

## **BCSIS Ed Council Meeting January 2018-2019 School Year**

### **Mindfulness regarding participation during meeting (Meaghan)**

- We want to try to practice what we are doing in our classrooms to help facilitate a more balanced communication in our Ed Council meetings. Concepts to follow:
  - If you are the person that seems to makes an offer all the time, try to sit back and allow others to make an offer first. This will help honor those that are more shy or quiet and/or not apt to jump in first. That way, more voices will be heard.
  - On the flip side, if you are someone who tends to sit back, please make an offer more often.

### **Teacher update (Erin)**

- The classroom teachers have begun to have conversations with their students about self-responsibility in general, and specifically about being responsible for bringing everything that each student needs for the school day in order to reduce parent drop-offs. Each grade is working with these ideas in ways that fit for their grade level.
  - Kindergarten: The teachers have made a list encouraging parents to let the kindergartners carry their own backpacks, bringing a water bottle on hike day and bringing library books on library day. The kids will color in the list with the color of the day and parents can add to the days (for example, "Ballet on Monday").
  - First Grade: Talking about responsibility for behavior at school (sitting quietly at circle time); talking about transitions, how to transition, what is energy and behavior is needed for each activity, focusing on bringing books and homework to and from school.
  - Second Grade: Created a checklist as a class, laminated and ready to go home. Focusing on bringing books and homework to and from school.
  - Third Grade: Created a checklist as a class that will be sent home and brainstormed other strategies for remembering and following through with home and school responsibilities.
  - Fourth Grade: Brainstormed strategies for remembering things that they needed (i.e., post-it note on door knob, or on boots) and shared about what worked and didn't work; talked about limiting a checklist to three items to make it most effective.
  - Fifth Grade: Planning to co-create a standard checklist in class, then customizing it for needs of individual students. Conversations in class about self-awareness, responsibility for self and it's impact on independence and autonomy, and advocating for self.

### **Communication Framework (Emily and Phil)**

- Have been working on this over the past several years with each Ed Council, Micha finally solidified our new communication framework plan into a written document. We are going to go through it line by line in today's Ed Council meeting. Full document is included in a separate document:

- Phil on why we are even having this conversation...
  - Previously there wasn't a streamlined organization of communication – messages came in many different formats from many different people, including:
    - Direct emails from Phil
    - Direct emails from Teachers
    - Parent to parent emails that were very repetitive
    - Too many papers passed out, also often repetitive
  - There were consistent complaints from parents about receiving too many emails and too much repetition of all announcements
  - When we started talking about “community,” obviously communication is the heart of that and we didn't have a center or organized format to support that effectively
  - There was a ton of work going into the newsletter that most likely only a small percentage of people read in the past.
  - We created this plan with the goal being efficiency and simple organization, so when someone has information to pass out, we have a clear process.
  - We also want to honor people's hard work for the school, and if someone is working on an event or project, we now have a great way to plan communication so that people actually learn about it.
    - One example was the CAP night, for the first time, we ONLY sent out the information in an Eblast and the Newsblast and we had a great turnout (for an evening event with no childcare, two nights after winter break).
- Other thoughts/ideas shared by people before we went through the framework:
  - Micha wants people to remember that people who are in charge of events or things like CGC should work directly with her to make a communication plan.
  - Emily Clay as a teacher doesn't feel that people are reading her emails as much as they used to
  - As we have been in this transition to a new communication plan, a few people in charge of events have felt a worried or unsupported b/c communication of their event is SO important and they were concerned there wasn't enough communication, but since one data point we know is that we have gotten A LOT of feedback over the years that we send out too many emails, we are asking everyone to take the plunge with us and give this new plan a try.
  - Phil estimates that about 40% of parents don't read most of what is sent beyond their child's classroom teacher emails, that the other 60% need a lot of encouragement to do so, and those that are full engaged, will read no matter what.
  - Maybe our communication plan becomes a big topic at Back to School Night, b/c we have so many more parents in a captive audience, to get their attention then might be a better way to get them on board for the school year. Phil will cover “how we communicate” and go over what

comes from the teacher, the news blast, the eblast, Phil directly and the district.

- Kristen – we aren't focusing on this from a marketing perspective – we have no way to accurately measure how many people read or open the newsletter, so most of our decisions around it will be based on random feedback, event participation and intuition. Phil can ask the district if we can get numbers of people who open/read so we can get more concrete data to help make future changes.
- Christina – shared that perspective that for some people, the teacher's email is the most important, and for parents who may feel that they are already in the know or have a strong presence at school, they may not be reading the newsblast each week / Christina and Sabina still want more repetition b/c they think its more effective. Emily H responds by saying that the issue is not necessarily about completely avoiding repeating ourselves, but is rather about being thoughtful and strategic in how we do it, so we are not bombarding or annoying parents.

Below are the comments/ideas/suggestions from the sections of the framework that warranted ideas, etc... (framework is attached as a separate document).

- School: Core School Messaging: this only happens about twice a year. Examples are safety issues in the neighborhood or upcoming standardized testing.
- Newsblast – is the coverage of everything
- Eblast – is when a single event or issue needs focus:
  - Question: Sabina asked what if there is more than one thing that needs to be included? Great question and we may have to be flexible and figure it out as we go, but Micha suggests that with careful planning everything ahead should be covered.
  - Note: Eblast is not sent every week, only when something important needs to be emphasized.
  - Question: Are we including the subject in the headline to help garner interest in the email?
  - Idea: Coffee talks have had lower attendance this year, maybe we should add them to Eblasts.
- Classroom Scope
  - Note: We have worked hard not to ask teachers to send things on behalf of Ed Council or Phil and give them space to make sure their classroom information is the focus of their messaging, not school wide info.
  - Note: it is important to know that each teacher has different communication styles and parents should not rely on their emails for the dates/logistical info of the school, that is not the responsibility of the teacher.
    - Example: Emily Clay is trying to send out her newsletter once a month and have it be about the content of what is happening in her classroom – engaging the parents around the content relatable to their child's experience and education.
  - Idea: (from Jess). What if each teacher's classroom information/update was available via a link in the newsblast instead of, or in addition to, it coming direct from the teacher?

- Idea: Make a disclaimer sentence at the end of each of the teacher's newsletter. "Please note that this email is about *our* classroom and *your* student. Please read the weekly Newsblast each week for information about school wide information and events."
- Idea: Should teachers be more regular in their communication? Once a month?
- Idea (Christina): could teachers put a picture of themselves in the newsletter for parents who don't know what their teachers look like?
- Emily Clay's opinion: She is looking at it philosophically. There are more working parents now. How do we make it easy and streamlined for them to get the information they need. Lets work with the plan we have in place and not make it more complicated for parents or the admin people putting it together (referring to some of the ideas above or resistance to the framework).
- Friends of BCSIS Facebook Page – no verification set up process to validate whether people joining are actually affiliated with BCSIS
- Ideas/notes/to-do's outside of specific areas of the framework:
  - Micha wants to tie teachers better into newsblast, such as including teacher profiles, library team profiles, volunteer profiles, etc. Maybe have a 5<sup>th</sup> grader interview a series of teachers and put it in the newsletter. Emily Clay will add this idea to the next staff meeting.
  - Jessica asked if "help at school," is part of communication strategy as its not mentioned in doc. Emily H. will figure out how to add it as a section and run it by Jess for approval.
    - Idea: Getting the school directory on Help at School instead of on paper (Kendall is leaving next year so need to figure out a new plan for the future)
  - Emily asked should we send this framework document out – maybe add it as an option to read?
    - Phil is going to send a reminder email about the updated communication plan and can attach this doc and the visual doc for anyone who wants to read it.
- Communications methods below are "list serv section"
  - To-do: Classroom rep parents should offer for anyone who wants to be added to the list if they want. Emily H will follow up on that.
  - Parent to parent list:
    - Idea: Maybe classroom reps can make their reminders about events be more "social" in their messaging
    - To-do: Ask Laura Rich, the coffee talk person, if she could send something to Emily H., who will send it to all class reps to send out.
    - Reminder: When a rep is sending something out on behalf of Ed Council – it should be streamlined and approved of. So please wait for the notes and summary that comes and if you want to send something that you feel compelled to share, run it by Emily

- Lets remind everyone of this when new people show up at ed council meeting

### **Questions and Next Agenda topics**

- Christina – how to make sure we have child care at all events
  - Add this to finance conversation
  - Can parents pay for childcare? Phil does not recommend asking that to happen, but a suggested donation to Ed Council for childcare is fine
- CAP conversation:
  - To do: Figure out way to get the main document from the CAP evening out via email or handed out from the classroom.
  - Can we do recap of that event? Phil will work on that – he is doing a follow up email on Tutors and CAP.
- Looking for winter festival chair
- Need new graphics person
- Check in on next year volunteers
- How to get more parents to these meetings. Each person can do a challenge to bring 3 new people from each class to the meetings next week – make sure they know there is child care and free food.