

Building & Grounds and
Curriculum & Achievement
Joint Sub-Committee Meeting
Amigos School Library (2nd Floor)

Wednesday, May 20, 2015
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Called for the purpose of discussing and prioritizing issues related to the Amigos School.

Members Present: Ms. Cronin, Chair Curriculum & Achievement; Mr. Fantini, Chair Building & Grounds; Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Harding (Absent)

Also Present: Mr. Maloney, COO; Ms. Sercombe, ASC Co-Chair and Amigos School Principal; Mr. Marco Curnen, Assistant Principal; Mr. Juan Lozada, Amigos School Council Co-Chair and parent; Lillian Rater, member – Family Liaison; Ms. Sarah Bartels-Marrero, Amigos School Council Member; Mr. Jose Luis Rojas, Amigos School Council Member and parent; Ms. Helen Bryant, Amigos Council Member and parent; Adel Daghmouri, Amigos School Council Member & parent; Angelita Mireles, Amigos School Council Member & parent; Ellen Davis, Amigos School Council Member & teacher

Ms. Cronin and Mr. Fantini presided as meeting Co-Chairs.

A quorum of the Sub-Committees being present, the Chairs called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. All in attendance introduced themselves. Mr. Fantini turned the meeting over to Ms. Sercombe, who thanked everyone for coming and stated that she will be attending the Upper Schools Roundtable, 5/26, and hopes to partner with the district to articulate short and long-term goals in addressing academic excellence for students and building needs at Amigos.

Curriculum and Achievement

There was a conversation about providing a pathway for more students to attend the Amigos upper school. A recommendation was made to admit 5 to 7 new students per year. These students would qualify as bilingual/biliterate and be recruited from the CPSD elementary feeder schools. The current Upper School Pathway policy does not allow students to transfer into Amigos in the 6th grade. A policy level change for the Amigos should be reviewed.

There was also a conversation about long-term plans to work with the district to support the IA's goal of strong and effective Upper Schools. There is a desire to increase African American and low-income student enrollment in Amigos' primary grades. Amigos participants felt no child should start Spanish instruction at the upper school level when the Amigos School is here to provide Spanish at the elementary level.

Buildings and Grounds

It was agreed Mr. Rojas, Mr. Fantini and Mr. Maloney should meet with Mr. Rob Steck, from the city's Open Space planning department to work with Amigos and its neighborhood community to determine how best to enhance Amigos outside play area. Ms. Kristine Jelstrup and Ms. Angelita Mireles will represent the Amigos council in launching a discussion with the city and developing next steps. The Assistant Principal, Mr. Marco Curnen, is thankful that there is a new fence that keeps balls inside the playground.

Mr. Fantini read an excerpt from an email from Ms. Peterson, Asst. City Manager, which included the following information: Funding for playgrounds comes from the Community Preservation Act. Projects

recommended to the Community Preservation Act should be submitted on or before June 16 in order for these funds to be available for September 16. There is an Open Space committee and the priorities are based on the Open Space committee review of playgrounds for next year. Because of handicap accessibility interest at the Morse and Graham & Parks, these two schools will be given priority. The Cambridgeport and the Haggerty also have funding for renovations. The Amigos could be scheduled for 2017. This project would need to be designed and constructed once the funds are identified.

The Amigos administration requested a bathroom be renovated to attach to a kindergarten class. A convenient and safe bathroom does not currently exist for them to use. Mr. Maloney agreed to look into whether or not state regulations on kindergarten bathrooms exist.

Mr. Maloney also confirmed that over the summer a new adult bathroom will be installed in the basement where the custodian's closet exists. This will restrict the need for contractors and other non-school based personnel to enter the building proper and interact with students.

Discussion

Parents and staff present felt that a nicer playground and more bathrooms will not solve Amigos space issues or provide for growth. They felt the current building is not sufficient in size or location to accommodate their school's growing needs.

Amigos expressed frustration at difficulty in enrolling new students in the school. The Controlled Choice sibling policy was used as an example to show how difficult it is for low-income families to find spaces if a full-paid lunch family with 3 kids starting at kindergarten gets in first.

There was a discussion about teaching Math in a dual immersion setting. Math is taught in Spanish in the lower grades, but not in the upper grades. Upper grade math is taught only in English. It was stated that the Amigos is the only school that does not have a co-taught 6th grade.

The need for a bigger building came up often. Some of the reasons include:

- To accommodate students with interrupted formal education. How do teachers prioritize large differences in grade levels inside the same classroom.
- SIFE placement at the high school is popular but SIFE students would benefit from beginning at the Amigos before the high school because the staff is qualified to teach students without formal education;
- teachers have to share classrooms but the classes being used every day for every period;
- Lack of a whole-school meeting space. Amigos cannot have an assembly and phys. ed. at the same time

It was also mentioned that although there is new housing going up, there are no new schools going up.

Mr. Fantini thanked Ms. Nolan for bringing in the motion for this meeting. There was a consensus to figure out how to get past the perception of the IA and Amigos, the Upper Schools and the Amigos etc. The perception should be the 5 upper schools.

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Ms. Cronin, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Distributed Documents (on file in the School Committee office)

- Amigos Enrollment Statistics SY14-15 as of May 20, 2015
- Amigos School Council Members List
- Agenda

Dosha Beard
Confidential Secretary
to the School Committee