

# Parent Council Meeting Minutes

Parent Council Meeting: Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010

## **I. Welcome (group discussion)**

A brief welcome was shared by the attendees.

## **II. Check-In (group discussion)**

At the beginning of the meeting, the attendees introduced themselves. In attendance at this meeting were:

- Ting Ting Cheng: K-BH Parent
- Mark Bensing: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Council Representative
- Amy Martel: K-EM Parent Council & Class Co-Representative
- Sarah Erickson Lume: K-MLB Parent
- Ann Meany: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent & Social Inclusion Representative
- Debbie Kane: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent & Social Inclusion Representative
- Vicki Dunlop: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Council Representative & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent
- Jo Ann Warren: 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Class Representative, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade & K-EM Parent
- Vaara Ostrin: K-EM Parent Council & Class Co-Representative
- Frank Jakowich: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Parent Council Co-Representative & K-MLB Parent
- Ellen Fiorito: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Parent Council Representative
- Pamela Isham: K-BH Parent
- Ben Richards: K-BH Parent, Parent Council Chair & Parent Handbook Committee Chair

## **III. Social Inclusion (presented by Debbie Kane & Ann Meany)**

Debbie Kane provided background information about Social Inclusion (SI) in MWS and unveiled the now completed SI policy brochure that will be distributed school-wide. Then Ann Meany spoke about the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade SI Group. Both fielded questions from the meeting attendees throughout their presentation.

### Background

The SI program was formed to help children deal with conflict in a healthy manner rather than to prevent conflict, as conflict does present growth opportunities. A key feature of SI is its "noblameness" policy to emphasize that everyone involved works to resolve the conflict. The goal is not to blame one person or "get someone in trouble" but to find out what happened, whether those involved want the situation to change, then to work on ways to improve the situation. Our school's program was started by former MWS teacher Mark John, and then later led by Ann Meany. Consultation was provided by Kim Payne, the inventor of the SI process, who is also a teacher, psychologist, and author (e.g., he wrote *Simplicity Parenting*). The SI Committee is made up of teachers and, at one time, a parent. The current teacher group that oversees SI consists of Debbie Kane, Kristen Riehle, and Eileen McMonigal. This group meets weekly to oversee any conflict issues that have been reported through an Incident Report, to plan things, and to keep SI active.

For the past two years, the SI Committee worked on an SI policy for MWS. Last spring, the final draft was approved by the faculty and printed as a brochure. It is now ready for distribution.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade SI Group

In past years, Ann Meany has trained each 8<sup>th</sup> Grade SI Group and agreed to train this year's group as well. She is assisted by Garth Riegel (Recorder Teacher). A student volunteers to be in the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade SI Group; this year, the entire class has volunteered. Members of the group are trained as student peers to resolve conflict by doing the following:

- They learn and use mediation techniques. For instance, they may tell another child their own stories about being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to show understanding and build a path toward resolution.
- In pairs, they perform recess duty amongst the lower grades. Although they interact with children, they are in a supervisory role and not that of a playmate.
- They attend Hold a New Student Meetings in which a new student will meet with a SI 8<sup>th</sup> grader to see how things are going.
- They perform during the school's Martin Luther King Tolerance Celebration. This year, they gave the famous "I Have a Dream" speech and performed an original skit.
- They will revise the Poem of Compassion, which was written four years ago by Gideon Weick.
- They visit classrooms to introduce themselves and perform skits about social inclusion.
- They have just begun to make announcements during the Friday gatherings. These announcements may be about such matters as school rules or thanks for kind acts.

### Q & A

*Is there a grade level when incidents tend to start up?* Not really, but how incidents are dealt with depends on the child's age.

*When do Incident Reports need to be filled out?* The report tends to be filled out for "severe" matters. For instance, you don't need to fill one out if you witness a one-time name calling. In fact, for such an incident, any adult (not just a teacher) can remind the child that "We do not say that here."

*Should a parent tell a teacher if a child is doing something repeatedly?* You may do so, as the teacher can then encourage a change of the behavior by, for instance, telling a pertinent story to the children. Our teachers are not trained in the SI process, but each teacher certainly has ways to address issues (i.e., through story, in a methodical way or not). How they do so may vary, depending on the children's age, the class culture, and other factors.

*SI used to be presented as a proactive process. For instance, the children were encouraged to greet each other, to use each other's names, etc. Why does the new SI*

*brochure seem reactive? I don't want SI to become painted as merely a discipline process.* Politeness and courtesy are foundations of SI. In practice we do need to do the proactive stuff. The SI guide may sound colder and more reactive because it is, after all, a policy for something that may, in fact, lead to disciplinary action.

*Do children know why the 8<sup>th</sup> grader is out there?* Not necessarily, unless the teacher has said something. The children may also know through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom visits and due to the Friday Gathering announcements.

*Are there opportunities for parent training?* Parent volunteers are welcome and should talk to Debbie Kane or Eileen McMonigal, as Kristen Riehle is new to the group. Be aware that you would be making a big commitment. Meetings are held on Fridays from 1:45 to 2:30.

*Did we look at other school's policies?* We looked at ten other school policies. Each was adapted to the particular school's situation, as is ours.

*How often does an incident come up?* It seems to especially depend on the time of year. The bigger incidents usually occur during the spring, after a winter of cabin fever. The SI process will try to catch situations early to be able to prevent them from blowing up or going to discipline.

During Q&A, a parent who had a child go through the SI process gave a glowing testimony as to how, though the process was upsetting to go through, she felt that her child was "held by the teachers" and that they "knew her child as a complete person." The process educated all involved on the child's trigger points, and an adjustment was made in the classroom that helped the child feel more in control, without the need to act out. The parent emphasized that we should not be afraid of the SI process.

#### **IV. Parent Handwork (presented by Ting Ting Cheng)**

Ting Ting Cheng passed out a handout about the key features of Parent Handwork in the 2009/10 school year. The features are:

- An emphasis will be placed on creating spaces where parents can gather and develop community as well as learn about handwork (how to do and why we do), relatively free from the pressure to produce for the school.
- An example of this is the creation of the Kindergarten Parents Knitting Group which has now morphed into the all-inclusive Parents Handwork Group. In January, a grandmother is offering free knitting lessons during the group's weekly meeting time. We hope to have future learning opportunities, which will consist of hands-on techniques and talks about handwork in Waldorf education.

This year will be an experimental one to see what works:

- What activities draw parents' interest?
- Do parents actually have time for these activities?
- How can we use the store to test sale items or try out different sales techniques?

- How do we implement Holiday Fair Parent Handwork for the November 2010 fair?
- Are Parent Handwork and Holiday Fair Parent Handwork viable to maintain for future years?

To minimize stress on parents, Holiday Fair Parent Handwork production will start now:

- Parents, relatives, and friends will be recruited, through a general call-out as well as targeted recruitment, to commit to making one or more items (note that Ben Richard's mom has already committed to making one item per month).
- Specific handwork project ideas will be available in the Parent Lounge with a Sign-up sheet. We have no shortage of ideas, from knitted gnome hats to cute plum pudding ornaments. However, interested handworkers will not be required to stick only to those ideas presented if they have something else that they'd like to make.
- Materials for handwork creation will be acquired from what we already have, a general call-out for donations of craft items sitting around the house, and outright donation from handworkers who wish to do so. In addition, a budget of \$200, which will come out of the remaining Parent Council budget of \$350, was approved for Holiday Fair handwork during this meeting.
- Parent Handwork will have its own sales table at the fair for higher visibility.
- No or minimal meetings are expected for handworkers to save everyone time.

Suggestions on how Parent Council and/or parents can help included:

- Pass on emails regarding Parent Handwork in a timely manner.
- Commit to doing at least one Holiday Fair handwork project.
- Recruit others to make something for Holiday Fair or give Ting Ting names and contact information on people who may be interested (these can include relatives and friends).
- Pass on any unwanted craft items to Ting Ting.
- Pass on any contacts or ideas at all regarding Parent Handwork in general or Holiday Fair Handwork specifically.
- Alert Ting Ting to sales of craft items.
- Realize that reviving Parent Handwork is a process that will take time; not every goal may be hit this year.

#### **V. Parent Council Minutes Update (presented by Ben Richards)**

Attendees got a Parent Council Minutes Update handout pertaining to the following topics

during the Parent Council Meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 2009:

- Capital Campaign Update: We did not get to discuss this.
- Faculty Update: Training for Ambassador Program volunteers began on Saturday, January 16. The Ambassadors are a subcommittee of the new Enrollment Committee, chaired by Sue Campbell (2<sup>nd</sup> grade parent), with accountability to the Board.

## **VI. Open Discussion (group discussion)**

- Faculty Snack for 2010: Ben Richards will find out whether the faculty still wants a snack to be provided for their Thursday 3:30 meetings.
- In-Service Day: The Parent Council approved the College's proposal that an In-Service Day for teacher training will be scheduled for Friday, May 28, noting that the following Monday is Memorial Day. One more In-Service Day will be scheduled in the future.
- The next Parent Council Meeting will be Thursday, February 11, 7 pm