

Parent Communications
October 1, 2015

The second Parent Communications meeting for the 2015-2016 school year was held on October 1, 2015, with sixteen Parent Representatives / Ambassadors attending.

Agenda Item: CMCSS Begins Transition to Blended Learning presented by Dr. Bryan Johnson. Dr. Johnson explained where we are in this process, the planning stages throughout the transition and what our next steps will be.

Digital Blended Learning is a combination of teacher-led and technology-enhanced instruction. The content and resources are developed and managed by teachers through an online Learning Management System (LMS) with multiple modalities for delivery. Digital Blended Learning is basically integrating what is already happening in the classroom to technology, to resources and to the curriculum. All of these things are merely incorporated into what a teacher currently does. The big “why” behind the shift in Digital Blended Learning is to place more focus on college and career readiness, increased student engagement, more personalized instruction, timely and adaptable intervention, access to current curriculum and assessment platform.

Currently both Moore Elementary and Kenwood High (STEM) are in their seventh year with refurbished devices. Northwest High is in their second year with devices because of a grant that was provided by Premier Medical and the Education Foundation. With these 3 schools specifically, the LMS is a hub that allows us to access the resources available like Schoology, Edulastic and Britannica. Forty-seven teachers have been selected to participate in a pilot and with training support from our tech integrated coaches will make monthly visits. Dr. Johnson stated that there is a Digital Blended Learning committee here at the district that meets regularly to explore best practices to ensure we are informed and adjust to any shifts needed. Next steps will include continued professional development, teacher focus groups, alternate funding and grants, researching devices, identify and integrate online resources into science and math and identify most valuable resources now in place.

Question: What do 1-1 schools look like in our district?

Response: At Moore, students have access to devices through a mobile lab within the classroom. At Northwest High and STEM, some devices can be taken home.

Question: For low income families without the resources at home, how are we going to compensate for that?

Response: Our primary focus today is providing access to devices in the classroom where teachers can monitor internet access and place more emphasis on blended learning. Based on recent surveys, we have determined that only 8% of our students do not have internet access at home. Bandwidth is available in schools.

Question: Has there been any discussion on preparing students 3rd, 4th, 5th grades in typing skills for TNReady testing?

Response: Several schools are introducing word processing in writing in elementary schools and teachers and principals are being intentional and taking on this responsibility to help students prepare as well.

Question: Is the district prepared for lower scores because of typing skills? How are they graded?

Response: There is a Rupert that is used and students are graded individually on what is completed. Any time the assessments shift a bit of a decline in scores is anticipated; however, it is not an excuse because all districts are experiencing the same challenges and our expectations are to perform at a high level.

Question: Is there information available to parents to help students with assessments?

Response: The next part of the meeting will be information on navigating the CMCSS website that provides information with regard to TCAP/TNReady testing and the new standards.

Agenda Item: Navigating the CMCSS website. Esperanza McCrary, Parent Engagement Coordinator, demonstrated how to access additional student/parent TNReady information. From the homepage, you will see top stories. Scroll down to TN Curriculum and Assessments. There is a TN.gov link that provides helpful facts on Tennessee academic standards: <http://tn.gov/education/topic/academic-standards>. Also from the homepage, under the tab **Students & Parents**, you will see other topics of interest such as the attendance policy, code of conduct, curriculum, etc.

Question: Why are parents not being notified if their child is being placed in RTI? Program doesn't seem to be consistent from school to school.

Response: Information regarding RTI can be found through our Focus video (**Students & Parents tab, Engage TV**) <http://cmcssfocus.net/2015/02/23/engage-tv-episode-2-rti2> . Parents should be notified by teachers if their child is assigned to RTI. There are different levels of RTI focusing on skill deficient. However, the program can benefit all students which means support for some students and enrichment for others. We will clean up the video for better understanding. If there is other information on the website that you hear parents talking about that requires further clarification, this is where your role as parent reps and ambassadors is important. Please let us know what you are hearing.

As a reminder, the notes from the monthly Parent Communication meetings are posted on the web so that you have reference of the information discussed and will be able share with other parents. Meeting notes can be found under **Students & Parents tab, School Parents Representative**.

Question: Where is Khan Academy located on the website?

Response: **Students & Parents tab, Family School Connection**, Khan Academy is located toward the bottom of the page www.khanacademy.org. In addition, you will find Power School, ConnectU and Military Families Transitioning to CMCSS.

Question: Can the "Question of the Month" be placed on CMCSS Facebook page?

Response: It could, but it would be difficult to identify from which group the individual responding is representing.

Agenda Item: Importance of what high school seniors need to know. Looking back and looking forward, as a parent, what are some things you would say to your child to prepare them for a career?

Responses from the group:

- Good communication skills / listening is important / think before speaking
- Attitude / Non-entitlement
- Attention to detail
- Self-evaluation / find your passion / branch out / have a vision
- Respect for yourself and others
- Teamwork / being a leader / follower
- Proper dress code / dress to impress
- Reading, math, technology, how to research
- Look for a path for success and focus on career skills

What happens after graduation (whether it be high school or college)? Where do they go and how do they apply for a job?

- Know how to fill out an application
- Building a resume
- Search on line for jobs
- Making personal contact, networking
- Initiative to look for a job and then follow-up
- Interview preparation process
- Employment agencies (Job Services, Workforce Essentials, Career Fairs)

September - Question of the Month – Does the District’s strategic work reflect a continuous plan to improve student achievement?

Response: District’s strategic plan to continuously improve student achievement will succeed if parents are included. Learning does not stop at school. It continues at home. Without the help of parents to encourage and provide necessary resources, the district’s plan will always be stuck at one level.

In closing, Dr. Worthington spoke briefly about recent district discussions surrounding the fact that our students are inside a school building 17% of their lives. But, what about the other 83% of time they are not in school? What are they hearing? What are their influences? How do we effectively disseminate information in order to help them become better prepared? How do we reach this 83%? This Parent Communications group is one avenue. Our Leadership CMCSS group is another. We are asking for help from our community leaders to get them involved in this project and you will hear more about this in future meetings.

Assignments for November 5th Meeting

1. **Question of the Month** – Are school resources aligned with the system’s mission and beliefs? (Resources include money, time, afterschool programs, personnel, etc.) If not, what are your concerns?
2. How do we get all parents the information they need in order for them to help their child become successful?

Please send any comments or questions you receive to Deb Cummings (deborah.cummings@cmcss.net)