

Parent Communications
February 4, 2016

A Parent Communications meeting was held on February 4, 2016 with approximately 30 parent representatives and ambassadors attending.

Dr. Worthington welcomed the group and briefly discussed the agenda for today's meeting.

Agenda Item: Inclement Weather Make-up Plan / Snow Days

Dr. Worthington provided copies of the inclement weather make-up plan to all attendees. According to the CMCSS School Board approval of this plan on July 21, 2015, the first five days missed by students will not be made up and will be used from student stockpiled days. (This make-up plan applies to missed student days. Teachers will be allowed three days missed due to inclement weather without making them up.) The sixth day missed and subsequent days will be made up as available:

- January 4, 2016 (staff development day)
- February 15, 2016 (Presidents Day)
- Early release day on February 26 will be converted to a full day with thirty minutes added to eight additional school days to equal one day
- Add thirty minutes to thirteen school days not to exceed TCAP week

Make-up for days missed beyond this plan will be determined as circumstances require.

Dr. Worthington shared there are many questions regarding the criteria used in determining school closures during inclement weather. When hazardous conditions occur, he said every effort is made to reach a decision before 5:00 a.m., however, at times this is not possible based on the timing of the weather. Dr. Worthington explained the weather is constantly monitored and road conditions are very carefully assessed by our Operations Department. The transportation management team is inspecting all city and county roads all hours of the night and early morning trying to determine if road conditions are safe for our students. For a thorough overview of what goes into the decision-making process of closing or delaying schools, Dr. Worthington recommended watching the Focus video of our Operations Director, Jim Sumrell, in a "ride-along" film describing in depth measures that are taken into consideration when weather decisions concerning our district have to be made. <http://cmcssfocus.net/2015/03/16/cmcss-snow-days>

Agenda Item: How can we improve Parent-Teacher Conferences? Is there a better way to maximize the usage of our conferences?

Mr. Marcus Heaston, High School Level Director, acknowledged the need for a more concerted effort to improve the overall organization and quality of time spent between parents and teachers at these conferences. Mr. Heaston opened up the floor to the parent group for their input in making these sessions more meaningful and time effective.

Comments were:

1. Potential online conference options between parents and teachers.
2. Email teachers to ask if there is anything parent needs to know rather than scheduling a time that could be more beneficially assigned to another parent/student.
3. Spread conferences over a week/arrange alphabetically (i.e., A- G – Monday; H- P – Tuesday).
4. During open house and before first conference, make initial contact with teachers; ask to be added to parent email list for homework/other concerns/get the groundwork started.
5. Most feel PowerSchool is an excellent way to communicate. Parents can have a "conference" with a teacher essentially anytime during the school year using PowerSchool. Can check PowerSchool daily to keep track of many things such as curriculum, grades, testing, and assignments.
6. Some parents like to go to conferences because it's important to put a face with a name and to show the teacher parents are involved.
7. Important to have teachers input/their perspective/personal interaction.
8. Parents need to be there to show child support in school and important for the child to be there as well.
9. Assembly-type conference/town hall (i.e., 6th grade Monday night, 7th grade Tuesday night) and then if additional time is needed can schedule more time later.

10. Back to School night is a convenient time to meet and greet teachers face to face.
11. Eliminate conferences as long as parents feel comfortable they can reach out to teachers when necessary.
12. Parents can go into their students' classroom anytime and volunteer during the day (as a way to communicate / bridge relationship between students, parents, and teachers).

Agenda Item: EngageTV

Ms. Esperanza McCrary, Parent Engagement Specialist, discussed EngageTV and noted there are currently 12 videos streaming on the website. A request was made for ideas from the group on creating new videos that they feel would be of assistance in answering parent questions. Some suggestions were:

1. Parent Teacher Conferences – how to maximize relationship/communications with teachers
2. PowerSchool – how to create/utilize an account
3. “Welcome to the Area” (top 10 things you may need to know if new to the area)
4. Safety drills (tornadoes, emergency situations)
5. The need for and importance of volunteers
6. Student pick-up at school/end of day procedures
7. Bus discipline/seating/procedures – who to contact with these issues
8. SRO's and the roles they play/educate parents on how they are protecting the students
9. Technology – Digital Blending
10. How to prepare for and seek scholarships
11. Curriculum access
12. Testing – TnReady
13. Fundraising - School resources (use and purpose)
14. Budget Process
15. School growth
16. Lunch procedures
17. Grading System (as there are differences between teachers)
18. Resource help for students – Hotlines, Khan Academy
19. Who are school reps/ambassadors
20. Navigate the website/popular topics
21. Reading/library

In closing, Dr. Worthington asked the group if the meeting last month which included the principals was a helpful exercise as far as increasing awareness of the parent group roles and better communication. Overwhelmingly, the group response was “yes”. Dr. Worthington suggested having another meeting with parent groups and principals in the fall.

Notes from each parent meeting are posted on the website which describes topics of interests and concerns (<http://www.cmcoss.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@cmcoss.net (931-920-7808).