

PARENT COUNCIL MINUTES

October 11, 2016 / 6-8 / Waldorf High School

Attendees: Janine Pearson (Co-Chair), Nirinjan Khalsa (Co-Chair), Kay Hoffman (Pedagogical Director), Akasha Grace (6G), Jill Gerichter (6G), Vanessa Kaczmarek (K Jill), Deborah Weisner (7), Adriana Reyes Newell (2), Cristina Ruben (3), Cynthia Shore (8), Sahaj Khalsa (3), Thania Ramirez (9), Anna Vanderlann (11), Akasha Grace (6), Sat Sandesh Kaur (k), Micayla Duran (K), Katie Feldpaush (4), Deb Midgette (4)

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Nirinjan began with an introduction from a quote from William Arthur Ward,
“Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice.
Do more than be fair: be kind. Do more than forgive: forget. Do more than dream: work.”

Announcements

Delegate contact list was passed around to be updated.

Delegates were asked to send a reminder to each of the families in their classes to encourage attendance at the October 14 cook-out and musical event, beginning at 5:30-8:00 p.m., in the high school great room.

Delegates were asked to remind class families to contribute to the the annual sustaining fund.

Nirinjan and Janine asked delegates to come up with ideas for the intro letter that is in the Eblast each week. Jeffrey has asked for ideas of topics that parents would like to hear about or would clarify decisions made by the school.

Update from September meeting regarding Enrollment and Retention:

What is the protocol for families that do not submit re-enrollment forms?

1. Generally the admissions coordinator will contact that family through e-mail and a phone call.

2. Having a chosen teacher for the year to come does not affect the enrollment contract.

Although parents are given time to meet the teacher if that is preferred before the contract is signed.

There were some delegates who mentioned that they did not get a phone call or an e-mail when their re-enrollment contract was not returned. Perhaps this protocol needs to be re-enforced and followed more reliably?

Enrollment Number Update for SFWS to be at the perfect thriving capacity

230 students at SFWS, creates a thriving school

200 students at SFWS, balances the budget

188 students at SFWS, currently attending

195 students at SFWS, projected new families by mid year

Retention; administration has changed when the exit interview happens for families that leave the SFWS, the exit interview will be given one month after a family leaves the school.

Portal Update: Heather Larson has updated the portal with directions to find the SFWS directory. Also question arises, will SFWS start sharing parent email addresses in the portal? Delegates currently do not have access to class e-mail lists which makes us unable to e-mail our classes when necessary. Nirinjan will get in touch with Jeffrey to see how this can be resolved

Governance Committee: is asking the parent council to suggest new sources for a treasurer nominee for the board. Requirements for this position; Approx. ten hours a week and someone who is gifted and knowledgeable with finances and numbers, who can contribute creatively to the SFWS. Also the council was asked to suggest two new potential board member nominees for the end of the 2017 school year. People who can contribute in some creative capacity to the SFWS. [Time requirements??](#)

Kay Hoffman clarified why the five minute change of schedule occurred for the lower grades for the 2016/2017 year: This change was to accommodate the bridge teachers (teachers who teach both in the high school and elementary grades) in creating more ease in time for the teachers to walk from the high school to the grade school.

This change did not affect any loss in time for lunch or recess for any classes except the middle school who lost ten minutes of morning recess time. The teachers individually can choose how to structure the time for their specific class to make the new schedule work for their specific class Elementary grades did lose 5 minutes of their main lesson time, but again teachers can make up for that time in their extra main lessons each week.

High school changed pick up time from 3:20 to 3:00 to accommodate the new schedule for the full school as well as to fit better with the student's energy levels.

PC Business

Filled PC positions

Parent Council Treasurer; Vanessa

Parent Council Secretary; Jill Gerichter

Need alternative volunteer for Secretary - Deb said she would fill in as needed

Yearly Tasks and Responsibilities of the PC

1. Black and White clothing swap for the winter and spring concerts: lead and organizer Anna. Dates to be announced in November e-blasts
2. Community Days: lead and organizers Sahaj Khalsa and Akasha Grace
By next PC meeting they will have times, dates and locations for Nov. gathering ready to post on SFWS calendar.
3. Welcome New Parents: lead and organizer Adriana

This year we used PC delegates to welcome new parents and it worked fairly well but we would like to create a buddy system for new families connecting them with families who have been at the school for a while to give them a primer on things that are unique to SFWS as well as to give the new families a point of contact if questions come up later. We would also like to create a brochure or handout that pulls out information from the handbook/website that is essential for new parents. Other ideas welcome. We will be working on a more comprehensive system of welcoming new parents later in the year so that things will be in place in August of 2017.

- Class delegates were asked to call or speak in person to the new families again now that the school year is well underway
- Brent Poole, admissions coordinator has been asked to inform PC chairs when new families join SFWS so that we can welcome them throughout the year. .

Additional PC Tasks that are in the works

1. Parent Education: lead and organize Nirinjan Khalsa

Looking for other volunteers to generate subject ideas and help host, and promote events for parent education.

Intention: community building through discussions of parental issues and creating a comfortable platform and feeling of community to share ideas and discuss social issues that might come up in classes over the years

Example of how the first evening might go on the subject of the benefits of athletics and our program philosophy- : Begin with article and have a discussion group focusing on athletic philosophies, and importance of sports. Reaching out to parents earlier in the grades to create more awareness and participation surrounding SFWS athletic program.

Ideas for future subjects of parent education - discussions on media following the screening of Screenagers.

PC discussed briefly impact of sports not being fulfilled in the Middle School and impact that has on enrollment/retention. Ideas generated included changing the culture at the SFWS by introducing sports earlier to the children, coming to games, creating parent education groups. Nirinjan said that these issues have been discussed at length by the school's athletic committee and mentioned the possibility of having a longer discussion in the PC about athletics if that seemed useful.

2. Media

Over the summer, the PC discussed drafting a letter to the administration and board requesting more guidance regarding media and potentially a new, more realistic media policy. This letter was drafted by Sahaj Khalsa. Nirinjan requested a couple other delegates volunteer to help edit the letter and get it ready so that it can be approved by the PC and then distributed after the community discussion about media to be organized by the PC following the Screenagers screening. Sahaj, Nirinjan Deborah, Deb and Jill agreed to help.

Showing of Screenagers, sponsored by Desert Academy and Santa Fe Waldorf School, Showing November 15th; two showings with a short discussion after, speakers and subject matter TBA. Geared toward parent body and mature student body.

3. **SCRIP**: lead and organize, Janine

SCRIP as a self generating fundraiser for the SFWS

SCRIP card for local grocery stores as well as bigger stores, servicing over 700 retailers

Simplifying ways to purchase scrip cards for families to use; can purchase online as well as elementary office

Discussion on ways to promote to the SFWS community; e-blast, friday coffee morning, class delegates and class parents sending personal emails to class members, etc.

Important to note; this process usually takes about one to two years before it takes off.

New PC Tasks

Basket Auction for Holiday Fair: lead and organize Anna and Thania

Themes will be chosen for a certain number of baskets, TBD

Example ideas; toy basket, coffee tea basket, chocolate specialties etc.

Each class member can contribute to that theme by November 15th

The baskets will be raffled off at the Holiday faire.

The PC agreed to take on 6-8 baskets this year divided by theme rather than asking each class to take on their own basket.

Reminders

Parent council has a designated slot in the e-blasts each week for any subjects or information that would benefit the parent body. If delegates have something that they would like to include, they need to send it to Nirinjan and Janine by Tuesday for inclusion in the Thursday e-blast. Please don't send info directly to the school for inclusion.

Discussion

Retention at the SFWS

Identify ways to communicate with new parents what to expect in coming years;

1. introduce in beginning of school year what to look forward to as well as creating more movement from each grade to the next by introducing the children to projects that occur in the grade/grades ahead.

2. Share curriculum early in year so parents can support their children in their learning and introduce information to them/ get parents and children excited about curriculum.

PC than broke into three different groups focusing on preschool through third grade, fourth and fifth grade, and than sixth grade through high school.

Notes from each group are attached on the following page.

New Business

-Adriana proposed childcare at parent council meetings, Grietje agreed to lead and organize

-Parent issue: Change of Michaelmas date- it is important to read e-blasts as all information regarding school and school events are always put forth in a timely matter. Unfortunately due to weather and camping trips for high school, dates had to be adjusted. PC members please be sure to promote families to read e-blasts. Also, it is important to remember that the decisions that the school makes are well thought out and always have a solid reason. Parents should inquire as to the reason if they feel they need more clarification.

Patty Hatch is no longer serving as the twelfth grade delegate.

Ideas for improving retention in MS/HS -

1. Build school enthusiasm - mock election, wilderness trips, athletics, make it a happening place
2. Work on improving/expanding international exchange program
3. Hold social and/or athletic events with other schools
4. Have class teachers that specialize in teaching MS rather than keeping same teacher 1-8
5. Market uniqueness of our curriculum (the education of the "whole person"), outdoor education to current parents
6. Host a panel **SOON** with HS parents/students for MS parents/students - **Greitje has offered to take this on**
7. Continue adding video or other presentations like the one made for 5th last year
8. Publicize college acceptances and merit awards for each senior class (how will investment in paying HS tuition pay off for college)
9. Create a business directory for parent owned businesses **Anna would like to discuss this at the next PC meeting**
10. Waldorf table at Screenagers screening
11. Parent Education about Waldorf education but also about expected age appropriate behaviors (eg. - 8th graders will be restless and looking to go somewhere else) **This fits within Parent Education which is being worked on by Nirinjan and others**
12. Work on social dynamics/bullying/dress code to create a more friendly environment for students
13. Create a strong and attractive display for "Why Waldorf" at Holiday Faire **Grietje is willing to work on this**

Retention For Parents:

- Kay's experience is that 5th grade parents were interested in HS experiential based learning more than athletics
- The school needs to articulate math & science program better and how it is different from conventional learning
- Curriculum is a journey that culminates in HS and that doesn't seem to be clear, present upcoming curriculum summary to parent along with enrollment contracts and how it fits into the bigger picture
- Letters/stories from Alumni, Alumni speakers
- Build class community, have socials, picnics, dinners, etc... Parents less likely to leave if they are connected in that way

****WE CANNOT DEPEND ON THE CLASS TEACHER TO IMPART THE IMPORTANCE OF WALDORF EDUCATION**

If a parent/family is only connected to the teacher, and that teacher is not embodying Waldorf and/or fully supporting the school, then it's easy for a family to walk away. If they are connected to the school on different levels and in different ways then they are less likely to leave and or to have one incident break their faith in the school.

Retention For Kids (Bridging the children with those of the upper grades)

- 3rd - invite them to Winter and Spring Concerts, Promusica
- 4th - invite them to Pentathlon practice
- K - Creating a shadow day for kindergartners to try first grade. Most of Miss Jennie's class this year will move up next year, so with the supervision of Miss Jennie & Miss

Patty, having those children spend time in the first grade classroom with the first graders.

- Pep rally for the whole school to get excited and support our Athletics Program, or simply to come together as a unified school.