

Parent Communications  
January 13, 2016

A Parent Communications meeting was held on January 13, 2016 with approximately 41 parent representatives and ambassadors attending. In addition, the majority of principals from each school were present.

Dr. Worthington began by explaining the purpose of today's meeting is to "re-connect the schools back together" utilizing our established Parent Communications groups. In order for this program to be successful and to maximize our efforts, Dr. Worthington added that principals, parent reps, and ambassadors need to fully understand the role of our Parent Communications group. Their role is to primarily listen, share, and disseminate information to other parents as well as to principals. Dr. Worthington stated their purpose is not intended to be an avenue for all complaints or venting but rather a resource for parents who have a real concern or need help in finding a responsible person in charge to assist with their issue. Dr. Worthington continued that this program is about linking arms, communicating, and working together to ensure parents receive answers to their questions and concerns. He added the results can be powerful and will be significant in building a strong, meaningful relationship between our parents and our district. By communicating more effectively, Dr. Worthington said parents will feel more engaged and will be better equipped with knowledgeable and confidence in their ability to navigate through the system and processes. Dr. Worthington mentioned our ambassadors are receiving training across the district in areas of PowerSchool, curriculum, transportation, zoning, operations, SPED, and RTI. These areas cover a lot of material and can be overwhelming especially if some parents need guidance but feel disconnected. The parent groups can serve as a liaison and be instrumental in steering parents in the appropriate direction. Dr. Worthington reiterated it is very important that we use every tool we have in order to make our kids and our school system the best it can be. In his final remarks, Dr. Worthington asked the group to use the next hour to focus on how they can help each other reach these goals and what processes need to be implemented or changed to move forward.

Esperanza McCrary, Parent Engagement Specialist, talked about PowerSchool being such a great communication tool for parents. Ms. McCrary advised the group that there are several iPads that can be checked out and used to demonstrate to parents how to create a PowerSchool account. She commented an opportune time to do this would be at a school event with a captive audience present as it can be difficult to get them into the schools otherwise. PowerSchool cards are available to parents (also in Spanish) that will guide them through setting up an account. Ms. McCrary suggested setting up information booths using a CMCSS school banner, displaying business cards and give-away items to attract parents. Ms. McCrary noted that she has received questions from the parent groups asking the best way for parents to contact them. She requested help from principals by perhaps placing a mailbox in school offices specifically for parent inquiries and by simply communicating with your reps and ambassadors. Let them know what they can do to help you in your building and decide on the most effective plan to circulate information.

In summary, Ms. McCrary commented on other ways of communicating outside of the building which could include community outreach events, welcoming committees for new families, connecting with their churches, HOA meetings, ballgames, and other social events. She said we also want to focus on those hard to reach families (for example, parents with two jobs or maybe some parents work at night) that may not be connected but yet have the same concerns. These life events can create even more challenges in reaching those parents. Ms. McCrary mentioned some ambassadors may feel comfortable in hosting a meeting with a small group of parents and, if so, they should contact her for additional resources.

Notes from each parent meeting are posted on the website which describes topics of interests and concerns (<http://www.cmcss.net/students/parentgroup.aspx>). This is a very informative tool to reference when engaging with parents. For questions regarding meetings and postings, please contact [deborah.cummings@cmcss.net](mailto:deborah.cummings@cmcss.net) (931-920-7808).