

## **Minutes, ARHS Parent Center Meeting November 14, 2007**

Safe Homes update: Adrienne Levine

- 140 responses received thus far, with a data base to be built and perhaps posted on a web site. Proposals for safety included monitoring parties and ensuring that no alcohol would be made available to minors, with a future issue such as keeping firearms locked up properly to be introduced as a new issue for parents to have a dialogue about. Volunteers were urgently needed.

Presentation by English Department (Jane Baer Leighton, Departmental Chair and Sarah Barber Just, faculty member)

- A history of the Department was given, notably the self-designed and executed curriculum entirely by Departmental faculty;
- Structure of program was explained, including the introduction of genres in 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> grades, critical instruction in four key areas of skill development, and 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade choices in courses, methodologies and themes;
- Quality of program (successfully evaluated) which places Amherst English Department on level with surrounding 5 college standards;
- Heterogeneous nature of instruction, with access to all students in integrated classrooms and respect for different levels and types of learning styles and needs within the same classroom.

Parents asked a number of questions about the ways in which the integrated classroom worked, about the portfolio, about electives, and about the range of learning needs and requirements addressed by the existing curriculum and teaching methodologies. The consensus was that this presentation was useful and would benefit a wider audience that might be reached by presentations outside the dates of parent center meetings.

Mark Jackson on the budget

- Strong concern that the new cuts anticipated for 2008-2009 would lower the quality of instruction because of the impact of larger classes;
- Long-term issue of state funding needed to be addressed;
- Need to communicate better to the larger Amherst community the existing accomplishment of each Department and the quality of instruction;
- Need to strategize with local representatives to educate larger Amherst community on the nature of the budgetary process.

### Nathan Mondschien: Report of Student Representative

- Issue of changed policy in allowing 18 year old students to sign their own absence excuses a concern to older students;
- Article in Amherst Graphic newspaper expressed feelings of some (unknown) number of students;
- Principal Jackson expressed basis for change (students leaving classes without any reasonable restraint on their absence and no check on who was coming and going);
- Principal Jackson invited dialogue with students but was not returning to previous system.

### Mary Jo Maffei: Report on initiatives to increase Tutorial opportunities for students after school

- Brief history of last year's efforts;
- Development of a letter, with help of guidance department, to communicate where students can seek help;
- Development of a publicity campaign, using help from students in Art Department, to have poster contest for marketing this information;
- Need for monetary support (grant from Parent Center?) for prizes awarded in above campaign.

### Aracelli Valle: Treasurer's Report

- Present funds are at approximately \$2,700.00 left from last year;
- \$945 received thus far in response to new fund raising letter, with amounts likely to come in throughout the year.

New Business: Amherst Educational Foundation priorities for ARHS in 2007-2008 posted on their website, with new priorities to be communicated and posted as soon as possible. Mark Jackson proposed student activities funding (cut in this year's budget) and the "Benefits Package" for providing students on subsidized lunch program with supplementary support to be added.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 12, 2007