

Parent Advisory Committee

Sep 19, 2024

- There were 20 participants in attendance
- Dr. Causey introduced the group to some of the individuals who are part of the monthly process
- Dr. Causey reminded the group of the strength in the “triangle” of education - parents, schools, students working together.

Any notes about positives or things we can improve?

- Cell phone policy and tardy sweep policy have been great at my school (KHS). Behavior has seemed better. Great feedback on Dr. Anderson.
- Cumberland Heights new principal - policy in place about the “Falcon Spirit” bingo squares (PBIS support). They can get a number called, they can come get a prize.
- Communication via ParentSquare has been great, 2nd year has been great.
- At Oakland last week, I was on a car rider line, it was so comforting to see law enforcement. Communication was great from the admin too.
- Principal transition has been great at CHS.
- Drop Off and pickup. I feel appreciative that teachers and faculty are doing this, but my child was tapped by a car - what kind of training do they get, how are we ensuring that people know when to wave people on appropriately.
- Crossing guards at both entrances - middle, high, but there is not one at elementary (Rossvie)...richview could use one on memorial.
 - Reach out to see if we can re-evaluate crossing guard placement.

The Communications Department presented an overview of ParentSquare as a resource, and the Education Foundation and the support it provides for the District.

Robin Burton, Executive Director of the Education Foundation, delivered a presentation about the work of the Education Foundation.

- Have been in this position since 2020. I am a parent, in addition to being the head of the Foundation. That gives me a great perspective on how the school system operates and what might be beneficial.
- We have our own Board, that is separate from the School Board. They are all community members, very passionate about education.
- We do a lot of grants - classroom grants, mostly. Sometimes, there is a lot of regulation on how teachers can spend their money, so our dollars allow us to provide money that is flexible for teachers.
 - Great Idea, Big Idea grants - we’ve funded things like sensory rooms, 3D printers, hydroponic towers, and other similar things.
 - Morale grants - specifically for administrators where they can get meals for events, create a zen room, or put on a special event like a paint night.
- Academic awards banquet - for our high-achieving students.

- Teacher of the Year - Wyatt Johnson pays for a trip for our teacher of the year to Cabo San Lucas, and they also provide a car for students who win the Pass and Go event.
- Leadership CMCSS - for community members to learn more about the ins-and outs of the school system. Creates advocates in our community and keeps accurate information accessible to people.
- Teacher Warehouse - a warehouse of supplies where teachers can “shop.” They can access supplies at no cost! Out-of-pocket savings for teachers totaled about \$80,000.
 - This program has been so successful, we’re working with Kirkwood High School’s academy to create a second location. The students will create an online ordering and inventory system, and they will also help us have a second warehouse space.
- Last year, we did about \$25,000 in the classroom grants, and we did about \$50,000 in morale grants.
- Families in Transition - we provide grants of \$3,000, and we have increased that line item to \$7,000. Offsets things like temporary housing, car issues, etc.
- Leadership CMCSS - a program for community members to learn more about the school system, visit classrooms, and see programs in action.
- Partners in Education - businesses that partner with schools that provide in-kind services, volunteering, etc.
- Our goal is always to be smart with our funding and ensure we keep a healthy balance in our account. We have several corporate sponsors, but we also have an annual employee giving campaign.
- We have two events each year - Bash to Benefit, and Dash to Benefit.

Questions

- How do teachers know those grants are available?
 - We communicate using ParentSquare, we send direct touchpoints via email, and we’re actually streamlining that process this year to make the application process easier.
- Do you all partner with other community organizations? (United Way)
 - Yes, we partner with them on key initiatives (Warehouse, specifically).
- Sensory room grant - the teacher that got it at BDES last year moved to a new school. Do we lose that, then?
 - No, it will stay at the school.
- Advising the school to come back and ask - is that for schools that have applied and asked, or is that for anything?
 - Let’s just talk through what they need! It may not be something that they need to apply for a grant for - it may make more sense for them to get that supply for the warehouse.
- With the changes to shelter in the community (specifically housing like the Salvation Army), are you finding there are challenges to shelter for families?
 - We do know there are some challenges, but we have not heard anything specific with a shelter. We will find out that information and report back.

Please [click here](#) to access the full presentation from the Education Foundation.

Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer, and Jessica Goldberg, Director of Communications and Marketing, delivered an overview of ParentSquare and district communication.

- Our transition to ParentSquare is one of the things I have been proudest of in my time as Chief Communications Officer.
- The reason that we made this move was to be more convenient for parents - simple as that. Before, you may have received a school messenger from your administrator, but teachers did not use it. You may have wanted to send a direct message, but you could not do that with School Messenger. ParentSquare allows you to do all of that! Today, we are going to share a couple of features that you may not know about, and hopefully you can share with your parents.
 - Issue - I'm getting too many communications!
 - You can fix that! You can update your digest preferences.
 - There are three different options - the digest option will send all of the messages at the end of the day, one time; it can be changes in your notification settings. It does not change direct messages or emergencies - those will still come instantly. Maybe you don't mind getting your emails throughout the day, but you want text messages to be in a digest...you can set it that way too.
 - Issue - I need this translated!
 - You can set your translation settings so that messages come to you automatically in your preferred language. Under "language settings," you can select that everything you get comes in a preferred language. They can also respond back in their native language, and it will translate to English for teachers. ParentSquare translates using AI, and they report about 90% plus accuracy with most of their languages, which is on par with other translation services (such as Google).
- You can see these materials at our website - cmcss.net/parentsquare/
- Anthony also shared the accessibility features on the website.
- 90% of the support calls that we get are about the contact information in the system not being correct. We can contact about 99% of our parents at this point, and it's allowed us to clean up a lot of our contact information errors. You can go in anytime and update your contact information. In real time, if you need to update your contact information, you can do it right away in the parent portal, and it will update automatically.

Questions:

- People don't know about the parent portal - it leads to a lot of frustration I think. It might be helpful to reshare that resource! Also beneficial to remind people what is "the district" versus "the school" or someone else entirely.
 - Totally agree! We know in the digital age, we know people are overloaded with information. We appreciate anything you all can do to help us get this information out there.

- What does it look like when I send a message through parent square to the person who I direct message? I've used class dojo in the past, and sometimes it seemed like I got a response quicker.
 - Just like everyone else, teachers can change their notifications too, so it may be if they have something set to digest, they may not see it until the end of the day. If You have any concerns about the timeliness of the communication, reach out to your school's admin.
- Is there teacher discretion on using ParentSquare?
 - We appreciate this feedback so we can continue to have critical conversations with principals. That discretion is there, but we are contemplating moving into a requirement. We see that reflected in the feedback we get.
 - Setting office hours is a great option too!
- Are there talks of cell phone banning in other schools?
 - It's certainly always a conversation that circulates, and there are pros and cons to the approach. What KHS has done with its cell phone policy is really just reinforce some existing expectations that phones will not be out in classrooms, and they added the expectation that they will not be out in hallways.
 - (Follow-up from parent) - if it's possible, I would hope parents could weigh in on those decisions. I personally want my kids to be accessible while they are at school in case there is a school safety issue.