

Middle School CAT Team Meeting Minutes for December 16, 2009

Apologies: Clinton Weening

General Announcements:

- A) Mr. Popinchalk distributed the minutes from last month's meeting for review: accepted as read.
- B) Mr. Popinchalk shared that in his discussions with the Grade Seven team about the previously raised CAT parent perceptions that Seventh Grade is the most challenging Middle School grade; the team responded that it is developmentally to be expected.
- C) A parent suggested that seventh grade teachers should spend more time teaching students how to organize and plan better because even with advanced notice about tests and projects, most students wait until the last minute. Another parent stated that some kids are simply organizationally challenged and an after-school session that focuses solely on organization might be considered. Mr. Popinchalk reminded everyone that the supervised homework help after school is geared toward whatever tasks kids need help with – including organization. CAT parents feel kids don't recognize their disorganization; therefore, they do not know how to seek help to get organized. A CAT teacher suggested that advisory classes could be opportunities for teaching organizational skills and strategies.
- D) Mr. Popinchalk asked CAT team members to encourage parents to attend the PTO sponsored workshops/presentations by Dr. Michael Thompson's in January. The schedule during the visit was shared with CAT members.

Miscellaneous Updates:

- A) Mr. Popinchalk informed the CAT team of the circumstances regarding a recent incident involving sixth graders who were suspended from school.
- B) Mr. Popinchalk shared that as a follow-up to the concerns shared by CAT members last month, he delivered a strong "it's not a joke" message to the entire Middle School student body in reference to offensive statements and actions.
- C) Killer statements – is another topic that is used to refer to statements that "kill" conversations.
- D) International Relations and Cultural Sensitivity comment from CAT parent: We live in a dynamic and diverse community – there will be times when there is tension, and as long as we discuss/talk about issues openly, the tension can be controlled; however, we need a common language and commitment across the school; hopefully the Middle School will take the lead and engage everyone.
- E) Mr. Popinchalk shared that he has also recently spoken to the entire Grade 8 student body regarding social networking. Parents need to take responsibility for monitoring and controlling this at home.
- F) Internet/technology awareness is critical – misuse affects the safety, health, and welfare of the entire community.
- G) Bullying occurs in covert ways – (parent concern)
- H) Parent shared that she feels the concern and commitment regarding cultural sensitivity, bullying, etc. is not universal across all three divisions; feels the Superintendent needs to become more involved with this initiative.
- I) Discussion ensued about American school versus international school: What are we? We are an international student body and community utilizing an American curriculum.
- J) Caregiver/Caretaker dimension of the learning outcomes process – How are we going to assess if our students are demonstrating global citizenship? Mr. Popinchalk shared that this is a work in process, and he is hopeful that we can translate our dialogue into actions.
- K) Parent Interactive Technology Forum: About 60 parents turned out. CAT parent commented that the same group of parents usually shows up at such events. Discussion ensued about how to ignite greater interest amongst the Egyptian parent community. Mr. Popinchalk suggested that each CAT member plan to invite an Egyptian parent to a future CAT meeting in 2010.

Educational Continuity:

- A) If all goes as planned, 70 days remain before the new building is completed.
- B) Mr. Popinchalk advises all to avoid campus during break if possible due to the work schedule.
- C) Mr. Popinchalk feels there has been consistent cooperation with regard to all construction issues that have developed to date.

World Languages:

- A) Proposed document will go to the Education Committee – copy of Monica’s statement is included – the proposal is the direct result of the language audits. Mr. Popinchalk will continue to advise that all sixth graders take a World Language, but there will always be exceptions for various reasons (ESL, LSP, band).
- B) The ultimate hope is that following the sixth grade year students will want to continue the language.
- C) 80% of CAC students are studying a world language – close to 90% of MS students are currently enrolled in a World Language.
- D) Mr. Popinchalk stated that parents will always have the right to opt out of a foreign language, but not until there have been discussions (i.e. counseling) about the reasons for their decision.
- E) MS Trimester system will be retained next year.

New Updates:

- A) Sixth grade “exploratory wheel” – Mr. Ferguson announced that we are looking at replacing the current sixth grade Egyptian Culture exploratory “taster” with drama. Drama would become a “six-week-taster” for all students with the focus on basic drama skills – but not a performance-based class.
- B) Planning and preparation for August has already started; in anticipation of the growing number of World Language (WL) classes, more WL faculty positions will be needed. Mr. Popinchalk shared the administration’s three priorities in terms of the current staffing plans to expand: 1) World Languages, 2) Learning Support Services, and 3) Technology Integration.
- C) Mr. Popinchalk shared the Middle School vision to try to build teams within each grade level team with the specific aim of assigning 3-4 teachers to teach/share same group of students. Not yet certain as to how practical it will be with Master Schedule, but the goal is to give it a try.
- D) Mr. Popinchalk had invited parents to comment on the recent Virtual School experience via the Daily Bulletin; in response, he received two pages of comments, 90% were positive and were shared for further reaction and discussion.

Grade and Task Force Committee:

- A) Mr. Ferguson shared that we are changing the way we assess and report on children – moving away from reporting on what they are or aren’t doing (i.e. homework completion), to what they are learning—what they are achieving.
- B) The Middle School started this journey a year ago – a group of Middle School teachers attended NESAs in Cairo to hear Ken O’Connor, an expert in the field of Standards Based learning, who spoke about grading and reporting. We clearly need to look at achievement of standards as a separate entity from behaviors.
- C) We are currently operating with a standards based curriculum framework; we need to align our assessment and reporting practices accordingly.
- D) The other piece to the assessment puzzle is that the fifth round of MAP testing will finish in January. Subsequently, we will analyze the data to see where students are meeting the standards and where they aren’t – thereby using the MAPS testing to help steer us the way forward with our teaching.

Mid-Year Review of Middle School CAT Meetings:

- A) Mr. Popinchalk looks forward to these meetings – thanks parents for opening their homes – would like to continue in the same vein – we’re engaged on important topics for the Middle School and CAC!
- B) CAT members thanked Zeina Darouni for hosting the meeting in her home and her gracious hospitality and delicious treats during this month’s meeting.
- C) Date of Next Meeting: January 20, 2010 – Middle School Counseling Conference Room.

Middle School CAT Team Meeting Agenda – January 20, 2010

- A) Apologies - Introductions - Approval of Minutes - Matters Arising
- B) CAC Board Election Process – Mary Marlowe
- C) Dr. Michael Thompson – Follow Up Activities
- D) Parent Communication - Challenges
- E) Educational Continuity – Future Transition Process
- F) Health and Safety Committee Update
- G) PTO Funding Requests
- H) Student Led Conferences
- I) Cultural Sensitivity and International Relations - Update
- J) Any Other Business

The Middle School Principal introduced the “Big Four” which were a focus for the new Superintendent of CAC, Dr. Rob Mockrish:

- **Educational Continuity: Completion of the Phase One Project**
- **Learning Support and Multiple Intelligences**
- **Value Added Instruction**
- **International Relations and Embracing Cultural Diversity**

As we review whether and how we are achieving our 2008-2009 professional goals, we have some highlights to share. First are excerpts from our World Language External Audit. Supplementing commendations of CAC's range of courses, resources, and the commitment of individual faculty members, some recommendations include: 1) Provide designated courses for Grade 6 students who have already begun a language. 2) In the Middle School, require a language of all students every year. 3) Review the efficacy of multi-level courses. 4) Ensure school wide curricular coherence in terms of delivery and assessment with an emphasis on thematic units. As you can imagine, staffing, budgetary, and scheduling issues dictate that not all recommendations can be accommodated immediately. Regardless, you will definitely see some modifications during the next school year, particularly in the Middle School. **Monica Greeley - CAC Cairo Glyphics - February 2009**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2010 at 6:00 Road 214 - House 5 - Apartment 4