

Park Road Montessori SLT Meeting May 17, 2013

Members Present: Bill Aheron, Aryon Dubinsky, Sherry Herbert, Alison Houser, Anna Moraglia, Kristin Piscitelli, Susan Plaza, Ginger Salmon, Candace Steude, Cynthia Wood

New Parent Members: Mike Herndon, Caroline Miller, and Jackie Peterson. New staff rep Anna Hurdle.

Principal's Report –

SIP update:

EOG testing begins May 20 for grades 3–6. Scores will be back in the fall. Most other states have seen a 30% drop in test scores with these new tests. Teachers are currently involved in Dibbles for K–3 students for reading assessment. Practice EOG was given a few weeks ago to plan for instruction, targeting 3rd graders as this test is new for them. Goal 3 – recent parent Ed events, moving up events, etc. Partnerships for next year could be a subcommittee to help with this goal, perhaps in conjunction with PTO.

We started year with recommendations from Focus groups, how have we done addressing these areas that are our priorities?

Parent Education:

Alison agrees that reflection is important, suggests that each leadership group uses their last meeting to do so. Parent Ed had some great new things this year (Curriculum Connection, Brain Discussion, etc.) Wished we could have done a book club. Suggestions for next year – parents benefit from Parent Ed but teachers drive it. Perhaps we could have a committee to plan for the year ahead – SLT, PTO, teachers etc. create a vision for the year.

Kristin expressed a wish to create a school culture with parents to make certain that parents understand Common Core, Montessori, expectations, etc. This includes informational meetings – such as a School Meeting, or Town Hall meeting, or Parent Ed – likely by grade level. The goal is to create a partnership with the parents in the beginning of each year so that everyone (teachers, students, parents) is aware of the accountabilities and ways to support our students for success. Designated meeting times will allow for discussions between parents and teachers about Common Core and providing the necessary grade level standards that each student is responsible for completing. Ms. Sharon has done some excellent work on this for quite some time and now we need to have the conversations with teachers – parents.

Ginger said Parent Ed calendar is not up yet, wants grade levels to determine dates.

Bill suggested that Parent Ed can be a good tool to establish expectations for parents' role in Montessori, make it an ongoing theme of discussions to remind and educate about the role of parents in the school. Some parents may not fully embrace or follow the philosophy PRM sets out. Ms. Moraglia agreed that all the Montessori schools are dealing with it. Cynthia thought it would be useful to have a Parent Ed on how to bring Montessori home to give parents ideas, allow them the opportunity to ask questions about it etc. Reading articles can give ideas but translating it to your own home is more challenging, discussion with teachers can be more useful for parents. Anna H said they have offered this before but not lately. She said a parent did not realize that Lower El was 3 grades, still a learning curve for families. Ms. Moraglia said there would be a philosophy document for the fall, will help shape decisions by SLT, PTO, etc.

Technology:

Candace said the calendar started out with challenges, difficult to maintain accuracy. Formed a calendar committee and have laid out dates for next year, will also have an events committee to update throughout the year. The process is well under way, discussions have been useful. Current calendar is done through Google, Cynthia has updated it. Ginger hopes to put it on the PTO website. Candace said websites and blogs are also being worked on. Videography is a challenge using volunteers due to time constraints. Kristin and Candace are researching costs of using outside videographers so we have that information, possibly set aside some PTO funding for this when necessary. Utilizing video for Parent Ed is very important. Possibly use professionals for promotional or website materials. Bill wondered if there is existing video out there that may be useful for PRM to use. Candace said managing content throughout the year is a challenge, perhaps a parent can help with this. Ginger said they hope to have a PRM website with links to PTO, SLT, school information, etc. They are looking for someone to develop this now. Including articles from teachers for a blog is a goal for next year. Candace said there are many communication venues now, will be good to have one central site.

Bill said technology also includes instructional technology in the classroom. What is the latest from CMS, what do our teachers want? Ms. Moraglia said not much new from CMS, Upper El wants some Smart Boards. Primary does not want this in their classrooms. We had discussed looking at other Montessori schools around the country to see how they are utilizing technology; this would be useful for us. Sherry said there is concern that testing is moving to a computer format, is money better spent on I pad carts that can be used for testing and instruction (as opposed to Smart boards.) Ms. Moraglia said the district is aware of this; we need to know what our building can support. The district is responsible for providing technology for testing. Bill mentioned the proposed CMS budget includes a large amount for technology updates. PRM has 4 Smart Boards now, we could use 7 more (upper El, 1-5, and Art.) Cynthia suggested using Donors Choose to get funding. Anna H said she wrote a grant and got funding very quickly from Donors Choose. There is a process to go through, must start with less than \$1000 request.

Grace and Courtesy:

Thank you notes have been signed. Someone needs to take over for next year. Bill explained the purpose of the cards to our new members.

PTO Connection to SLT:

Ginger reviewed the bylaws; a PTO member serves on the SLT as a non-voting member for one year. This connection is important. Bill suggests amending the PTO reference in the bylaws to clarify "The PTO shall appoint a member to serve on the SLT" so the election process is not changed and the PTO connection is maintained. Alison says there has always been a connection but has not been formal. Alison moved to support Bill's proposal, Ginger seconded, all voted in favor. Bill also suggested amending the voting bylaw to include electronic balloting, Candace moved to accept this as well, all voted in favor. Bill discussed principal appointments to SLT; he understands this is for temporary purposes until an election can happen. He suggests reviewing the bylaws next fall. Jackie says in her experience on boards appointments are made to fill vacancies until the end of a term, no special elections are held. Bill said this is practical for 6 months but not for 3 years. Ms. Moraglia asked if there is a perceived problem with someone filling the remainder of the term. Ginger said we just need specifics. Sherry suggested putting in terminology that specifies the appointed person will serve until the next scheduled election. Susan suggested reviewing state statute on this. Bill will review and revise the bylaws and share through email.

Upper El / Middle School Communication:

Alison said that parents had questions about the process of moving to middle school now that we have a Montessori Middle. Educating parents on the next step would be helpful – discuss other CMS school options, how EOG scores factor in with honors classes and magnet school selection etc. As an SLT it would be a good service. Ms. Moraglia said this falls under the counselor's umbrella. It is her role to get this information out there. SLT can help get her more involved and share the communication. This should happen at the beginning of 5th grade. Bill said target Upper El.

Ginger asked about status of 6th grade for next year. Ms. Moraglia said it is uncertain, CMS numbers are not correct. Final numbers will not be clear until August. This is a staffing concern since enrollment numbers determine staffing. The proposal for the Montessori High School may help retain our 6th graders in the program. Sedgefield Montessori Middle currently has no designated high school. Middle school is staying there, will be some staffing changes; science teacher will receive Montessori training. This should make a huge difference for the program. Bill said the expansion of the program (new elementaries as well as the high schools) demonstrates support from CMS. Ms. Moraglia said the budget is approved but there is always a possibility if funding doesn't come, the expansion could be cut.

Other:

There is concern that assistants are losing their jobs in 2013/2014 due to new state budget proposal. Is this a PTO or SLT issue? There is consensus that we need to make an effort to get information at PRM to parents regarding which legislators to contact and a brief note for parents to work with. Ms. Moraglia will write something to include in the e-bulletin

Cynthia Wood discussed PRM Cares, a community service committee being formed. Cynthia distributed hand-outs; they will also be emailed to the group. Everyone felt this was great for our school and appreciated the initiative taken by Cynthia Wood and Kristen Piscitelli. Project plans are in the works including ways to share projects with Sedgefield Middle School.