SGC Minutes – November 7, 2016

Meeting was called to order at 3:21

Present were the following members: Susan Heilweil, Cristina Montanez, Evelyn Alicea, Sylvia J. Roszkowski, Peter Martinez, Luis Planas, Kristen Clark, Evelin Del Cid, Patricia de Freitas.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT - Dr. Planas noted the “See Something, Say Something” presented which was given at the school recently. Ms. Clark brought the program to MCM and it received outstanding review by the middle school students and staff members. The program is presented by the Sandy Hook Foundation and is sourced solely through donations. The presenters discuss topics which affect many middle school students, such as social media incidents, threats, harming themselves, and suicide. Ms. Clark asked if it would be possible to take up a donation from our school/middle school classes to present to the Foundation.

Dr. Planas also noted there was a great deal of participation and volunteer assistance for both Hispanic Heritage, the Fall Festival, and Trunk or Treat. He thanks all who were involved for their assistance and support. He also wants to thank Mr. Green, who once again kindly offered to supply food “baskets” to families in need during the holiday season as part of our Giving Tree program. Thank you also to Ms. Quinn and Mrs. Heilweil for working with Mr. Green on this endeavor. Thank you also to Mrs. Heilweil for agreeing to oversee our Giving Tree program.

He also wants to share his admiration for those who took part in the fundraiser for the Castillo family. More than $3,000 was raised; $400 from MCM alone.

The Reading Marathon was a huge success. More than $15,000 was raised this year, with more money still coming in. Special thanks to Sylma Vasconcellos, Cecile Lobo, Debbie Williams, Monse Vargas, Marcia Carvalho, and Sylvia Roszkowski.

Both Mrs. Alicea and Mrs. Montanez are extremely pleased with the assistance they are receiving from the SHU interns. They both stated the students come to their classroom with prepared activities and they all strive to collaborate with them and share materials. All instruction has been literacy based, which is extremely helpful. It was noted the interns will be coming the night of the PAC meeting to assist in activities. Mrs. Alicea inquired as to whether the same interns will be returning after the winter break. It is not sure at this time how many will return, based on the courses they will be taking during the Spring semester. Mrs. Alicea also mentioned Ms. Victoria, who comes to volunteer in her classroom each Monday. Mrs. Freitas mentioned how much she likes the idea of the SHU students working with our students. She wondered if they might be available to assist students whose parents don’t speak any English or very limited English. Mrs. Montanez said she has a volunteer who comes in once a week and that Mrs. Rua helps students in this situation as well. It was suggested that this topic be discussed at a PAC meeting so that parents can share the strategies they are using at home to assist their children. Mrs. Montanez agreed that the main language of several parents is not English, so parents speaking mostly Portuguese or Spanish at home may appreciate the extra information and assistance. Mrs. Del Cid shared the fact she uses a word reference app on her phone.

Bullying was mentioned as a concern. It was felt some students might have a problem talking with an adult. It was asked if it would be possible for a 3rd party to come and teach the students about ways to approach bullying situations. In light of the success of the “See Something, Say Something” program it was suggested this would be a good topic to address with the students.

Dr. Planas has requested that all topics for future SGC meetings be emailed to Mrs. Alicea no later than the Thursday prior to the meeting so he has sufficient time to include it in the agenda.

Ms. Clark reported the Moby Max program has been very well received. She also mentioned the Typing Pal program is a valuable tool for our students. The cost of the program is $180. We split the subscription with High Horizons. It is up for renewal. She stated it has been funded in past years by PAC. Dr. Planas added how necessary this program is in preparing our third grade students for the computer based SBAC testing. Ms. Clark said she offers the program to grades 3-6, since the younger grades are just learning the keyboard (hunt and peck style).

Ms. Clark discussed the recent Educators and Computers workshop she attended. Three companies has projectable equipment that can be attached to the class computers and Smart Boards. ELMO’s are very high end projectables (they can go up to $900 a piece). ELMO’s offer many options, such as recording and camera features. We have one which she received at the workshop. Another projectable she received from the workshop is called ZIGGY. It is similar to an ELMO insofar as its projection ability. These sell for $87.50. She noted the teachers who have used the ELMO love it. Mrs. Heilweil purchased one for her classroom this year and said it very useful for novel studies, displaying information from other sources outside school sources, and providing opportunities for close up exploration of materials. It was suggested that either monies from fundraisers or requests for donations of equipment from the companies selling them be considered in order to provide each classroom with a ZIGGY. Ms. Clark has the contact information for the companies.

MCM is still considering the purchase of new laminating equipment and supplies. Options are still being weighed between hot and cold laminating equipment. Dr. Planas noted this topic will be discussed with PAC.

Two of our annual writing contests are under way. Ms. Shannon Shea has taken on the responsibility of overseeing the Poetry for Peace contest, opened to students in grades K-8. Mrs. Heilweil will once again be the coordinator of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay contest. Both contests are sponsored by Fairfield University. Our students have been highly successful in both these contests for several years. The Poetry for Peace submissions were sent to FU last week, and the MLK submissions will be due mid-December.

MCM faculty and staff recently attended a mandated reporting workshop, which is given each year. Dr. Planas explained that as educators we are required by law to report to the authorities information concerning students who we suspect are being abused or neglected by their parents/guardians. In addition to this training, teachers will be attending workshops throughout the district on Election Day.

Important dates coming up:

November 16 – 5:00-7:30 and November 17 – 1:30-4:00 are Report Card Conferences.

SGC elections will be held in the Spring. Mrs. Alicea tenure will end this year. It was once again suggested that if more than one person ends their tenure they be given an opportunity to sign on for an additional year, with the thought being it would make transitions more seamless. If many people have ended their tenure at the same time, it would be more challenging in establishing the roles of each team member.

Student Recognition Ceremony – this time it will be held November 22 at 9:15 in the Thurgood Marshall Auditorium. This assembly will now be held for students in K-3rd grade because it was felt these are the students that are impacted by it and most eager to be recognized.

Mrs. Vilanova is in the process of connecting parents to teachers needing volunteers to help out either in their classroom or with copying, lunch duty. This new initiative to assist parents in finding ways to volunteer will be shared with PAC at their next meeting. Information will also be available on our school website and Facebook page. Mrs. Roszkowski asked about the system we used to use for parents signing on to volunteer. Dr. Planas explained the district made changes concerning volunteer requirements. It is no longer mandatory for parents to volunteer ten hour per week; it is strongly encouraged. Due to this change it was decided to not renew the annual license and to not use the system. He shared we are trying to find alternative ways of recording volunteer hours. The laptops that were being utilized for this system are now being used for SRBI purposes.

OLD BUSINESS - Debbie Williams is still working on ways to improve the MCM field, and Dr. Planas said he would continue to discuss this project with her. Mr. Gomes has been contacted concerning the building of a new playground. Mrs. Roszkowski mentioned once again the possibility of MCM doing a fundraiser through the sponsorship of Bass Pro Shop. She said it would be great if we could get teams together to do the gift-wrapping fundraiser they are offering. She needs dates, times and volunteers. It was suggested perhaps NJHS an Student Council members could help out. Mrs. Heilweil offered to talk with both Mrs. Tarnowski and Mrs. Sarmiento about this idea and to have them contact Mrs. Roszkowski for more information. Mrs. Alicea suggested the possibility of teacher teams.

Kindergarten is still collecting bottles and cans. Please ask everyone for donations.

Our next meeting will be held on Monday, December 5th. Mrs. Del Cid and Mr. Martinez will be providing the refreshments. Thank you so much!

The minutes from this meeting will be approved at our next meeting – Dec. 5th.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:25.