

Parent Communications
September 10, 2015

The first Parent Communications meeting for the 2015-2016 school year was held on September 10, 2015, with sixteen Parent Representatives / Ambassadors attending.

As an introductory, Dr. Worthington, Director of Schools, and Elise Shelton, CMCSS Chief Communications Officer, spoke about the role of the Parent Communication Group which is to listen to information provided and to share with other parents. Questions from parents should be brought to the group each month. They explained another effective communication tool is learning to navigate through the system which includes going through the proper chain of command for more timely answers to issues as they surface. Reasonable turnaround response time expected should be within a couple of days of initial request.

In order to assist in helping make the process more effective, Ms. Shelton reminded the group that each month there is a "Question of the Month" to take back and place in their school's ballot 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. Most schools should have boxes already there except for Oakland. After checking and if you are unable find the box from last year, let Deb Cummings know for replacement. (Have been notified St. Bethlehem and East Montgomery boxes are missing. These two will be sent out this week.) Question of the Month for September, "Does the district's strategic work reflect a continuous plan to improve student achievement? If not, what are your concerns?"

Dr. Worthington provided a brief overview of the district and highlighted some of the strategic work for this school year described in our "About CMCSS" brochure:

The district is currently transitioning to TN Education standards formerly known as Common Core last year. TN Diploma (TNDP) standards are completed and now we're headed to TN Education standards with full implementation expected next year. Along with this transition a new type of assessment is required which must align called TN Ready standards. 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. Expectations include a higher level of learning for our students and more rigorous teaching in the classroom. This is the third set of standards for teachers in seven years which can cause shifts in what is being taught at different grade levels and can create gaps in learning. Principals and teachers have been proactively training all summer; however, we could possibly see lower test scores during the transition years. Parents can access TN State Standards online via the Curriculum Navigator which was demonstrated later in the meeting. The link is: <https://www.cmcoss.net/news/?id=605>

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 sixth year. The other high school academies now have 9th, 10th and 11th graders.

Dr. Worthington explained that RTI (Response to Instruction and Intervention K-12) is different than regular tutoring because it is skill-based. This is a state-mandated program and students will be assessed in 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.

By maximizing employee capacity, typically CMCSS is above average in teacher retention. We have expanded our substitution staffing program and, by bringing the program in-house versus contracting out, a savings of \$350,000 will be realized.

With regard to improving efficiency and effectiveness, a program called COW (Computers on Wheels) is providing technology in classrooms. Teachers will be integrating technology into student lessons and transitioning to digital blended learning. Because of TCAP assessment, we must have enough technology on-hand to test in one day the largest grade level across the district. We will continue to seek alternative funding for after school programs, STEM initiatives and STEM externships and provide one-to-one technology to Northwest High School academy and to Moore Magnet and others as resources become available. Security upgrades are a priority as well which include enhanced front entrances, the use of swipe cards, SRO's, and lockdown protocol.

Dr. Worthington commented on district highlights which included:

- CMCSS number 1 in the state for one year's academic growth
- Scored perfect 5s on 12 of 12 targets identified by the state
- Received \$14 million in grant funding 2014-2015
- CMCSS selected as "2015 District of Distinction"
- Math teacher received Presidential Award for Excellence
- Eleven schools identified as 2015 Reward Schools for being in the top 5% in the state
- 2015 graduating seniors received \$37 million in scholarship offers
- Graduation rate of 95+% for 2014-2015
- Attendance rate of almost 96% for 2014-2015

Demonstrations were given by Esperanza McCrary, Parent Engagement Specialist, of the website resources available like Curriculum Navigator that allows parents to view standards across each grade levels and access testing. In addition, Ms. McCrary was able to display the School Calendar and give examples of features such as short cuts, linking schools and events together and downloading/subscribing to a phone. Another valuable resource is Khan Academy which is a free academic tutorial for students, parents and teachers and can be located under "School Links" for each individual school. Hand-outs were provided. Feedback was requested on what else parents might want to see on the website. Any event not on the calendar should be passed along to the communications personnel at your schools.

Parent topics brought up by the group:

- Since going to electronic testing, shouldn't we also focus on electronic homework for students?
- How does moving to technology help kids without a computer at home?
- What grade will students have to do TCAP online?
- Advance placement discussion
- COW's bandwidth problem last year?
- Is RTI an extension of curriculum?

Parents were asked, "What subjects do you want to hear about during the year?" Some responses were:

- Safety/Security
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Academies

Parent assignments were given:

- Send any additional questions to Deb Cummings (deborah.cummings@cmcss.net)
- Check on "Question of Month" box at your schools. Go ahead and post October question. Let Deb know if your box is missing from last year.
- Think about...as a parent looking backwards from K-12, what does your child need to know to be employable?
- Give feedback on information sheet for curriculum standards and assessments.