

Blanche Ames School Council  
Minutes of April 24, 2023

Members in attendance: Sam Cederbaum, Betsey Clifford, Stacey Friedrich, Sam Hill, Jamie Isherwood, Sumi Loomis, Julie Paul, Lisa Resca, Melissa Scarry, Scott Turecek

Mr. Cederbaum called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

The first agenda item is to vote to approve the minutes from our last meeting on March 31, 2023. Mr. Cederbaum asks if anyone has any changes to the minutes. Hearing none, he asks for a motion to approve the minutes.

Mrs. Paul makes a motion to approve the minutes which is seconded by Mrs. Clifford. After a roll call vote the minutes of the March 31, 2023 meeting are approved unanimously 9-0.

Mr. Cederbaum states that the next agenda item is to discuss the 2023-2024 School Improvement Plan for Blanche Ames. He shares that he will be presenting the plan to the School Committee at their May 25, 2023 meeting. He asks if we want to have a theme for next year's plan.

Mrs. Resca states that she likes when we've had a theme. Mr. Cederbaum shares themes from the past such as Choose Kind and Reading is An Adventure. Mrs. Clifford also like the idea of a theme and wonders if one that is literacy focused makes sense since we are adopting a new literacy program next year.

Mr. Cederbaum reviews the first goal on the plan. This goal focuses on the transition to Blanche Ames. He discusses building in more professional development time so that the staff can continue to build relationships with their colleagues and really develop the community of the school.

Mr. Cederbaum then moves onto the second goal of the plan which focuses on PBIS and SEL. He describes the PBIS model that was developed and implemented as well as the use of the Second Steps curriculum for our social emotional learning. This goal will also include action steps of bringing the PreK-2 PBIS team back together, ensuring fidelity in the use of Second Step, and strengthening our SEL and PBIS.

Mr. Cederbaum also describes bringing back the use of the DESSA-mini universal screener for SEL. Ms. Scarry asks about the DESSA screener. Mr. Cederbaum explains that the DESSA-mini is short for the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment. It is administered three times a year similar to the CBM assessments we currently use. The data collected is then able to follow students from PreK through grade 5. Ms. Scarry thinks that using the DESSA-mini will be very beneficial for our students and our move to Blanche Ames.

Mr. Cederbaum explains that the third goal of the plan has traditionally been the curriculum plan. This coming year we will be adopting Wit & Wisdom in grades K-6 in addition to using Foundations and Heggerty.

He then asks the group for their thoughts on any additional goal. At the last meeting a DEI goal was mentioned by the members. Ms. Clifford wonders if inclusivity can be the theme with the goals focused on the staff coming together as a community, the continued SEL and PBIS work, as well as the differentiation and scaffolding of the new literacy program to meet the needs of all learners. Ms. Friedrich suggests a theme around inclusivity and unity.

Mr. Cederbaum then asks the Council what types of action steps might be included in this type of theme. Ms. Clifford suggests building inclusive action steps into all three of the goals previously described such as meeting the needs of all learners especially our growing EL population. Ms. Isherwood mentions the use of artwork, photographs, or murals to create a welcoming space for students.

Mr. Cederbaum states that he will work on a draft Improvement Plan and have that to the group for their review prior to the next meeting. He also mentions that the next School Council Meeting is scheduled for the same date, May 25, as the School Committee meeting. He suggests meeting earlier as a School Council to review the Improvement Plan. He suggests 5/18, 5/19, 5/22, or 5/23. The Council decides on 5/23 as the next meeting date.

Ms. Resca states that when developing action steps around diversity and inclusion, continued collaboration with RMK would be good to add. Mr. Cederbaum acknowledges that RMK is a great resource and partner with the Easton Public Schools.

Mr. Cederbaum states that the last item on tonight's agenda is the continued discussion of the PreK-2 Handbook. He reminds the Council that the handbook is currently developed by Central Office staff but that he would like to look at it from the building level. He shares that Mr. Getchell will be heading up a PreK-5 Handbook Committee. Mr. Cederbaum shares that he would like one member of the School Council to also serve on the Handbook Committee and be the conduit between the two committees. This committee will help align protocols and procedures from PreK through grade 5. He reminds the committee that ideally we would want to approve the handbook as close to the beginning of the year as possible so that the School Committee can approve it.

Ms. Clifford states that she has looked through the handbooks and in addition to policies and procedures, many also have sections with programs of studies. Mr. Cederbaum agrees with Ms. Clifford and would like to see our handbook include all of these components as well as our PBIS model. This would allow all families to see what we are practicing in school with our students on a daily basis.

Ms. Hill states that a question that comes up often is student absences. Mr. Cederbaum states that this is a much larger discussion taking place at the administrative level across the district. He reviews DESE attendance policy with the Council. He states that once policies and protocols are fine tuned by the administrative team, they will get added to the district's handbooks for all to see.

Mrs. Paul states that if we add curricular components to the handbook we can look to Mrs. Weintrob, Director of Curriculum & EL, for support.

Mr. Cederbaum revisits the idea of a school needs survey with the Council that can be administered at the beginning of next school year. Ms. Scarry asks for survey templates and questions to be shared with the Council.

Ms. Hill asks about the term limit on School Council thinking it is a three year term. Mr. Cederbaum isn't sure and states that he would investigate and report back.

Ms. Friedrich asks for an update on the fields and playgrounds. Mr. Cederbaum reports that the construction company has not provided a firm date as of yet. The playground closest to the front doors has all of the equipment in, and the bouncy surfacing is installed. The bus loop is completed minus the painting and decorations on the asphalt. They are currently putting in all of the play structures for the large playground the backstop is in and all of the sod has been laid on the soccer field. Mr. Cederbaum is hoping by the May meeting that students will be able to play on the new spaces.

Mr. Cederbaum seeks a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Clifford makes the motion, seconded by Ms. Scarry. Mr. Cederbaum adjourns the meeting at 6:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sam Cederbaum