

Norcross High School Council Minutes
March 16, 2006

Members Present:

Mary Anne Charron, Kirsten Mixer, Harvey Snider, Chuck King, Jo Ellen Greenway

Members Absent:

Kevin Case, Mario Mireles

The motion to approve the agenda was made by Chuck King and seconded by Harvey Snider.

The motion to approve the minutes was made by Harvey Snider and seconded by Kirsten Mixer.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

The meeting opened with the Council members reflecting on the impact that Dorothy Lewis made through the years as a teacher at Norcross High School. They shared memories of her and spoke of her dedication to the school and to the students.

The first item of business was an explanation of the PSAT Summary of Answers and Skills report by Ms. Charron. She explained that the PSAT is given to all 9th and 10th graders and to 11th grade students who elect to take the test. The report is a summary item analysis of the test results by grade level. This summary shows how Norcross students' test results compared to students from the state, the nation, and a composite group. The report provides teachers insight as to how well the students are understanding and applying the skills taught in the curriculum and is used to help identify academic weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Norcross High students have traditionally done better in the math component of the PSAT. When asked why, Ms. Charron replied that math is an "international language" so students from diverse backgrounds have a common understanding of it.

With the addition of the writing component, language arts teachers now must focus on a different kind of writing, one with lengthy passages and more critical rather than creative passages.

Discussion of Gwinnett County Public Schools Effective Pedagogical Instructional Strategies followed. Pedagogical strategies are strategies based on sound pedagogy, the

study of effective teaching, and when used in the classroom will address the needs of the student and will be an effective path to learning.

By studying scientifically-based research to find out why schools are successful, GCPS has formulated thirteen instructional strategies that all teachers will utilize to guarantee that students will learn. These “Best Practices” are as follows:

- Strategy 1: Frequently assess students’ learning of the AKS and give specific feedback to students.
- Strategy 2: Use of a variety on non-linguistic/visual representations of content and skills.
- Strategy 3: Model strategies and skill and give multiple opportunities for guided and independent practice.
- Strategy 4: Explicitly teach content-related vocabulary.
- Strategy 5: Teach students to summarize knowledge.
- Strategy 6: Provide collaborative learning opportunities.
- Strategy 7: Teach and require students to set goals for academic achievement.
- Strategy 8: Explicitly teach skills for improving reading and writing proficiency/literacy.
- Strategy 9: Use problem-based inquiry with students, generating and testing hypotheses.
- Strategy 10: Use and teach questioning and cuing techniques.
- Strategy 11: Access and/or build students’ prior knowledge and experience.
- Strategy 12: Teach students to compare and contrast knowledge.
- Strategy 13: Use technology effectively to teach and assess.

Ms. Charron suggested an additional strategy of teachers having a relationship with their students. She said in order to teach a student effectively, the teacher must have some knowledge of that student.

A letter will be sent to parents of Norcross High School students informing them of the upcoming election in May of School Council members for the next two year term. The election will also be advertised in the Blue Devil Bulletin. Anyone interested in serving or nominating another person should complete the nomination form and return it to the school. Three days in May will be designated for the voting to take place.

The discipline report continued to show an increase in unexcused absences (tardies to class). Ms. Charron explained that while there is an increase in the total number, there are actually fewer students having 5 or more tardies. With the new process of administrators handling tardies immediately, more consequences are being given to students with 1 to 5 tardies.

Norcross Police Chief Dallas Stidd has approached Kirsten Mixer about having the Student Council helping to raise funds to purchase two drug dogs for the police department. Ms. Mixer was told that the school’s involvement in raising money would allow us to have more access to the dogs.

Ms. Charron reported that Mr. Wilbanks will be writing a letter to the Air Force supporting our application for Air Force ROTC to be offered at Norcross High. The program should be in place by the next school year.

Council members were reminded of the Area Board meeting which will be at Duluth High School on May 20. Ms. Charron asked that those members able to do so, be in attendance.

Meeting adjourned.

The next School Council meeting will be held on April 13.