

1/24/2018 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

- When a child is hurt during school time (recess, gym, cafeteria, class) and is sent to see the school nurse and to get some first aid, wouldn't that be appropriate for the parents to get a report? I am a realistic mom, and understand that there is one nurse in the school but I think will be beneficial for all of us.

It's not possible for Mrs. Lynn to contact parents every time a student visits the health office. She uses her professional judgment to decide when to contact parents. Parents are always welcome to contact Mrs. Lynn if their child visited the health office. In addition, due to flu season, Aramark is using an extra disinfectant on surfaces commonly touched by students and teachers, such as desks and tables.

- I would like to see better, healthier options for school lunches. I know this has been a complaint before, but I think it is worth bringing up again.

I will bring this concern to Mr. Tardibuono, the Director of the Aramark Food Service. He has offered to speak at a PAC or PTO meeting. Follow up - Mr. Tardibuono is speaking at the March 22 PTO meeting.

- If a family moves within Basking Ridge but outside the Cedar Hill School zone mid-year, does the child transition to new school immediately or they do so only from the next school year?

Parents have to write the Superintendent, Mr. Markarian requesting to remain at Cedar Hill until the school year ends. Mr. Markarian makes this decision.

2nd Grade Questions - Mrs. Vanessa Lombardo

- I am writing concerning the substitute teachers at Cedar Hill School. Yesterday afternoon my daughter described her day with a substitute teacher as "the worst day ever." When I asked for specific details about the day she told me a classmate was crying and the teacher's direction was to either sit down at his desk or go to the main office. When I asked her why was he crying she said she didn't know and then went on to tell me that every time there is a substitute it's awful because they yell all day and called it "chaos." Over the past few years she has described numerous accounts of what sounds to me like a complete lack of control. Additionally she rarely knows the teacher's name. I think this is important for many reasons including safety. Is it possible to ask them to write their name on the board or a piece of paper when they come in the room? I'm sure this is not reflective of all the substitutes but I feel I would

be doing a disservice to our students to not bring this up to you and PAC. On a positive note she has describes Mrs. Graves (apologies if not spelled correctly) as lovely. Thanks for your time and efforts with PAC.

If parents have a specific concern about a substitute, please contact Mrs. Uhler or me as soon as it comes to their attention. Any time a concern is brought to our attention, we will address it. Teachers do the same and we address it each time. We monitor the substitutes regularly and will continue to do so. Moving forward, I will direct substitutes to write their names on the boards in classrooms and in addition to the substitute identification badge, we are having substitutes wear name tags. The district has increased the substitute rate for certified teachers in an effort to attract higher-quality substitutes. Teachers are encouraged to use the “preferred substitute” feature in our substitute system.

- My kids loved the holiday sing along (grades 4 & 2). Wonderful jolly way to start the break! And the recent assembly 'respect' awards were a big self esteem boost to my 2nd grader. The outdoor recess in winter initiated by Mr. Ciempola is wonderful. There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing :) And as always, the wonderful responsiveness of our beloved and talented teachers.

Thank you for the positive feedback. We are glad the sing along, our monthly assemblies, and the side-lot recesses are being received so well.

- Issue I raised years ago and still not fixed- Aramark lunch program. Constant overcharges. Parents should check their accounts daily. It is very hard to receive the advertised \$2.60 lunch. Even if you tell Aramark you want your kids to get the nutritionally balanced lunch when they buy lunch. I got Aramark to make a change on the menu this month (January) stating if the child selects wrong, they are charged a la carte. But the problems are not fixed. The exact same lunch costs more if charged a la carte. And if it is rung up as a la carte, Aramark does not have to ensure they receive all the nutritional components. Aramark benefits twice (charges more, serves less food) and the child is missing nutritional components. I was informed by Aramark before the holidays that our lunch program is actually a la carte, making the current monthly menu and the Aramark parent letter on the BOE site completely misleading and inaccurate. Parents should check how many times they were charged extra for items included in the advertised lunch like milk or water bottle. They should request credit to their accounts to Steve Tardibuono of Aramark. I check my kids lunch accounts frequently and over a period of just a few weeks, there was a 50% error rate in the transactions.

Steve Tardibuono: tardibuono-steven@aramark.com

Mr. Ciempola is aware of the problems. Mr. Mollica was in discussions with Steve Tardibuono about the overcharges but retired shortly thereafter. I just got name of District head who manages lunch program. It is an issue for all K-8 students in the district.

Check your lunch accounts!

In response to this parent's requests, Mr. Tardibuono has added additional information to the monthly lunch menu calendar. If parents want specific parameters placed on their accounts, for instance, wanting their children to only be able to buy a \$2.60 lunch, they need to contact me and I will have a pop-up message placed on their account. We can

encourage students to take additional fruit/vegetables so that their lunch qualifies as a standard \$2.60 lunch.

- Each week in his email, Mr. Ciempola mentions the importance of hand washing for preventing germs, yet our kids do not wash their hands before eating lunch. With the flu epidemic being deadly in some cases this year, and the below freezing temps keeping our kids inside for recess, could we have the kids wash or hand-sanitize before eating? I bet parents would gladly donate hand sanitizers as I'm sure they will say hand-washing would take too much time.

Hand sanitizer is available in the cafeteria. We will remind students that they are welcome to use it before eating. Many students do use the hand sanitizer. Students may wash their hands before eating. Parents can also include sanitizer / Purell wipes in lunchboxes. We are working on adding a sink near the water fountain in the cafeteria.

3rd Grade Questions - Mrs. Colleen Harris

- Has consideration ever been made to change how AfterCare is currently run? Especially during the colder months? Our comment stems from there not being enough outside play time for kids anymore.

I am happy to discuss any suggestions with the director of AfterCare. The AfterCare staff tries to get students outside as much as possible. Generally, any day we go out for recess, AfterCare goes outside. They are regularly utilizing the side lot for AfterCare if the playground is too wet and muddy.

- Has the district ever considered doing more programs on teaching children how to make friends other than what is currently being done? This goes for all kids not just new ones who recently moved to the district.

Please, feel free to make program suggestions. We are happy to consider any additional program. We work on social skills in a variety of ways: classroom morning meetings, monthly assemblies, cultural assemblies, guidance modules and ad hoc lessons, lunch bunches, and special-education social skills classes.

- Does a program exist in our district where students are actually taught how to study, not doing homework. I mean actually how to "study"...(From 3rd Grade to High Schoolers)

I am only going to speak about Cedar Hill. The teachers teach study skills in each grade level as part of their grade-level curricula.

- Has the district ever considered doing "lunch and learn" programs where kids that have interests share their knowledge with other kids?

I am only going to speak about Cedar Hill. We are developing recess activity carts which contain games and other STEM activities. We have 25 minutes for students to eat. We encourage students to socialize while they eat.

- Has the district ever considered doing any intergenerational programs with the students?

If this parent has a suggestion, please ask him or her to contact me. We are happy to consider any ideas.

4th Grade Questions - Mrs. Colleen Heinemann

No Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

5th Grade Questions - Mrs. Inga Matukhina

- Please share the school's vision for introducing students to the subject of Suicide (in 5th grade and beyond). There is also some concern that due to the fact that the subject was introduced by different teachers on different days this year, a "broken telephone" effect resulting in student confusion may have been inadvertently created.

I am reviewing the health curriculum with the 5th grade teachers. My understanding is this was a discussion on feelings in which a student brought up the topic of suicide. The teacher brought this to the attention of the school counselor who spoke with the class. Otherwise, the topic of suicide is not part of the health curriculum for 5th graders. It was mentioned briefly in the teacher's guide that if more students spoke about their feelings regularly, we could reduce suicides. The teachers regularly omit this section. We contacted Mr. Shello, the Supervisor of Physical Education and Health. He discussed that the inclusion of Suicide Prevention within the Health Education curriculum begins in middle school at 6th grade. It is continued every year through 12th grade. This past summer through curriculum review and writing the emphasis in suicide prevention was expanded greatly in response to community and Board of Education input.

- This school year, there seems to have been an unusual amount of parent/student confusion re: the schedule of practices for orchestra, band and chorus. Would be grateful for any effort to establish clearer communication.

I will ask the music teachers to revamp their system of notification to parents and students and see if we can create a single calendar system to keep parents notified. We are developing one centralized google calendar for rehearsals only. We can explore adding lessons at a later date.

- The idea of too much communication/repetition was brought up (Friday Folder, CH Scoop, Remind.com, etc.) A parent suggested one longer email that combines all information. Parents sometimes stop reading when emails are too lengthy.

Mr. Markarian is considering Aspen email blasts instead of Friday Folders, which are often not read. Although there is some overlap, the focus of the CH Scoop is different than the Friday Folder. The CH Friday Folder is essentially Mr. Ciempola's weekly newsletter to parents similar to a classroom teacher's weekly newsletter to his or her parents.