

**Booker T. Washington Middle School 54**103 West 107<sup>th</sup>

Street New York,

NY 10025 Phone:

212-678-2861

**SLT Minutes**

February 16, 2024

7:20 AM

**SLT Members:**

Core SLT Positions	Teacher Representatives	Parent Representatives
Elana Elster, Principal*	Sara Lichtman (co-chair)	Janette Cardova**
Jose Beauvais, UFT rep	Erica Williams	Randall Friedman (co-chair)
Spyridoula Ntella PTA Co-Pres	Elizabeth McNulty	Sofia Hubscher (co-secretary)**
Jill Bennett, DC37	Daniel Clark (co-secretary)	Katie Miller
	Kyle Wilson*	Eunice Chi
		Usha Kotelawala*
		Andy Weinstein*

\*Late

\*\*Absent

**Observers:** Peter Singh

The meeting was held in person.

**Agenda:****Approval of the minutes from November 2023**

- The minutes were approved.

**Update on SLT DOE email address**

- Citing cyber security and safety, the DOE has decided to phase out “shared accounts” made for “parent leaders.” The DOE will instead issue individual email accounts. The DOE’s language is somewhat ambiguous as to whether SLT email accounts are included within this phaseout. In any event, no existing email account will be deactivated until January 2025, so any action by Booker T. affiliates can be deferred until the DOE provides more clarity on the matter.

**Principal’s report**

- Dr. Elster shared school-wide data on MAP performance.
- Dr. Elster reports that that the DOE uses MAP to identify skill areas that students may have deficits in but does not have any systems to deploy tools to help target those areas.

- High school results expected to be released March 7, the day before the next SLT meeting.
  - o Most area private schools are planning to release their results a week or two earlier.
- No update on the CEP.

### **Weight of student backpacks**

- Presentation by Spyridoula Ntella and Peter Singh. Sixth grade parent Dan Cohen was unable to join by phone due to rules requiring non-member observers to attend in person.
- The PTA met with Dr. Elster over the summer to address physical health concerns surrounding backpack weight. As a result of those talks, the school piloted some new policies, such as:
  - o Issuing smaller planners for each semester rather than one larger planner for the whole year
  - o A revamped folder system whereby students shuttle one, all-purpose folder to and from school and leave subject-specific folders at home
  - o Periodic folder clean-outs led by teachers during the year
- These piloted measures did not achieve the PTA's goal of bringing backpack weight down to 10% to 20% of a given child's bodyweight.
- At this presentation, Ms. Ntella and Mr. Singh proposed:
  - o Replacing all subject notebooks with a single three-ring binder. Other schools have successfully implemented such a system.
  - o Encouraging use of wheeled/trolley bags as opposed to shoulder-strapped backpacks.
  - o Partnering with OT service providers on staff to educate student and parents on how to maintain physical health while managing backpacks.
- Ms. Ntella and Mr. Singh will distribute their materials by email to the SLT members.
- The school administration will bring these ideas to the faculty at large.
- The school administration will seek input from leaders at schools that have successfully adopted a binder system.

### **Distribution of grades in core classes at MS54 compared to other middle schools**

- Dr. Elster shared:
  - o Data comparing 7th-grade grade distributions for the current school year and the 2022-2023 school year at Booker T.
  - o The DOE's conversion table for translating marks from idiosyncratic grading systems to a 100-point scale
  - o Examples of how some schools convert their bespoke grading systems to a 100-point scale before sending grades to the DOE.
- Discussion re: whether our grading policies may put Booker T. kids at a competitive disadvantage for entry into desirable high schools.
- Given that high school admissions results will likely provide useful information and will be released before the next SLT meeting, an election was made to table further discussion until that meeting.
- Several SLT members expressed interest in serving on a subcommittee to analyze relevant data sets to inform the decision-making process going forward.

### **New Business**

-none