

Academics Agenda

May 4, 2020

8:00 A.M.

Members Present: Lisa Anderson, Maggie Burggraaff, Tom Johnston, Joell Pundsack, Emily Graveen, Cheri Howe, Hannah Kostichka, Noah Langseth, Teresa Ward, Kirstin Knutson, Tara Richert, Noelle Haland, Kassie Larson, Wendell Sletten, John Gawarecki, Jennifer Heydt-Nelson

1. A form was sent out to parents/guardians of current 6th and 7th graders to register for band 2020-21. One parent asked if their child, who is retaking English 6 this year, could take both English 7 and English 8 next year as an 8th grader? (Joell)

Joell had a parent request his student take English 7 and 8 at the same time. Joell wanted to see what the committee thought about this. She is concerned about holding middle school students back based on numbers.

A concern was raised about the student being able to keep up if they are already behind. Can this student keep up with two English courses at one time? It will be twice the reading, writing, and the assignments. How will this student do this with a full course load in 8th grade? Also, scope and sequence are a concern.

Is this an issue for other middle school courses?

This is bigger than one or two students. Credit recovery options have been looked at and considered. Credit recovery has not panned out as an option for us.

Joell says there have not been many students previous to this current 7th grade class where more than usual students failed the course.

Teachers feel doubling up will only add more stress to the student. And this will set a precedent for other students in other courses who are failing.

Many feel that this particular group (7th grade) is an anomaly. This is likely not a trend, but what will this look like for high school for some of these students? Will they need to repeat middle school courses?

Who knows what will happen with this particular group after this year. Many kids who struggle in middle school, don't stay. We usually have our largest attrition numbers between 8th and 9th grade.

If this is allowed, what does this do to the elective courses?

Should the student be taking an enrichment course instead? Maybe this student should take study skills.

There should be a separate meeting for this issue. We need a plan to help support these students. There needs to be a long term plan.

A task force will be led by Joell. Emily, Kirstin, and Tom will join. Joell will send out an email to other staff members to join as well. They are hopeful a plan can be put into place soon.

2. What should Distance Learning Grading look like? Everyone

- a. Do we want to make any guidelines/suggestions? Or should we just trust individual teachers? What feedback did you hear from your departments?

Do we want to give guidance to teachers? Do we want teachers to do what is best for individual students? Do we want students to not fail courses? Do we want to let students not go below the grade prior to distance learning?

Is it up to individual teachers?

Some teachers are excusing multiple assignments, but other teachers are not following the same protocol. Some parents may ask why one teacher will do one thing and another teacher won't.

Is this fair? If we do not have a legitimate reason for missing work, is excusing assignments okay?

Should a formal letter be sent out by administration?

Should we be consistent with the same student over all subjects?

MDE says we should hold students harmless...meaning we should not fail students who were passing prior to distance learning. Students who were failing prior to distance learning are different. A D is an acceptable grade. For most courses this is passing. However, math and Spanish requirements might look different. Will the student who is not completing the work now, be successful next year?

What does hold harmless mean for us?

Do they hold the same grade prior to distance learning? Do they receive a D? Hold Harmless is for highschool students and progression towards graduation.

Gradebooks need to be looked at and adjusted for class time and assignments.

Does this dove-tail with the P/F discussion later during this meeting?

Do we forget about letter grades and go to P/F?

Will people work the system so their kids pass?

If we're going to pass every kid, then will teachers put forth the effort to instruct students and plan lessons? What would be the point of doing that if everyone is going to pass? As soon as students hear it is P/F, students may lose motivation to do the work.

We're a rigorous school. The majority of our families would not approve of this. Switching now will upset teachers, too. We've been planning for graded assignments, not P/F work.

We cannot go to P/F without informing the BOD and having a vote.

Next year will look different than it ever has before.

A blanket policy might be needed to ensure fairness and equity.

Maybe grade level teachers meet to discuss specific students. How will this work for families who have students in multiple grade levels?

John wants to trust teachers to give grades as students earn them. In the rare cases where students aren't completing work, but were passing prior to distance learning, lowering the grade one grade level down, up to a D is an option. Make sure teachers are aware that after spring break what has been assigned is worth less than what was assigned prior to that.

If they were failing prior to distance learning, then failure is an option.

That is a good guide for teachers and will be addressed by John to the staff through email.

b. Covid Delineation on the Transcript?

Do we have to put it on there? Doesn't everyone know about distance learning?

These statements need to be on there for future students, three to four years down the line.

Joell is worried about pushback from parents.

Emily feels it should be universal and should be on the transcripts. A reminder will be helpful. This will be applied to everyone.

Does it go on report cards? They are a different issue, and do not necessarily need to contain the statement.

MDE language has been shared with the staff. Joell will use that language to create a statement for the transcripts.

c. PSEO Pass/Fail grades (Emily)

Some colleges are resorting to P/F for all classes, or are letting students choose. Some students are checking with Emily wondering what this will look like on the transcript, for their GPA.

Right now P/F does not affect MSA GPA.

They will receive the credit for a course if they earned a P. There will be no change to the GPA. Individual colleges will determine what to do with the GPA they earn there.

There should be a message sent to families explaining this.

This year especially, a P in a P/F should receive credit.

3. A parent asked what AP students will do after the AP test?
Will there be assignments after the test?
Yes, the teachers will be assigning work.
4. Modified Transcript update (Lisa)
There will be a rough draft at the next meeting.
5. WBWF update (Tom)
No update.
6. Eligibility Policy update (Lisa)
What is a grade that will earn academic probation?
They are looking at changing this to an F.
The issue is that in math or Spanish there are different requirements. Should it be universal or should there be different requirements for different classes?
Students who fall under this are no longer allowed to participate in activities and must create a plan to participate again.

There will be a survey sent out to the staff. The survey should allow for a place to comment.
7. Diverse Staff Recruitment update (John)
There will be a survey going out to parents which will be utilized going forward.
8. Supplemental Online update (Emily)
Each department was supposed to go through the online courses Emily shared. There are some departments which have not completed this yet. Hopefully this can be done over the summer.
This will be more of a focus next fall.
9. Educational Program Policy update (Cheri)
Three years ago there was a major rewrite. Right now the BOD is working on this through the Policy Committee.
10. MSA Tours update (John, Shannon and Tom)
No progress on virtual tours yet.
11. Orientation update (John, Shannon and Tom)
Working on the orientation ideas that include live stream and recorded video. The hope is this will be happening in a couple of weeks for the incoming 6th graders.
No plan for new families in other grades.

12. Placement Exams (keeping on here for placeholder for the June meeting)

This will be put off until summer.

Math has been working on this. There cannot be any testing prior to the end of the school year. Over the summer, maybe they will have groups of 8-9 students at a time who are spaced out for each test. This will take much longer than usual. They are waiting for more protocols to be decided by the state. There will be some students who may refuse to come in and/or be tested. What will happen to them?

Will they just be placed and then possibly moved once school begins?

The math department will continue to discuss this.

The Spanish department is still holding off on any decisions because there are usually only a few students who are affected by this. A decision will be made later.

It was suggested that maybe these students could take both tests on the same day.

13. Planning for next year:

a. Do we want to move to one Learning Platform

Many teachers are using Google Classroom, but not all. How should this be approached?

John thinks the entire staff needs to have this discussion so teachers who are not using Google Classroom can have a say.

It would be nice for families and students to only have one platform to navigate.

Some teachers will have more work to do than others if a decision is made.

This will be on the next staff meeting agenda.

b. Thinking about going back to school in the fall with distance learning or a hybrid of distance learning/instruction: (Cheri)

Are we putting together a transition/planning team? There will be a lot to discuss moving forward.

If we begin the planning process now, we would be better off for the fall.

People (teachers, parents, students) are expecting a plan.

It was suggested these discussions begin in July.

Will this give us enough time to have a full plan? What about student safety?

Are there things we can plan for now?

Social distancing will dictate what happens. Some alternatives work at other schools that will not work for us.

We should have multiple plans.

John has four different skeletal-outlines of action plans based on what could happen or be decided by the state.

There will be calls out to the staff to help plan this. It will take everyone to make this work.

We want to make sure our academics are still rigorous.

Teachers may want to meet earlier than July. Parents would like to know we are working on plans.

- c. middle school engineering does not translate well as a distance learning class unless the whole focus is on computer programming and coding -- my class does not, I'd like to switch to a different subject (not that I want to create something all over again, but oh well. . .)

Certain classes may not be able to be taught in the fall based on this.

Engineering could be changed to something else for middle schoolers.

Art courses will likely need to be altered, as with distance learning, it will not match the course description.

Physical Education courses may need to be altered, too.

This is a large plan that needs to be worked on.

- d. Should we eliminate study halls and instead use this as an opportunity to add enrichment/elective classes?

Can there be a course offered instead?

14. Additional Items?

Next meeting: June 1 at 8:00 A.M.