

District Parent Council
January 22, 2018
Meeting notes

Attendance: Alena Zachery-Ross, John Hood, Christine Sermak, Tonya Rodriguez, Anupama Atre, Jen Berman, Melissa Cochran, Martha Hentz, Jen Nanzer, Andi Pincheira, Karen Shapiro, Amy Suhrheinrich, Lynne Thatcher, Stefanie Konrad

12:05 pm Meeting began

Board of Education – Tonya Rodriguez

- Resolution to support research of School Finance Research Collaborative, and consider further action after the results are out
 - Find real cost to educate a student in Michigan
 - Differences between different student groups, e.g. higher cost for Special Education students.
 - Will be topic at the Board Meeting this evening.
- Board of Education
 - New Officers:
 - Dean Bolton – President
 - Sarah Wohlford – Vice President
 - Tonya Rodriguez – Secretary
 - Amy Crites – Treasurer
 - Erica Wolff – Parliamentarian
 - The Board Meetings will take place as usual, generally the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7pm; the dates can be found on the website.
 - Dean Bolton is representative at the Ingham County School Officers Association
 - Sarah Wohlford is representative at the Okemos Education Foundation
- Meridian Township will present a check to the Okemos Athletic Boosters and Okemos Athletics in recognition of their efforts and involvement in the summer 2017 Gus Macker Basketball Tournament
- Green projects at OHS: Solar panels are installed, lighting upgrades to LED under way. Lighting upgrade project is facilitated in partnership with Consumers Energy and Michigan Saves. Required the creation of a Green Revolving Fund, so savings from the project finance the implementation of further green projects.
- Tonight's meetings topics include
 - Acknowledge teachers with 24 years of service
 - Vote on Spanish Course trip to Ecuador
- Notification from Moody's, that the credit rating of Okemos Public Schools was lowered since the fund balance is still below the recommended value. That means the interest rates for the district are expected to go up slightly.

Superintendent – Alena Zachery-Ross

- 1st day of 2nd semester today, courses changed as planned, report cards will be going out on January 29th
- Friday afternoon was records day, teachers met and looked at the data for each individual student and their growth during the last half year. In addition to the academic growth, social and emotional growth were discussed as well. This allowed the teachers to project forward goals intentionally for each student individually.
- Superintendent committees:

- Facilities Study Committee – led by Alena Zachery-Ross and Steve Lathrop will present to the Board at the meeting on 03/12
- Technology/Security, Capital Outlay, Transportation Study Committee – led by Patty Trelstad and Dr. Cathy Ash will present to the Board at 2/26
- Committees performed site visits and looked at research, talked to planner for new developments, looked at students per area and grade (older neighborhoods are turning around, require several elementary student buses now)
- 02/14 Count day
 - Last few months: families moving in, often not affiliated with MSU, have students in all grades and move to Okemos (not school of choice!)
- Ways of input to the superintendent committees are discussed at Board Meetings, no decision or timeline yet, probably meetings and offline input opportunity
- Equity plan:
 - We are embracing the opportunity to include all students
 - Was and is especially focus when testing to be aware of and decrease the challenges due to cultural differences and socio-economic status
 - Getting student's voice
 - There was an article in the Lansing State Journal by a 15 year old student from East-Lansing, who commented on the curriculum and emphasized a necessity to include more different voices
 - Make sure all groups are represented during meetings (and have a way to give input if they can not come to one of the meetings)
Ask regularly: What can we do better? What can the District Parent Council do? What can I do?
- Posting for Hiawatha's Principal
 - is active now
 - desired characteristics have been gathered from all stakeholder groups
 - Parent Group will provide names for three parent volunteers to help with the selection process

Okemos High School Principal Report – *Christine Sermak*

- 2nd semester kick-off today, many academic opportunities and fine art performances coming up
- Schoolwide assemblies:
 - Diversity assembly End February, students present
 - USMC All Star Jazz Band performs
 - Spring musical
- Mental Health and Mental Health Awareness
 - After the death of the husband of a teacher last school year and a student recently, a group of students has worked together with Christine Sermak to provide activities for all students to be more aware of your own feelings and of possible changes in your friends.
 - United and Social Progress Team is organizing different activities for April
 - Will Heininger, a former Football player from the University of Michigan will be giving a presentation to the students in March and 2-3 weeks later to parents/guardians (to give the families time to have some conversation at home upfront). They are currently looking into financing the event (3 assemblies a \$1,000, will be donated to a depression clinic at the University of Michigan)
 - All school assembly organized by students for the students
- Phi Sigma Beta Workshop for African-American Male students coming up, see News&Notes

- Philharmonic Wind Ensemble invited to perform at Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids: great honor, all orchestras and bands send in recordings and they are choosing in a blind audition which one to invite.
- Registration for classes 2018/2019 starts soon
- Prom will be held on May 20th and the Post Prom starting at midnight on May 21st
- Two world language teachers resigned during the school year (Latin and Spanish), postings did not yield teachers that met our standards, through personal connections two long-term subs have been employed for the rest of the school year, positions will be reposted in spring. Long-term sub Jessica Geyer is now employed as a teacher in the OHS English department. Psychology position will likely be posted as well, so the subject will probably be available next year again.

Special Education – Anupama Atre

1. New club starting at Bennett Woods called PEERS (Promoting Early Educational Relationships). Successful programs already exist at OHS, Chippewa and Kinawa, extend to Elementary School now.
The club aims to foster interaction, understanding and relationships between students with and without disabilities. The club is led by the Speech and Language Pathologist and meets once a month, starting Jan 22. It is the first club in Okemos School District for students with disabilities and as the focus of the club.
2. Michigan Disability Rights Coalition in partnership with Michigan State University is seeking applications from Ingham and Genesee County Schools to implement a program called YELL (Youth Engaged in Leading and Learning).
The program which is funded by the Michigan Disabilities Development Council presents a unique opportunity to pilot an intervention model designed to develop youth leaders, foster inclusive practices for schools, empower transition age youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to achieve their dreams, and to create opportunities for school and community engagement in learning about the multiple benefits of inclusion and integrated community supports for all. The project aims to train and empower faculty, staff, administrators and, most importantly, students to create a culture of inclusion in their schools and communities. They will support 8 schools. The goal is a program led by students with disabilities for students, informing e.g. about disability history and disability pride, the topics are decided by the students. Okemos is strongly encouraged to apply, applications from the school administration are due next month
The training could take place either during the school day or after school, depending on the needs of the school district, the program itself would probably be an after school club.
3. College and Career Fair and Workshop, organized by the Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee will be held at Lansing Community College on Feb 23. All high school age students, caregivers, teachers and guidance counselors are encouraged to attend. More details are available on the Ingham ISD website.

OEF – Martha Hentz

Okemos Education Foundation www.oefsite.org

- **Distinguished Alumni Award.** The OEF has partnered with the Okemos Alumni Association (OAA) to facilitate the selection process of the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award. The OAA will establish their own timeline and procedures for selecting candidates for the award; however, the chosen recipient will be honored, as usual, at the annual OEF Awards Banquet in November. Do you know an Okemos alumnus who has accomplished amazing things and worked to improve their community? Learn more about the award at www.oefsite.org/nomination.

- **John Bjorkquist Alumni Science Fund.** The OEF is pleased to announce the establishment of a new fund to benefit science education in our schools. The Okemos Alumni Association has generously committed \$10,000 as a leadership donation to establish this new fund, named in honor of former Okemos High School teacher John Bjorkquist. The John Bjorkquist Alumni Science Fund is now accepting donations, which will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$10,000 by the Alumni Association. These funds will be used to enhance science and technology education for all Okemos students. To make a donation, visit www.oefsite.org/donate.
- **Science Fair Grant Applications due Feb 1.** The OEF offers up to \$350 to each school to help support their annual science fair events. The one-page application, available on the OEF's website: <https://www.oefsite.org/science-fairs>, must be received by Feb 1. Please contact OEF Chair Martha Hentz with questions.
- **APPLE Awards.** The OEF sent 56 APPLE Awards at the end of 2017. APPLE Awards can be sent at any time of the year. Learn more at www.oefsite.org/apple.
- **Annual Fund Drive.** The 2017-18 OEF donor list is displayed on our website and more names are being added each week. Please consider making a donation. The OEF relies on our generous donors (parents, grandparents, OPS staff, area businesses, alumni, community members) to help the OEF fund classroom grants, educational programs, and after-school clubs. Your donation matters! Learn more at www.oefsite.org.
- **Elementary Author Visit.** The OEF partners with Horizon Bank each spring to bring an author to each of our elementary schools. This year's author (and illustrator) is Leslie Helakoski (www.helakoskibooks.com), and she will visit our students during the following days:
 - March 7 - OPM
 - March 8 - Bennett Woods
 - March 14 - Cornell
 - March 15 - Hiawatha

Parents are invited to join the students during the presentations.
Thank you, Horizon Bank, for supporting the OEF's beloved Visiting Author program since 2009.

District Parent Council President – *Lynne Thatcher*

Please see the email from Olivia Jo Utlej on the backside of the agenda (MSU offers help during Elementary School Science Fairs) and pass the information on to the your school's science fair organizer.

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction John Hood: Third grade reading law

- Link to the presentation:
<https://www.okemosk12.net/cms/lib/MI02209166/Centricity/Domain/891/Reading%20Plan/Third%20Grade%20Reading%20Law%20Overview.pdf>
(Academics, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessments, scroll down to Reading Law Overview)

The following notes reflect comments, questions and answers that went above what is in the presentation.

- Kindergardeners and 1st graders are already in program, will be tested at the end of 3rd grade
- John Hood is available for questions regarding the law
- Law wants to increase reading and improve the teaching of reading, Okemos is pretty well set up already
- M-Step does not give a grade level result, only proficient, partly proficient, not proficient
- Okemos has systems for reading level assessments and interventions/further support already in place, needed documentation for these systems, worked on read@home ideas, see <https://www.okemosk12.net/cms/lib/MI02209166/Centricity/Domain/891/Reading%20Plan/Final%20Parents%20Read-At-Home%20Tools%20for%20Student%20Success.pdf>

- Forms are available and filled out for every student in the district, were already discussed at Fall conferences and will be again at Spring conferences; if a student needs to be on a plan according to the winter assessment, the parents will be contacted directly
- The form we use evolved from the Ingham ISD form (needed to be adapted since we use it for all students, not only students on a plan)
- Law mandates reading support and documentation only until grade 3, we expect to roll forms up to higher grade levels as the age groups progress through the schools. (Start using 4th grade forms when now 1st graders reach 4th grade)
- Students on a plan are reevaluated every 14 days
- If a student is on an IEP that trumps the reading plan
- Reading law provides exception for Spec Ed students, concern was voiced that might lead to parents pushing for a Spec Ed status for their children to avoid retention; not likely, there are other exceptions; correlation observed: especially students that do not respond well to extra interventions often need to be in Spec Ed
- Interesting tidbit: States look at 3rd grade reading performance to figure out how many prison space is needed; up to 2nd grade: students learn to read, after that: students read to learn
- No consequences (“punishments”) for the district if students do not perform well besides having to staff another 3rd grade section
- Students have to be there for two count days to be counted for M-Step (that means ELL students are not counted in their first year in the country)
- If student did not pass the test are they automatically retained? No, Spec Ed students and ELL students that have not been there for at least one year are exempt, students previously retained should not be retained again, exception for students whose test was an outlier compared with performances in the classroom, exception for students who passed all other areas
- Exemption letter is available for parents to check their reason:
<https://www.okemosk12.net/cms/lib/MI02209166/Centricity/Domain/891/Reading%20Plan/Parent%20exception%20letter%20to%20superintendent.pdf>
- Research on retentions:
<https://www.okemosk12.net/cms/lib/MI02209166/Centricity/Domain/891/Reading%20Plan/Retention%20Research%20Summary.pdf>
- Not clear whether school district will know before parents or at the same time whether they have gotten a retention notice
- Law might change in two years, but we all are appreciative to have a good system in place
- Several districts might not retain any students (best interest clause, since research clearly shows that retention has a negative effect on the development of most kids)
- Moving between districts is not helpful to obfuscate failing the test, grades can be tracked
- Parents can opt-out students from M-Step (without giving a reason)
 - Not sure whether the number of opt-outs will increase
 - Theoretically 95% attendance required or financial consequences, not sure whether they have ever been applied
- The system will be explained to parents regularly, parents need to self-advocate, individual plans for all students, communication essential (e.g. if student is English native speaker but parents are not)
- 99 of around 315 students received not proficient on their 3rd grade Language Arts M-Step last year – and our district ranked 7th in the state.
- More funding would be needed to implement good measures in all districts
- Summer reading programs available in Okemos, voluntary, free, limited amount of spots

- Brainstorming questions for next meeting's topic "Nutrition" presented by Lynna Hassenger
 - Healthy nutrition standards: Are we keeping to Obama's rules or will Trump's rules be used?
 - Vending Machine options at OHS contain highly caffeinated soft drinks, why? Should parents be informed?
 - Nutrition rules seem to focus on sugar. Avoiding chemicals, avoiding processed food does not seem to be part of the plan
 - Healthy choices at OHS are often gone early?
 - Wellness committee?
 - Okemos wants to go above and beyond, do the same with food!
 - Vegetarian options?
- Brainstorming questions for the meeting in March: Community Education
 - Inclusion for people with disabilities, what does the equity plan mean for Community Education?
 - Different options for before/after care (e.g. language immersion, computer club, ...)
 - What is Community Ed? Who do they report to? Where do they get their money from? History?
 - Brief overview over current offerings
 - Why is Haslett's program more extensive?
 - Relationship with Meridian Township, who gets what? (Some activities seem to be organized by the Township, some by Community Ed)
- Absence during count day: Make sure to call in!

OHS – Amy Suhrheinrich and Stefanie Konrad

- Congratulations to Poetry Out Loud winners Dora Ivkovich and Molly Cavanaugh, who won the school-wide contest on January 10. Dora (or Molly as alternate) will represent OHS at the state Poetry Out Loud competition in Lansing in March.
- Finals Exams took place from Jan 17-19, students are relieved.
- Teacher Appreciation Luncheon was held on January 17 and looked great! Thank you to all parents who brought in delicious dishes, and helped with set-up and clean-up.
- Post Prom kick-off meeting was held on January 18th. Event will look similar to last year, and just tweaked a bit (different activities, wider choice of food options, etc.). The committee came up with several fun ideas to raise more funds, and are now looking into the feasibility of these suggestions.
- Last week: Used book drive for the Friends of the Library Group.
- Athletic Boosters are looking for helpers for Concession Stand during Basketball games. There have been some games with no concessions due to lack of volunteers. Sign up and gain money for your child's sport team:: <http://signup.com/go/oPSGkTU>
- Parent Group Meeting is January 23 at 9:00am @OHS counseling office conference room.
- January 25-27 is the Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids, All State Band performs as well as Symphonic Wind Ensemble.
- January 29-February 9: Apply for AP courses for the 2018-2019 school year, applications can be obtained from the AP teacher and have to be returned to the AP teacher.
- OHS Shoe Drive: OHS hosts a Shoe Drive for Soles4Souls now until January 29th. Please donate your gently used shoes of any kind that you no longer need, the shoes will be distributed in 127 countries around the world.
- Phi Beta Sigma Youth Workshop for Male High School Students: "The BluPrint for Success: Bringing Out the Professional in You!" will be held on Thursday, Feb. 1st at the East Lansing Hannah Community Center. Permission slips can be acquired from Matt Guthrie, Lindsay Huddleston, Jane Phillips, Pam Williams or the Main Office.
- Tri District Band Concert is February 4 from 2:30-5:00 pm at Haslett High School

- MSBOA District Jazz Festival is February 6 at Mason High School
- Talk Early, Talk Often workshop on February 7 at 6:30pm, CMS PE/Health Classroom
- Our Town - Presented by Okemos High School Theatre on February 8-10 at 7:00 pm and February 11 at 2:30pm, OHS auditorium
- Orchestra Childrens Concert on February 15 during FLEX
- The Early College at LCC, open to all, students are only eligible to apply during their sophomore year. More information: www.lcc.edu/earlycollege - March 1 6pm @OHS Kiva
- Yearbook applications are available now (Mrs. Harrod in D131 or D133), applications are due Friday, February 9, Yearbook Senior Ads are due Monday, March 12 @midnight, Yearbook Sale Deadline is Monday, May 21.

Chippewa – Karen Shapiro and Shruti Gross

- The last Chippewa Parent Group meeting was on 1/19. Mrs. Noble discussed the ideas for the upcoming Open House in August and we are awaiting results of the Panera and Old Town Shop for Schools fundraisers.
- The winter party in December was a success.
- Schuler Book Days will take place March 18-24.
- Homework Club: students work together with some help from our high school volunteers from 2:45 to 3:30 in the large group room on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, except early release days.
- Rehearsals for Shrek Jr. are ongoing, the musical will be performed 2/23 and 2/24 at 7pm in the Chippewa auditorium.
- The next Chippewa Parent Group Meeting is 2/22 at 6pm. Following, special speaker Josh Smith will be speaking about suicide prevention.
- Donations at the Super Wild Wings Bowl 5K, organized by PlayMakers on February 4th, will benefit the Chippewa and Kinawa Chieftain Challenge. The race starts and ends at the parking lot of Chippewa Middle school and is open to participants of all ages.

Kinawa – Andi Pincheira and Sarah Finley

- Winter Strings Concerts were on Jan 17 & 18.
- Kinawa's Got Talent Showcase is coming up on February 9th. This is a variety show to give Kinawa kids an opportunity to showcase their talents and have a fun night out with friends and family. This event will be held on February 9, 2018 from 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm.
- Talk Early and Talk Often® workshop, a nationally recognized workshop aimed at helping parents talk with their children about abstinence and sexuality, will be held on Feb 7, 2018 from 6:30-8:30pm at Chippewa Middle School. The workshop helps parents recognize and use opportunities to open the door for conversation, listen and respond with greater confidence and skill and to feel comfortable seeking outside sources of information. Registration at www.okemosonline.com.
- Food 4 Friends are still collecting non perishable food items during three lunch periods to help fill the school's pantry shelves. Snacks can be dropped off in front of the main office in the box labeled, "Food 4 Friends" or in Mr. Turner's classroom. If you would prefer to make a monetary donation, checks can be made out to Kinawa 5/6 School or cash can be delivered to the office in an envelope with your name on it. Please contact Justin Turner (517-706-4716) with any questions. Also, An Amazon Link for Food 4 Friends has been created if you are interested in supporting: <http://a.co/4aNqzhO>
- 5th Grade Vocal and 6th Grade Choir have begun selling tickets for the Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser which will be held on March 9th at the Okemos High School from 4:30-7:30pm.
- Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search (NUMATS) for qualified 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students continues until February 6, 2018 for the March 10, 2018 SAT. More

information at www.td.northwestern.edu/numats or contact Deb Hamilton, District Coordinator of Gifted Education, at (517) 706-5011 or e-mail at deb.hamilton@okemosk12.net.

Cornell – Sarah Allen and Melissa Cochran

- Technology Club is starting 2/7 and runs Wednesdays after school thru 5/9. Mrs Deladurantaye is the teacher advisor. Open for 3rd and 4h graders.
- Cornell's science fair is scheduled for 3/1.
- MSU Athletic Dept graciously donated free hockey tickets for Cornell students to the January 5th game vs. Ohio State.
- PTO meeting is Thursday 1/25 at 9am.
- Spring events are currently being planned, such as Mileage club, Garden Club, Global Cornell, Talent Show, etc!

OPM – Kristin Arnett, Heather Moeser, and Kally Etchebarne

- Re-Enrollment forms have been sent home to help determine available opening for student enrollment next year. This helps the office determine if there are siblings of current students planning to apply, as they will have priority admission assuming there is available space.
- Grandparents Tea (singing event) will be held Feb 14th in the gym at 9:15 and 2 pm
- ENROLLMENT INFORMATION for 2018-2019
 - Our enrollment will open at 8am on March 2nd and close at 3pm on March 16th. Applications will only be accepted during this time.
 - Tour Dates (All tours start in the Library at 10am)
 - Wed. Jan. 24
 - Wed. Jan 31
 - Thurs. Feb. 8
 - Thurs Feb. 15
 - Thurs. Feb 22
 - Wed. Feb 28
 - Thurs. March 8
 - No registration is required to attend a tour. For more detailed information about the Enrollment process please see the Parent tab and click on Enrollment information

Bennett Woods – Anu Atre and Jayne Lock

- Little Caesar's fund raising going on. Orders due by Jan 22.
- Kindergarten to Wharton Center on Jan 26, 2nd grade to MSU recycling center on Jan 24.
- EDRU skating on Jan 26
- International Cafe and Movie Night on Feb 2 with dinner and Movie (Trolls).
- Popular Science Fair on Feb 22.
- Report cards go home on Jan 29.
- New PEERS club formed (see Special Education Report) and meets monthly.

Hiawatha – Joanna Wangerin, Cathy Heath, Jen Nanzer

- Alena Zachery-Ross, Superintendent attended the PTO meeting on Thursday, January 11th to discuss the timeline for the principal selection process. Feedback was solicited on desired characteristics of the new principal. The PTO is currently seeking three parent representatives to sit on the interview committee.
- Students were introduced to a new Hiawatha mascot Hero the Hawk (Name was voted on by the students). Hero was a great success and had fun meeting all of the students. He will be able to attend assemblies, help introduce safety procedures such as fire drills, encourage students with good behavior etc.

- January 26th the PTO will sponsor Entrepreneur Night and the International Tastes and Traditions potluck