

3-12-2015

Blakely PTO General Meeting

I: Welcome

II: Principal's Report: Reese

Positive Paws, new initiative to help kids improve behavior, recognize 3 Rs.

Bring home, show parents, school to home communication.

Kids could also give positive paws to teachers, custodians, etc. Kids are making appointments with Reese to nominate adults.

Next year will try monthly character traits – could even be please and thank you.

Next year will also try All School Writes – common writing examples of what a 4 looks like for student writing in different grades, and how it should look at different months throughout the year. Parents and teachers will participate too, provide examples. Want to instill kids with work ethic and positive behaviors.

Testing coming up:

April: smarter balance for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

May: 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders smarter balance and math assessment

Lots of testing, parents are encouraged to ask teachers, Reese if have questions.

Next year, conference changes for all elementary schools: will switch from 3 times a year to 2 times a year for report cards. Will still have October intake conference, late January will have report card accompanied by a conference. Aligns with middle schools, kids out of school at same time. Better for teachers too because November is a little soon for having all the information to report on. This will be a pilot year, will have feedback process.

III: Guest Speaker: Jim Corsetti, Sakai Principal

Sakai is one of biggest transitions kids will make in the school system. 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> is not as big of a step. 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> is not a typical transition time, and research has shown that fewer transitions is better for kids – but transition can be mitigated so that the transition is not difficult. Can make it “feel” more elementary in 5<sup>th</sup>. Remembering that they are 11 and 12 year olds, and need nurturing. 6<sup>th</sup> grade looks more like middle school, so like having two schools in one. Sakai was broken off because of overcrowding, and to separate the younger kids from Woodward. Sakai is the largest school in the district. Next year should be about even with Woodward – due to bubble in this age group.

Structure is set up differently from elementary: team teaching, kids will experience at least 2 different teachers – one math, one social studies and language arts.

Most kids do just fine in the transition. It's harder for the parents!

Students have the opportunity to tour Sakai in June – all 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Morning field trip to Sakai. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders will lead those students around Sakai. Kids ask about school size, finding their way, lunch in cafeteria. They'll hear about band elective – end of year performance is very impressive! Positive, exciting visit for 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

Parent Input Form – for class placement, typically due end of May. Harder to get a good class placement for 5<sup>th</sup> graders than 6<sup>th</sup> graders, because kids are new to school, so input form is very helpful. Need to know if there is a history with a student and won't work well together and could be a problem in the classroom. Don't like to make changes once school year begins, so please be upfront with that information. Can download form from website too. Good idea to talk to 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher to provide input on concerns for class placement.

Communication – elementary parents are used to weekly emails, classroom emails – some teachers at Sakai do that, but it doesn't always happen. Teachers use Skyward to communicate missing assignments. Teachers keep websites up to date with homework assignments. Parents need to seek out the information rather than having it delivered or sent home.

Big developmental changes between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Preteen brain has trouble with organization. So even if child tells you they don't need you, they really do – check family access, skyward, website to stay on top of assignments.

Volunteers – there are opportunities to get involved. For examples, salmon release into the stream right now – 2 per classroom. Also Sakai Reads program – parents read a novel that kids are reading, and lead a book group. One day with 60 different book groups happening throughout school. Parents are trained on how to lead those discussions. 6<sup>th</sup> graders have Leaving Our Island curriculum, about Japanese Internment. 7 novels are used in preparation for that curriculum. Also have read naturally program, where parent comes in and works one on one with same student for a period of time. Also have that program for math, working one on one. Volunteer positions work directly with students, as opposed to busy work like may have in elementary volunteering.

Bus situation: 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders ride with middle schoolers and high schoolers. Not many high schoolers ride the bus, but some do. Middle and high schoolers are encouraged to set a good example, but kids will hear profanity on the bus. Sakai kids know that the bus is an extension of the day, good behavior extends to the bus ride home.

Q: How does cafeteria transition happen? Concerned about seating situation.

A: Worked on in Coho time – social, emotional, team building, school spirit, community service program. Biggest issues at Sakai are name calling and being left out, exclusion. Both of those things are developmentally normal, but Sakai is not just writing that off and accepting it. They create role plays – one is finding a seat in the cafeteria. Have observed kids in the cafeteria inviting kids to sit down at their table in empty seats. Because of size of school, have to divide up into 3 lunch periods. They overlap by 15 minutes, have bells to help keep on track. 1<sup>st</sup> lunch is all 5<sup>th</sup> grade. 2<sup>nd</sup> lunch is 4 5<sup>th</sup>, 4 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Last lunch is all 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Q: Track usage?

A: Do use it, mostly Woodward's but they have access. Some teachers use it, teach math outside.

Q: Enrollment?

A: Not needed, automatically move up.

Q: Can you provide more info on student-led conferences.

A: Work in progress. Being discussed, have had mixed feedback from parents, so looking at it.

Q: Which teacher is main point of contact? Or both?

A: Students have a homeroom teacher. That is where they hear Coho Connection, get forms. Homeroom teacher is main point of contact. But if you have a specific question about a study subject, contact the teacher that teachers that subject.

Q: Homework?

A: About an hour a night. Hard to judge if that is the same amount for different kids. Teachers want to know if student is struggling at home with homework, if it's leading to tears, struggling, sleeplessness. Teachers can make accommodations, they don't want that kind of situation.

Jim: Fundraising – just trying to get to their mark, not trying to raise as much money as they can. Students are only there for 2 years. PTO provides for small teachers grants. Example of large grant to teacher would be \$2k. Bigger grants teachers go to BSF, outside companies like 3M. Math-A-Thon is run in beginning of the year, and that's it for fundraising. Covers their budget.

Q: student store?

A: Funds itself, goes through student council. Climate, spirit kind of thing – sells popcorn and trinkets. Not a big money maker, the little that is generated goes to student council. Last year student council added 2 picnic tables from 2 years of store savings.

IV: Motion to approve February minutes – Karen. Second – Anna. Approved.

## V. PTO Updates

Enrichment – Liz

Kate DiCamillo , George Shannon – authors came to visit, kids and librarians loved it. Suzanne Selfors – was planning to come but got sick, so will be rescheduled.

Warren Reid, also local author, volunteered to fill in and was able to talk to kids.

Poet in Residence – Lorraine Fera comes end of March.

Science Assembly – next Tuesday. Pacific Science Center coming. K-2 first, 3-4 second. Jillian worth will talk about Science Fair at the end of each assembly to get kids thinking about it, excited.

Science Fair coming up April 16<sup>th</sup>.

Read-A-Thon – Heidi

\$8100 dollars raised by 80 students! Met goal, also have money from auction to help pay for outdoor ed. Reese: total \$13000 raised, so estimate will be \$175-\$185 per student! Lowest it's ever been per student!

Reproducible Art – Anna, Lisa

Can make student art into puzzle, poster, books, notecards that kids can purchase after the fact. Could become tradition of graduation present, additional fundraiser.

Discussion about how to make this available online, have online store.

Scholarship fund for Outdoor Ed: have \$3000 line item in PTO budget. If family qualifies for free lunch, Reese lets them know they are covered for Outdoor Ed. This year much of that has been taken up already. Will check with Robin and determine how much is left, establish deadlines.

Volunteer – Karen on behalf of Lee

Need more volunteers to make lunches for teachers during conferences.

Science Fair – April 16<sup>th</sup>. Very fun event, need volunteers.

Open board positions for next year. Usually vote in May, so need to get buttoned up.

Karen: Would like to have Enrichment, Art Docent Coordinator be separate positions to allow more focus on art docent process.

Discussion about Art Docent role and VTS, how well it's integrating into the classroom. Reese: needs to be a building discussion. Teachers need to know that it helps with critical thinking, will help thinking across the board. There is a 5 minute youtube video that shows student writing examples in beginning, mid and end of year, amazing to see how writing and vocabulary has improved, very impressive. Suggestion for Art Docents to communicate to parents what art piece is being looked at, so parents can have a follow up conversation about it at home.

Reese: Need to have communication so teachers understand the connection and value. Problem is once a month doesn't show how it could integrate into the classroom with improvement in critical thinking skills. Having same problem with HC, how effective pulled out for only one hour a week.

Next year: Starting STEM additional minutes program, Ms. Bedell working with Ms Bonano to integrate the arts into technology so it will be STEAM.