

Date: April 17th, 2014

Attendees:

- Suzanne Smith, Site Council Chair & MMS Teacher
- Kerrie O'Brien, Site Council Secretary & MMS Teacher
- Rebecca Bond, MMS Parent
- Lise Grato, MMS Parent
- Michelle Meekins, MMS Teacher
- Ken Gilbert, MMS Principal
- Betsy Gregory, MMS Student
- Sophia Lynn, MMS Student
- Stephanie Farnes, MMS Student
- Bailie Burt, MMS Student
- Megan Miller, MMS Student
- Eleanor Smith, MMS Student

Upcoming Event: MMS 50th Anniversary party

This event will take place on Saturday, April 26th from 1-4. We would like to get out the information to as many people as possible, so start getting the word out via social media. Our office manager has been doing a lot of publicity with flyers, parent emails, and postings. We have opportunities for volunteers to help at the event, and we are looking for more people to staff certain areas or give directions. The whole school will be open for visitors, although some classrooms will be locked. Volunteers won't necessarily have to stay in a certain area the whole time; we will work on a rotation schedule next week once we know how many people are available to help. Our leadership class is looking into finding a bear costume to have a student dressed up for pictures and possibly to hand out goodies to kids.

Upcoming Event: Technology Safety and Cyberbullying Awareness

We are having a guest speaker for parents and students on Tuesday, May 20th who will talk about online safety. She will be bringing detective Mike Rossiter from the Linn County Sheriff's Department. They will give a presentation and open it up to questions from the community.

Secretaries' Day

Wednesday, April 23rd is Secretaries' Day. Our leadership class will be bringing drinks, flowers, and cards for our office staff. Our principal and vice principal will be taking them out to lunch as well.

Teacher Appreciation Week

Our leadership class will be doing several things in honor of our teachers. The PTC will be setting up a luncheon for the staff that week as well. The 7th grade zoo field trip is on Friday May 9th, so the staff luncheon will take place on Thursday the 8th. Usually the luncheon begins at about 10:45 and ends around 1:30. In the past, the PTC has provided an almost formal restaurant kind of meal for the staff, and it is always appreciated that parents take time out of their busy schedules to do something to make the teachers feel special.

OBOB Request

Our librarian and OBOB coach have requested \$200 from the PTC to complete the collection of books for next year's Oregon Battle of the Books team. They would like to purchase the books soon so that OBOB team members can take them home over the summer to read.

PTC Business

A parent suggested there may be a need for additional microwaves or hot water dispensers in the cafeteria as there are currently only two microwaves. There is often a long line for use of the microwave ovens that we currently have, and some students have given up on bringing lunches that require heating. The PTC might be willing to fund this, or we could put out a call to parents to see if anyone has a lightly used microwave that they could donate.

School Climate Survey

We need to look at our school climate survey to see if there are any changes that need to be made. The last time we gave this survey was Spring 2012, so there may be things that need to be updated. There are three versions of the survey: one for students, one for staff, and one for parents. The questions are essentially the same, but the wording is different depending on who is taking the survey. We need to see if there are questions that we need to add, delete, or change to make sure we are getting the feedback and information we want from students, parents, and staff. The survey used to be about eighty questions long; the last time we edited it, we dropped it way down to more like thirty-five for students and parents and approximately fifty for staff.

A student asked about the first question on the survey, which asks if students agree with the statement that teachers at MMS treat everyone with respect. Ken said that this question should be taken as an "in general" statement; if it's one or two teachers, it might be more of a personality conflict than an issue of respect. We will reword the question to say "in general" or "overall".

We used to have a blank space for general comments so that parents, students, and staff can have the opportunity to give more specific feedback. That way, if a student or parent felt like there was a specific teacher not treating them with respect, for example, or if there is one who is doing a great job, they would have the opportunity to give that feedback.

Sometimes this survey is difficult for parents because they don't always know what's going on at school, so we are seeking parent feedback in particular on questions that should be removed.

A parent asked if there is a distinction between "teachers" and "staff." Should we reword to just be staff, or do we want to take teachers separately?

The last time we did this survey, we only had about 280 student responses, 100 parent responses, and about 27 staff responses. It was a good sampling, but the more the better, so we will try to get a better rotation this year to get all the students into the computer lab to take it. There's a possibility of students doing it at the end of their OAKS testing session, but some classes have already taken the OAKS, so it wouldn't work for everyone.

We are going through the questions one by one on the staff and student surveys. We will add, delete, change, combine, and rewrite to improve the survey. Our parents had to leave early, but they will send us some additional feedback.

While looking at the survey, the question of homework came up. Our students pointed out that homework isn't a bad thing if it's meaningful, but just doing busy work is not helpful. For example, spending a lot of time coloring doesn't really teach you anything. Also, having the study hall period on Thursday is helpful, but maybe teachers could think about coordinating their projects and tests to fit better with the study hall schedule. Some students prioritize homework; if the assignment is just an effort grade and it doesn't really contribute to a student's understanding of the material, they might decide not to do the assignment and to spend that time doing something more meaningful.

Next Year's Schedule

In January, our student members came to us about the elective period study hall. They asked to change the study hall to the end of the day on Thursdays so that students would have all of their homework. We made the change to Thursdays, but could not change the time frame. However, we did take this feedback into account for next year.

Next year, every day except for Early Release days, there will be an Academic Support period at the end of the day for Bear Dens. The period will last thirty minutes and will be time for study hall, check-ins, reminders, etc. We appreciate our students' feedback because without them we would not have thought of this. We hope that this period will give our students the opportunity to get organized and get a good start on their homework before they go home. This could also be a good time for our daily announcements. There could also be once monthly locker clean-outs.

There are some drawbacks to this schedule. We had to take five minutes out of each class period, which is a negative for teachers who lose instruction time. We also had to take five minutes out of nutrition break, which still gives students ten minutes to use the restroom, get and eat a quick snack, and get to class on time.

The rest of the schedule is essentially the same. It will be a seven period schedule (we currently have seven periods, but we don't give the elective a number). We will no longer have an elective period; our elective classes will be spread out throughout the day. Most of our electives will be a semester long and will be matched up with another elective, so students will forecast for the elective pair they would like for the year. Students will not be allowed to change electives midyear; if they want the first elective in the pair, they will also have to take the second. The electives will be mixed grade levels with 6-8 together. We will also have a few full-year classes, such as leadership.

The electives next year should be higher-quality than this year. Since all of our teachers are doing electives this year, the quality varies. Not all teachers like teaching electives, so this will allow the teachers who actually enjoy teaching an elective and are willing to put in the time to focus some time on it.

Student Input

Our principal opened up the floor to our student members to give us feedback on things that they might like to change to improve our school.

One student recommended having Late Start days rather than Early Release days. However, this is not a building decision; the district decides which schedule we will be on. The district made the decision to do an Early Release schedule. One reason is that the Boys and Girls Club can take the kids after school but not before, which is important for child care. Another student recommended having our Early Release on Friday, but that is also something that the district decides.

One of our student members asked about grading next year. We will still have our Effort category, but our Academic grading will be standards-based. One student commented that Effort grades aren't taken as seriously. We asked how we could make our students take Effort more seriously. One student suggested that it be counted towards and academic grade. Having letter grades is a big motivator, and our students agreed that they would take the Effort category more seriously if they got an A, B, C, D or F for that.

The majority of our students cannot just skip the homework/studying and still do well on assessments. So we need to do something to motivate the students to do what they need to do. One student suggested having consequences for not completing effort assignments.

Our principal asked for some feedback on watching videos in class. Our students said that they don't watch many theatrical movies, but they sometimes watch documentaries. One film that our 8th graders watched was *National Treasure* in Social Studies class; the question is, what are the students getting out of this? The students pointed out that it isn't useful to watch something if there's nothing to go along with it. They need a worksheet to help them pay attention, or they might space out or fall asleep. It's also nice to have something after the video so that you know what assignment you're doing. It's also hard for students if there are too many questions on the worksheet; it's easy to miss information while you're writing down the answer to the previous question. A video can also really help to make something more clear.