

Parent Communications
September 4, 2014

The first meeting for the 2014-2015 school year was held on September 4, 2014, with 25 parent representatives attending. CMCSS Chief Communications Officer Elise Shelton spoke about the purpose of the parent communications group. The district wants to provide information to parents as well as get feedback from parents. Each month there is a "Question of the Month" that is given to the group to take back and place in their school's box where other parents can comment on the question or share concerns. The representatives should bring those comments back to the meeting the following month to discuss.

Using the "About CMCSS" brochure, Dr. Worthington provided a brief overview of the district and highlighted some of the strategic work for this school year. In the "Improve Student Achievement" category, he noted that Common Core standards are the third set of standards for Tennessee in the last seven years. Common Core is currently being implemented in Reading/Language Arts and mathematics. Teachers are using the Tennessee Diploma Project standards with reading/language arts Common Core inside of the TNDP standards. Dr. Worthington stated that the Tennessee legislature put a hold on the new PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessment and asked the state to put out a RFP to find an alternate assessment. The assessments students see this year will be based on the TNDP and Common Core and will look the same as the assessments used this past year.

Dr. Worthington noted that CMCSS now has a career academy in each high school and the group would be hearing more about the academies closer to recruiting time later in the school year. The STEM Academy at Kenwood High School is in its fifth year. The other high school academies now have 9th and 10th graders.

Dr. Worthington explained what "Response to Instruction and Intervention K-12" means. This is a state-mandated program. Students will be given a 10-15 minute skills-based assessment three times per year. This assessment will be for reading, writing, and math skills rather than knowledge. Students may be placed in an enrichment class based upon skill levels and what skills need to be developed.

In the "Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness" category, Dr. Worthington commented that preparing district technology for state assessments means there must be enough technology infrastructure and computers for the largest class of students in each school to take the test at the same time. The CMCSS technology department worked last year on improvements in the infrastructure. This year, the district will lease rather than purchase some of the computers required. Leasing will cost less than purchasing new computers.

Other goals in this category include "study online student fee pay options" and "increase alternative funding sources". Dr. Worthington said that alternative funding in the form of grant awards went from \$6 million to \$16 million in one year. These funds support all after school

programs, STEM initiatives and STEM externships, and provide one-to-one technology to the Northwest High School academy and to Moore Magnet.

Under the “improve student safety and security” heading, Dr. Worthington explained how the district conducts “tabletop” exercises which involve district personnel, local police and sheriff, and emergency agencies. During a tabletop exercise, an emergency scenario is used to play out what the responses would be for the schools and agencies. At the conclusion of the exercise, responses are evaluated to determine what actions are appropriate and where improvements can be made in the event of a real emergency situation.

In the “engage the public in support of student achievement” category, Dr. Worthington and Elise Shelton shared some of the work being done to expand parent engagement opportunities. Parents were shown some recent changes to the CMCSS website that will enhance parent opportunities. Some of these website improvements include the volunteer portal, information on the Khan Academy, and the on-line registration feature which allowed parents to pre-register students over the summer when school offices were closed. During this first summer 638 students were pre-registered. Many of the website changes have been made based on input from specific demographic groups such as military parents or ELL parents. Ms. Shelton also added that there is now a PowerSchool app for smart phones that parents can download.

Ms. Shelton shared that one of the assignments for the group would be to provide feedback about the information found in the parent calendar and on the CMCSS website. Parents were given a copy of the parent calendar and were asked to take it home and look over the information in the front section of the calendar to determine what topics are helpful and important to know and if any of the sections should be deleted in the future. Ms. Shelton commented that the group would be e-mailed more specific questions in the future. Parents were also asked to spend some time on the CMCSS website and to let us know what makes sense and what doesn't work. Parents were shown where to locate the Focus Videos and where questions can be input. Ms. Shelton said that the “Top Stories” on the website are usually reflective of questions trending at a particular time of the year.

The parents discussed the September question, “Does the district’s strategic work reflect a continuous plan to improve student achievement? If not, what are your concerns?”