

Middle School CAT Team Meeting Minutes - November 18, 2009

A) Apologies - Introductions - Approval of Minutes - Matters Arising

- CAT parent members introduced “invited guests” at the meeting. Michael asked everyone to look over the minutes and they were approved as read.

B) H1N1 / Update / Response to Town Hall Meetings

- Michael shared a summary of current discussions, but added that there isn’t anything new to report since Dr. Mockrish’s letter that went out yesterday. He stated that the school is in daily contact with the ministers about the situation.
- Michael then invited Viveka to convey a summary of the parental concerns reported to her following the Town Hall meeting; following a few comments, Viveka added that since Dr. Mockrish’s parent letter was sent yesterday, she has received more positive feedback from parents giving her the impression that the majority of those concerns have been subsequently allayed.
- Andy added in his view Middle School teachers have remained focused on their teaching, and the overall emphasis continues to be on student learning.
- Michael answered CAT parent members’ questions about the reasons school was closed last time, and why our school remains open when other schools are closed now.

C) Virtual School Updates and Planning Process

- Michael introduced Steve Roberts to the CAT team. Steve shared that the parent forum about virtual school plans that took place this afternoon went well, and that there will be another one scheduled based upon parent suggestions for topics.
- Michael addressed the issue about student support groups during a school closure and informed parents that specific information about family demographics is not open to the public domain.
- Discussion ensued about possible ways to create student-teacher support groups in the event of a school closure. Parent presented a few ideas, but Michael cautioned about the risks involved when attention is drawn to large groups of people seen being transported from the school gates (this is the reason that buses would not be a viable option for transportation).
- Michael reminded the group that significant consideration must be given to the health risks of gathering in groups if the intent behind a potential school closing is to minimize the risk of spreading illness.
- Parent brought up concern about inconsistent use of POLAR – some teachers update daily, while others update occasionally (mid-trimester, for example).
- Michael clarified that the current expectation is that teachers post on POLAR twice per trimester – once at the progress report interval and again at the end of trimester reporting period (report cards).

C) Educational Continuity – Phase One Dust and Noise

- Michael informed the group that the building completion is 100 days away.
- Parents are cautioned that there are no guarantees about the dust or air quality after 4 pm.
- Today’s noise level was unusual.
- Parent asked if air purifiers might be placed in classrooms. Michael responded that this idea was discussed before the construction project started, but there was not enough evidence to demonstrate that this would make a difference in terms of air quality in classrooms.
- Michael stated that we continue to practice “emergency drills” as per usual protocol for such.

D) Homework Pressures

- Parents feel there is too much homework; specifically that students are spending too many hours on homework on a daily basis.
- Some parents are reporting 3.5-4 hours of homework each night.
- Another parent said that over the years, she feels seventh grade is the hardest.
- Andy encouraged parents to ask their children when the homework is due – there is a huge difference between daily HW assignments versus assignments that are given well in advance of the due dates, which some students put off until the night before, creating the image of excessive “daily” homework.
- Andy said that in general teachers do well to avoid scheduling multiple test/assessments all on same day.

E) Michael shared that the entire school viewed “Garbage Dreams” on Monday – a “must see” production; we are fortunate to have seen it in advance of the scheduled PBS programming this winter.

F) PRIME Trip Feedback

Michael called for three positive parent comments:

- 1) Kids were forced to meet new students.
- 2) Sense of independence – they were trusted to walk in groups.
- 3) Smooth departure from CAC gate for seventh grade.
- 4) Nurse Claire was fantastic.

Michael opened the floor to parental concerns:

- Grade 7 parents were unhappy with the hotel. It was reported that this was a major improvement over the camping conditions in place the year before and that the area was not a resort but on the edge of a protected area.
- Kids reported that quality of the food was “poor”.
- Overall the trips were appreciated for their organization and commitment to health and safety.

G) Arena Style Conferences Feedback

- By all accounts, conferences were smooth and parents generally satisfied with both the format and opportunity to meet with teachers.

H) Name Calling

- Issue of cultural sensitivity and school-wide effectiveness to teach values of respect and tolerance was raised and discussed. It was shared by CAT members that, despite efforts to raise students’ sensitivity and awareness on this issue, the school administration needs to continue to monitor this closely and remain vigilant in confronting issues of racism and discrimination. Michael assured the group that Middle School efforts would continue and the concern would be presented to the entire CAC Leadership team.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2009 and will be held at the home of Zeina Darouni

Middle School CAT Team Meeting Agenda – December 16, 2009

A) Approval of Minutes - Matters Arising

B) Virtual School Reflection / Round Two

C) Educational Continuity

D) Dr. Michael Thompson Visit/Schedule – January 2010

E) World Language Programming and Elective Options

F) Mid-Year Review/Updates and Goal Setting

G) Any Other Buisness

The Middle School CAT Team topics from the 2008-09 academic year:

- The Profile of World Languages in the Middle School
- Educational Continuity (CAC Campus Master Plan)
- Future Direction of PRIME trips
- Teaching and Learning – *Examples: Student Grading and Reporting, MAP Test Data*
- ‘No Cuts’ Sports Program
- Implementation of the Middle School Core Values: “Walking the Talk”
or what does it look like to students, parents, and faculty?
- Learning Support/Differentiated Instruction and support for the diverse range of students’ needs, family situations, cognitive abilities (low and high),

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**

It was agreed that all topics were relevant at the Middle School level and many positive developments were already underway. It was agreed that future agenda items would be in line with the “Big Four” and would include any follow up on matters from the previous school year.

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