

Cory CSC Meeting Minutes
Oct. 23, 2014
4-6 p.m. in the Cory Library

Members Present: Jennifer Harris (Principal), Michelle Bills (Co--Chair), Jay Willoughby (Co--Chair), Susan Levy (Parent Representative), Samantha Sturhahn (Parent Representative), David Fowler (Community Representative), Rainy LaVenture (Teacher Representative), Margaret Wing (Teacher Representative), Julie Keppler (Teacher Representative) and Chris Pagliaro (Teacher – Specials Representative)

Other Attendees: Several parents attended the meeting*

Agenda

Michelle started the meeting by acknowledging the significant time investment (40+ hours) the staff had made reviewing feedback and answering questions gathered at the Fall Forum.

4th/5th Math Changes

- Jennifer presented a 6-page handout (“CSC Special Meeting”) that the SLT had recently developed to help address questions raised at the Fall Forum. This document will be communicated to interested parties.
- The group reviewed sections on the Integrated GT/HGT Program at Cory, Why Did the Math Model Change?, and discussed two slides showing TCAP Math scores from 2010-2014, covering the time period before 2013/14 when classes platooned but did not regroup for math, and the 2013/14 school year, when Math regrouping was tried. Sections entitled How All Students Receive Support, How All Teachers Receive Support and Additional Resources were also reviewed briefly.
- The group reviewed the Math Status and MGP (Growth) slides, noting that an MGP of 65 and above indicates “high growth”, and that GT and HGT student growth has been above 65 for the past 5 years.
- It was noted that while students did not regroup for enrichment Math during 2013, logistical arrangements led Debbie Stricker to be able to form a small enrichment group within her regular Math class. (Some students from Lisa Iverson’s, then Hoyt’s, 4th/5th grade class regrouped into Debbie’s class because it was not possible for Lisa to teach a mixed grade math class, and some of those students ended up in the enrichment math group).
- A clarification was made regarding the GT Resource Teacher and how the hours and GT-related funds are allocated: primarily, GT funds have been used to support teachers receiving their GT-endorsement (many of Cory’s GT-endorsed teachers were not required to become endorsed but elected to do so on their own time and at their own cost). Funds

* It was noted by some attendees that they had not been aware of the time of the meeting until very late, meaning they were not able to participate for the full time, and that some knew of parents who wanted to attend but were not able to given the earlier time of the meeting (as opposed to the evening time of the Forum).

are also allocated to support our GT Resource teacher - recently, the Cory team made the decision to increase this teacher from quarter-time to half-time. Those hours are spent primarily in helping to administer testing for the GT/HGT program, and working with teachers to develop ALPs for students.

- It was noted that, while Interventionists are paid by Mill Levy money, Paras are NOT supported by DPS and thus completely supported by the PTA and through the Cory school budget. Until 3-4 years ago, Cory did not have Paras in the 4th and 5th grades, but this was changed in response to PTA and community feedback. (*This led to an important point about the status of Friends of Cory. See below under the FOC section.)
- Because parents with an interest in the 4th/5th Math Changes were present at this stage of the meeting, Jennifer invited questions and discussion. Below are paraphrased questions/comments and discussion.
 - “Are advanced learners being challenged, or getting bored and turning off?” During discussion, an article entitled “Even Geniuses Work Hard” was distributed and the point was made that advanced learners are being asked to deepen and more fully explain their learning in the current model, and to seek challenges.
 - The group discussed the way that Everyday Math has been adjusted to meet the requirements of the Common Core State Standards, by requiring students to explain reasoning they may have intuited before. Julie Keppler distributed two anonymous Open Response solutions from the previous week – one, from a student who had previously been in accelerated math, contained little explanation because the student had done most of the work in his/her head and arrived at a partially wrong answer; the other, from a previously non-accelerated student, contained a variety of explanations including visual representations of the problem-solving strategy. This example was used to highlight the opportunities for advanced learners to increase their ability to manipulate problems and explain reasoning, as required in the new curriculum and testing models (CCSS and PARCC).
 - “Are advanced learners being left to work on their own without the advantage of a mini-lesson?” Jennifer replied that she has been sitting in on classes and noted that the teachers she has observed *are* giving mini-lessons, and that she will continue to observe across all classrooms and note best practices. She also indicated that teachers are doing planning as a team (and thus sharing differentiation practices that way).
 - Jennifer requested that families trust the considerable teaching experience of the Cory team, and the fact that the current math model is one that the teachers used successfully for many years prior to last year’s trial of regrouping for Math.
 - “Could we communicate ‘A Day In the Life of a Cory Math Classroom’, as a way to help 4th/5th grade families understand how differentiation techniques are being applied in practice?” The group discussed that some parents are able to volunteer during Math, but that for parents that are not able to, a ‘DITL’ summary might help parents understand how all of the available differentiation resources (other curricula like Sunshine Math etc, mini-lessons, para and interventionist support, etc) are actually being used by their children.

- “Is the band of learning styles/paces/needs too broad for any teacher to handle in the context of a subject like math?” During discussion of this question, a handout was distributed entitled “Ability Grouping in Elementary Schools” from the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, which discusses a number of different ability-grouping strategies for Math. Parents also shared that regrouping and/or offering pull-out support to low-achieving math learners helped those students to feel confident and capable in math.
- “Could Cory offer a math enrichment opportunity during the school day, similar to Book Club offerings from Dawn Miller, as a way to offer additional challenge opportunities to kids who love math?” The group discussed existing programs like Mathletics and the possibility of starting something similar during the lunch hour – before- and after-school hours were not as desirable because there are already many competing time constraints during those hours. Jennifer noted that Cory’s GT/HGT Teacher was not able to lead something like this (she is focusing on the long-standing Semantics and Stock Market Clubs). Question of who might lead a club like this was left open.
- Margaret Wing and Rainy LaVenture noted that the decision to return to differentiation within Math classrooms did not seem like a significant change to the Cory staff, because this model had been employed for many years prior to 2013-2014. But the group recognized why parent perception of this change might be very different, as many parents did not have the same depth of experience with Cory’s math model. Jennifer noted that, in retrospect, additional information should have been provided to parents about this change.
- “How can we increase our comfort level that this instruction model is working for this years’ 4th and 5th graders, given the move to different testing standards this year? Some parents are very concerned that it is already November and their children still seem to be focused on review in Math and/or not feeling challenged.” One suggestion was to look at interim assessments as a way to assess growth.

GT/HGT Program

- Discussion also covered the integrated GT/HGT Program at Cory.
 - “Some parents feel as though the GT/HGT community at Cory is not being well supported or appreciated, that changes in the program are happening to, rather than in collaboration with, GT/HGT parents, and that at times Cory feels like a hostile environment for advocating for the needs of the GT/HGT community.” Jennifer communicated her appreciation for sharing this sentiment and apologized that these feelings existed. She noted past efforts to support GT/HGT families, like the special speaker that came to Cory last year to talk about the needs of GT/HGT learners. She also underscored the “integrated” aspect of Cory’s GT/HGT model and that this model might not be right for all families.
 - Some parents indicated that the approach to the GT/HGT program seemed very different now than when their children (especially older children) started at Cory. They felt that the integrated model as they understood it had been one of the

primary reasons they chose to come to Cory, rather than a different GT/HGT magnet school within DPS.

Wrap-Up

- Margaret Wing offered a final suggestion that the SLT take a close look at three points emerging from the meeting:
 - How to help achieve more consistent messaging and communication with parents across the Cory community (ie parents at the upper grade levels, rather than just those who learn about Cory when they are new to the school)
 - How to improve engagement with the GT/HGT parent community
 - Ways to keep checking in on the “spark” in Math in the upper grades – how to ensure kids are continuing to “love” math under the current Math model
- A final handout was distributed entitled “Superintendent’s Corner: Rumors Can Undermine School-Community Partnership”

Friends of Cory (FOC) Update

- The group noted that FOC is one of the two primary fundraising activities (second is the Auction) for the PTA’s annual budget, and that the PTA’s budget is the primary source of Paraprofessional salaries.
- Dana Kang, who is Chairing FOC again this year, indicated that contributions and participation are both at an alarming low, especially compared to last year at the same time in the FOC campaign.