

Minutes: Middle School PAC meeting, 3/10/10

In attendance:

Colburn Shindell

A.J. Long

Ruth Adams

Lys Shannard

Ilana Rugg

Ann Keniston

Linda Curcio-Nagy

1. Survey and Future Goals of the PAC

Colburn suggested that we consider devising a survey for parents to help determine several things. One question has to do with the function of the PAC itself; we haven't had a lot of discussion topics raised by parents this year, perhaps because many parents are talking with Colburn individually; a survey might help us determine our mission as the PAC and MS evolve. This survey might include questions about how the school is doing in general and include open ended questions about parent concerns. Another possibility would be to consider a broader survey about how well the middle school is meeting its goals. This survey could be based on the mission statement, asking how well the school is fulfilling the different aspects of its mission. We discussed the different goals of the survey/surveys, and raised concerns about getting a good response to the survey, as well as hearing from a representative sample of parents. Incentives including parent volunteer credit for completing surveys were suggested

We also discussed more generally the function of the PAC for next year and beyond. One idea was for the PAC to work in a more focused way on some of the issues we've raised this year, including the transition from middle to high school and the issue of student retention. According to this model, the PAC could make suggestions to the administration about particular issues and/or produce documents helpful to the school; however this is somewhat different from the original PAC mission to provide a liaison between parents and the administration. Among possible issues the PAC could address, which we've discussed in earlier meetings, are: better marketing of the middle school; inclusion of student and parent "testimonials" in publicity material and on the web page; scheduling information sessions about the high school earlier; getting clearer information from parents and students about why some students leave after 8th grade. Thus, two of the central issues the PAC could work on in the future might include (1) help with marketing and (2) help with retention. Some PAC members felt that families leave the school because of financial pressures, wishes for organized sports, and/or wishes for a bigger or more "conventional" high school experience. These are issues that it may not be necessary/possible for SRS to address or correct.

Colburn announced that he is talking with faculty about the "project-based learning" model. He cautioned that there are good and bad designs for project-based learning and that this model isn't appropriate for all lessons, but many faculty members are interested

in integrating this model into their teaching. He is working with them individually on this mode of teaching.

A.J. Long gave a presentation about the new “Summer at the Ridge” program, which will run for 3 weeks in July, allowing for different combinations of half- and full-day programs, including before- and aftercare at reasonable prices and an afternoon camp option. Some courses run for a single week; others run for 2 or all 3. Courses will be taught by SRS faculty, other instructors, and returning alumni. Current upper school students can earn volunteer hours helping with the before- and aftercare. Registration begins on 3/22 with an in-person registration day. The full brochure is available on the SRS web site.

The PAC will have one more formal meeting in April; our final meeting in May will be more social. Please forward discussion topics and/or concerns to your PAC representatives.