

Westhill School Governance Council 2015 – 2016  
Meeting Minutes  
November 9, 2015

**In attendance:**

- Faculty: Camille Figluizzi, Richard Ceroni, Maria DeAngelis, Mark Magisani
- Parents: Sue Bria; Jenny Fuchs, David Greenberg, Richard Nohe, Rick Smeriglio, Patty Denham Travaglino, Alyssa Wallen

**Meeting minutes**

- Following introductions, Camille provided all participants with a School Governance Council binder
- David introduced the first order of business: choosing a secretary. Patty volunteered.
- David welcomed new participants to the Council, noting that a higher number of parents ran for the position this year than in past years, and that it's typically been a challenge to elect community members
- The reason why Westhill has a School Governance Council (SGC) is its status as an alliance school, which indicates there are huge achievement gaps among the student body in standard tests.
- In past years the Westhill SCG has tackled these issues:
  - Participating in hiring process for assistant vice principal positions
  - Focused on school achievement data showing that the transition from eight grade to ninth grade was difficult, with grades declining for most students.
  - As a result of the focus on transitions, upper classmen visited Turn of River Middle School in the spring of 2015 to meet with eighth graders and discuss what to expect
  - Camille has attended Stamford Neighbors Link (mission: To strengthen the whole community by actively enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants) meetings, to bring a bit of Westhill and the SGC to a population that is less likely to come to WesthillMost of the SCG work has been based on data about the school (performance data, survey results, etc.)
- The group discussed completing its membership roster:
  1. Camille will bring forward two students to serve on the Council. It will be important for us to focus on issues that are relevant to them and that they can engage in as members. These students will likely come from the successful Land Crew program.
  2. Community representatives: There are no specific roles required of community representatives. Given their vested interest in Westhill and desire to participate, David suggested extending invitations to Jennifer DiGiacomo and Sandy Menendez-Aponte, both of whom ran for the SGC and received substantial numbers of votes. Their membership is pending their acceptance after David contacts them.
- The group identified and evaluated issues to focus on for the 2015 - 2016 school year:
  - Transitions beyond eighth grade to ninth, including the junior year transition to focusing on college and / or life after high school
  - Data that may come out of the 2014 -2015 school climate survey (note: the survey changed last year, making year-over-year comparisons tricky)

- How to improve school-parent communications
- Mental health of students, encompassing everything from anxiety / pressure to perform to more serious issues, which Mark indicated he sees on a regular basis
- Expanding Land Crew, juniors and seniors who mentor freshmen in their advisory classes throughout the year (while this program costs money to administer, it has two-pronged success: it benefits freshmen while also building leadership skills in the upperclassmen who participate as mentors) – potentially to include sophomore participation as mentors
- Supporting sophomores, who are in an in-between year (no longer receiving the focused mentoring that freshman receive; not yet focused on college and the out-of-high-school transition)
- Getting more parents to use the Parent Portal / PowerSchool to stay connected with their students' classwork, grades and attendance
- Social media: providing students with tools to use it successfully; exploring the links between the immediate gratification culture perpetuated by social media, mental health, and focus; understanding what tools / resources other schools deploy around social media that could have a positive impact at Westhill
- Parent mentoring: because parental involvement drives student achievement, start with the parents who are already involved and contact (phone / email / social media) other parents to draw them into programs that benefit parents such as Parenting University
- The group had general consensus that there was value in exploring the following four issues:
  - Expanding Land Crew
  - Social media
  - Mental health
  - Parent mentoring
- The next meeting will be held on Monday, December 7 from 6:15 – 7:30 pm in the Westhill Media Center. All parents welcome.