PTO Meeting

4/20/20, 7:30pm

Via Zoom

Called to order 7:32pm

In attendance – Beth Herlihy, Barbara Mauger, Shion Walsh, Suzanne Szwarcewicz, Lori Zinner, Susan Lowcock, Laura Murphy, Jen Behr, Jess Lourie, Sue Johnston, Rebecca Gavin, Rakashi Chand, Becky Schwartz, Jennifer Terrazzino, Dolly Wallace, Emily Restivo, Sangeeta Jathar, Jennifer Tomaneng, Liz Flaig, Rob Flaig, Adam Howes, Isabella Xiao, Schachi Shrestha, Abby Bannon, Ryan Brennan.

Distance Learning

Principal coffee next week. Principal Herlihy expressed how great teachers have been, what they have acccomplished in 43 days, with no notice or guidance in the novel COVID-19 era.

CS was one of first schools to do zoom

Teachers: More small group next week – 2 per week – 1 with teacher, 1 led by aides (literacy, ell, interventionist). Will try to structure across classes too. Huge shout out to literacy and math specialists, who have made great schedule for all kids.

Awaiting new guidance from superintendent to see if we need to adjust based on state guidelines; there will probably be minimal adjustments; this will be addressed at principal coffee.

Encourage people to give feedback. Try to help each family. Goal is to decrease not increase stress.

It was mentioned that social emotional wellbeing is important too. There are some social emotional resources on each weekly schedule – maybe fine tune to address stress, anxiety, not seeing friends, and how to help with this. Principal Herlihy will plan a coffee that includes SW, Nurse Murphy, specialist. Will solicit questions in advance. Given that activities are supposed to be independent, don’t want kids to navigate these social-emotional issues alone without parent helping them. Beth is planning some social events, like 1st grade bingo, etc. This is why the small groups are going to be across classes. Tried something for 5th grade that they will tweak.

Recent middle school superintendent coffee was very informative. Parents in very different places, some wanting more work, others done. Helpful to see what is state mandate – ie not allowed to give new instruction. Echoed that there is also a wide range at CS. Ms. Bannon – state will give update on end-year goals for each grade level. Principal Herlihy reiterated that she and all the teachers are just an email and phone call away.

Thank you to our front line workers, including our doctors and healthcare professionals, grocery store workers, and all our front line workers, was discussed and echoed. We should find out who our CS frontline workers are and make sure they are ok.

Rakashi – should we conduct a parent survey to see where everyone is at? Could we have room parents reach out to parents and let them know to open communications? Yes good idea! Unclear what will happen in fall –hopefully we will have additional guidance soon.

Reviewed that we just missed parent-teacher conferences; Principal Herlihy confirmed these were cancelled. They are determining how to do report cards etc.

Summer plans – hopefully governor will give guidance soon.

Action items:

* Upcoming Principal Coffee
* Social/emotional wellbeing focus. Upcoming coffee or session to help with this.
* Make sure our CS community front line workers are ok.
* Have room parents reach out to their classes and encourage them to give feedback, communications.
* Teachers would appreciate feedback

Retrieving items:

People have left clothes, snow pants, other belongings at school. Have to return library books etc. There will be a well thought-out way to retrieve items – will trial in HS first. Meds. Nurse Murphy will be emailing parents about med retrieval, and meetings with parents. Could coordinate with CCC too.

Screen time issues:

Some kids struggle with screen time – either disengaged, or can’t get them off screens. Could we have worksheets or workbooks? School will try to give back math books, etc. Reaching out to title one about packets, in past have done summer packets etc. Hopefully district will have a grade level packet. If your child is having trouble with screens, reach out to Principal Herlihy/teacher for help. It was discussed that it would not be that hard for parent(s) to go in at get items, then distribute to families. Maybe hold some items for the fall. Want to make sure families aren’t stressed by too many workbooks/work to complete. Will be difficult to find right balance, but if people reach out, will try to address specific situations. Discussed a tiered approach, with additional opportunities for those who want them, but not required. Also reviewed that at school, there are breaks etc not just sitting for 3 hours in a row.

How much do we push kids - if we make too many things optional now, will it be too hard to address in fall. School/teachers know it will be really hard and a big adjustment in the fall. Trying to individualize. Teach older kids prioritizing.

Action items:

* Contact teachers if you want less screen items for your child.
* If a cohort of parents can help Principal Herlihy brainstorm on ways to prepare, coordinate, distribute paper packages etc.

School supplies

There are school supplies available if any families need. Families can reach out thru teacher. If families have other needs, like rent, utilities, should reach out. Can help families access COVID fund. Gifts cards available. Barbara -can put in update.

First Day school supplies – Lori is looking at options. Hand sanitizer – Nurse Murphy mentioned DPH is ordering a large supply, trying to order in bulk. Ideally need to decide in next few weeks, they usually sell thru 6/30. Probably kids should have their own school supplies, own pencils etc – safer and more comfortable for parents. Mrs. Wallace has been collecting lists from teachers.

Action items:

* Circulate info that school supplies and other items are available to families in need in the Update
* Ask for Visa card donations instead of food, as families are struggling with bills/rent/utilities and have other resources for food
* Decide about 1st day school supplies

Gift card drive

So many donations! Teachers have generously donated, as well as families. In good shape. Suzanne – at ESL meeting, it was discussed that there are a lot of food donations, so may be better to shift to visa cards that people can use for bills etc. Barbara/Principal Herlihy will adjust wording for next update.

Teacher Appreciation

Can’t do TA lunch in May. Sangeeta – organize a bake sale for teachers. Have teachers request particular baked good items, accommodate dietary restrictions, maybe have parade to distribute, with a personalized card. Beth – a note would go a long way. Teachers: handwritten notes are very sweet; then don’t have to worry about allergies, germs etc. They don’t want to ask families to go to stores – personal notes keep them going. Maybe have food as an option, thank you parade. Principal Herlihy plans a video montage/movie with each class, for teachers. She will be in touch with Becky and Jess to coordinate. Can survey teachers about food.

Action items:

* Becky & Jess will message Room Parents about Zoom, plans

Raffle Update

Lori – reached out to families who already purchased tickets, about giving back money. Went thru raffle prizes – retracted teacher prizes. About 90 prizes. 4 are summer camps that parents can opt into. Will have drawings. Will have Mrs. Wallace provide updated list, and help with reaching out to winners. Will post winners on 5/17. Will ask for response in 72 hours otherwise will go to next winner. Info will go in Sunday Update. And blast on Tuesday. Will have option to donate to PTO.

Year end cancelled activities

Multiple cancelled activities: MCF, Springfest, Movie Night. Principal Herlihy is meeting with 5th grade activity committee to discuss options – planning a special sendoff.

5th grade committee update

Rakashi – planning meeting to further review. Amy Volk working on yearbook. Class tshirt. After meeting Wed, they plan to move forward on many items. Will focus on making sure they have their special day to graduate – even if in the fall – but once DPH gives ok, will do. Could have parade, where teachers out front and kids drive by. Could have yard signs, class of 2020 etc; want to make sure protect kids privacy. Ryan shared there is a generous budget available. Ms. Restivo- it is the last year of STRIDE/aba program – should have goodbye for them. Rakashi reminded room parent coordinators there aren’t 5th grade room parents, so reach out to them as well.

Fields trips – have placed deposit at Plimouth – will try to convert to 2021. All field trips parents have paid for have happened. A lot of cultural institutions are offering virtual field trips, virtual tours etc. Teachers should take advantage of this.

Newton Serves update

Newton Serves cancelled. Thinking about having people sign up for different time slots to do various projects. Sue thought about this more - was concerned not right time to do this, as in peak of curve. There are still a lot of people going to school, and want to be able to safely block off areas where people would be working, and make sure people can do this safely. Once safe to do from governor, may schedule. Wanted input on how people felt. Some mentioned it feels like CS is generally deserted. Items ranging from painting parking lot, to artwork on pavement, K courtyard, painting US, 4 square boxes. Emily – double check parking space sizes. Could start in courtyard and see how it goes. Will stay updated pending updates from governor etc.

Playground update

Julie had put on hold given COVID distractions. Had in past looked into NPS, Hyde playground (wooden), Belmont school and had trouble finding company that would do this. One company stopped by and declined. Was thinking of doing in summer, once distancing relaxed slightly but before kids are back. Ryan indicated we have money in the budget, and hiring a company would be best. Liz – there was a company that did this not last time but the time before; she will get Julie the info.

FORJ

Shachi updated from recent citywide FORJ Zoom meeting. Recent attack at Newton South reviewed. Had a speaker. There was good CS attendance. There is meeting next Tuesday at 7:30p – will send link. Ms. Tomaneng reminded us that Monday is national immigrant pride day. She has a lot of resources if people want to do something with their kids. Barbara – can run in Update. Asian American commission – hashtag “I am not a virus”.

Planning for 2020-2021

Board for next year was discussed. Nominees for co-President and Treasurer were reviewed.

Julie happy to compile “job descriptions” from graduating board members, and put on website or in google docs document.

Miscellaneous

CAS.

Too challenging to facilitate live zoom stream for all the kids, and don’t want to purchase something if not most of the kids able to participate. Will email Kerry and Emma to check in on status.

Book swap? Cannot do officially at school ie a Little Library.

Reminders

Tuesday is FORJ

Wednesday is principal coffee

Principal Herlihy will organize another coffee soon – for social emotional supports

Meeting adjourned 9:20pm