

## **SITE COUNCIL PARENT FORUM**

### **11/1/11 - SUMMARY**

#### **Classroom Interruptions**

We have technology in our building that has not been used in the past. The classroom paging system will be used at the beginning and end of the classroom periods to eliminate phone calls and minimize interruptions to learning.

#### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Overall, fall conferences went well. One of the challenges we faced was that even though our 6<sup>th</sup> grade numbers went down, cutting a team of teachers has caused the numbers of students per team to be higher than in previous years. We will be adjusting conferences this spring, and using other technology options such as the parent portal as we look to solutions for the future. The bottom line is that we need to insure that each family has access to a conference while honoring the teacher contract.

On a related note, we will be looking at possibly (in future years) adding more time to fall conferences while reducing the number of hours dedicated to conferences in the spring. The number of parents participating in spring conferences traditionally has been fewer than in the fall.

We have received feedback over the years with regard to student-led conferences, some positive but the majority of comments were not in favor of the format. The feedback was thoughtfully considered along with the amount of time issued, the number of students in advisories and the reconfiguration of staff. We will not have student-led conferences in the spring. We will be looking to a more traditional format.

#### **E-Communication and Customer Service**

We are cautiously moving forward with more and more paperless communication, including possibly documents in the future such as report cards. There is the potential for considerable savings when you take into account the cost of paper, the man hours involved with copying, folding, stuffing of the newsletter, MCA results and report cards, etc., which could be put directly back into the classrooms.

Many parents are in agreement that we are at a point in time, with the effectiveness of Parent Portal and List Serv at the middle school, paperless days are here. We will always make an effort to provide paper copies and mail reminders to continue to include those who do not have access to e-documents.

Some parents have expressed the need for Parent Portal in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and feel that it would be helpful to students and parents to be familiar with the many facets of Parent Portal before they get to the middle school.

#### **Academic Support**

At the middle school there have been different after-school and weekend programs to help with academics. Parents and staff have asked if we would again be doing an after-school study program or Saturday school. Dr. Dixon, our superintendent, has asked us to look at the Minnesota Alliance with Youth, which is a national program that could bring trained community members to work with students to provide academic support to them on a regular basis. We are just beginning to work with Dr. Dixon on K-12 solutions and are excited to learn more about the possibilities.

#### **Testing**

The Department of Teaching and Learning has asked that we provide reasonable amounts of time for the MAP test. The point of the test is to get a good picture of where the student is at, at a given time, and to direct teaching experiences based on the student's needs. We have provided all students with two class periods to take the test. The Teaching and Learning Department has suggested that if it takes a student 8 or 10 hours to complete their test, they perhaps haven't mastered the assessed skill.

MAP testing in the future may be used with subsets; i.e., academic support clusters, ELL clusters, special education and gifted clusters of students.

The big picture question is; how are we using data to help the students. We will be discussing this further in the spring. One important item to note is that **no** child will be penalized or dropped from advanced placement because we had only two periods for the test this year.

### **First Response Update:**

A new initiative at the middle school is called the WATCH D.O.G.S. This is being led by Joe Goetz, one of our parents who has been in the district for many years. It is a national program that encourages dads to get more involved in school. There will be an introductory pizza party on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Dads who want to join the program will participate in a district mandated background check. They will help us out with some basic supervision such as in the hallways and in the lunchroom. The time commitment is one day per year. The dads are welcome to volunteer for more days if their schedule allows them to. They are **not** at the building to discipline but rather to be extra eyes and ears for staff and positive role models for students.

### **Celebrating Middle School Students**

Honors Breakfast has been a point of conversation with staff and families. One rationale behind the conversation was that some feel we are missing the chance to celebrate kiddos who are great, smart, bright and talented in a variety of ways. We may want to look at ongoing celebrations of all the different attributes of our students on a monthly or quarterly basis.

We value academic success! We want to continue to celebrate it but perhaps using a slightly different venue. We also want to look at ways to celebrate the child who plays an instrument, or is an artist, or a child who helps other children connect or be successful. We are going to investigate options with the parents and staff.

### **Handouts**

In any organization it is imperative that everyone is on the same page with the roles of groups that communicate, make decisions, provide support or celebrate the culture. Hopefully the documents that are attached to these notes will help clarify how we are currently doing business.

1. Decision Making Teams
2. Annual Progress Report
3. Middle School Planning Calendar

Please feel free to email or call with comments or questions that we have shared in this summary or any that you would like to see addressed going forward.