

# 12/13/2017 Parent Advisory Council Meeting Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

## Special Education Questions - Mrs. Bridget Schiraldo

No Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

## Kindergarten Questions - Mrs. Lauren Salko

No Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

## 1st Grade Questions - Mr. Chris McCombs

No Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

## 2nd Grade Questions - Mrs. Vanessa Lombardo

1. The new change at recess- alternating between closing the Gaga pit and soccer fields each day so the lunch aides can see everyone. They are not too happy about this change.

2. Three lunch aides may not be enough to supervise all of the classes, 100+ students at a time, particularly for the younger grades safety.

Is CHS exploring any solutions to better staff recess?

**Clarification on Coats for Recess - I know there was some concern raised about the need for heavy coats for recess. The message to the students got a little jumbled. We were never planning to have students sit in the main office for not having a coat, nor will we require students to see if there is a coat in lost-and-found. I would like parents to understand that as long as conditions are around or above freezing, without strong wind and precipitation, we are sending students outside for recess. I do expect parents to make sure their children are dressed appropriately to be outside in thirty degree weather. If I don't feel any student is not dressed properly, I will be contacting parents.**

**Clarification on Recess Supervision and Closing Areas - I am working on different ways to add additional supervision to the playground. Our lunch aides are spread out at their posts, but with the addition of the gaga pit and Omni Tri Net, we have added more activities to supervise. In the interim. I had directed the lunch aides to close areas alternately if they felt the areas were too large to watch. That said, I have asked them not to close the soccer field, Omni Tri Net, and gaga pit, as they are very popular with the students.**

## 3rd Grade Questions - Mrs. Colleen Harris

1. Thank you for reaching out to us. I do want to know if school can do anything about not selling chips of any kind in cafeteria. Eating chips has been affecting my kid's health lately and I do believe in general it's no good for any kid.

2. I've noticed that they allow the kids to buy junk food as many times as they want. My son will buy cookies or fruit roll ups twice the same day along with other extra things. The kids shouldn't be allowed to buy junk food more than once a day. It also doesn't matter if they have money in the account or not they allow them to buy the stuff. Of course the account will be negative and

they know the parents will pay. I understand if they allow the kids to buy a healthy lunch even if the account is a negative, but allow to buy junk food should be a no no.

**I have forwarded this parent's concern about chips to the Food Service Director, Mr. Tardibuono. Parents are able to restrict the purchase of any food for their child by contacting Mrs. Vecchio, the cafeteria director during school hours, at 898-204-2633 x114 during school hours. A pop-up can be added to a student's account restricting the purchase of any particular item or the amount. Parents may also contact the Director of Food Services, Mr. Steven Tardibuono, at [Tardibuono-Stephen@aramark.com](mailto:Tardibuono-Stephen@aramark.com). The lunch aides monitor students' eating lunch and allow students to go up and purchase additional items once they see they have eaten their regular lunch. Cookies are only sold once the regular lunch line has dissipated. The lunch aides cut off any snack buying a few minutes before clean up at the end of lunch. I have directed classroom teachers to review the components of a lunch with all students grades K-5.**

3. Why are we suddenly restricting what and where the children can play during recess? Lunch aides being able to monitor the playground has never been an issue before. Our children get 20 minutes of free time a day. Can we please give them the freedom and independence to play what they would like during that time?

**See Grade 2 Responses Above**

#### **4th Grade Questions - Mrs. Colleen Heinemann**

No Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

#### **5th Grade Questions - Mrs. Inga Matukhina**

1. I was wondering if you could bring up the subject of half days? There are so many that I believe (from a parent perspective) it'd be easier if the half days were consolidated into full days off for the students, even if it would extend the school year. A half day is tough since you still need to get the children up and out, but their instructional time and routines are substantially disrupted. If they were full days off instead, we could plan for full days off from school which would enable vacations, family activities, etc without missing school time. And the days in school would be fully "normal" with full standard routine.

**The abbreviated days are a district decision. These days are used for parent-teacher conferences as well as professional development for staff. Based on feedback I received from teachers and parents, I am recommending to move fall conferences to the week between the NJEA convention and Thanksgiving to minimize disruption.**

2. I am a bit confused with the recess process. Can you explain to me what's happening? I've heard through my son and other children, that the recess is now being contained to just a couple areas and not spread out. To explain it a bit further, apparently the children are limited to the activities they can play. Meaning they could play soccer as a group but another group can't play the gaga pit at the same time. They can only do one or two activities at a time. The lunch aides are saying it's for their own safety because a parent complained. I'm a little confused by this I've had children in Cedar Hill school for eight years and I've never heard of something so crazy. There are the same amount of children on the same size playground. I don't understand why they can't use as much as possible especially when their recess has been limited to a bare minimum as it is. Please explain further. Looking forward to a reply.

3. Thanks for your email, and thank you for representing us. I was wondering if you would address an issue for me next week. It seems that the children were told that a new recess policy has been started, where the students will only be able to use the gaga pit, and the soccer field on alternating days. I believe this is an issue across all grades, but I was hoping you would be able to talk about it at the meeting and provide some feedback on this?

The students were told by the aides that the aides didn't want the students to be so 'spread out' and it was hard for the aides to supervise them in more than one location. This seems to me, to defeat the entire purpose of recess. It limits different play options for students with varying interests. And, on the gaga days, students would have to wait in even longer lines to get any play time. It just seems silly, and I would like to know the thought process behind this decision.

4. The biggest issue right now is the recess. I think it is unfair that the students need to alternate between fields. I've been told that the lunch aides stand together- therefore they do not want to cover the entire playground. This is not a social hour for them and they need to cover all of the playground- the kids only get so much time and they don't need to be crammed on one side. There has never been any issue in previous years.

5. I have concerns regarding the new playground rule soccer field one day / Gaga the next? I mean can 140 kids fit in the Gaga pit? No.. My kids don't play football or soccer what should they do those days? They love Gaga - they see an open pit but can't play 2-3 days a week. Just makes no sense. They are 5th graders that should be earning more independence not losing privileges. One aid watching soccer field / one on equipment and one on Gaga isn't enough supervision? Maybe we need more aids? It's not fair to revoke the kids privileges. I mean this is their last recess ever. Please reconsider some of these RULES. I mean it's their only 20 minutes to have any freedom during the day.

### **See Grade 2 Responses Above**

6. Has there ever been a discussion of taking up a collection for all the behind the scenes workers at CHS. Every year we receive emails to donate to our classroom teachers, yet that only takes care of part of our CHS family. There are many people that make sure CHS runs smoothly day after day--the specials teachers, the administration, the secretaries, the janitor/maintenance crew, the lunch servers, the lunch aides. Even if every child was encouraged to bring in one dollar that could raise a substantial amount of money to be divided amongst these important CHS people. Perhaps a grade level competition of who could raise the most money would encourage participation. I would be happy to assist with this if needed. I realize it is the 11th hour for the holiday season and maybe this could be better considered at the start of 2018 or toward the end of the year instead.

### **The teachers do a collection for the custodians and maintenance. The PTO gives gifts to custodians, secretaries, guidance.**

Secondly, I would think this would go without saying, however, given the new method of classroom party volunteering being online, it should be mentioned on the sign-up email that the opportunity to organize a craft, read a story, bring a game, etc. should be given to those who have yet to volunteer in the classroom. This is being done by some classes, but not across the board.

There are so few opportunities to help in the classroom during the year, it is not equitable that the same parents are signing up for another classroom party a mere 20 minutes after the

sign-up email goes out. I understand there could be occasions where a week or two have gone by and there is still a needed volunteer for a craft and a repeat would be warranted, however, everyone should be given the chance to consider volunteering before spots are filled in by families who have already participated this school year. Please understand I am only referring to classroom parties, not other sign ups.

**Thank you. The class parents are monitoring who is signing up. Please, contact your class parent. The PTO will talk to the chairs about monitoring and putting a blurb on Sign-Up Genius about allowing others to volunteer.**

Third, this past Thursday, there was an incident near school that caused delays for the comings and goings for morning drop-off. A contractor (a local one no less) had his work vehicle break down at Winding and Finley. And while this happened at one of the most inopportune times, it was completely unavoidable and unpredictable. I'm certain this contractor would have much preferred to be on his way that morning rather than tying up traffic for CHS.

What ensued by our CHS parents is my reason for bringing this up. He was reprimanded, honked at, gestured to by our CHS parents. It was embarrassing to watch cars swerve around him into oncoming traffic, drive in the wrong lane, and maintain no courtesy for rules of the road and proper roadway etiquette.

My point is this....we are ALL neighbors. We all live in the same two-mile radius. Our kids all attend school together, all play sports together, all meet at the playground together. I ask that perhaps a message could come from school, from our PTO with a gentle reminder of this. Getting students to school entails driving through a residential area or another school. The utmost caution should be taken. There are contractors, pedestrians, parents, pets, and most importantly children that we not only should be setting examples for, but all holding their utmost safety in highest regard. We have new safety protocol at the doors of CHS, yet it remains that one of the most hazardous places to be at CHS are the roads, parking lots, and crosswalks at arrival and dismissal. This should not be. Slowing down, waiting for a turn, being neighborly, and following universal road laws and the speed limit need to become the norm, not the exception.

**Thank you for the thoughts on etiquette and being neighborly. In Friday Folders I have sent reminders about slowing down and feel many parents have been doing so lately. I agree we need to model the behavior we expect of our children. I will put a reminder in the Friday Folder about this subject.**

And lastly, thank you to CHS for establish rules and guidelines for the betterment of the students. I understand there have been discussions regarding the new rule for needing a winter coat for recess. The murmuring that goes on whenever there is a change implemented made me realize that while those who don't agree make sure to call, send an email, escalate to the superintendent and what have you, there are those of us who are in agreement and find value in the implemented changes who don't take the time to say THANK YOU. For every complaint, there are many who in fact are in support of the new standard. So, thank you for asking that when it is cold that students wear coats. And thank you for enforcing the use of crosswalks for everyone's safety. And thank you for making sure the crosswalks were salted after the weekend snow. And thank you for teaching students patience as they wait to be excused from the lunch table. And thank you for continuing to find ways to build character educating students how to treat others--the Cedar Hill Owl is a perfect addition. And thank you for taking what was a chaotic lunch room into a more structured and organized lunch break for the students.

Thank you one and all for all of your efforts in making CHS a great place for our kids.

**Thank you for the compliments and concerns.**

7. I can understand a need for the younger children to be closely monitored but not our 5<sup>th</sup> graders who are 10 and 11 years old. We should be giving our children more responsibility to monitor their own behavior not less. The children only have 25 minutes of recess, they should be able to play the game they want without more rules and restrictions. Additionally, I hear from my children that the lunch aids are often standing together chatting during recess. If that is the case, they should separate and patrol the playground. If more supervision is still needed then perhaps some of the HS students can fulfill their volunteer requirements by monitoring the playground during their free period or an additional aid hired. Other solutions should be considered rather than closing off portions of the playground.

8. Thank you! And would you please let me know what they say about the opposition to the new rule about the heavy jackets being mandatory at recess? I am with the long list of parents who feel that this is a parent decision, not a school decision.

**See Grade 2 Responses Above**