contents for some courses:
  - Add "Plus Geometry" to Algebra I, II and III
  - Add "Plus Geography" to 9th and 10 grade history courses
  - Change "Spanish IV" to "Spanish Literature & Conversation" (for those prior to this year)
- These changes can be reflected in current students' transcripts, even for courses already completed.

#### **Parental concern raised in SEAC meeting**

- Hannah shared that some SPED parents expressed difficulty with accessing teacher's web pages as some teachers use the MSA site, some use Google Classroom, and some use other sites. They would like uniformity among all teachers.
- We all agreed that better, more frequent training of parents to appropriately use Skyward would address some of these concerns.
- We agreed that a possible school-wide approach to how assignments are posted online should be a topic at one of the summer staff workshops and that there will be no systemic changes this school year.

#### **Update on collaborative learning**

- No update this month. This will be on the agenda of the next two staff meetings.

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

1. Noelle will share Skyward/administrative options for mid-semester communication with parents of struggling students.
2. Noelle will report on BOD response/action regarding semester and quarter grades.
3. Maggie and Jen will update us on alternative schedule issues.
- 4.

#### **TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING**

1. Review of our committee goals for this year (including review of last year's goals)
2. Update on alternative schedule issues (zero hour, evening classes, 8th hour)
3. Update on elective courses for 2016/2017
4. Collaborative learning - results of department meetings regarding possibilities

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 4/6/16 at 8:00am in Room 12**

#### **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS:**

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

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