

MSA Academics Committee Meeting - Minutes
Wednesday, April 6, 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), Marci Patchett (Parent), Hannah Kostichka (SPED), Noelle Haland (Chair), Cheri Howe (Science, now in place of Steve Pullar),

Absent: Tom Johnston (PE/Health)

Member change: Cheri Howe is replacing Steve Pullar on the committee, representing the science department.

Review of committee goals for rest of academic year

1. Noelle: Start looking at weighted grades. Are our high schoolers at a disadvantage for college & scholarship applications? MSA used to do them, but not now - why? Let's start gathering info.
2. "Honors" classes - bring back?
3. Lisa: How can we let families understand what it means to be an MSA student, that we offer a rigorous "college prep" curriculum. Families need to have clear expectations of course difficulty, homework, etc. Bronwen said that we used to have an "expectations" document; she will find it and share. Lisa will followup with Communications Committee; maybe we could have a "prospective families" tab on the website, among other ideas.

Semester grades on transcripts

1. Noelle and Romelle shared concerns about our committee's recommendation to eliminate semester grades for year-long courses from official transcripts, saying that it creates major problems for juniors and seniors applying to college not to have semester show. There was confusion among some committee members who didn't realize that's what we had decided to recommend.
2. We reviewed our discussion about the "final grade," and the two semester grades, and that depending on how a teacher sets up the course (ie. each semester weighted equally, or semester 2 allowing for more points and therefore more weight in overall grade), the "final grade" might be very slightly different mathematically.
3. The "final grade" in a year-long course is used to determine whether a student passes on to the next course in a sequence, but it is not used to calculate GPA.
4. The group decided that Romelle will add to the official transcripts an explanation to the effect of "GPA is based on semester grades."
5. Noelle will talk to Joell and possibly the Technology Committee about adding a section to Skyward about all of this to clarify for families.
6. Noelle and Romelle will work together in a sub-committee to continue with these issues as needed.

Elective courses for 2016/17

1. John reported that he has received elective course preferences from about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the student body. We don't have a schedule yet. Several members suggested not waiting any longer for that last $\frac{1}{4}$ of the students, since their preferences are secondary to what is possible based the availability of teachers and space for core classes.
2. Math and band drive the schedule. The math department has flexibility of teachers and can make a good estimate of what they will need for core classes now.
3. The group discussed reversing the sequence of this process for next year:
 - a. Figure out number of sections per grade of core classes
 - b. Create a preliminary schedule, showing blocks of time that are open for possible electives
 - c. Request teacher & student preferences for electives
 - d. Adjust schedule as needed to accommodate for teacher availability, space availability and student preference

Alternative course scheduling update (zero hour & evening class options for high schoolers)

1. Maggie and Noelle found nothing that said MSA cannot do this. We've found nothing stating that these courses must be electives only or that MSA must provide transportation for these alternatively scheduled classes.
2. Lauren Zachman (via Maggie) is going to poll students regarding a possible evening AP Calc II elective. There is a separate set of rules from the state for fully online courses, but she could find nothing specifically about a partially only course.
3. Maggie wants to offer 12 core class (10-12 Writing) in a "zero hour" as well as during the regular school day.
4. Lisa asked if it makes sense to have one alternative-schedule class offered for each grade since this might be appreciated by many families. Other members thought that might get far too complicated at this point. We agreed that we would "start small" and pilot the idea first.
5. John raised a concern that putting a core class into an alternative schedule might inject a lack of flexibility into scheduling because there would only be one option for that core class in the regular day for students, possibly creating a "ripple effect" through the schedule.
6. The issue is ongoing....

Update on collaborative learning

1. John reported that we are done for the year with the inter-departmental meetings and we are now consolidating the information on how we can continue to enhance collaboration across the curriculum among teachers and courses.
2. Summer professional development might be a good time to start planning specific ways to collaborate.

ACTION ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

1. Lisa will followup with Communications Committee; maybe we could have a "prospective families" tab on the website, among other ideas.
2. Romelle will add to the official transcripts an explanation to the effect of "GPA is based on semester grades."
3. Noelle will talk to Joell and possibly the Technology Committee about adding a section to Skyward about all of this to clarify for families.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 5/4/16 at 8:00am in Room 12 (NOT May 5, as previously recorded by mistake)

FUTURE MEETINGS: First Wednesday of the month at 8am in Room 12: May 4, June 1