

Begich Middle School
UAA ED 555: Building a School Community, fifth session
Thursday, February 8, 2007, 4:00-6:00 p.m.
Chester Valley Elementary School Library

Thanks to Sharon Mitchell, Chester Valley principal, and her staff for allowing us to meet in their school. For information about the school, please see the Chester Valley report card in your folder with school goals, vital statistics and assessment data.

1. Introductions and announcements (4:00-4:15 p.m.)*
2. Housekeeping; staffing and facility update (4:15-4:30 p.m.)
3. Working Committee meetings for activities, positive school climate and family involvement, scheduling nuts and bolts, safety and decorum, and technology (4:30-5:15 p.m.)
4. Reports from committees about status of their committee work. One representative of each committee will report on their discussions, tentative decisions, concerns, good ideas, dilemmas, and so on. This would also be a time for staff to ask questions and offer ideas. (5:15-6:00 p.m.)
5. Other/Miscellaneous

Any snack food would be appreciated.
Individual first time and retake photos taken for webpage.

*All times are approximate.

Begich Middle School
UAA ED 555: Building a School Community class community meeting
Notes from February 8, 2007 class at
Chester Valley Elementary School

1. Introduction and announcements

After an introduction of new staff members and guests, Jan Davis, Chester Valley PTA officer and Sharon Mitchell, principal of Chester Valley, welcomed us and provided a description of the school. A copy of the Chester Valley School Report Card was also included in each staff folder.

Chester Valley Elementary School currently has 285 students in grades K-6. The school's population is composed of long-time Chester Valley/Muldoon families who remain committed and involved even after their students move on to middle and high school. The school is characterized by a talented and strong teaching staff and PTA members who are active in promoting student recognition programs and providing family evenings such as the Halloween carnival. The school has worked for eight years to seek bond passage for school renovation. Chester Valley has been successful at achieving Adequate Yearly Progress as measured by the No Child Lefty Behind assessments. They continue to work on strengthening the reading and math skills for all students.

2. Working Committee updates

The five working committees met during this class meeting and prepared preliminary reports about items of agreement and areas of concern that need further study and discussion.

TECHNOLOGY

This committee wants to focus on basic technology training for all staff so that the technology is used fully and safely. There will be in service trainings to help staff learn all of our technology (e.g., Smart Boards, telephone voice mail message, computer lab sign up procedures, use of portable wireless carts and so on). Focus will be on ensuring that equipment is ready for the next teacher to use. Staff will model technology use for students. Goals for technology education, grades 6-8, will be the next focus.

SAFETY AND DECORUM

Prior to opening, we will have our own Emergency Plan, based on the district template, and will fine tune the flip chart for decorum that will be

placed in all classrooms. All agree we need a school-wide discipline plan or "umbrella" policy that is fair and easy to use, apply, and follow. The school wide plan must fit with individual classroom procedures. There will be a staff survey to find out individual ideas.

We need further discussion about the Make Your Day program, which the committee believes is a good "umbrella." Staff can look at the website www.makeyerd.com. Also, we need to discuss a school uniform/dress code that is "casual" and professional/appropriate.

ACTIVITIES

Of the staff surveys received, 99% of the staff want to be a sponsor or coach of an activity. The committee agreed on the following items: school dances sponsored once a quarter, spirit weeks at the beginning and end of the school year, pep assemblies once a quarter that recognize athletics and other activity involvement, and staff activities to have fun together. All agreed we want every student to be involved in one activity and connected to an adult.

We need more discussion on the idea of advisory/activity periods. We would like to discuss trying Intensives.

POSITIVE CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The committee agreed that we need a climate that welcomes and recognizes all students. We need school traditions.

Some ideas for these areas include: recognition of student and staff birthdays with photos and cards, photos of staff labeled and posted, an introductory DVD about the school for new families to use at school or home, a school area with a computer that parents can use for email, checking grades, learning about the school while waiting or visiting, lots of photos of students throughout the building, student guides or buddies for new and ESL monolingual students, everyone focused on greeting and welcoming people, postcards sent to new families to welcome them, recognition of all achievements for students and staff, spirit days on Friday, school color days on Friday, team names that are related to a school-wide theme and inviting seniors from Chester Valley residence to use our facility for morning walks and greet the students as they arrive.

SCHEDULING

The committee agreed that we need to know more about or demographics and needs of our students before setting up our schedule. We want to have a flexible schedule that would allow for project-based activities. Some

teachers desire the longer periods (e.g., science, art, PE) while others might have difficulty with the long period or want to see the students every day for continuity (e.g., math, band, world language). Some thought we should try a three day/week blocked schedule with Monday and Friday having the traditional seven period day. We agreed that some teachers need training for teaching 45 minute periods as well as 90 minute periods depending on their experience and current assignment. Some textbooks are oriented to 30 minute lessons. There are some issues with blocking (e.g., effects of poor attendance, monolingual students coming third hour from KCC Newcomer program and so on).

We agreed with the efficacy of an advisory period.

Some thought we could build a schedule that allowed teams to do their own blocking as long as they served all their students. We want to prepare our students for the rolling block schedule they will have at Bartlett. Our first year schedule should be simple since everything will be new.

We need to look at samples and have more discussion about schedules. There will be a staff survey distributed via mail.

We will use the remaining five classes for an in-depth study of one topic. At our February 20 meeting, we will spend the entire class period and discussion on the topic of ACTIVITIES. We will divide into groups with one member of the activity working committee serving as group leader. We will discuss the "must have's" and best practices that we want to see for Begich Middle School and also discuss the issues and concerns for this topic. The goal is to offer a format so that all staff members can add their input for each of the five topics. We all benefit from the group discussion based on our individual ideas, talents, and enthusiasm.

The March 6 meeting will have the same format with the focus on positive climate and community involvement.

All during these discussions any mission/vision statement that is made will be compiled for our May retreat meeting. At that time, we will take all the statements that have been consistently made and strongly supported to identify our vision, compose our mission statement, and list our guiding principles.

Please feel free to share any questions or concerns you have about the above. Thank you for reading this!