

SALMON BAY BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM (BLT) Minutes

August 25, 2014, Caitlin Racey's home

9:00am

Welcome to Salmon Bay Neil and Darren!

Present:

Neil Gerrans, principal

Darren Frink, AP

Kevin Junker, SpEd Rep

Connie Gold, Cascades Team Rep

Caitlin Racey, Office Rep

Nancy Gruber, SpEd IA Rep,

Amy Gross, K/1 Team Rep

A.J. Silva, Parent Rep (morning only)

Linda Illman, Librarian

Brian Williamson, 4/5 Team Rep

Jeff Callahan, Olympics Team (7/8th) Rep

Katie Hayes, 6th Grade Team Rep

Jon Olver, Math

Dave Middleton, 2/3 Team Rep

Markos Weiss, Counselor

Suzanne Waller, parent FOSB Co-Chair

Robin Lofstrom, FOSB Co-Chair (10:30am arrival)

1) Getting Focused: Neil shared a poem titled, *The Journey **, which inspired a thoughtful discussion about seeking 'perfection' vs. striving for excellence as a process. This discussion was followed by brief self-introductions.

2) BLT Structure Conversation: After verifying who was rep for which community groups, Neil began a discussion about the size of our current BLT. Connie shared some historical BLT representation notes from years past. Neil reviewed official district guidelines for SPS Building Leadership Teams (BLT) including size, representation, as well as leadership and record-keeping. In considering this, several representatives offered thoughts about communication challenges the BLT has faced during the last two years. Neil expressed his desire for a BLT chairperson (not Principal) to set agendas and run the meetings, and an official 'note-taker' to record minutes, as first steps toward change. Nancy Gruber volunteered to take minutes starting immediately. Additional work will be done to align our Salmon Bay (SB) BLT with guidelines in the next few weeks.

3) SB Meeting NORMS: Neil noted and shared his thoughts about the ambiguity of language in our current Meeting Norms. This prompted a lively discussion about each of the current SB meeting norms, and how each might be put into more common, clear terms. Examples:

Step Up – participate, don't stand back

Make Room – All voices are heard, don't dominate, etc.

Assume Good Will- assume positive intentions, non-judgmental

Accept & Tolerate Non-Closure – Not sure this one belongs here

Speak for Ourselves – don't generalize your opinion, but represent your team/constituency

Respect Time/Honor Time – start/end on time, get to the point, etc.

Honor the Agenda – similar to above.

Refrain from side conversations – Stay on task to help others stay on task, active listening

Follow Through with Commitments – fairly clear

Maintain confidentiality when requested – This one prompted a discussion about 'transparency' vs. the need for people to speak freely. A general consensus appeared to be that 'professional standards' were what was intended and expected

Possible new norms ideas:

Obligation to dissent, agree to accept

Active engagement in work at hand

Use professional standards when speaking and disseminating information...

Action item:

At a request from Neil, Brian and Nancy volunteered to 'word smith' new norm ideas based on this discussion for next meeting.

4) REVIEW OF RESULTS FROM JUNE 18, 2014 STAFF MEETING: Discussion began with a 'pop-corn' reading of dot-vote results gathered at the last-day-of-school meeting. Items read aloud included a variety of staff concerns such as: decision making process, rebuilding trust, effectiveness of BLT/BLT changes, need for more and effective K-8 meetings to enhance communication, and many more. Neil synthesized the list into two categories: **communication** concerns and **decision making** concerns. In a general group discussion that followed, it was agreed that these were the broad-brush issues at hand. Other specific concerns mentioned were the need for recognition/awareness of individual contributions, more administrative awareness/involvement in daily 'life' of the school, and rebuilding trust.

5) CHANNELS OF COMMUNICAITON: Neil started this conversation with questions about our basic communication tools. Who writes/builds/maintains it, sees it, uses it, etc.? Representatives gave basic info about each of the following:

-Daily Bulletin: Appears to be mainly used by middle school Homeroom/Advisories to inform students about upcoming events, school news, or opportunities. Very few hard copies are made, since it is distributed via email to teachers. Bulletin input is mostly via email, too.

- **Fusion Pages:** used more by some than others, but generally is used effectively by some (but not all) teachers to disseminate info to kids/families.

- **Panther Press:** was used in past and is more project oriented than regular communication.

- **Weekly Bulletin:** is mainly directed at parents, but is sent to staff, too.

- **SPLASH:** was previous principal's weekly update of items coming in the next week.

-**Calendar:** In order for our school to operate seamlessly, we need an effective working scheduling calendar. After consideration, Neil has decided to use an Outlook calendar as our MASTER SCHOOL CALENDAR. Dena, with help from Caitlin and Carrie, will be the 'gate-keepers' for placing items on this calendar. In addition, for simplicity's sake, he will move away from googledocs and back to more standard PC files, which can be placed on the District Server. This news was positively received by BLT members present and was followed by a thoughtful, in-depth discussion. Several members went on to offer additional requests for the Outlook Calendar to have time, size, and space of events as well as the event title, and, ideally, an identified point person for each scheduled event.

-**PC/MAC Conversation** – Open discussion on building technology: Outlook works best on PC. It was noted that there are a variety of both kinds of computers in our building, and that we have not had a robust tech committee this past year or so.

-**School Messenger** – is a tool that Neil likes to use. Currently used by Caitlin, Sharon, and a few others for mass email. This system is connected to SPS robo-calls and will likely be used more as we move forward.

-**In-Class Communication:** INTERCOM, SPEAKERS, PHONE – Always repeat message twice when using intercom! These tools are used mainly for calling kids to office, and for emergency drills, etc. Not currently used much by students for announcements.

- **Radios:** are used on-site for recess duty personnel and counselors. Some SpEd rooms have moved to CELL PHONE communication for text messages and tracking students.

Communication Discussion:

Neil shared his preference for face-to-face communication, with email or voicemail as back-up. He plans to establish open, transparent communication pathways, but will also allow for protected conversations when discretion is needed. In closing the discussion on communication, there was an open invitation for representatives to

share thoughts about communication at Salmon Bay - staff-to-staff, student-to-student, student-to-staff, etc. Concerns from the past year about respect, discipline, and follow-through were expressed. The administrators indicated their plans to address these important concerns. In addition, Robin Lofstrom voiced a pressing need to have/develop/define effective pathways for FOSB to communicate to staff.

LUNCH BREAK

6) **DECISION MAKING:** To start this agenda item off, Neil encouraged people to familiarize themselves with a book called *Systems* by Nancie Atwell, which is a book that focuses on organizing systems for educators. The strategies in this book are intended to help us communicate, give feedback and plan effective practice. The idea behind this is to maintain the freedom for individual teachers to be themselves, but to create systems that might help us support student needs consistently and effectively across all teaching teams.

- **BLT By-Laws:** Current by-laws for Salmon Bay BLT and the Decision Making Matrix are not readily available at present. If not found, we will need to create new ones. In order to expedite this process, the group divided into 5 teams to spend 10 minutes reading existing bylaws from a variety of Seattle schools, including schools such as Blaine, Lawton, and Wedgewood. When the group came back together, individuals and groups reported back with responses and ideas. Concepts that were positively noted were inclusion of clear timelines, clarification of procedures for getting ideas onto BLT agendas, roles of participants, defining quorum, clear paths for dissenting viewpoints. And there was positive feedback on the Lawton Decision Making Matrix, which was shown in a concise table format that aligned with SPS contractual agreements.
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- **Action Items:** *Brian, Katie, Neil and Linda volunteered to take on the task of creating BLT By-laws for review by this group within the next month. Caitlin offered to contact Faye to see if she has this BLT document, and Linda offered to research other archives.*

Decision-Making Discussion:

Neil opened the floor up to other general thoughts about communication. Comments ranged from concerns about avoiding 'crisis' management tactics, to effective strategies for important decision votes at SB. An example given was last year's budget vote and the decision to use school budget funds for an instructional coach or a counselor. Neil articulated the complex budgeting and solicited member input/thoughts. Strong points were made about the potential benefits of instructional coaching and additional counseling services. Markos articulated concerns about the long list of items currently on the plate for a single FTE counselor. A number of people chimed in with comments about possible alternative ways to fill needs- from potential parent academic helper, to teacher peer 'coaching', to defining limits of school-provided counseling services, and more.

7) IN CLOSING: Each member had the opportunity to share thoughts or responses about the day. A variety of positive comments were put forth expressing appreciation for the process and demeanor of the meeting. Many thanks (and enthusiastic jazz hands!) were given to Caitlin for hosting the meeting at her house!

Action Item: Neil distributed a tentative school-event calendar to ALL REPS present, and asked that everyone look over the draft calendar with their teams and get back to him with corrections/input.

Next BLT meeting will be held Tuesday, September 2, 2014 at 7:30-8:30, in Katie's room (#203).

Meeting closed at 3:40pm

***The Journey**
(anonymous)

Perfection is being right.
Excellence is willing to be wrong.
Perfection is fear.
Excellence is taking a risk.
Perfection is anger and frustration.
Excellence is powerful.
Perfection is control.
Excellence is spontaneous.
Perfection is judgment.
Excellence is accepting.
Perfection is taking.
Excellence is giving.
Perfection is doubt.
Excellence is confidence.
Perfection is pressure.
Excellence is natural.
Perfection is destination.
Excellence is the journey.