

Walnut Hills High School
Local Decision Making Committee Meeting

November 14, 2019

6:00PM

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Laura Stith Deck, John Chambers, Jessica Smitson, Ashley Morgan, Richard Graeter, Sylvia Nelson, Judy Neff, Francesca Bownas-Rayburn, Lisa Brokamp, Brad Smith, Terrance Poole, Dillon Vorherr, Matthew Eggars

Guest: Sofia Tollefson

Not in attendance: Rich Coleman

1. Approval of October Minutes (as amended)

- Motion to approve L. Brokamp, seconded by J. Neff; all approve

2. Old business

○ **Distinguished grad discussion –**

- Review letter to the school community (*see end of minutes for copy of letter*)
- Written communication will roll out officially to staff first.
- Distinguished Scholar title is not all Latin. Scholar is not a Latin word and using the Distinguished Student doesn't have the same ring to it. Consideration given for one Latin word "Insignis" and one English word "Scholar"
 - Decision to stick with English title of Distinguished Scholar
- Criteria for how a student can apply to be a Distinguished Scholar is laid out in the letter
- Motion to accept the letter and concept made by L. Brokamp, seconded by R. Graeter; all approve
- Letter will be shared with faculty first on Monday morning, go out in the Under the Dome Newsletter, posted on website and feature in a Chatterbox story.

○ **Mental wellness update**

- National Kindness Day: took posters around the school and spotted acts of kindness, snapped some photos; Boo Radley Kindness Day focus
- Dr. Michael Sorter, Director of Adolescent Psychiatry at CCHMC, presented at the Special Parent Board Association Meeting on November 13 on the topic of Adolescent Brain Development. We had approximately 50 parents and staff in attendance.
- Continue to have monthly meetings with 1N5 Director Nancy Miller and WHHS parents focused on the mental well-being of our students

○ **Entrance exam – Iowa test**

- WHHS administered the paper version of the IOWA test to our 7th (IOWA 7) and 8th graders (IOWA 8) to familiarize students with the IOWA test format.
 - These scores have not been received as of 11.14.19
- CPS 6th graders, for the most part, took the online version of the test.
- This is the first time the SCPP has been given online and the scores indicate that the 6th grade students may not be comfortable with the online testing platform.
- Scores: Mr. Chambers' conversation with the testing department ~260 6th grade students passed the test at the 70th percentile on the first try. The first round of testing generally has ~400 students reach the 70th percentile.
- Some of our underrepresented schools had a higher number of students passing the test in this first round.
- Close to 400 students are scheduled for the first round of re-takes on 11.16.19.
 - The test will be the paper/pencil test.
 - Students have an option to retake both math and reading portions of the test, or just the part that they did not pass the first time.
 - Students need a composite score of 140 points, with no score lower than 65.
 - With retakes, the higher of the two scores will be used for admission purposes.
- Students can take the test up to twice per school year
- Expect one month turn around for the paper/pencil test results

- Terra Nova: If a student prior to the 2019 change to the IOWA test has passed the SCPP Terra Nova test they can use that score for admission to Walnut Hills.
 - IOWA test is starting with the 2020-21 first time test takers
- All CPS students who have scored a composite of 140 on the SCPP test and has registered at one of the three registration dates in January-March will be guaranteed a space at Walnut Hills in 2020-21 school year.

3. Principal's report

- None

4. ILT Report (October)

- Update the PSAT day schedule
- ILT requested more paraprofessionals for students who need extended time
- Discussed block scheduling
- Overload update
 - Minutes say 1 teacher is overloaded, but the paperwork says 2 teachers are on overload this year
- Science department proposal to split AP Physics 1 and 2 to 2 full year courses
- Master schedule process
 - Discussion regarding double bell math and science courses

5. Student Report

- *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* was last week and went well!
- Senior Night Band students at our last football game on November 1, 2019
- Eagle Buddies had "preparing students for exams strategies" session on 11/13. There was a good turnout.
- Letter going around that parents signed. Parents and students are upset about the schedule (math and science classes as reported by ILT)
- Pep Rally December 6 (ILT still needs to vote) will possibly be over two days
- Books for Kids: CCHMC and Walnut students are paired up. Walnut students are artists and writers. They meet with a child from CCHMC and get an idea for a book from the child and then write out the story and illustrate it, eventually sending it out for printing and binding.
 - Students hold a fundraiser to raise monies to print books
 - Also received a SOAR grant from the Parent Association to go toward funding the printing
 - Mr. Stocker is the Advisor for the project
 - T. Poole requests Sofia Tollefson come and share out at the Alumni meeting
 - Parent Report

6. Community Report

- Evanston is a Thriving Community brochure highlights Walnut Hills for Report Card grade of A.
- Alumni Foundation meeting on Tuesday
- Evanston has a 5K in the spring

7. Parent Report

- Concerns about the IOWA test and the number of students who did not score high enough to enter Walnut Hills
- Concerns about the last football game between Withrow and Walnut Hills that ended with a fight.
 - Is there anything we can do as a peace offering or extending the olive branch prior to basketball season?
 - Possibly Thanksgiving dinners?
 - Ashley will reach out to Josh Hardin for ideas
 - We are ONE!

8. Other Business

- 2019-2020 Districtwide LSDMC Meeting Schedule (6-7:30p - **Meetings are located at the CPS Education Center in the Mayerson Banquet Room – 2651 Burnet Avenue.**
 - Wed 11/20/2019 – All current LSDMC members
 - Wed 3/4/2020 – All current LSDMC members
 - Wed 4/22/2020 – All current LSDMC members

○ Other?

9. **Next meeting** – Thursday December 19 at 6p

10. **Motion for adjournment** made by R. Graeter and seconded by L. Stith Deck; all approve. Meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.



November 14, 2019

Dear Walnut Hills School Community,

The Walnut Hills Local School Decision Making Committee made the decision to eliminate class rank beginning with the class of 2021. The Walnut Hills LSDMC recognizes the importance of rigorous, challenging coursework, a diversified learning experience, and the personal and emotional growth of every student. The elimination of class rank does not affect our commitment to these values. Academic excellence will continue to be recognized and celebrated. Key considerations in coming to this decision include:

- The differences in grade-point averages among our highest achieving students are statistically insignificant, often less than one-hundredth of a point. Many students with strong grade point averages at Walnut Hills are not ranked in the top 20% of the class. Our students, who are among the best in the nation, are sometimes overlooked for admission to colleges or receipt of scholarships solely due to class rank. We desire for colleges and scholarships to view the whole student, not just a ranking among an above average peer group.
- Over 60% of high schools across the country no longer rank their students. This is not adversely affecting entry into college. In fact, the opposite is happening. When colleges do not have class rank, they more holistically evaluate a student for admission and rely more on the rigor of the high school curriculum, involvement in the school community, writing samples, and letters of recommendation. Data from colleges shows the importance of class rank has drastically dropped over the past decade.
- Competition and stress about class rank is adversely affecting the mental well-being of our students. Students are not enrolling in courses they are interested in; rather, they are enrolling in courses that will give them the most credit toward class rank. Some students are giving up their summers to take classes, and are taking heavy course loads solely to move them higher in the class rank structure.

Elimination of class rank means that there will no longer be identification of a Valedictorian or Salutatorian. Consequently, the LSDMC spent time determining how a speaker at graduation will be chosen. Beginning with the Class of 2021, the graduation speaker will be called Distinguished Scholar and there will be 2 main areas of emphasis for selection of this role. In keeping with Walnut Hills High School's tradition of excellence in academics, the Distinguished Scholar will be chosen from the top 20% of the students who are graduating Cum Laude. Cum Laude is a way to honor high scholastic achievement and includes no more than 20% of the graduating class. For more information about Cum Laude, please visit www.cumlaudesociety.org. In addition to high academic achievement, a student who has been actively involved in and positively contributing to the WHHS community will be sought.

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OFFICE 1-513-363-8400 FAX 1-513-363-8420

Students who meet the following criteria will be invited to apply for Distinguished Scholar:

- In the top 20% of the students who are graduating Cum Laude
- Have attended Walnut Hills High School for at least 5 consecutive years

Students must submit a completed application by the stated deadline. Late applications will not be accepted. The application will include the student's resume, an essay written by the student, and a letter of recommendation written by a coach, community member, or club advisor. Applications will be reviewed by a committee selected by the Principal and will include:

- Principal
- 2 Teachers
- Cum Laude committee member
- 1 WHHS Alumnus, at least 5 year post-graduation

No committee members will be the parent of a current Walnut Hills High School student. Committee members will be "blind reviewers" who will only see applications with names redacted.

Please understand that the LSDMC considered these decisions seriously and over a great length of time. We gathered data, looked at the research, and interviewed other high achieving high schools who have eliminated class rank. We are confident that this decision is in the best interest of the students at Walnut Hills High School.

Sincerely,



John Chambers
Principal, Walnut Hills High School



Laura Stith Deck
LSDMC Chair, Walnut Hills High School

References regarding class rank:

<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2019/03/01/high-school-ranking-would-you-rather-top-of-the-class-or-suma-cum-laude/3014665002/>

<https://www.collegedata.com/en/prepare-and-apply/strengthen-your-chances/how-colleges-admit-students/what-matters-most-to-colleges/>

https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018_soca/socal8.pdf

<https://www.ivycoach.com/the-ivy-coach-blog/college-admissions/decline-of-class-rank/>

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED538327.pdf>