

***Student Council Notes - Class Orientation for First Grade
March 8, 2016***

Started: 3:35

Present: Jackie, Renée, Jen C, Deb Lee, MaryAnne, Nancy, Rebecca F, Kathryn F, Melissa W, Casey Grant, Jaime Donta, Jeanne Brown (6 parents present)

Jackie: Welcomed everyone. Explained that 6 students for first grade is not enough for a full classroom. Described what is currently happening with a pre-k/K. Explained options:

1. 6 age appropriate students move together to first grade and we open 6 school choice places (class of 12)
2. all students currently in PreK-K move ahead as a cohort with no school choice (K-1st grade)
3. move some of the cohort and open 4-5 school choice seats (class of 15-16) "hybrid option" and siblings will be able to attend. (K-1st grade)

Nancy: discussed social interactions among the cohort of students currently the PreK-K: excellent working relationships, strong social friendship, working through challenges together; one of the best group of students she has ever seen; very cohesive.

Deb and Renee: gave examples of how the students from this group balance each other out and support each other.

Jackie: explained what might happen if the school choice seats are not filled - "tricky". Talked about opening 6 seats in first grade and one seat for siblings for every other grade.

Jaime Donta: Asked about the high levels of boys. Jackie explained that she cannot pick and choose students based on gender or any other specifics. It would be a lottery.

Melissa: Voiced concern of the 'unknown' - does not know when decision will be made, who will join them, concerned that the older students are already all boys and to get more boys would make even things more unbalanced. She intentionally kept her daughter back because she has a summer birthday and can be anxious. Does not want her daughter to move with cohort.

Kathryn F: her son wants to stay with cohort; would love to have him be part of this group.

Jen C: talked about how her class has strong students and weaker students and functions similarly to a mixed grade even though the students are same age peers.

Renee: gave examples from the upper grades working well both as mixed age levels and as a straight grade - mixed grades give students the opportunity to be leaders or be supported by peers; more opportunities to meet new friends and prepares students better for middle school through rotations.

Nancy: talked about the model for math so peers are taught together.

Deb Lee: read a note from Sally (Betsy's mom) very positive; her daughter has bonded and wants her to stay with the cohort; ready for academics and wants her in a mixed group.

Jackie: spoke for Colleen (Brian's mom) very positive; thinks the group is cohesive; does not want to underestimate the power of the group getting along.

Rebecca: worried that with growth of kids, if we get several students, we may need additional support; feels the group is thriving; asked about creating a 1/2 class as an option.

Jackie: yes, school choice is 'risky' but the numbers are so low that we need to have new students; there are 19 students in what will be the 2nd grade so that will not work - too big.

Open discussion about concerns and comparisons of other schools in Leverett, Pelham, Amherst. Jackie explained new configuration in Amherst schools.

Renee and Nancy: K-1-2 teaching team works well together > planning; talking about cohesive curriculums; social issues. Renee also noted that this continues through the older grades with a strong teaching team in 5/6 and good associations with ARMS for transitions.

4:30 Jackie adjourned the public discussion and School Council continued to talk about other issues.

School Council continued discussing split grads vs. whole grades, population and school choice.