

Principal Coffee Minutes  
November 3, 2017

*\*Disclaimer: These notes are not official school or FA approved minutes. They are informal notes taken during coffee hour.*

**FA**

Intro and discussion of why folks come to First Friday Coffee and whether the format is meeting folks' needs.

Folks come for:

- Social interaction with other parents
- Announcements – it is one of the few ways to get information directly from school administration
- To be seen at school as a supporter of child's education – one of the few opportunities to do that other than parent/teacher conferences
- To get information generally about the school, its history, how things work for self and to pass along to other parents who cannot attend

Announcements:

Voting is starting for the Florence Bank Community Grants. All account holders are encouraged to vote for PVCICS. Children with bank day accounts can vote, as can their parents if they are on their child's account or have their own account. We must get at least 50 votes in order to be eligible for prize money.

Gift card fundraiser – the FA is selling gift cards again this year. The form will be going home soon in the backpacks. There will be two ordering deadlines for delivery before winter break.

**School Administration**

Kathy

Coffee Time Recap:

11/3/17 is the 102<sup>nd</sup> principal conversation time. Has been happening once a month since the school started. The current time has been used for a while because it seems to have worked for people, but if there was a strong desire for a different time, such as 7 am, a different time could likely be accommodated. Kathy sees it as a time for information to flow in both directions and she is open to feedback via email etc.

Announcements – There are flyers for two programs organized by Cathy Z. circulating – running club and skiing opportunities

Thank Yous

- to the FA for the ice skating event. She skated and enjoyed it.
- Thanks for attending parent teacher conferences

- Thanks to Cathy Z. for arranging child-care options for the afternoons when parent teacher conferences were happening

#### Parent Teach Conference Follow-Up

- There were two options for childcare for elementary students during parent teacher conferences this year
- School is looking into having middle and high school students be active participants in parent/teacher conferences
- Parents of high school students received information at parent/teacher conferences about an online system for grades and assignments used in the high school.
  - The high school students had been given this information at the start of the year.
  - This approach of giving info to students first was deliberate in order to help students take ownership/responsibility over their own academic experience as a college/life skill.
- Parent response:
  - High school parent has found it has worked well for his kids to be included with parent/teacher conferences and has encouraged them to more meaningfully interact with their teachers
  - Middle school parent asked about possibility she heard about that the grading method may be changing for middle school students
    - Kathy – K-8 currently have standards-based report cards. School has been talking about the 8<sup>th</sup> graders switch over to standard letter grade report card format prior to high school. Working proposal is to have a “double” report card in the spring of eighth grade – one that is standards-based and one that is grade-based
      - Parent suggested rolling it out for the fall would give students an opportunity to change their behavior and incorporate the feedback from letter grades
        - Kathy will take to group considering the change. The current plan is to ease into ninth grade by simply providing grades in the spring. Unlikely to happen earlier because the standards-based report cards provide more information

#### Partnerships with other school districts

- A dance group came recently from Amherst High School
- Folks from Holyoke Public Schools came to visit to learn about immersion programs
- Folks from Weston Public Schools interested in coming
- A large group of educators recently visited from Taiwan
- Another group is scheduled to come from China in January

- Parent suggested that this type of information be included in the next newsletter

#### Target Bus

- so far there are 17-20 folks signed up to be using the stop. Hadley police will be at the stop this week.
- There is still capacity on the Target Bus for another 12-15 students depending on the day.

#### Directory

- It is in process but it is missing a lot of information
- Parent suggestion that next year the directory be opt-out rather than opt-in at least for parent email and town information
  - Other school districts do this, parent happy to share what some of those districts are if that is helpful

#### Release of Information to Third Parties

- Under state law generally the school needs parent consent for releasing information to third parties, this includes enrollment information provided to other school districts
- The school recently sent out an email about this in part because sending schools are requesting enrollment information earlier than in the past and are asking for additional information.
  - DESE has opined that some of the info requested of PVCICS from other school districts may be more than they are entitled to
  - Parents have a right not to give consent
  - Parent suggestion that it would have been helpful if the email had more information about what information the school is giving out and to whom
    - PVCICS has never collected or actually given all the possible information

#### PAC/School Council Update

- PAC is not required by state law, but there is a law requiring that all public schools have a school council and so the PAC is being retooled into the School Council
  - School plans to disband PAC
  - Members to School Council will be elected
  - Under the statute, school councils includes folks besides parents and principal
  - School Council meetings also must follow Open Meeting rules
- Parent comments

- The PAC currently meets monthly and current PAC members would like to continue to do that even if the School Council does not need to meet monthly. There is concern that if PAC is transitioned to School Council there will be fewer opportunities for parents to interact with admin.
- May be worth having two bodies so that we don't lose the functionality of the PAC because School Council has other needs/functions
- Comment from Richard
  - The School Council requirement may actually be incompatible with the requirements on charter schools
    - For example charters have a mission that is established separate from school counsel
- Kathy has traditionally appointed folks to the PAC, but right now it is pretty much anyone who wants to come can come.
  - It is not meant to be a drop-in meeting, but any parent interested in attending should check in with Kathy W. Goal is to have a diverse group – different grades, geographic areas, etc.
  - Currently no high school parents attend.
  - Kathy says that there has been less for PAC to do recently because there have been fewer policy changes/amendments lately

#### Parent Questions/Concerns:

- 4<sup>th</sup> grade parent concerned about child not feeling challenged in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade – encouraged to follow-up with teachers and Kathy
- Question/concern about how holidays are handled – parent surprised by how much Halloween-themed stuff came home with student
  - Parents of older students commented that they have not had experiences of kids coming home with holiday themed projects
  - Kathy - the MA state standards have things like Columbus Day and Thanksgiving in them – School has tried to use as an opportunity of placing these events into a more global perspective
  - School is actively interested in not offending and is very open to feedback
  - It is being renamed School Council and representatives will need to be elected
  - PAC is not required by state law, but there is a law requiring that all public schools have a school counsel and so the PAC is being retooled into the School Council.
  - Mandi – the PAC currently meets monthly and members would like to continue to do that even if the School Council does not need to meet monthly.
    - If the School Council can't meet at least monthly because of the requirements that various people besides parents need to attend and follow open meeting laws

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Cathy Z. – there are flyers on additional activities, including Sunday family ski