PSD School Board Meeting January 27th 2017

Minutes taken by Kimberly McGlinchey

1. Introduction- Leslie Steven’s opened the meeting with clarification on the method of public commentary for the night. She stated that the time limit for speaking was 3 minutes and that they would strictly adhere to that in the essence of time. She stated that she wanted folks to know that there had been no decision made on the Honor’s program and that this was an opportunity to hear more information about the decision. She also stated that the Board would not be voting on the issue as it is not in their practice nor their policy to vote on these types of issues.
2. Public Comment
   1. There were 17 people who commented on the Honor’s program and Arts program. Of the 17 only two commented on the Arts.
   2. Honor’s commentary- people were from both Portsmouth and Rye. The following reasons were given for keeping Freshmen Honors
      1. Academic challenge and Rigor
      2. Ability to be with likeminded kids who want to learn and enjoy learning
      3. Social identity and dynamics
      4. Need freshmen program to ready themselves for years ahead and AP courses
      5. Don’t understand why 9th grade teachers are any better than 8th grade teachers at picking students.
      6. Top 12 High Schools have some form of freshmen honors with an override
      7. Student survey and data supporting keeping Honors
      8. Comparison to getting rid of freshmen opportunity to try out for varsity and JV Sports.
   3. Arts
      1. Idea to officially change STEM to STEAM in the District
3. Honor Presentation by High School teachers and guidance
   1. Teachers explained the current system
   2. Explained how many were overriding (out of 51 not accepted 29 did the override)
   3. 1/3 apply and ½ of that are accepted
   4. Mr. Tomberelli stated that students could take Clipper Academy courses during the summer to get an Honor’s experience or take VLAX
   5. Ms. Grenier spoke about how “wellness” was an issue at the High School- stress and anxiety were up. It was recognized that the levels of stress and anxiety were the same at all levels. It was not particular to Honor’s. The level at PHS was about 1/3 of the students.
   6. Mr. Hugener stated that students were not at the level of inquiry he expected. He thought he should not have to teach them inquiry at the Honor’s level, yet he was having to.
   7. Ms. Grenier stated that it was unanimous that all teachers wanted to get rid of freshmen honor’s classes.
4. School Board Response
   1. Two main questions remained for Board-
      1. What about the kids who are ready for Honors? What will we do?
      2. Still don’t understand what problem we are trying to solve
   2. Members of the Board commented
      1. Perhaps it’s the process we should fix
      2. Afraid of endorsing a program that would get rid of rigor and challenge
      3. Process has been backwards from the start
      4. Board was impressed by the statement that 100% of the teachers agreed
      5. Selection process? Two options? More open and let them all in or no opt in and hold them accountable or give them exit ramps.
      6. Board ended with a comment that they would review all the handouts and that if anyone had any more questions they should email or call. That no decision had been made and more information needed to be provided in regards to their two questions.
5. Future of the Arts
   1. Excellent presentation on the Arts in Portsmouth’s Schools
   2. Moto is Creativity, innovation, imagination and exploration
   3. Integrating standards into classroom
   4. Looking to create arts integration through STEAM
6. Superintendent Report
   1. DHHS Wellness Coordinator grant- position would be full time at Lister
   2. Joint Building Committee- getting the standing on the Middle School

ADJOURNED AT 10:30