**NSHS School Council Meeting**

**October 9, 2012**

**Attending:**  Ryan Augusta, Sue Flicop, Jacob Freedman, Sue Kirshenbaum, Thomas Lee, Charles Myette, Jeanne O’Reilly, Marcia Okun, Michael Oshins, Liz Richardson

**Role of school council:**  The committee reviewed information taken from the Mass.gov website regarding the areas of responsibilities of School Councils.

Regarding the annual school building budget, the committee noted that this is more of a department head/administration responsibility, but felt that advocating for more resources within the community was an appropriate role. In the past this was done in collaboration with Newton North’s School Council.

The annual review of the student handbook is usually handled at the Ed Center, but Newton South does have its own Orange Lion Handbook (available online.) This has not been updated for a while, and needs to be brought up to date with the student handbook. The committee felt that this was a task it should address this year.

**Update on homework policy:** Newton South had our first homework-free weekend.  Anecdotal evidence from those in the room showed a breadth of experiences: from truly no homework, to no homework but with extra assigned for Wednesday. The consensus was that any extra homework due on the Wednesday after the long weekend should be consistent with the regular amount of homework given—no projects.

The School Council noted that timing of this first homework-free weekend was a problem for teachers. Since school started, there has been only one week with a full five days; the rest had either an early release day, one school-one book day, or a holiday.  It made it more difficult for teachers to plan, and should be considered when planning the weekends for next year.

An informal study of juniors was done to determine if students knew about the special weekend, if teachers complied with the homework-free request and if students felt less stressed.

The Committee agreed to approach School Councils at Oak Hill and Brown to see if they will also endorse the same homework free weekends for their schools. This would be a great advantage to families with children in both middle and high schools.

**Agenda for FY13:**

School Improvement Plan (SIP):  The plans last for three years, with Newton South’s currently expired.. The Committee can review the latest plan to become familiar with it and discuss it at an upcoming meeting. We will look at a new plan in the spring, since the high school process starts with the department heads.

NEASC: This accreditation process will start in 3 years, but a review of the newly revised standards shows at least one area of concern. NEASC will be looking for each student to experience one heterogeneous core class in their four years of high school. The concern is that parents will object to the implementation of this standard.. The School Council will be talking more about this issue throughout the year, with the conversation expected to extend to issues such as grades and leveling and models such as SAM.

In the past, the School Council divided up into groups to work on the different areas of the NEASC review. This time, we are starting early, but the process is still being determined.

School Budget:  The School Council recognizes the need to be strong advocates for the overall budget this year.

**NCAA issues:**push off to next meeting

NOTE: The staff feeling overwhelmed with all the current and future expected changes:

* the new evaluation process is very labor intensive;
* NEASC is looking at major changes in teaching and curriculum; and
* a new SIP will be developed over the year.

The committee feels that these three items should all be overlapping, with the SIP reflecting all the work being done in these areas.

The School Council would like to add to this year’s agenda an overview of the new evaluation system. We would like to hear about the framework being used, and the rubrics.