

Monroe County Community School Corporation
Graduation Work Group and Delegates to NTHS Debriefing from Napa Trip
February 7, 2007
7:00 p.m.

Summary Notes

Following introductions, Superintendent Jim Harvey explained the purpose for the meeting was to share experiences of those who visited the New Tech High School (NTHS) in Napa, California in late January. He said in looking at ways in which our schools can be improved, the purpose for the trip was to take a firsthand look at a NTHS, and the one in Napa is the original NTHS. He said this joint meeting was to share and to answer questions from members of Graduation Work Group (GWG). He shared with the group a revised budget for implementing a NTHS and the floor plan of a portion of the building at BHS South. He had met with Mark Fletcher, BHSS principal, and Mike Scherer, Facilities Director, prior to the trip to look at sites for placing NTHS as a school within a school. They will also tour BHS North facilities to look at options there. Regarding the Napa trip, Mr. Harvey said priority was given to teachers going and at least half were teachers. He asked them to share what they learned and what they want to share.

Don Adams said before he went to Napa if asked to vote he would have been 51 to 49 against, but what he saw was impressive, although there were things he didn't like. He said they saw the same things you expect to see everywhere – students sleeping, groaning, a debate that was a disaster, etc. He said there is no magic answer but the students were impressive and they are mature in a way the general student population is not. He said they have a poise about them that is impressive and they volunteered. He said they say they are preparing in a direct way with working careers; they see a connection with what they are doing in school and in a job. He said that he got the same answer over and over – they feel what they are learning is important enough that it is worth it.

Ann Burke said she was concerned about content being covered and she spent most of her time visiting three different classrooms. She found the students involved in true project based learning in a biology only classroom and in what appeared to be project based learning in an integrated physics and algebra II classroom. The third classroom was for algebra I and the teacher called the approach there **problem** based learning. The algebra I teacher said that his classes spent between 20 minutes and three days on an idea. She said he seemed to be an excellent teacher but he said the math department found it difficult to integrate math into other classes. She said except for algebra II and physics, they taught problem based learning in math rather than integrated project based learning. From a teaching perspective, she said that activities in the biology project based learning classroom were not unlike those she has done in the classroom but things they had in place to support kids in terms of time management, presentation skills, etc. was a real advantage in terms of being a support framework for all of their classes.

Mr. Harvey said you got a real picture that this is a small school and a number of things we take for granted are not there and won't be. He noted that NTHS by design will be 400 students maximum and they will never have 400 students. He said they have a graduation requirement that students must take 12 hours of college credit. He added that you will not see a chemistry lab; chemistry is taught but one day a week they go to a college to do lab.

Amber Dehner said she appreciated the parent/community involvement. She noted that families as well as students made a commitment. She said she feels there is disconnect sometimes in public schools and they require parents to come in and they do community projects. She suggested that is something we may be missing.

Phil Knieriemen said he wanted to see how they used technology; he imagined kids always doing everything on a computer. He found that technology was a supportive tool but not the end. For example, they were used as a platform for delivering material and as notebooks – they don't just put kids in front of computers.

Patty Krise said she really liked the report card and that students had access to all of their personal information. She said if they were rated low in an area they could check their record and get details about why they got that score. She also noticed that they were graded on oral communication, written communication, team work, time management, etc. and content was only 50% of the grade and they could call that up in the computer. She said they could also keep good work in a portfolio that would continue to build until graduation. Ms. Krise said she also wanted to see the atmosphere and type of student selecting NTHS. She noted that MCCSC has Aurora and TLC and we love options and NTHS is another option. She found that students are taught and they model trust, respect and responsibility and she felt it. She said one junior told them that a freshman class came in and they had to deal with some trouble, but they corrected themselves first and then worked with the new students.

Regarding credits and requirements in the State of California, Ms. Krise said California doesn't have Core 40 and Honors diplomas; they leave it up to students to decide what college requires and to make sure they are getting the classes they need. She saw some differences but it seemed they are able to work with that. She said they are requiring college credits and a senior project – pushing kids to do more, although it would fit with what we are doing in Indiana.

Mr. Harvey said he asked Jean Schick to look at what extent the New Tech Foundation, who will do the crosswalk to make sure modified standards to various first year models are being adopted. He said it will be our responsibility, not part of their delivery.

Referring to how easily we could use their project database for our courses, Matt Hoagland said it depends on the course. He said their World History course only covered about one-half of what our World History course has to offer as defined by the state standards. Insofar as student projects, he noted that some were uneven in terms of the challenge. He said when you look at it overall he was struck by how students bought into it. He asked can you make that happen by putting it into another school. He said they were teaching each other value system and that would be difficult to merge in another building.

Mr. Harvey said he has three weeks to send a recommendation to the Board. He said there is space at BHS South where the program could be housed and he thinks there is also potential space at BHS North. He sensed from several of those who made the trip that if they had a preference they would prefer a stand alone site. He explained that there will be additional cost if we look at a stand alone site – not just for the facility but for secretarial, custodial staff, etc. He shared that Mike Scherer is looking at a potential stand alone site on Friday but we don't know if it is viable. He said he wasn't considering a stand alone site until this trip. He said the planning committee will have to make that decision.

Andrew Schrader said what we are buying are these projects. He went to an American Studies class and the teachers said at least one-half of the projects they did they had created. He said teachers are still generating content and ultimately it will probably be teachers who make the curriculum fit. Tina Peterson noted that they get paid more for projects that are accepted into the library.

Mr. Adams said they have trouble with recruitment and retention; it is one thing to have trouble getting veteran teachers to shift gears but recruitment and retention is another. Mr. Harvey noted that there is more student turn over than expected and he didn't realize that it became a four-year school just two years ago. Ms. Dehner pointed out that many teachers had been siphoned off to work for the Foundation. Others agreed. Mr. Harvey suggested they are dealing with managed growth with growing pains in the school and in the organization. He thinks it might be difficult for one person to serve six schools in the Indiana network.

Ms. Krise recalled some reasons for student turn over; she said the school originally took students from out of district and received state funding but California then passed a law and said no funding would follow them. Mr. Knieriemen said kids need to want and value it but because of reputation, some parents pushed them. He said they are 12 years into it, long enough now to be getting siblings.

Mr. Schrader agreed that it does have a reputation and parents push kids. He said the students that stay in this school are usually above average and willing to deal with challenges. He said the school's model is fantastic; he does not think it will solve all the problems our corporation has but some kids we are serving well may be better served in this model.

In Mr. Harvey's conversation with one student, he said she came there because she felt it would help her get a job; she said internships lead to jobs and there is a waiting list for companies to sponsor internships.

Autumn Butler said career development in this school is outstanding in terms of interviewing, resume, work ethic, etc. She said she has been working with companies in Bloomington and asking what skills they want and often it is business and interpersonal communication and this school brings that out.

Keith Bobay noted that we don't have a good idea what type of students we will attract (to a NTHS). He pointed out that we have Aurora, Hoosier Hills Career Center, AP classes, etc. Mr. Harvey added that we have not asked middle school kids.

Paul Farmer said he asked what do kids say about why they go back and they say it isn't money – it is too hard; want more focus where the teacher will tell me what I need to know; here I have to do too much, etc. He said one student wanted to go back to the other high school because she wanted to do it that way.

Ms. Dehner asked about homework and was told that because of efforts in teaching time management, he does better managing his time at school and at home because of better time management. Mr. Hoagland agreed that the common response was time management. Ms. Dehner said she has mostly freshmen but in most candid discussions she thinks you will generate more interest. She said they are interested in options and choices; some students do not want to question the status quo, then you have other kids who ask 'why am I doing this'. She said some know what they want to do and that is the type of student you will serve and make happy and she thinks there are a lot of them (in MCCSC).

Teresa Grossi realized that the students were pretty powerful and the challenge will be developing the culture and sense of belonging. She wonders if we can do this in a school within a school setting. Regarding cost, she said we have to think about the big picture and where do we go from here.

Lois Sabo-Skelton said they met with one Board member who was very pro this program and when it started they had an elementary school already available to use for the program. She said having a facility available would save a lot of money. She said they also had a business community that insisted upon doing this program so they had backing. She, too, was torn with the idea of putting a school within a school. She said the culture of NTHS was strong and they were getting an identity. She said we have very strong academics at North and South and when you have a separate school that is going to be another problem, i.e. leaving North or South.

Dr. Sabo-Skelton said last night (at the School Board meeting) we had incredible teachers come to talk about large classes at Templeton and Lakeview and we know there is a need. Noting the plan for NTHS would be 400 students, she said she can't help but think that any school with 400 kids could give more one-one-one instruction. She added that they were acting like project based learning is new but it is not.

Mr. Harvey referred to a recent interview he had with a student reporter from *The Optimist* and said he explained to her that you will find project based learning but you will not find a school that is organized that way and this is what this school is about. He said some kids come as 9th graders and realize it is not for them. Noting that kids have different learning styles, he said he also likes choices.

Jim Smith said the 12 college credit component was interesting to him. He said he was pressing the tour guide for how would she make that transition. He said the school appeared to have a lot of freedom of action but there is a structure there and project based learning that existed since time. He said he was impressed with students and if they are better time managers they would be better college students.

Mr. Harvey noted that we have tended to generate dual credit through HHCC and Ivy Tech but not in general education classes. He thinks we will need our science rooms and said that some things about the school disappointed him; he thinks that if implemented here, in five years this could become a model. He suggested that if we want to help kids make the transition, they need to come to the college campus for those classes.

Mr. Smith recalled that the requirement is 12 hours worth of content and those details are yet to be determined. Mr. Harvey said the 12 hour requirement is novel and California does education like no one else in the country. He said we have to see how this translates to what we are doing.

Mr. Harvey said in conversations with Jean Schick she spoke about how some of the New Tech models have business, fine arts, etc. with a bioscience flavor. Ms. Dehner said one opened up in Chicago and they have four schools and each has a different focus, i.e. various themes for which you could focus. She said since we are seeking to address bioscience and physics she thinks science instruction would be critical. She said at least one wet lab with some integrity should be some aspect of the school. Mr. Harvey had looked at the fittings in the biology lab at NTHS and asked about equipment. He didn't know how much 'hands on' work they do but they do a lot of computer simulations. He said our school system has commended itself that kids do a lot of lab work. Mr. Farmer noted that a physics lab is not like a biology lab and both would be important.

A. John Rose said he was hearing how the teachers relate to what they saw and relate it to MCCSC. He said he was hearing two parallel conversations – results of process and delivery. He said it is clear to him that the result of what NTHS does is the results of what we are looking, i.e. ability to communicate and project based. He said business and colleges are looking for this and this is a means of delivery that works for a large number of kids. He asked is it worth the amount of money we will have to spend or for the same amount of money can we do our own. He noted that it is a lot of upfront money.

Mr. Harvey explained that we are attempting something on a bigger scale than they did. He said in the afternoon the Superintendent of Schools came and said 23,000 students in this district and this school was not part of the greater design of the other high school. He said he thinks that whatever we do in GWG we need to look at how this affects teaching across the district. He said he wants to revive the professional staff development committee. He said there may be a teacher who says he/she will do this in a certain biology class and the counselor schedules a student into that class because she knows this is what will be a good match for that student. He said there must be ways to share what we learn about good practices; we are trying to move all of us forward and create better opportunities for kids.

Mr. Harvey said he was not going to make any apologies in that we reallocate money differently now. He said we are forced to allocate money to special education and textbooks and to subsidize transportation because State support was removed. He said he also will not apologize for the fact that we have subsidized gifted-talented classes and high schools for AP classes. He said we do this across the school corporation and they are difficult choices but we make those kinds of allocations all the time. He noted that the FTE ratio at Aurora is 1 to 13; we don't treat everybody the same. He said he learned in 1968 from Board member Elizabeth Bridgwaters who said equality is not sameness. He said equality is quality of opportunity and equal opportunity to succeed will be defined differently in different schools. He reiterated that we do it all the time and if we believe it is a valuable experience for kids, we will have to acknowledge that it will cost a little more.

In distributing the revised budget for NTHS, Mr. Harvey noted that Mark Fletcher and Jeff Henderson did the original budget version. He explained that the private donation notation on the budget refers to community members who went on the trip to Napa and paid their own way. He reviewed the budget information.

Ms. Krise asked if we can get NT and staff development for \$150,000, at the end of this commitment will there be anything contractually that will prevent our trained teachers from training others? Mr. Harvey

said we look at the big picture for the school system and for staff development. He said if we have money in the budget we will do some of our own staff development. He discussed specific funds included in the budget for this purpose. He said this came out of GWG during discussion about high school redesign and we need to provide teachers opportunities to learn what we are doing.

Dan Peterson said that may be a counter argument for doing it within another building. Mr. Harvey said one of the advantages of a school within a school may be to do some crosswalk to get to AP chemistry or whatever.

Jeff Henderson said questions about whether in an existing facility or separate facility have come mostly from conversations with Mark Morrison, the founding principal of NTHS. He said things that make him personally prefer a stand alone site have to do with the fact that when you share kids outside of the NT culture, you dilute that culture and when you assign teachers to teach outside, you dilute that teacher's ability to maintain that culture. He said having 100 kids in a facility the first year and trying to keep them separate to preserve their culture is difficult and he has some reservations about how we can do it. He noted that the foundation has guidelines that successful sites have adhered to when replicating the model and the culture. One of those guidelines is that the school be housed in its own facility. He worries that we might be setting ourselves up for failure if we do not follow the replication guidelines. Mr. Henderson said he worries that we might define success of the program too narrowly if we focus only on improvement of district statistics that pertain to overall graduation rates and ISTEP+ passing rates. He said to think that implementing the program for 400 kids will dramatically change district level data is delusional because of the percentage of the total student population of the district compared to the enrollment in New Tech.

In terms of content, Mr. Henderson said it wasn't more rigorous than what we currently do. He said if you compare class to class, written work, documentation and portfolios, what we saw represented at New Tech wasn't anything greater than what we are doing now. But, what he did note as different was he saw soft skill development in the New Tech students. He indicated that in comparison to our general population, the New Tech students are more capable of articulating how the school helps them grow in terms of teamwork, organization, and understanding why education is important to them, etc. He hopes that development of these skills will be taken into consideration when we evaluate the success of this program if it is implemented.

Mark Fletcher said Mark Morrison mentioned that we are looking closer than most people they have had use this model. He said we have a very high performing student population and he thinks the time spent is well worth it in that he doesn't want to make a mistake for our kids. He said if we do choose to go down the path, we have as good a staff as anybody and he is confident we can do as good a job. He said his first impression was all about project based learning but now he thinks the sense of belonging is the number one component. Regarding the question about a stand alone or a school within one of our schools, Mr. Fletcher said autonomy and sense of belonging are important but on the other hand variety of course offerings would be available within a school. He said it is a tough problem to juggle.

Noting that Mr. Henderson talked about expected outcomes, Mr. Fletcher said this model is not meant to serve the bottom 15% of our population but there are a lot more important things we could do to help that group of students and the original goal of GWG was to attempt to impact those kids. He said basic human support may be what they need. He said there is no data on student outcomes (for this model) and if the selling point is 21st Century skills and this program will do that, he doesn't think we should go in thinking this will solve workforce issues in the community. He said he thinks we will be making a global commitment to 21st century skills but he is not sure about the local impact.

Mr. Harvey said Jonathan Plucker has graduate students who want to have opportunities to do research. He said we can gather that data and in terms of academic and soft skills, this is right for that, i.e. it is a perfect research design. He added that we are talking about random sample.

Mr. Fletcher said he is not only talking about stability from a financial point of view, but will we probably take some kids from HHCC and Aurora. He said a question that came up in discussion today is with one-half as many kids as Napa, could we sustain all three of those programs.

Mr. Harvey said this is the first thing we are doing, not the last. He said we also have a grant for Early College High School (ECHS) and GWG members said at the last meeting that after spring break we will focus on the other six models as well as anything else. He said he has asked the NETS steering committee to meet with GWG in April. He said there is an overlap and there will be an overlap between all of our programs and schools and it may mean that Aurora and HHCC will redesign themselves. He said he believes that HHCC is the best kept secret in Bloomington.

Closing comments:

Mr. Harvey said one thing needed to be done is to identify models that will work as a school within a school in that we can't select 16 small schools and close two big ones.

Dr. Grossi asked if conversations had been held with principals who have done school within a school; she thinks it would be interesting to see where they are.

Mr. Henderson noted that if we continue to do what we have always done we will continue to get what we have always gotten.

[Jeannine Butler could not attend the meeting; however, her comments are attached.]

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

(Following are comments submitted by Jeannine Butler.)

NOTES ON NEW TECH TRIP/INFORMATION

After our trip to Napa and the visit to New Tech, presentation by Bob Pearlman, conversations with students, comments by students, talking to a former board member, and talking with Mark Morrison, the following points summarize my visit.

- The students as a whole are very involved in their learning and receive a lot of help, encouragement and support in their projects. Additionally, they learn to work in groups and learn about group dynamics and seem to thrive in this environment.
- There is no doubt in my mind that project-based learning is a very valuable tool to use in teaching many students. The depth of their investigations during the projects is commendable and exciting.
- Students learn from each other and it would seem that the philosophy is like that of Coalition of Essential Schools—teachers are facilitators and students are responsible for their learning. I think this is an excellent philosophy.
- Integrated classes—i.e.: English and social studies, math and science, etc. are obviously successful and the students appear to like the set-up and do well in the environment of integrated subjects. It seems to provide more relevance for both of the subjects that are integrated.
- The ability of students to take classes not able to be offered at New Tech at the local community college is a definite asset and plus. I would be interested as to how we could facilitate this for students without there being a financial burden on the students or families. (In California, the cost of community college tuition or even four-year college tuition is minimal)
- The teachers I saw at New Tech seemed to be engaged in the learning of their students and supportive of the philosophy of the school.
- The Foundation that supports the additional costs for New Tech is substantial—it began small with community members but it received over 4 million dollars from the Gates Foundation grants—that certainly would be nice for us—where would that kind of basis come from? The issue of sustainability for MCCSC will continue to be a question for me.
- The need for a separate facility for a program, school or whatever designed after the New Tech model seems to be necessary to maintain a culture that would be desirable for students. While having the model within an existing school might be something that people can work with, I think the optimum placement would need to be in a separate facility.
- They report that they have difficulty retaining staff.
- There seemed to be some conflicting information concerning students being representative of the populations of the two high schools. For example:
 1. While we were told that 18% of the students had active IEP's, it turns out that most of them were 504 students and not students who had been identified as special education students. The assistant principal told me that they had 8-10 students with identified disabilities—that doesn't add up to 18%.
 2. The free and reduced lunch population is 2% at New Tech—do we think that that is true at the two sending high schools?
 3. The “lottery system” described in the a.m. meeting doesn't seem to be the way students get in. One student said that she applied and knew she would get in because her brother had attended and her sister was going to also. Also, there are 50% boys and 50% girls in the list.
 4. It would seem that the school has never been able to attract a full complement of 400 students so the lottery has not been necessary.
- There are numerous New Tech High Schools in their first and second years across the country. We have only seen the Napa example. Should we make some phone calls and visits to other sites with a set of questions? It might be wise to visit or call sites that are in a separate facility and sites that are not.

- Questions that I had that didn't get answered: What is the cooperation with other schools? What if a student prefers to work individually? Why is the current senior class only 40 students? Are students with disabilities being discouraged from enrolling?