

10/17/2018 Parent Advisory Council Meeting

Compliments, Comments, and Concerns

Special Education - Mrs. Bridget Schiraldo

Although Special Ed., these concerns deal with grade 5 and our platooning model this year.

- Organization/Assignments - For those who have organization skills in their IEP (or those students who are just classified period) there is a disconnect between the teachers who do not have the support teacher in class in terms of making sure that the student has all the materials and assignments written down and clarified. So for example, my child has support in Math and Reading, but not Science/Health. Her support teacher is never in the Science/Health classroom. Therefore the support teacher does not know what assignments are due in that subject, or whether they've been accurately copied in the agenda.

The fifth-grade teachers are aware that there is not ICS in SS and SCI. This is not just for 5th grade, but for all the grades. The SS and SCI teachers are looking at each IEP and working to provide the accommodations and modifications as it applies to each child. They are working with the grade level SE teachers on this endeavor.

- Furthermore, if modifying the amount of homework is an accommodation (either in the Modifications section of the IEP or in the 504), how can this be accomplished if each teacher is unaware of what the other teachers have assigned?

The teachers coordinate their homework and tests on grade 5, so they are aware of what each teacher is assigning and to keep tests to a minimum. With regard to SE students, the teachers are keeping IEP homework accommodations in mind when they assign homework to SE students.

Kindergarten - Mrs. Sarah Heller

- Parents who idle in their cars at pick-up! - It is so unbelievably bad for the environment and then all of our kids come out and stand in the midst of this pollution. Although I get

when it's below 0, I think Ciempola should remind parents that the kids are breathing in damaging toxins while they're hanging out keeping cool in their cars. I've read some studies on the air surrounding idling cars and it's horrific.

I will request that parents turn off their cars in warmer weather when they are sitting outside.

- When the kids have recess on the blacktop, is there a way we can also have sidewalk chalk available to use? My kindergarten son hasn't mentioned seeing any, so if it's already available, please let me know.

We do have sidewalk chalk and the students may certainly use it. We will ask the lunch aides to make sure there is sidewalk chalk available for both side lot and regular playground recess.

- Our daughter is in the aftercare program and we have some concerns over the "snacks" that are available for them during this time. Each day she tells us about the "new" thing she tried, which is typically Doritos or chips or juice, things we don't typically give her. We were hoping there would be a way to start offering healthier snacks at the aftercare program.

I spoke with Mrs. Lynn, the AC director and Mr. Tardibuono, the district food service director. He is working with Mrs. Lynn to add some fruit and vegetable snack choices to the AC menu. Parents are always able to pack a snack for AC. Keep in mind, snack is an "extra" that the AC program does gratis. It is not included in the cost to parents.

- We have similar concerns with the lunch options. Our family is vegetarian and our daughter would like to buy lunch her daily choice is Pizza. The daily lunch special is rarely something she can eat. So we're not sure if there is any way start offering a different variety of options that all could partake in.

I spoke with Mr. Tardibuono, director of the food service program for the district. All food served in the cafeteria and BC/AC do meet federal nutrition standards. There is a variety of food and snacks served. There are snacks like Doritos or Sunchips that some parents would not give their children, but there is plenty of fruit and vegetables, salad items. Mr. Tardibuono mentioned that there is an asterisk next to an item, it can be made as a vegetarian item. Parents are able to restrict student buying with pop ups on the cashier's screen. Students can bring a lunch to school.

- I heard that one of the kindergarten classrooms has a problem with ants, flies, and mice (droppings). Is this true and what's being done to eliminate this?

Whenever a teacher reports a problem with ants or any other pest, we address it as immediately as possible. We are an older building and we immediately call for maintenance and custodial service to sanitize areas.

1st Grade - Mrs. Nikki Richter

- The concern is safety on the bus while the driver is operating the bus full of kids. Could there be an "aide" on the bus? Feelings are that several other school districts have a bus driver and a helper/aide on the bus which enables the driver to focus on driving as opposed to a bus load of kids that may be misbehaving or having an issue.

Adding an aide to each bus across the district would add a tremendous cost to transportation of students. It's really more of a district concern. I am happy to share with Mr. Markarian and Mr. McLaughlin who is the BA, but in the current budget, there is no provision for aides on gen. Ed. buses.

2nd Grade - Mrs. Catherine Gilbert

- I was wondering if you could ask if students would be able to have their water bottles at their desks? I work in another district with younger students and they are all allowed to have water bottles on their desks. My daughter keeps coming home with her bottle practically full. She says she doesn't want to get up in the middle of class to get a drink and it is a pain to get it out of the backpack. Staying hydrated is important for so many reasons and it keeps kids more alert and ready to learn.

I think some teachers allow students to have water bottles at their desks, possibly at certain times of the day. I believe spillage is one of the reasons not all teachers allow this.

- We just received this email from Mrs Heitmann and I think this is something that should be raised in your next meeting.. Is there a reason the 2nd grade classes don't have chromebooks this year and if they are to get 5 - when will that happen? I personally don't think CH invests enough in technology at these younger grades- and think its hugely important!

Mrs. Daglian outfitted the second-grade classrooms last week. Each class has 5 chromebooks. The second opted for pods rather than a shared cart. The district technology committee has not made firm decisions about the types of technology for the primary grades.

- I would like to bring up a concern about the cleanliness of the bathrooms. My child, and her friends are complaining about clogged, dirty, smelly toilets. My daughter just tries to wait until she gets home, instead of using the bathroom at school.

The custodians are on a regular schedule to check and clean restrooms during the day. We have one male and one female custodian and they check the boys' and girls' rooms respectively three times a day. Mrs. Uhler and I also check the restrooms and radio custodians when we see cleaning needed. One issue we run into constantly is students not flushing toilets. Both of us flush 10 to 15 toilets a day because students fail to do so. It would help if parents would talk to their children and remind them that they expect students to flush the toilets as well.

3rd Grade - Mrs. Barbara Geary

The overwhelming issue in grade 3 is parental concern about class size.

Class Size in 3rd Grade:

	Primary Teacher	Math	ELA	SCI/SS (content)
Cherubini	23	15	23	25
Martin	23	14	23	27
McKinnon	23	15	18	23
Nollkamper	24	19	19	24

Keep in mind that ELA and math comprise half the day in school (three hours) and content is one hour. I am working with the grade 3 teachers to look for ways we can enhance the experience of the grade 3 students this year. I am planning that we will have five grade 4 classes next year and five grade 5 classes next year.

My son asked me tonight if 3rd Graders could have access to Raz Kids. He said he asked Mr. McKinnon and he didn't think so. I do think Raz Kids is a cool reading tool for the kids! could you ask which grades get access and to propose the website for 3rd graders or the whole school?

I have to check into it. K-2 has a certain number of individual spots. Grades 3-5 have teacher or whole-class subscriptions.

My other question is, has anyone ever looked into a whole school yearbook? I have a yearbook from every year k-12 with each class picture in it. So it would have a class picture of every class in the school, and there would be a purchase price for students. I have nieces and nephews that have these yearbooks. Tree house does something similar. Is this something that he would be okay if someone(prob me) inquired about?

I'll think about it. I will discuss with the PTO.

- Is there an issue with the school website? Why can't we access the teacher's websites from the CHS page? Another parent was looking for the GoMath link & I easily found the link on LCS website. (this could be a user issue:-)

You are no longer able to access teacher websites and the GoMath links on the Cedar Hill website. The district as a whole is dealing with new ADA mandates about accessibility on the website (as are other districts throughout the state) It's extremely expensive and time consuming to make links ADA compliant so in the meantime, teachers are sharing their websites with parents, many have added them as part of their signature on emails.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt contacted me a few weeks ago and said I needed to remove the GoMath links from our website. I believe teachers can share links with you.

- Can a school calendar be provided besides the district calendar since the district calendar does not provide CHS parent/ teacher conferences, days, green & gold

assembly days etc.? I know there is a summary in you the weekly email but I personally think a calendar on the website would be very convenient for all.

We have a building calendar on DynaCal where I am trying to put most of this information as well. I will sit down with my secretary Mrs. Voorhees and look at adding more items to DynaCal.

- When are the parent/teacher conferences for the Spring?

There are no spring conferences this year. This was a district decision to reduce the number of abbreviated days.

- The jump from 3rd grade from 2nd work has been a big adjustment, in my opinion. For example, in first grade there were spelling & math tests but only math tests in 2nd grade. Now, in 3rd grade in addition to more homework they are having math & spelling tests on the same day. Two tests is a lot for 3rd graders in one day. I think there should be more of a build up from 2nd to 3rd so it's not such a difficult transition.

I agree that the jump of second to third grade is a big one. I think third grade is definitely a transition to more academics. I will speak with the third grade teachers about it and follow up at our next meeting.

4th Grade - Mrs. Nicole Henderson

- The time allotted for lunch is too short. By the time kids get cafeteria food, there is no time to eat. Perhaps additional staff or a different way to get kids through the line would be helpful. Happy to brainstorm with you.

We try to make sure the students have a full lunch and recess. Student cooperation helps in making this occur. I am working with Mr. Tardibuono, the food service director on ways to get the students through the line faster. Remember, students may always bring a lunch to school. This will give them the most time to sit, eat, and relax.

- Can you stress the need for the kids to play on the large playground? It seems that many times the default is the side parking lot. If conditions are favorable, the kids

need to be on the large playground so that they can run around and release some of their pent up energy.

We always aim to get students on the playground if conditions are right. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of rain in September and October which has caused muddy conditions. Students were on the playground yesterday and will go to the playground today.

- Also, last year the 5th grade PAC rep recapped the outcomes of the meetings to all of the parents. It was helpful to know what the response to the issues was. Can we expect the same from all this year?

Yes

5th Grade - Mrs. Danielle Kahm

- Compliments:
 - The variety of teachers and teaching styles
 - The ability to have a movement break between subjects
 - The additional responsibility of remembering your notebooks
 - Teacher enthusiasm
- Concerns:
 - Excessive amounts of homework. The back to school presentation stated that students can have "20-30 minutes of homework per night." This is not the district policy for 5th grade. The district guideline is as follows: *Grade 5: 20-30 minutes of homework no more than four nights per week, Monday through Thursday*
 - *Students may be required to spend time on the weekends for any long-term assignments and required reading*
 - This also does not state that homework will be done over weekends unless a long term project. On 10/5 students in Mrs. Cicchino's class were assigned a math homework page over the weekend.

- Are we to expect up to 2-hours of homework per night plus homework over the weekends? This is very troubling to me, against the district policy and quite overwhelming to my student.

The slide about the homework in the BTSN presentation was incorrect. I have spoken with the fifth-grade team about this slide. One of the issues the fifth-grade teachers is encountering is that quite a few students are not using time wisely in class. Parents are encouraged to talk with their fifth-grade child about using their time better in class. This will reduce some of the work that ending up being taken home. Parents are encouraged to email subject-area teachers about any specific homework concerns for their individual child. Guidelines in homework times can vary per child, based on the child's strengths or weaknesses. Some are better at math than others, so the work will take ten minutes compared to forty. The length of time needed to complete homework assignments depends on the learner and BOE guidelines are for the average student. Keep in mind that students are able to make use of project morning, the first thirty minutes of each morning, two-and-a-half hours a week to work on homework or long-term assignments. Finally, the teachers feel there is a period of adjustment each year to every grade level and the new routines and requirement. They feel certain the students will adjust by the end of the first marking period.

- My concern is that the platooning (picking up and returning supplies, walking to class, finding seats, getting settled) is eating away a classroom time, and the students are then being asked to complete assignments at home. The memoir is an example of this.

Children were given plenty of in class time to complete the memoir assignment. Students who needed to work at home were those who did not take advantage of class time to revise and edit their work. The due date was even extended to meet the needs of the

students. Again, the memoir is a long term assignment that may be completed over weekends if needed.

- Missed assignments/long term planning
 - Being accountable for homework and projects and learning to plan for long term work (eg. studying for a test) is an extremely important foundational skill. Because of the platooning we have a golden opportunity to teach this skill when the stakes are low... but is trial by fire really the best way to teach this skill? Should we be punitive for missed assignments in the beginning of the year, or should we set that expectation and slowly increase stakes?

Incomplete homework requires students to complete a missed homework slip and then they have time to make it up for a late grade. This is a regular routine the fifth grade has had in place for many years beginning in September before platooning. Completing homework on time is teaching students responsibility, and homework is completed in every grade, not just in fifth.

- Wouldn't it be better to work with the students and teach them how to budget their time (eg. break their studying into chunks by writing on the assignment pad "study Social Studies for 5 minutes tonight")?

All classes had class meetings to discuss homework and these were the topics discussed:

- **We talked about planning out their week so that if students know they have a busy afternoon, they could work ahead or break the assignment down so they have less to do at the last minute.**
- **We discussed with students about using their time productively in class.**
- **Project Morning time is ALWAYS a time that students can ask for extra help, make up work, study or review. We reminded them that just because we don't teach them that subject, we are available to review or reteach! Some students**

are great about using this time. Others need to be encouraged to use this time to their benefit.

- Additionally, how is the homework being communicated each day? Does the homeroom teacher write the assignments for every subject on the board? Can the assignments be posted on the Google classroom each day? This is a particular concern for children who struggle with organization.

We also reviewed with students that subject Google Classrooms are a great place to look for help. There are posts that will clear up any confusion on new material, supply information, clarify assignments, and support classroom lessons. Please encourage your children to visit often!

- Note taking - Note taking for studying at a later date is a new skill for these fifth graders. Where can they find the correct answers to their study guides and the correct information to study for tests? Is it the Google classroom? If so why has they not been clearly communicated?

The teachers have discussed taking minimal notes in reading only.

- Frequency of trips back to homeroom - How can we minimize the trips back and forth to homeroom to pick up and drop off composition notebooks?

The teachers allow students to return to homerooms when they feel it is necessary.

Classrooms cannot hold all of their books for all of the classes, and notebooks are needed for studying or homework purposes.

- Supplies - Instead of carrying around the gigantic pencil case, can they leave their supplies in the desk of each classroom? Or in a common bin?

Students should not be carrying a gigantic pencil case. They should have a zipper pencil punch that goes into the binder to store pencils, pens, highlighters. (This will be similar

at William Annin.) Students are aware of this, but many prefer the larger case, knowing they need to carry it around.

- Have substitutes been given an understanding of what is expected of them regarding platooning?

We are working with the substitutes so that they have a better understanding of how the the platooning routine works. There will be a period of adjustment for substitutes as well as the rest of the building when it comes to introducing a new program and new routines. I believe this will level out.

- When an assignment is missed due to an absent teacher it has great potential for 1/2 the grade to fall behind in those subjects. On days where the whole grade is out, What are our substitute expectations?

Teachers are leaving detailed plans for subs. Again, we are trying to some training for subs on grade 5 platooning model so they are aware of how the model works.

- How will 5th grade conferences be handled?

Fifth-grade homeroom teachers will be meeting with parents. They will have updates from the other subject-area teachers. If parents have additional questions or concerns for the other subject-area teachers, they are to contact those teachers to set up a phone or in-person conference.

- Are there spring conferences?

There are no spring conferences this year. This was an administrative decision made at the district level. Parents are always free to contact teachers to talk on the phone or schedule a conference.