

DRAFT

To be approved at next PTO meeting

PTO Meeting with Dr. Brenner

September 19, 2017 at 7:00pm

Meeting started with an introduction from Sara Parent and Hope Barton. The budget was proposed, with a request that \$110 be allowed to spend per student, first motion by Jen Hite second by Pam Sparkman and then approved.

Paula Bleakley greeted all and welcomed ideas and topics for upcoming PTO meetings and then introduced Dr. Brenner. Dr. Brenner started with discussion on the elementary curriculum continuing to include professional development, the Columbia reading and writing as well as the new Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Math in Focus Program and Investigations pilot in select elementary school classrooms. Another initiative DPS is taking on this year in PreK-12 is how to raise healthy kids-helping kids to make good decisions and be good citizens through creating healthy living environments and addressing drugs and alcohol. This year, in the high school, student-athletes and those involved in afterschool activities are required to attend an evening meeting with their parent/s during which these topics will be discussed in hope that the conversations can continue into the home.

Question: "Why only students involved in athletics and activities?"

Answer: DPS cannot mandate nonathlete/activity involved students to come to an afterschool event.

Question: "Have you thought of moving the program into 8th grade too?"

Answer: Yes. The first year going to aim to connect with all 9-12 and hope to move into lower grades in upcoming years.

Question: "Can health classes build on these meetings/conversations?"

Answer: Yes. The curriculum is also being looked at to include this model.

Question: "How often will kids attend?"

Answer: Goal is for kids to attend once per year, building on information they received from the meeting the prior year.

DPS has also adopted a change in the 1st-period study hall. The structured reading block was not effective and tardiness rose significantly with many not attending the first period at all. This year the "flex period" is moved to later in the day where 2x/week it will be a community building block, 2x/week study skills or pullout support block and 1x/week structured reading block.

Question: "Any discussion on changing the start time for DHS to later and elementary earlier?"

Answer: the research is clear that adolescents need more sleep but afterschool activities dictate the earlier start times of school so as to maximize daylight for outdoor activities.

New Developmental Learning Center (DLC) program for special needs students housed at Hindley Elementary School. Fitch Academy, housed at the Darien Public Library, is in its first year and successful thus far with a current enrollment of 10 and a maximum of 12. Looking to expand the program and find a new location for next year. Teachers from district work on a smaller ratio with children who are self-identified as anxious, sad and need “TLC”. Kids are committed to one semester but have the option to stay as long as necessary to get their educational and emotional needs met. Students will receive a DHS diploma coming out of Fitch Academy. There were 9 applicants prior to school starting. Projected to double capacity to 24 next year.

Technology K-8 highlights: 4th graders now have 1:1 in school Chromebook access. 5th graders now have 1:1 in school and take home Chromebook access. 9-12th will have 1:1 iPad in school and take home access. This has also led to an increase in Professional Development for teachers in technology. Chromebooks are beneficial for lower grades as a utility tool-apps, google classroom, etc. and iPads as a creative tool for older grades-movies, presentations, creating apps, etc. and they keep them 9-12th.

Question: “How come not an opt-out option to save the district money if you have your own device already?”

Answer: It’s difficult to support someone’s personal device and school owned ones have filters and additional mandatory software preinstalled.

State Educational Budget-Dr. Brenner presented best case scenario of DHS budget being cut by \$700K and worse case by \$1.7 million for the current 2017-2018 school year. Dr. Brenner suggested all to keep abreast of information and decisions through www.ctmirror.org to know how much Darien will be impacted by budget cuts.

Questions: “Can parents privately fundraise to help with any cuts?”

Answer: it’s difficult to do that for operating/annual expenses. Possibly for capital funds but also a difficult thing to be successful with.

Question: “How will the budget cut impact our kids?”

Answer: It’s difficult to answer now and we are trying to plan for it somewhat but the impact would be more 3-5 years down the road.

Other highlights:

New lights and field at high school

DPS district-wide newsletter started this year

New central copy/print center for DPS has saved over \$200K!

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm

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