

School Council Meeting April 27, 2023

Meeting commenced at 4:31 pm

- 1) Angie discussed budgeting for a coordinator for extracurricular activities as well as for community service.

- 2) Alisha will work on getting more info from the PA about the FAQ that's currently being proposed to add to the website.
 - She also mentioned a change to the PA bylaws, that states that the PA vice chair should come to every meeting to make sure there is communication between the PA and School Council
 - Elections don't happen for PA leadership, there ends up being volunteers only. Alisha is trying to get more accomplished through a sparsely attended PA.

- 3) Angie brought up the proposed Student Handbook changes
 - She would like to add verbiage to the Handbook's Attendance section about extended absences. There are families out of the country for weeks at a time and the parents are expecting their children to be provided with work for the entire time and also to have the absences excused. It needs to be made clear that the school is not responsible for providing a month's worth of work to a student who is not present for an extended period. Teachers plan based on student mastery of content and are generally not able to plan weeks in advance
 - Ann noted that the wording should be phrased carefully; it could be problematic for students to be told they can't make up a test, etc. Angie said the burden should not be on the teacher. It's on the parents choosing to remove their child from school.
 - Jamie has had to deal with students being out of school for as much as a month. What is the expectation for making up work? Parents are looking for certain parts of instruction to be excused; Angie said that there might need to be language about remediation, especially for high school students.
 - Rowena agreed that the responsibility should be on the family and student. They need to read the textbooks and do more studying, with some help from the teacher.
 - Shawn noted that with school sports teams, there is always an understanding that when students miss class time for games or practices, they need to make up any work they've missed. But with extended absences, sometimes it's made up, sometimes not, which causes problems.
 - Jamie said that if the Handbook says the student is responsible for making an agreement with the teacher prior to leaving, teachers can work with families to create a plan.

- Karin pointed out that the youngest students' parents are the ones responsible for these arrangements, not the students.
- Shawn mentioned a student of his who hadn't showed up to school for some time and other students finally said, oh, he's in Africa. There was no information given to him ahead of time to help plan making up the work.
- He also noted that the Handbook has a signature sheet that makes families responsible for following the rules of the school stated within the Handbook.
- Angie offered variations of wording for this part of the Handbook, for a vote. Council members offered suggestions.
- Mary noted that there is a big difference between elementary/middle school, and high school, due to the much more vital work in high school. Based on the suggestions, Angie came up with wording. The council voted and decided to accept it.

4) Dances and special events

- Angie was asked how long students have to be in school the day of the prom in order to be allowed to attend it.
- There would need to be exceptions to such a rule; Angie mentioned a Level III student who had asked if her all-day medical appointment would prevent her from attending the Level's social event.
- This rule is not actually in the Handbook; Angie would like to add it.
- Marco would like to add verbiage regarding things that students are not allowed to do at prom, i.e. smoke, drink, use illegal/illicit substances, etc.
- Angie said that it makes sense that students would need to attend school for at least a half day in order to attend a school social event.
- Ann requested that exemptions are possible with permission.
- Mary noted that there should be language about students needing to be at the event 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after, so that the parents can know that their child is at the event the entire time.
- A vote was taken and it was decided to add this language to the section to which it pertains.

5) Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

- This is part of the Handbook but also a stand-alone document that has to be updated by law
- We no longer use Open Circle so that wording is being removed, replaced with PATHS/Emozi
- Angie had requested feedback from Council members about this section. She read Ann's list of questions and responded to them.
 - Anybody can report bullying but verbiage can be added to the Handbook which clarifies this, including where the form can be found. Online reporting isn't available; emailing could be done but would preclude anonymity. Marco asked about targeted groups, which Angie said is a different form.

- She also noted that false accusations wouldn't be possible if the form is anonymous but said the law expects both.
- Teachers and staff are mandatory reporters of bullying as well as other issues such as child abuse, neglect, etc. Ann would like to see that fact added to the Handbook.
- Angie pointed out that not all negative interactions between children are bullying. She thinks training for parents about bullying in the fall would be a good thing, but believes it's better done in person. All agreed.
- Alisha pointed out that she does hear things called bullying that actually are not.
- She also noted that aggressors need help too; she'd like to see more details about the process on both sides. Angie agreed. She'll look into how other schools address this issue.
- Shawn noted that the definition of bullying requires repeated instances, not just one incident. Angie noted that any aggressive incident, even if it's only a one-off, is going to be dealt with, not ignored because it's not "bullying".
- Incidents on the bus can also result in removal from the bus, either temporarily or permanently.
- Counseling for the aggressor will not be put in the discipline section, to avoid making it look like counseling is a punishment.
- Angie will add these items and send the policies out to the Council members so they can look them over, along with the SIP so voting on all can be done.
- The votes have to be complete before the Board of Trustees meeting in July. If the May meeting doesn't produce all the votes needed, there may need to be an additional meeting in June.

Next meeting is May 18th.

Meeting concluded at 5:35 pm

Attendees:

Angie Pepin

Ann Mantil

Marco Pedulli

Mary Carter

Jamie Allen

Rowena Samuels

Alisha Uhlenbrock-Furst

Shawn Connors

Arya Suryawanshi