

MSA Academics Committee Meeting - Minutes  
Wednesday, May 4, 2016, 8:00am, Room 12

**Present:** John Gawarecki, Romelle Pornschloegl, 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), and Cheri Howe (Science). Also present: Mona Hayashi, Jeana Albers, Kerry O'Keefe, Jerry Shelton, and Rachel Ryan.

**Absent:** Cathy Moos (SPED), Tom Johnston (PE/Health)

**Review of teacher grant requests**

1. Mona Hayashi brought the list of teacher grant requests for the committee to approve. She will bring them to the Finance Committee and then to the BOD for approval. The total pool of available funds for these is \$10,000, which is enough for only about half of the requested amounts. Last year, some grants were partially approved; this year, we may have to compromise.
2. Review of grant requests:
  - a. MUSIC: Jerry Shelton requested \$3400 for a one-year subscription for SmartMusic for the Masses, used for rehearsal, assessment, and performance tool. This program is currently the basis for the Wind Ensemble Online course. Currently, families pay \$50 per subscription, and not all families participate. This cost covers a one-year subscription for up to 150 students. Jerry would coordinate how student accounts are set up and would expand his use of the program in his curriculum. Currently there are about 120 students in band, plus more in choir and orchestra. Jerry would likely re-apply next year for the grant. Many schools charge a music/band participation fee in their student fees. The committee denied the grant request but agreed that we want to have a sustainable SmartMusic program. We agreed that the best way to do this would be to charge each student a flat music ensemble participation fee to be assessed in the summer student fee invoice. Jerry would define that amount based on enrollment, but a fee range might be \$20-30. John Gawarecki agreed.
  - b. ART: Jen Heydt-Nelson & Kerry O'Keefe requested \$4500 for two display cases with glass doors for 3-D art projects, one in each building. There used to be a shelf in building A that has been converted for use as award case for extracurriculars (eg. robotics and sports). The group agreed that we want to bring back art displays and discussed various solutions that may be less expensive than the requested amount. These alternatives included having an Eagle Scout build a case or shelves for robotics (maybe even out of legos!), installing shelving up high for robotics and other trophies in the Great Hall or elsewhere, and hiring someone to build larger cases than are for sale. Jen was concerned that if we don't approve funding to buy art cases, nothing will happen. Noelle was concerned that robotics and other activities and sports would lose display space. The committee approved a partial grant for \$3400 for the purchase of either two art display cases, or one art display case and materials for open shelving to display robotics and other awards and trophies.
  - c. SPANISH: Maria Sustic (for Markell Anderson, who was not present) requested \$325 for a 25-count class set of headphones for upper-level Spanish coursework. These will improve in-class listening and speaking activities and will be used for instruction, practice and assessment. These will improve students' use of Audacity, a speaking and listening program already installed on student laptops. Grant was approved for \$325.
  - d. SCIENCE: Cheri Howe and Jeana Albers each made separate requests for compound microscopes for \$2060 and \$1600, respectively. (They did not know they were making separate requests for the same thing!) Currently, MSA owns 6 microscopes for all science classes, which are in Building A and must be wheeled between buildings for middle-school use. This frequent movement is bad for the microscopes since they are highly sensitive and must be calibrated frequently. Cheri's request would buy 8 economy compound microscopes from Flinn Scientific to expand Life and Earth Science curricula. Jeana's request would buy approximately 6 microscopes to expand curricular use in Biology, AP Biology and Anatomy courses. The committee approved \$3660 for the combined order of microscopes. Cheri and Jeana will coordinate their order.

- e. ENGLISH: Rachael Ryan requested \$2500 for purchase of books to create 6th grade nonfiction literature circles as cross-curricular thematic units with the Social Studies department. The area of focus will be World War II and the Holocaust. The grant would be used to purchase 25 copies each of 5 nonfiction titles in the theme. Nonfiction literature circles will expand our teaching of nonfiction literacy skills, improve our alignment with MCA and Common Core nonfiction skills standards, and cross-curricular collaborative learning. Next year, Rachael intends to request grant funds to create science-themed nonfiction literature circles. Rachael said her request of \$2500 was a slightly high estimate of total cost, and the committee approved \$2200 of the request.
  - f. SCIENCE: Mark Greseth (not present) requested \$800 for purchase of 14 one-time-use kits to build powered, non-powered and hot air balloon flight designs for use in the Science of Flight elective. Various people present remarked that some electives are given a budget and some are not. Romelle pointed out that the state requires that MSA offer electives. The committee agreed that buying these kits is a valid school expenditure and should be budgeted for in the Science Department budget. The committee denied the grant request with the understanding that the \$800 will be included in the Science budget; John Gawarecki agreed with the rest of the committee.
  - g. MATH: Caitlin Harper (not present) requested \$315 for the purchase of an EduStic Algebraic Classroom Kit of algebra manipulatives for up to 36-40 students for use in Algebra I. She also requested approximately \$100 for a set of Dry-Erase Side-Loading Pouches for up to 30 students, for easier collaboration among students and teacher assessment at a glance for use in 6th Grade Math, Pre-Algebra and Algebra I classes. The committee approved \$414 to cover both grant requests.
  - h. PHYS ED: Molly Molitor (not present) requested \$3649.23 for an Archery Starter Pack for use in P.E. classes. The kit would include 6 compound bows, 72 arrows, 3 self-healing targets, 3 replacement target faces, 3 tripod stands, 6 arm guards, 1 storage cart and 1 curriculum book. Because of its high cost and the low number of materials included in the kit, the committee denied the grant request.
3. Mona shared that the Finance Committee was considering the possibility of offering a small stipend to each teacher (eg. \$150). She asked the group if teachers would prefer that instead of grant requests. The consensus was negative.
4. Motion to approve as recommendations to the Finance Committee grant proposals as follows:
- a. Phys. Ed./Molitor: denied
  - b. Music/Shelton: denied under the stipulation that a fee will be assessed to all music students in the summer fee statement to be applied to the SmartMusic school subscription
  - c. Science/Greseth: denied under the stipulation that this cost will be paid for from the Science budget
  - d. Art/O'Keefe and Heydt-Nelson: approved for \$3400 for the purchase of either two art display cases, or one art display case and materials for open shelving to display robotics and other awards and trophies
  - e. Spanish/Anderson: approved for \$325
  - f. Science/Howe and Albers: approved for \$3660
  - g. English/Ryan: approved for \$2200
  - h. Math/Harper: approved for \$414

Moved by: Romelle Pornschloegl      Second: Mona Hayashi      Vote: 16-yes 1-no (Sustic) 0-abstain

#### **“MSA’s Expectations for Students and Parents” document**

1. Lisa talked to the Communication Committee and they think it is a good idea to create this document, but they want the Academics Committee to create it.
2. Lisa, Noelle and Cheri volunteered to create the document together and bring it to our June Meeting for approval. Then the Communication Committee will get it put on the website sometime this summer.

#### **Update on next year’s class schedule and alternative course scheduling pilot**

1. The schedule for next year has not been created yet. John said all information from teachers is in and they are ready to begin.

2. Maggie told us that Lauren Zachman (not present) polled potential students for an evening AP Calculus II class and most did not want it. From their feedback, Lauren decided it is best to offer the class during first period next year.
3. John has decided that there will be no “zero hour” English Writing class next year. His main reason is that this will decrease flexibility for the entire high school schedule because only one section of the course would be offered during the regular school day. It is also an issue of fairness to students who may need transportation to get to a “zero hour” class, which MSA would not provide. He said that other schools that do offer “zero hour” courses are bigger schools that have many sections of a course and therefore have multiple opportunities in the regular schedule for students to take the course.
4. Lisa shared that she and Michelle Kurkoski are also interested in exploring “zero hour” courses, and other departments may feel the same way.
5. Noelle stated that it is so late in the year that it is not realistic for us to pilot “zero hour” or other alternative schedules for 2016/2017. However, because of stated interest in exploring these possibilities, the committee will continue to work on the issue, perhaps in small working groups as well as on our committee agenda for next year.

#### **Other issues**

1. We ran out of time to discuss two items on the agenda: possible school-wide procedures regarding homework over extended breaks, and researching weighting grades and/or “honors” classes.
2. Noelle asked all committee members to consider which issues they will want to work on so we get a fast start in the fall when we meet again.

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

1. ALL MEMBERS should decide if they will be on the committee next year, and if so, which issues would they want to work on?
2. LISA, NOELLE and CHERI will meet to create an “MSA’s Expectations for Students and Parents” document to be brought to the committee in June.

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, June 1, 2016, at 8:00am in Room 12 (*final meeting of school year*)**