

MSA Academics Committee Meeting - Minutes  
Wednesday, June 1, 2016, 8:00am, Room 12

**Present:** John Gawarecki, Romelle Pornschloegl, Maria Sustic (Spanish), Maggie Burggraaff (English), Jen Heydt-Nelson (Art), Bronwen Williams (Math), Marci Patchett (Parent), Cathy Moos (SPED), Tom Johnston (PE/Health), Noelle Haland (Chair).

**Absent:** Lisa Anderson (Social Studies), Hannah Kostichka (SPED), Cheri Howe (Science)

**Last meeting of the year - what issues will go forward into next year?**

1. Weighted grades
  - a. MSA did try weighting grades (more than 5 years ago) by weighting AP and Honors classes. Susan Mooney (former teacher and academic counsellor) reported then that colleges did not take weighted grades seriously.
  - b. Romelle asked if perhaps a shift is happening with colleges? Multiple colleges have asked her what grades would be *were they weighted*, regarding scholarships and not admission.
  - c. Weighting PSEO would be difficult if not impossible because MSA has no control over those courses and their quality. This could create a disadvantage for PSEO students if MSA grades were weighted.
2. Honors-labeled courses
  - a. Scheduling was the biggest problem when MSA had Honors courses years ago because of our small size.
  - b. We now offer AP courses in lieu of "Honors" courses. We currently offer an AP option in most disciplines: AP Lit & Comp, AP Spanish IV, AP US History, AP Studio Art, AP Calculus AB and BC, AP Statistics (alternating years), and AP Psychology (new next year).
  - c. Many in the committee agreed that MSA should not have an AP class as the only option.
3. Ongoing improvement of MSA college and academic counselling
  - a. Noelle asked if MSA hasn't become complacent in assuming colleges already understand the rigor of an MSA curriculum? Much of that in the past was because of Susan Mooney's networking with local universities but because of a few years of little happening in this area, those relationships need to be strengthened. Developing a robust School Profile is critical for all of our students applying to college. Romelle has begun these processes, and these will need to be major areas of focus for the new Academic Counsellor.
  - b. Our marketing on the elementary end is great (long waiting lists for middle school), but on the post-high school end, our marketing is majorly lacking.
  - c. Romelle noted that the counselling aspect of MSA's website is dismal. Colleges use high school websites to inform their admission and scholarship decisions.
  - d. One area of development should be profiling MSA graduates on the MSA website.
  - e. Jen will bring these marketing issues to the Communications Committee next year.
4. World's Best Workforce
  - a. We may be required to go more in depth next year; we will wait to hear from the state.
  - b. We need to be careful not to have too much emphasis be on MCAs as the major measure of success since more and more students are opting out (7 students this year, mostly 11th graders). We should consider other options in addition to MCAs to quantify and report MSA success.
5. Cross-curricular development
  - a. Do we continue as we've done this year with cross-departmental meetings to identify specific areas of cross-curricular opportunities, or should we pivot in our approach? (Age group focus? School-wide theme? Can we pinpoint certain standards that may be lacking to create a cross-curricular focus?)
  - b. The group agreed that a school-wide theme was good in the past and would be a way to promote community-building as well as address state standards and requests from our authorizer.
  - c. Possible "themes"/areas of focus - where could we have most school-wide impact?

- i. Nonfiction reading skills (an area that is lacking for many students entering MSA and seen throughout their time at MSA, eg. how students read and digest math and science textbooks)
- ii. MLA skills (useful for writing needs in all disciplines at MSA and beyond)
- iii. Cross-cultural celebrations and diversity of our community (noted in some community surveys as a needed area of growth)

#### **New staff update from John**

1. Have hired a new teacher for AP Physics, General Physics and Physical Science
2. Second interview this week for new Spanish teacher
3. Interviewing this month for new Math teacher
4. Will begin screening and interviewing for Academic Counsellor
5. Will begin search for new Business Manager

#### **Committee changes for next year**

1. Marci is leaving the committee because of her full-time teaching position
2. Kassie Larson will be taking Maria's spot representing the Spanish department
3. New Academics Counsellor will sit on the committee

#### **Meetings next year**

1. Noelle asked if anyone wanted to volunteer to chair the committee next year. If not, she will continue as chair.
2. Meetings will continue on first Wednesday of each month at 8:00am in Room 12. Next meeting is Wednesday, September 7, 2016. Meetings are open to the public.