

Minutes of Wamego High and Wamego Middle School Site Council Joint Meeting

April 9, 2008

Wamego Middle School Principal Vici Jennings called the joint meeting of the Wamego High School and Wamego Middle School Site Councils to order at 4:00 p.m. on April 9, 2008 at the Wamego Middle School. The main topic for the meeting was Freshman Transitioning. The meeting began with a brief review of what is already in place for Freshman Transitioning. WHS representatives come 5 times to WMS to meet with eighth graders for the 23 minutes during Home Based time. Meetings include a Kickoff event which is fashioned like a pep rally, meetings with core teachers and high school students, an activities fair, and a meeting with coaches and athletes. The most recent meeting was a skit by the WHS Link Crew.

Wamego High School Principal Donna Workman commented that she felt most fears grow over the summer between the students' eighth grade and Freshman years. The transition times before summer help to ease the fears and tensions of incoming Freshmen. It is important that the students get involved with sports and/or activities when they come to WHS because being involved keeps kids in school. Those who are not involved are more likely to have problems with their grades and attendance and are more likely to drop out.

In former years, 8th graders have come to WHS for a tour during the school year. This year the tour was a part of their August Orientation Day. August 14, 2008 will be Freshmen Orientation Day at WHS. It was suggested that the tour of WHS be put back into the 8th grade school year so that 8th graders are actually learning where rooms are, etc. prior to the Orientation Day, which is just one day before the rest of the student body arrives.

It was suggested to invite the 8th grade to come to a high school game as a part of transitioning.

Marc Stratton suggested a "50 Questions Incoming Freshman Have" webpage be made available on USD 320's website so that students can access it at any time to help alleviate fears and tensions that seem to grow over the summer. Mrs. Jennings was going to talk to Elaine Werner about meeting with students to generate questions.

Having 2 or 3 high school students come to WMS maybe twice monthly to meet with 8th graders to field questions and concerns throughout the year was suggested. WHS's Principal Donna Workman and Counselor Shelley Rickstrew and WMS's Principal Vici Jennings and Counselor Elaine Werner will work on this to coordinate timing.

Mrs. Workman said that one of the big problems for Freshmen is getting organized with block scheduling. Some have 2 book bags—one for white days, one for red days, but then end up at school with the wrong bag for that day. Some students have difficulty in time management. They don't develop the habit of doing that evening after school what was assigned that day while the classes of that day are still fresh in their minds. Then by the evening of the next day, they have either run out of time, or forgotten, and end up getting behind. Mrs. Jennings related that study skills are taught twice a month in Home Base, but are not an incorporated part of the curriculum for 8th graders. Several students who are struggling with organizational skills are receiving extra instruction.

It was agreed that both schools need to eliminate comments like “Wait till you get to high school” and “You’re not in Middle School any more”. Such comments serve no good purpose either for students or for relationships between schools and employees.

Vici Jennings expressed concern over a dip in 8th grade assessment scores. Donna Workman suggested having Sophomores and/or Juniors come to talk in a mentoring fashion with 8th graders--- maybe just those who are not applying themselves---about the importance of doing well, that good performance reaps rewards, privileges, diversity, etc.

Donna Workman, Vici Jennings, WHS Counselor Shelley Rickstrew, and WMS Counselor Elaine Werner will work on arranging times—maybe twice monthly—to have 2 or 3 high schoolers come in to meet with 8th graders to field any questions/concerns about high school that they may have at that time.

Grading practices at both schools were discussed. WMS is currently using “0” grades for work not turned in on time. The second day the grade starts at 60% for perfect work. Passing is 70%. Some students are choosing not to hand in an assignment that may be 75% done, which would probably result in a higher on time grade than a complete assignment would be if handed in the second day, or are taking a “0” rather than even doing the assignment. Some WHS teachers are grading with “Incomplete” instead of “0”.

WHS will be discussing what constitutes Extra Credit and that it should be tied to learning, not points for purchasing items, such as tissue for the classroom, etc. Not every student can afford to buy their extra credit points. There are not a lot of extra credit points at WMS. The push is to get the assigned work done for class rather than to have teachers manufacture extra credit just to get enough points to get a student through the class.

How to get the student to get the work done and in on time raised several suggestions. There are phones in every room at WMS. To get parents on board, possibly the student could call a parent to let him/her know that the assignment was not in on time and has to be in to get any credit. However, phone calls to parents could cause trouble for the parent at work. Maybe the parents could let WMS know at enrollment whether to be emailed or contacted by phone and to provide the email address or phone number where they could be reached.

Everyone agreed that in grading of group projects, students need to receive individual grades instead of the same group grade being assigned to all participants in the project. In some groups one individual may do most of the work, while another may contribute virtually nothing to the success of the project.

Vici Jennings told members that a letter had gone out to parents about Eighth Grade Promotion with a guide sheet for what promotion is and is not going to be at WMS. There are specific guidelines about appropriate clothes, no limos, etc. That promotion is a party to get the students on to WHS, a small step toward graduation from high school.

Next WHS Site Council meeting will be Wednesday, May 7 at 5:00 p.m. in the WHS conference room.

TOPICS for discussion: Freshman Transitioning , Mentoring, and Completion of the Spring Report to the Board of Education.