

Parkland Community Advisory Council

March 16, 2017

CO-PRESIDENTS

Marie Maritch
Melanie St. Hill

VICE PRESIDENT/MEMBERSHIP

Michelle Wahlmark

SECRETARY

Linda Perlman-McKenna

ATTENDEES : Nicole Mandry, Ann Segan, Jennifer Schreiner, Melanie St. Hill, Linda Perlman-McKenna, Robert Fager, Ismail Kashkoush, Mary Braccili,

GUESTS: Jessica Kara, Mary Ost, David Kennedy (Board Member)

ABSENT/EXCUSED: Jennifer Jones, Nancy Trach, Trish Balestrini, Tom Murray, Monica Gutman, Deb Martin, Melissa Grube

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES: Kiera Segan, Alana Dee, R.J. Corba

SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVES: Lisa Roth (Excused), David Hein (Excused), Carol Facchiano, Mark Hanichak (Excused)

ADMINISTRATION: Dr. Rodney R. Troutman, Assistant Superintendent

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Melanie St. Hill at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion to approve the minutes from February 16, 2017 was made by Ann Segan and seconded by Mary Braccili. The motion passed unanimously.

PRESENTATION: Full-Day Kindergarten / Mindfulness

Diane Neikam, Elementary Curriculum Supervisor, introduced the evening's topics: Full Day Kindergarten and Mindfulness. Parkland implemented full day kindergarten at all elementary schools beginning this past fall 2016 with great success. Diane shared a slide presentation entitled, "Full Day Kindergarten Update," that provided data demonstrating how well our current full day kindergarten students are doing compared to how our half day kindergarten students did the previous year. The differences in data from this year's middle of the year STAR Early Literacy Diagnostic Report to last year's is striking and reveal that more students are now reading at or above grade level by the middle of the kindergarten school year. In addition, there are less students in the "Intervention" category (i.e., struggling readers who need additional instruction) as well as the "Urgent" category (i.e., our lowest readers who need intensive interventions in addition to the core instruction). The percent of students in the "Watch" category (i.e., students reading close to grade level) has also increased as kids have improved and moved out of the bottom two categories—the intervention and urgent categories. This year so far, 99% of our kids are reading at or above grade level, or are close to it (i.e., are in the "watch" category) compared to approximately 80% the previous year. Only 1% of our kids are currently in the intervention and urgent categories compared to approximately 29% mid-year 2016.

Diane continued with slides highlighting the comparison of performance data in a several skill areas for which students are assessed, including the following:

- **Alphabet Principle**—knowledge of letter names, alphabetic letter sequences, and sounds associated with letters.
- **Concept of Word**—assesses a student’s understanding of print concepts regarding written word length and word borders (the ability to identify the number of words 2-3 in a sentence) and the difference between words and letters.
- **Visual Discrimination**--assesses a student’s ability to differentiate both upper- and lowercase letters, identify words that are different, and match words that are the same.
- **Phonemic Awareness**--assesses a student’s understanding of rhyming words; blending and segmenting word parts and phonemes; isolating and manipulating initial, final, and medial phonemes; and identifying the sounds in consonant blends.
- **Phonics**--assesses a student’s understanding of short, long, and variant vowels and other vowel sounds; initial and final consonants; consonant blends and digraphs; consonant and vowel substitution; and identification of rhyming words and sounds in word families.
- **Structural Analysis**--assesses a student’s understanding of affixes and syllable patterns in decoding and identification of compound words.
- **Vocabulary**--assesses a student’s knowledge of high-frequency words, regular and irregular sight words, multi-meaning words, words used to describe categorical relationships, position words, synonyms and antonyms.
- **Sentence-Level Comprehension**--assesses a student’s ability to listen and identify words in context and to read and identify words in context.
- **Paragraph-Level Comprehension**--assesses a student’s ability to identify the main topic of text; listen to text and answer literal who, what questions and where, when, and why questions; read text and answer literal who, what, where, when and why questions
- **Early Numeracy**--assesses a student’s ability to identify and name numbers; understand number-object correspondence; complete sequences; compose and decompose groups of up to ten; and compare sizes, weights, and volumes.

Diane then shared some writing samples to illustrate how kindergarteners improved their writing skills from the beginning of the school year through January 2017. She discussed how writing is connected to purposeful play, how the kids respond to text, and touched upon what the kids do in math centers.

She closed with a description of Mindfulness practices in the classroom to help kids to calm themselves down, relax, manage their frustrations and anger more appropriately, and to better focus on their school work. This year the new practice started with kindergarteners and will be extended to first graders next year. Kids have been taught how to breathe deeply and meditate. They think about what makes their day good, bad, and what could make it better. They practice mindfulness in class twice a day, in the morning and either after recess or at the end of the day. Mindful exercises include: “focus on the day” (where they concentrate and listen); deep breathing exercises; “hand breathing;” and “listen for the bell and breathe.” She shared videos of the kids practicing mindfulness exercises and of the kids being interviewed about how they feel before and after these exercises.

More information regarding full day kindergarten can be found at the PSD website on the Asst. Superintendent’s webpage.

SCHOOL BOARD REPORT:

Carol Facchiano reported that there was a school board retreat on March 6, 2017. She announced that KCBA (Kelly Clough Bucher and Associates), was selected as the architect firm to build the new elementary school. Construction of the new school is expected to be completed by Spring 2020, and the school is expected to open Fall 2020.

She noted that John Vignone will review the budget with the board at the workshop on Tuesday, March 21st at 7:00pm, prior to the regular board meeting. There will also be an all-day budget seminar on April 28, 2017, in the board room at the Admin Center. Both presentations are open to the public.

She highlighted a wonderful article published on March 27, 2017, in the Morning Call about working for the Parkland School District. Parkland was named No. 2 among large employers in the 2017 Top Workplaces survey.

David Kennedy, President of Parkland's school board, was introduced as a special guest. He welcomed everyone to attend school board meetings. He commented on the budget approval process, noting that the Board will be asked to approve the preliminary budget at their May 16th meeting. Then the budget will then be available for public inspection at the Admin Center for 30 days.

A short discussion took place regarding the need for a new high school. Although a new elementary school is being built to accommodate growth in the southwest corner of the district, this growth will NOT necessitate a new/additional high school within the next decade. It was explained that we infrequently have all 3200 enrolled high school students in the building at the same time; many students attend LCTI or other outside programs and have either early dismissal or late start. There may be a need to add 5 or 6 classrooms, but a new building is not required. The school district is also trying to create more options that will give high school students greater flexibility in their schedules as well as affording them quality learning opportunities, such as creating more courses online (including AP courses).

STUDENT REPORT: Kiera Segan, Alana Dee and R.J. Corba

General

- The Parent Forum Spring Workshop was held on March 15th.
- The Key Club Blood Drive is March 21st.

Arts—reported by Kiera Segan

- "Pippin," the spring musical, will be performed April 5th through the 9th.
- Tri-M sold puppy chow last week to raise money for Zomba Prison Project.

Academics—reported by Alana Dee

- The Robotics Team won the Judges' Award at their most recent competition.
- The PA Governor's STEM Competition involved a group of students who developed a device to solve a problem with irrigation of crops. They won first place at regionals and will represent Parkland at the state competition.
- The Science Fair Club competed at the Pa. Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) and came home with many first places.

- The PALS Club had “End the R Word” week January 27 to February 3, ending with a dance that Friday.
- Algebra I Boot Camp begins in April. More information is on the district website.
- Parkland hosted the SAT on March 11th.
- A Mini Thon was held which raised over \$7,000 for the Four Diamonds Foundation.
- National Honor Society hosted a Dr. Seuss night for the K-3 students on March 2.

Athletics—reported by R.J. Corba

- The boys’ basketball team beat Allen in a huge game during the district playoffs.
 - They lost to Pocono Mountain East later on to secure a position as second seed.
 - They lost in first round of states to Archbishop Ryan.
- The girls’ basketball team had a successful season but were recently defeated in Class 6A Division consolation game by Northampton.
- The girls’ swimming/diving team won first place in district.
- The boys’ swimming/diving team placed second.
- Boys’ wrestling in districts:
 - Nate Feyrer—2nd Place 220 lbs.
 - Zach Ortman—3rd place 138 lbs.
 - Ethan Moscat—4th place 182 lbs.
- Spring sports are in the process of wrapping up the tryout periods and beginning to practice/compete.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

The next CAC meeting will take place on Thursday, April 6, 2017 at 6:15 pm in the Library Classroom at Parkland High School. The agenda will include a presentation on Drug and Alcohol Abuse followed by the spring musical, Pippin.

ROUNDTABLE:

Many thanks were extended to Diane Neikam for the informative presentation. The school district was commended for their incredible work to implement full day kindergarten district-wide on such an aggressive time line. CAC members were very pleased to learn about the success of the program, as evidenced by the data that was shared as well as the positive comments from some of the parents who have had first-hand experience with the program.

Jennifer Schreiner highlighted that Parkway Manor hosted a science fair (the only elementary school in the district to do so) that included between 80-100 student projects. The school also started a community event celebrating diversity. This event showcased foods from around the world and represented over 20 different cultures.

Dr. Rod Troutman shared that the proposal to eliminate property taxes seems to have been put on the back burner for now. Members were encouraged to continue efforts to write their state legislators to block such a proposal. Community members were also encouraged to write their representatives to oppose legislative changes to Medicaid that would affect Title I funding and the ability for many of our kids with special needs to access medical services that are critical to their well-being.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

At 8:17 p.m., Melanie St. Hill called for a motion to adjourn. Ann Segan moved, with Michelle Wahlmark seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Perlman-McKenna