**North Atlanta High School Local School Council**

**November 5, 2015 Minutes**

**Board Members Present:**

Curtis Douglass, Eleanor Brookins, Chip Fife, Lisa Jern, Joleen Neel

**Board Members Not Present:** Stephen Lawrence, Millie Dunn, Mike Everly

**Guests/Non-Members:**

Dawnitra Quigley (PTSA Co-President), Carolyn Dingman (parent/study hall presentation), Suzi Fife (504 Plans)

1. **Called to Order**

4:20 p.m. by Mr. Fife, Vice Chairperson

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Approval of Minutes from September 3, 2015 (Lisa Jern)**
Motion by Mr. Fife to approve minutes; second by Ms. Brookins; approved unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **UGA Honors Program (Lisa Jern)**Ms. Jern briefly described the UGA Honors Program and circulated the UGA “Honors at Georgia” fall 2015 brochure. Grady High School has proposed partnering to host a UGA Honors Night for North Atlanta, Grady and probably other APS students. Kate Belgum, who works with the Honors Program at UGA, has proposed having the program earlier than they did last year at Grady (in September) because of competing time constraints as the semester gets going. Possible dates are August 24 or 31. LSC members agreed it would be worth pursuing this opportunity for our students.

**ACTION ITEM:** Ms. Jern will follow up with the College and Career Center’s Ms. Bush, who is a UGA graduate and who would likely be the “point person” for moving forward with coordinating a UGA Honors reception.
2. **Study Hall (Carolyn Dingman)**Carolyn Dingman, a NAHS parent, brought the issue of study hall to the attention of the LSC. As a basis for proposing study hall as an elective, Ms. Dingman emphasized the rigor and challenge of North Atlanta’s IB, AP and honors classes in particular, as well as increasing expectations in connection with the writing assessment. She discussed the volume of work required for students generally and proposed study hall as a way of increasing productivity and reducing the stress placed on students from the overwhelming volume of homework. By way of comparison, Ms. Dingman circulated information she compiled on the schedules/requirements at other private and public schools in Atlanta (Attachment A).

Mr. Douglass explained that one impediment to instituting study hall within APS was that “we don’t have a code” for the class currently; *i.e.*, APS hasn’t given us the flexibility to make study hall an elective. Another explanation given, perhaps more persuasively, is that we don’t have the resources to pay teachers to monitor study hall. The A/B block schedule also makes it challenging to add a study hall. We also lose instructional time with 1/5 hours 4x/wk (compared to schools with 6 periods of 55 minutes).

Ms. Dingman pointed out that we’re one of the only schools that require a class schedule of eight classes. (See Attachment A.) She suggested that students would benefit from not having an eighth class (*e.g.*, an elective that they’re not particularly interested in or committed to?). She compared the crux of her proposal as similar to that of private schools that have an open period, and of Walton High School’s WEB (all referenced in Attachment A).

Ms. Brookins pointed out that North Atlanta may have the “bones” for a study hall because we have Advisement 2x/wk. Mr. Douglass said that, unfortunately, the District won’t permit us to, for example, limit advisement to once per week in order to add a weekly study hall.

Ms. Dingman asked whether study hall could be a full class, rather than simply a replacement for advisement. It would need a course code and could be an elective.

According to Mr. Douglass, APS said “no” to a similar proposal last year, but he thinks that it’s more receptive to it this year. An “open” study hall/elective period could also facilitate programs for students attending early college. He said that Dr. Carstarphen “seems to be encouraging” these kinds of opportunities.

Joleen Neel observed that the IB DP program previously included a study hall. Ms. Brookins asked whether the second half of TLK2 could essentially be a study hall. It was also generally acknowledged that students are taking an extra elective, which they don’t need to graduate, and Mr. Douglass noted that the administration has brainstormed about how to avoid that outcome.

Regarding the issue of teachers being paid to monitor study hall, the LSC discussed the possibility of the district approving a paraprofessional to monitor study hall, obviously at a lower cost than paying a teacher.

**ACTION ITEM:** Mr., Douglass will ask APS about getting a “state code” for study hall. The timing is appropriate because we are currently looking at scheduling for next year. **Put the study hall issue on the next agenda; invite Ms. Dingman to return.**
3. **504 Support**Suzi Fife brought her concerns to the LSC regarding her North Atlanta student, who has a diagnosed learning disability and who is taking AP World History. Her concern is that the teacher is not providing the required accommodation. Ms. Fife referred the council to “A parent’s guide to Section 504 in public schools” (Attachment B). Mr. Douglass said that there is a general issue school-wide regarding what constitutes a study guide and that this has been the source of some interpretation problems for purposes of accommodation.

Chip Fife also raised a concern regarding responsiveness – *i.e.*, the amount of time that passes between requests for accommodation or for an issue to be corrected and the response to that request. Ms. Quigley provided an anecdotal description of how the 504 process worked for her student.

**ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Douglass will immediately address the specific accommodation issue raised by Ms. Fife, and she can follow up with him after the meeting to move this forward. As an immediate fix, Ms. Brookins referred Ms. Fife to an AP World History condensed study guide.

**ACTION ITEM:** The LSC reviewed Attachment C, the “Application Process for Extended Time for National Testing (2015-2016),” which should be updated to include IB. The testing issue needs to be addressed in any meeting regarding 504. It will also be posted on the NAHS website.
4. **LSGC Update (Lisa Jern/Curtis Douglass)**Ms. Jern updated the LSC on the ongoing timeline and recent meetings concerning local school governance teams. (See Attachment D, “What Will Be the Work of the Go Team (LSGT@APS)?”.) In the online discussion and conference call (info circulated to LSC via email), Rebecca Kaye said that the LSGC/LSGT councils will now be referred to as “Go Teams,” basically with a goal of promoting action.

The consensus among the current LSC members and Mr. Douglass is that the transition will not be as significant at North Atlanta as at other schools because we function in many respects like a “Go Team” already in regards to the five areas of Go Team focus referenced in Attachment D (Personnel, Finance/Resource Allocation, Curriculum, School Improvement, and School Operations). Organizationally, we don’t have as many hurdles as some of the other schools, particularly since we are already an IB school and that isn’t changing.

Ms. Jern highlighted the following information from the various Go Team meetings: there will be two- and three-year terms for Go Team members; elections will be online and at school sites; full-day post-election training will be conducted in February and March; business representatives and the swing seat will be selected by the principal and the elected members post-election; and a strategic planning retreat is being planned for May.

**ACTION ITEM:** There will be a candidate information session on December 7 from 6-7:30 at E. Rivers
5. **SACS Accreditation Update (Joleen Neel/Curtis Douglass)**The LSC reviewed Attachment E – AdvancEd Performance Accreditation Process (Visit – March 15-16, 2016). North Atlanta needs additional parental input from the surveys. Ms. Neel strongly recommended, and Mr. Douglass agreed, that we need parents for greeting, hospitality, and similar activities and events. Mr. Douglass also noted that one of the significant items this year is technology.

Ms. Neel explained the process from her perspective as a SACS examiner, including her experience with Grady’s impressive undertaking. Ms. Neel suggested that Mr. Douglass reach out to the assistant principal at Grady because their process was so effective.
6. **Principal Report (Curtis Douglass)**
Mr. Douglass updated the council on vacancies in Social Studies (Shannon Williams) and Special Education (Lisa Oglesby).

Regarding CCRPI, Mr. Douglass noted that when teachers don’t take attendance, schools are leaving “points on the table” as it relates to attendance ratings. Mr. Douglass also highlighted information in the APS Attendance Dashboard (Attachment F), which includes year-to-date data from APS.

The graduation rate at North Atlanta is 81%, an increase from last year. Mr. Douglass noted that the organization HOPE has been very effective with the Hispanic population. Ms. Neel shared that she continues to be impressed with practical implementation of certain techniques, which she believes has impacted test scores – *e.g.,* learning to write a term paper, doubling up on math. Mr. Douglass credits the Leadership team with implementing these changes.

**ACTION ITEM (ONGOING):** Please provide suggestions to Ms. Dunn regarding types of information we might need/want from Mr. Douglass as part of the transition to Go Teams.

**MEETING ADJOURNED: 6:05 p.m.**