

LSA School Site Council

Meeting Date: Thursday, May 13, 2021 Time: 6:00 pm

Requested By: Rafael A. Garcia, Linden School Principal

Attendees: R. Gray, J. Nightingale, C. Cannatella, E. Garhart-Smith, E. Elliott, L. Hanifan, K. Bryson, R. Garcia, H. Provenzano

Notes

Welcome

Approval of the minutes from 4/29/21

- Approved

Public Comment

- Rachel Running/51 Bellevue/1st & 3rd graders speaking in favor of retiring uniform policy to allow students to choose what they wear. Questions why LSA has a uniform. Sites research that supports no uniform, such as uniforms are uncomfortable (especially for those with sensory issues), preppy uniform style associated with wealthy, white communities, uniform doesn't match with diversity of school/Malden, staff spending time on uniform enforcement. Would request that we look at uniform through a diversity lens. Only school in Malden with uniforms which makes it unfair, especially now that Malden sends students to neighboring schools rather than school choice.
- Cynara Cannatella's children do not think students should wear uniforms because kids should be able to pick out what they wear, because kids don't want to be the same, because they're uncomfortable, and because they don't like them.

Principal's Report

- MCAS update: Going well so far for both students in person and remote. Mrs. Scott & Mrs. Jones did an excellent job scheduling MCAS for Gr 3-8.
- Thank you to PTO for staff lunch! Thank you to Taylor family for sending in donuts!
- 5/18 Cambridge Health Alliance will be donating books to Mrs. Timmons class & the library. Mayor Christensen will join to read aloud a story to the students that day.
- Spirit day on 5/18--asking students/staff to wear red & blue to celebrate Haitian Heritage Flag day

Update on Family celebrations/events

- Ray is still working with the superintendent & Board of Health on clearance for celebrations & activities.
- Currently received clearance for Gr. K & 8 celebrations this year, similar to last year's 8th grade ceremony.
 - No food allowed per BOH.
 - Last year there was a drive through or walk up through the driveway.
 - Picked up certificates and goodies bag.
 - Students were announced and came through with staff cheering.
- Seeking alternatives to field day.
- Ray will meet with Gr K team to discuss K celebrations.
- Celebrations will be determined at the school level, not here on SSC.

Uniform Policy

- Ray shared the survey from July 2020 and results.
- Ray would like to keep the survey simple again this year.
- DEI coordinator for Malden would like to talk to families about the policy. Ray would like to provide a forum for families and community members to share comments.
- Elaine asked where the uniforms came from.
- Ray found that the uniforms were implemented when the Innovation grant was implemented.
- Rachana shared that there were several reasons that uniforms were adopted, including increasing school safety (easy to identify intruders), ease cost for families to clothe students, ease pressure to wear labels/brand names, NUT days provide opportunity for no uniform. Rachana has research that was used to initially make the decision.
 - [Parentuniformletter.doc](#)
 - [uniformreport-\(2\).docx](#)
 - Emails also forwarded to LSA SSC from initial decision making process around uniforms.
- Anonymous Attendee: I feel like another year of no uniform will be great, due to parents may still be out work and working less and may not be able to buy uniforms.
- Cynara shared that she looks forward to hearing from parents and families regarding the uniforms.
 - I have a lot of thoughts, as I'm sure do all of you – so I wrote them down with the hope that I make a little bit of sense tonight.
 - I've spent a lot of time over the last few weeks giving this serious thought, talking to parents, teachers, students and community leaders, and doing some reading.
 - While there may be some benefits to uniforms, I haven't seen these benefits conclusively demonstrated anywhere. There is no data I have found to support the claims that uniforms improve behavior, school spirit or student success. In fact, the data I have found tends to suggest otherwise.
 - Furthermore, and more importantly, uniforms carry a long history of colonialism and patriarchy.
 - For all students, but particularly for our students of color, our girls, our LGBTQ+ students, uniforms can represent policing and a loss of agency. Many students feel robbed of their self-expression.
 - Female and students of color are the kids most often found in violation of uniform policies, with black girls being the hardest hit.
 - Uniform policies are most frequently found in poor schools. [According to a 2016 study](#) by the National Center for Education Statistics, [school uniforms were required at fifty-three percent of schools where three-quarters of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. But, of schools where fewer than a quarter of students were so eligible, only four per cent required uniforms](#)
 - I have heard the argument that “school uniforms bring an image of success to students and teachers.” This depends on how you define success. Today the most successful people wear whatever they want. In creative sectors, science and technology, casual dress is the norm. I am an engineer and this is what I wear to work every day. I would not be any more successful if I wore a suit to work and this is the nature of our evolving workplace cultures. I have also heard that uniforms help train students for the workforce. I've been working in my field for 15 years and only the sales people wear suits.

- This is typical in STEM fields. So I don't see uniforms in a STEAM academy as prepping kids to go into STEM fields, I see them as training our students to fit into an ever narrowing workforce that requires employees to wear uniforms.
- I see more ties to the school to prison pipeline where uniforms are a way to homogenize those with the least amount of power, students of color, poor kids, young people, girls.
- There is also some evidence that student self perception is harmed by uniform policies.
- In the National Association of School Principals Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments, and the Harter Self-Perception Profile for Children. **In the National Association of School Principals Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments, Participants consisted of 415 urban public middle school students and 83 teachers. Findings indicate that, that students from schools without uniforms reported higher self-perception scores than students from schools with uniform policies.** Student and teacher perceptions of school climate did not vary across uniform policy."
- This is a paraphrased excerpt I read from an essay about School Uniform Colonialism:
- "School uniforms are not universally utilized throughout the world. In fact, across the globe people of color are significantly more likely to attend a school that mandates uniforms. Given this, one might postulate that communities of color value school uniforms and therefore, utilize them more often. Research suggests that this is not the case. It demonstrates the role that colonialism and systemic oppression play in the widespread use of uniforms on students of color. This is increasingly problematic as it sends implicit messages to children about their ability to make decisions and their place in society."
- In summary:
- I don't think we should need uniforms to keep kids in line. I give our teachers and our students more credit than that.
- I don't think kids need uniforms to feel pride or a sense of community.
- I don't think they bring income equality – the focus becomes on shoes for most kids, and many kids get free hand me downs and can't utilize them when there is a uniform policy in place.
- Requiring uniforms is completely incompatible with any efforts to decolonize MPS curriculum or culture at Linden. Suspending the uniform requirement is a critical step towards creating an anti-racist learning environment for our students.
- <https://journalistsresource.org/education/school-uniforms-research-achievement/>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-unquestioned-goodness-of-school-uniforms>
- <https://www.cram.com/essay/Colonialism-In-School-Uniform/PK85WQ53GZ3W>
- <https://www.weareteachers.com/school-dress-codes-diversity/>
- <https://nwlc.org/resources/dresscoded/>
- <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2018/9/13/17847542/students-waging-war-sexist-racist-school-dress-codes>
- <https://hechingerreport.org/dress-codes-are-the-new-whites-only-signs/>
- Lisa shared that without school choice it doesn't seem fair for students at Linden to be the only ones required to wear uniforms. Lisa thinks that this vote should be more for families than for staff. As a teacher, it's really difficult to enforce the uniform policy and not a top priority as a teacher. Lisa questions what the goal of uniforms is.

- Kymberly shared that even though there are many stores that sell uniform pieces, they are not always a great fit for students. We're asking students to wear something that they are uncomfortable in which hinders their productivity.
- Jasna asked what the impact of the survey and forums will be.
 - Ray shared that the survey and forums will be shared with SSC members and we will vote.
 - Elaine suggested that we survey parents.
 - Jasna also asked if it would be possible to suggest a more relaxed uniforms?
 - Jasna suggested we share research on both sides along with survey.
- Eden shared that she likes that students are not walking advertisements wearing the current brands.
- Is there a current uniform policy?
 - Elaine has it & can share.
 - Ray shared that his understanding was the uniform policy was more about colors than clothing.
 - Rachana shared that it was about the colors more than exact clothing articles when the governing board decided on the uniforms approximately 7 years ago.
- Ray shared that not having uniforms this year has cut down on the policing. He shared prior experience on a campus where students had to wear certain colors and all black shoes, which led to many suspensions due to uniform violations and difficult, escalating conversations about these uniform violations.
- Suggestion to Survey update 2020:
 - Option 1: Keep uniforms.
 - Option 2: No uniforms.
 - Comment section.
- Proposed plan:
 - Send through X2. Schedule forum. Keep survey open for 1 week. Review survey & forum results on 5/26. Vote on 5/26.

New Items

- Next meeting will focus on uniform decision.
- Need to recruit new parent members for SSC.
 - Task force to identify next steps
 - Collaborate with PTO
 - Ray will send emails and connect-ed call
- Acknowledge & thank PTO from SSC
 - Denise, Jade, & Waldina

Personal Privilege

- Eden wanted to say thank you. Eden also was wondering when pictures came out-some have arrived and more are coming in.
- Elaine wanted to say thank you for information on uniforms. Lisa seconds that.
- Ray thanked everyone for history on the uniform policy.