

Fireweed Academy  
'Where students learn to view themselves as readers, writers, and problem solvers'  
Academic Policy Committee Meeting  
DRAFT minutes  
November 6, 2017

**APC members present:** Lynn Kee, Mo Wilkinson, Jane Dunn, Jon Kulhanek, Crisi Matthews

**APC Members absent:** Amber Niebuhr, Kate Henry, Brandy McGee

**Staff present:** Kim Fine, Stephanie Zuniga

**Public Comments:** Stephanie Zuniga spoke to our PTR as it affects the classroom experiences, her notes are attached to the bottom of these minutes.

**Approval of Agenda:** Mo Wilkinson moved to approve the agenda, Jon Kulhanek seconded and the motion passed with unanimous consent.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mo Wilkinson moved to approve the August and October 2017 minutes, Crisi Matthews seconded and the motion passed with unanimous consent.

**Administrators Report:** In reference to the request for clarification regarding the FY17 roll over on the August 2017 minutes, the expected rollover was lower than expected, due to higher expenses than were expected. I was using past estimate in a previous the Memorandum of Agreement for "Sharing a Facility." That document had not been update over the years and listed the estimate of shared costs at \$50,100. The actual estimate of expenses for our shared facility initially was \$89,788, which when finalized this Fall increased another \$5,109. Todd will provide a breakdown of this figure at the December APC meeting.

Current Enrollment Total: K-6 is 124, (grades K-2 is 55, grades 3-6 is 69

The playground at Little fireweed is done.

October In-Service: Socratic Seminar Workshop was held on October 20th in support of our Core Values.

Instructional Aide Position: Lydia Arndt is our new Instructional Aide at LFW. She will provide extra support from 8AM- 1PM.

LFW remodel. Dave Richie has given us permission to get the fire sprinkler system modified to allow the walls to be taken up to the ceiling and the installation of doorways for each of the classrooms.

LFW parking lot: Dave Richie made some changes with the LFW parking lot to allow for better drainage and use of space.

Space at BFW: I have begun a conversation with Eric about getting additional space at WHE. We will be meeting to discuss the annual Memorandum of Agreement for shared facilities.

Volunteers have been working on our library and it is almost done.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Budget Committee:** The increase in enrollment comes to approximately \$270,000 in extra revenue. This covers the second half of the SPED position and we have a goal of a \$175,000 rollover, leaving \$50,000 left to spend. This will hopefully cover the improvements to LFW.

**PR committee: MOTION: Mo Wilkinson moved that we host a movie night food drive at the Homer Theater, Jon Kulhanek seconded and the motion passed with unanimous consent.** We would like to have movie night when Hannah's class films are ready for their premiere. Janet will follow up.

**Bylaws committee:** There have been no parent comments regarding the proposed changes to the bylaws.

**Motion: Jon Kulhanek moved to put the vote for the updated bylaws on the December APC meeting agenda. Mo Wilkinson seconded and the motion passed with unanimous consent.**

### **Pupil Teacher Ratio:**

After discussion with staff and the APC, Tod would like to cap the enrollment at 1-18 for Little Fireweed and 1-20 at Big Fireweed.

**Motion: Crisi Matthews proposed an amendment to our contract with the school district to include the following PTR language...The pupil-teacher ratio for Fireweed Academy is 18:1, K-2 and 20:1, 3-6. Motion is seconded by Mo Wilkinson and passes with unanimous consent.**

### **Guest Speaker**

**Motion: Crisi Matthews moved to invite Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly member Kelly Cooper to speak to the APC about the process of funding a new campus. Motion is seconded by Mo Wilkinson and passes with unanimous consent.**

There was a general discussion/brainstorm of ways to relieve some of the stress of the current situation at Big Fireweed...hire a part time PE teacher or short MOA contracts with local movement teachers. Need to create a list of people with skill sets, find out about insurance...

**Principal Evaluation Forms:** There was a discussion about using the district provided forms or creating one of our own. It was noted that we are on a deadline.

**Motion:** Crisi Matthews moved to use the KPBSD survey forms for parent, student and community members for the Administrators evaluation for the 2017/2018 school year. The strong Leadership committee will convene to bring forward a Fireweed based evaluation for the 2018/2019 School year. Jon Kulhanek seconds and the motion passes with unanimous consent.

**Motion:** Lyn Kee moves to adjourn, Jane Dunn seconds and the motion passes with unanimous consent.

The adjourned at 5:44pm

Submitted by Janet Bowen

Stephanie Zuniga's public comments

I am speaking with my teacher hat on. I am a teacher at Big Fireweed. I have been teaching here 13 years with an additional 2 years serving Fireweed as the Quest facilitator for the lower peninsula. The first year was when they were in the portables over at Paul Banks. I would like to comment tonight on my concerns regarding the conversation at the last APC meeting regarding PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio).

I understand that legally Fireweed Academy must follow the state PTR in our contract (Charter Renewal)

I understand that our current contract (2016 Charter Renewal) does not state a PTR.

Last APC meeting the staff at Little Fireweed presented a document stating overcrowding in the classrooms at Little Fireweed and issues with noise level.

The staff representative from Big Fireweed also presented verbally, concerns about large classroom sizes at Big Fireweed.

There was a request for discussion and action on creating a cap of some sort to help with keeping PTR down to a reasonable number.

I was concerned with the APC's response. There was more concern about how the cap would possibly limit new sibling enrollment than concern about quality classroom experience.

In my 15 years working at Fireweed the classroom sizes have never been so large. Big Fireweed used to have 4 classroom teachers and now we are down to 3 with 21 to 25 students in each classroom.

Note (paraphrased):

**Our Fireweed mission** "To provide a compassionate learning environment that gives students, parents, teachers, and community members opportunities to develop in our learner outcomes"

**Our Core Values** – We believe in creating a learning community where all members thrive through commitment to authentic constructivist principles, integrated experiences and reflection upon these experiences.

As our numbers grow and our classrooms are packed, opportunities for these authentic experiences are diminished. Students arrive at staggered times, unprepared, needing to be caught up. In order to accommodate more tables and chairs I have to remove classroom engineering table that allows students to create projects through the engineering process.

I do less Problem of the Weeks in math due to larger numbers of documents to correct and authentically respond to.

Science experiment and projects become more difficult to set up for.

Our PE classes are up to 35 + students. The teachers have to teach our own PE, Music and Art. We don't have a specials teacher like the other schools. We don't receive a prep on one day of the week. Field trips are becoming more difficult.

I used to lead afterschool math club, film club, robotics club and ski club. I am too exhausted to want to offer these anymore because there are too many students to keep up on.

I know it is hard to get your child to do one page of homework 3 days out of the week. Imagine if I sent 24 more home with you every day. I am catching all of the

students who don't do their homework up during the school day. This is about 12 kids a week on average.

I fear Fireweed will become like any other typical school if we don't preserve our small classroom sizes.