

PARENT UPDATE

A Summary of a Recent Meeting of the District-Wide Parent Committee

February 11, 2020

Call to Order/Welcome

Meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. at Coulee Montessori/Northside Elementary.

Attendance

Central High School: Not represented
 LaCrossroads: Not represented
 Logan High School: Not represented
 Lincoln Middle School: Laura Eber, Laura Olson
 Logan Middle School: Not represented
 Longfellow Middle School: Lori Potkay
 LaCrosse Design Institute: Not represented
 SOTA II: Kyle Backstrand
 Coulee Montessori Elementary: Not represented
 Coulee Montessori Adolescent: Nathan Warnberg
 Emerson: Jeremiah Galván
 Northside Elementary: David Delimat
 Hamilton: Not represented
 Hintgen: Not represented
 North Woods International: Not represented
 Southern Bluffs: Alicia Place
 SOTA I: Dawn Wacek
 Spence: Not represented
 State Road: Jed Olson

Summit: Barbara Jo Wolff
 Members at Large: Not represented
 BOE Liaison: Not represented
 LEA Liaison: Not represented
 Superintendent:
 Randy Nelson
 Executive Director of Business Services:
 Patty Sprang
 Associate Superintendent/Instruction:
 Troy Harcey
 Director of Elementary Education:
 Shelley Shirel
 Director of Secondary Education:
 Stacey Everson
 La Crosse Public Education Foundation:
 David Stoeffler
 Visitors: Curt Teff, Josh Shively, Alison Prohn

School Showcase, Coulee Montessori: Josh Shively, Laura Huber and Alison Prohn highlighted the unique philosophy of Montessori education and addressed some common misconceptions.

- Although there is an emphasis on students regulating their own learning there is also plenty of guidance and modeling provided
- Montessori students do not follow a traditional curriculum, much more focus on developing social and emotional skills and respectful relationships, and still score just as well (and often better) than their traditionally educated peers
- Coulee Montessori (4k through 5th grade) and Coulee Montessori Adolescent Program (CMAP, 6-8th grade) are not private schools they are charter schools, i.e. there is no tuition
- Montessori classrooms have mixed grades to which helps students develop leadership and compassion: Children's House – 4k and Kindergarten, E1 – 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders, E2 – 4th and 5th graders, CMAP – 6th, 7th and 8th graders
- Charter school students, in general, can still participate in sports and other extracurricular activities.
- Montessori teachers have all of the training of a typical elementary teacher and get additional Montessori training.
- Transition from Montessori to non-Montessori classroom typically goes very well. They tend to have a better sense of regulation and think more abstractly than their non-Montessori peers

Code of Rights and Responsibilities: Discussion led by Curt Teff and Alicia Place, Director of community services

- Seeking feedback about updated code of Rights and Responsibilities. The document discussed is not the entire Policy but a plain-language summary that is more accessible to parents,

students, teachers and staff: <https://www.lacrosseschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-20-Code-of-Rights-and-Responsibilities-7.9.19.pdf>

- Getting feedback from several groups within the community.
- No mention of learning disabilities in the beginning of the document, those are included near the end of the document.
- Can the interscholastic athlete section be more inclusive, i.e. include quiz bowl, band, academic decathlon, FBLA, etc.? Or make it clear that this applies to all students who are representing the district?
- Under parents Rights and Responsibilities there is a feeling that parents are not informed when there is a potentially traumatic incident in the classroom. Parents should have a right to know if their child has been potentially traumatized so that the parent can help the child through the situation.
- Can we include language about it being a right for students to have social/emotional support and access to counseling (or other resources) when there is that need. Or include something about a right to mental health and wellness?
- Can we make it a right for students to know that they have access to mental health and wellness resources and their responsibility to seek it out?
- Rights – ‘Be treated courteously, fairly and respectfully by other students and school staff.’ This seems a little sterile, can we include something about respecting each other as a ‘whole person’?
- Can we include something about it being a right that staff can use their best professional judgement?
- Can we include something about it being a right that school is a ‘healthy’ place to be, that is can they be reasonable sure that there are not going to be sick children at school? Maybe this is part of a parents responsibility too? If this is added, then the district should NOT punish parents/families for keeping their children home sick.
- Can we move the information about bullying more towards the front of this document?
- Has there been thought about creating other documents for parents that give them ways language to talk about student rights and responsibilities since the way you talk about these with a 1st grader is very different than how you talk about them with a junior in high school?

Expulsion Policy: Discussion led by Curt Teff

- The district is reviewing their expulsion process. The district has been working really hard to not expel students because in Wisconsin that basically means the child cannot get an education. No expulsions in about 10 years.
- The search and seizure process is being looked at. Making sure active searches are performed by an appropriately gendered person.
- Looking at active and passive searches.
- Data indicates males and students of color are overrepresented in disciplinary actions. In particular, students of color are disciplined more often for subjective types of behavior (disrespect, disruption, etc.).

Dress and Grooming Policy (4430.1): Discussion led by Curt Teff

- This is for secondary schools.
- Most dress codes target female clothing choices, up to 70%.
- There are concerns, from students in LSD, of inconsistent enforcement.
- Goal is to not target specific populations with the code and to not take-away learning time from students.
- Feedback has ranged from ‘no dress code’ to ‘wear uniforms’ and everywhere in between.
- ‘Students, staff and guests wear clothing in a way that does not expose any undergarments including underwear and bras (waistband and bra straps excluded) and prevents direct skin exposure on school furniture (chairs, benches, auditorium seats, etc.). Lengthy discussion on skin exposure and language that could be used in Policy. Example given: The ‘breast, chest and buttocks’ language was used to discriminate against a minority swimmer in Alaska: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/female-swimmer-s-disqualified-over-her-bathing-suit-critics-cite-n1051951>
- This language seems to be about short shorts and skirts and specifically targeted at females.
- The word ‘grooming’ has been used in the past to target minority groups whose cultural grooming practices differ from the dominant, white American culture.

- A focus on 'grooming' and 'hygiene' could target students who lack access to resources which is kind of a punishment for being poor.
- It was noted that 'neutral in fragrance to others' was put in because middle and high school males would spray so much 'Axe body spray' on them that it became a distraction.
- There was discussion about 'concealing identity within the school' and exactly what it means. Does it mean no hats and no hoods? There is going to be more discussion about this. One reason for this policy is a school safety issue. Basically, faculty and staff need to be able to identify students when they are in school.

No Small Matter documentary screening: <https://www.nosmallmatter.com/about-the-film>

- Main take-away: investing resources in early childhood education is one of the most fiscally responsible things we can do as a country. It has been supported by decades worth of research. However, early child-hood educators are still notoriously underpaid for some of the most important work.
- Despite 82% of Republicans, 87% of independents and 97% of Democrats supporting more funding for early childhood education, policy makers are not responding.

Joys/Concerns - None

Future Agenda Items

- International Baccalaureate
- Five Year School Improvement Planning (each meeting)
- Equity (October-May agendas)
- Board Linkage
- Trauma-Informed (Resilience)
- Addressing Disruptive Behaviors
- Sports/Extra-Curricular Participation
- Culturally Responsive Practices
- Sustainability Practices
- Wellness Policy (May)
- Curriculum and Instruction Updates (elementary, middle, and secondary)
- School Safety
- Grant, New Systems
- High Schools (backpacks, etc.)
- PTO Best Practices/Fundraising
- One-to-One Devices
- Year-Round School Update
- AVID Update
- Coherent Governance
- Educator Effectiveness
- Academic Career Pathways
- RTI - Early intervention
- Budget updates; legislative updates; innovative programs, clubs, projects in district

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

NEXT MEETING IS TUESDAY, MARCH 10th @ HAMILTON/SOTA I ELEMENTARY