

Parent Communications  
October 5, 2016

The second Parent Communications meeting for the 2016-2017 school year was held on October 5, 2016, with 37 parent representatives and ambassadors present. Dr. Worthington, Director of Schools, welcomed the group.

Anita Smith, Title I Consulting teacher, was invited to speak about the CMCSS Learning Centers and the importance of connecting parents and schools to help support their kids. Ms. Smith commented there may be some misconception regarding the Learning Center in that the program in the past was more focused on targeting only those students academically challenged. Ms. Smith stated the program can be very beneficial in raising overall achievement levels not only those struggling students. Any child can benefit through these funds and is free to Title I, Pre-K, Headstart, and ESL families. CMCSS has 19 elementary schools that qualify for this program which primarily focuses on involving parents in the education of their children. The Learning Centers provide monthly workshops on topics such as solving homework problems, helping students with reading and math, attention deficit disorders; computer lab for use by parents and students with internet access / word processing; and library access for parents and students which includes educational games, parent reference materials, and audio books. Learning Center locations: 343 Pageant Lane (931-648-5653) and 800 Lafayette Road (931-647-2778) and Ms. Smith asked the Parent Communications group to pass along this information to other parents. <http://www.cmcss.net/Schools/schoolwebsites/parent.aspx?locid=LC>

Dr. Worthington congratulated Mr. Stanley Woodall, parent ambassador from Sango Elementary, for being named the Mid-Cumberland Tennessee School Board Association Volunteer of the Year. Mr. Woodall will be competing against all other volunteers across the state of Tennessee.

Elise Shelton, Chief Communications Officer, addressed the group concerning the importance of Federal forms and Impact Aid. CMCSS will be sending these forms home with students on Monday, October 17. Federal Impact Aid is designed to assist local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt Federal property (such as Fort Campbell, government buildings, TVA steam plants, subsidized housing, etc.). Its intent is to help offset the lost property taxes that would have been collected if businesses or privately owned residences were located there instead. Your support in returning these forms is appreciated.

Ms. Shelton spoke to the group regarding School Messenger and announced the roll-out would be going out this week with a link provided allowing parents to select a preference on how to receive general messages from the district. For emergency situations, parents will continue to be notified using all contact information on file but for general messages parents can now decide whether it be a phone call, a text, an email, etc. versus messages going to all of these.

Dr. Kimi Sucharski, Instruction Accountability Coordinator, shared a presentation on "Preparing for a New Assessment". Dr. Kimi gave a visual comparison of standards shifts going on in 2014-15 and 2015-16 and what to expect in 2016-17. The Tennessee Diploma Project was being used in 2014-15 for all subjects and Common Core was starting to come around and in 2015-16 the transition continued with TN state standards. This year (2016-17) we are doing TN Education standards in all content areas and the test is called the TNReady. TCAP is the name of the assessment system for the state of Tennessee.

Tested subjects 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 2016-17 are Math (3 sections multiple formats), English Language Arts (4 sections includes writing/multiple choice), Social Studies (1 section and will be field tested with no results), and Science (2 sections all multiple choice). Tests will be administered via paper/pencil.

Tested subjects in high school 2016-17 are Algebra I, II, Geometry (3 sections multiple formats), English I, II, III (4 sections includes writing/multiple choice), US History (3 sections includes writing/multiple choice), and Biology, Chemistry (1 section multiple choice). Again, tests will be administered paper/pencil in our district although some districts in the state may choose online testing. In addition, some districts may select to do testing in K, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, but CMCSS is not.

As a point of reference, parents can visit the CMCSS assessment webpage and can see exactly how their children are being assessed (updates monthly). Also remember, last year there were two parts for testing – one in February and another in the spring. This no longer exists as testing will only be at one point. TCAP TN Ready Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades and HS (all subjects) will be administered April 17 – May 5, 2017.

ELA average reduction of testing time is 95 minutes and Math average reduction is 25 minutes. Online assessment will be phased in over 3 years. Test format and item types will remain the same. There is not an opt-out option for testing permitted in accordance with TN state law.

Test scores are to be included as part of the second semester grade. For grades 3 – 8, that will be 15%. For high school, it is 25%. The state must provide the results to districts 5 instructional days before school ends. If the information is not received from the state, then test scores are not included in second semester grades, however, there is no penalty to students.

There was discussion regarding stress for the students and teachers during this testing period. Dr. Sucharski said the district is working with teachers and practicing strategies to help students cope with pressure of the assessments. She stated the goal is that we work with students all along to understand the purpose of these tests and how the results are actually treated. Students are more accepting of what they understand. The Communications group will be working on a video to illustrate ways to assist students in this regard. The testing is really an opportunity for them to share what they know, is one event – one point in time, and these scores are not considered a pass/fail.

Dr. Bryan Johnson, Chief Academic Officer, provided information on digital blended learning. Implementation of digital blended learning has begun and parents have more than likely seen an influx of technology which students are using and is available to them. Approximately 20,000 new devices and about 14,000 additional devices have been secured and there is a lot more technology in schools. There will be a video shared explaining the process for implementation of these electronic devices in schools. When our IT department received the devices, they pulled back all others from schools and rebalanced to make sure that all schools had the appropriate amount based on enrollment. As our student numbers have grown, they have even more leveling and balancing to do. We are trying hard to ensure that students in grades 3 -5 and through high school have access to some type of electronic device. Tablets are being pushed down to K - 2. Key word is “digital” blended learning which is not intended to replace teachers teaching and students learning the basic foundational and problem-solving skills that drive students to the next level. Some textbooks in our classrooms are over 12 years old and no longer match the curriculum. We met with teachers last year to figure out what they are using and learned most of them were accessing technology for more current content. Based on their feedback, budgeted money was allocated to blend textbooks and technology. A decision was made to lease the devices rather than purchase because it proved to be less costly. Technology will allow teachers to shift and meet students exactly where they are academically. Teachers can also pinpoint exactly where learning deficits exist and will allow teachers to be more flexible and efficient in their lesson planning which will greatly improve instruction time.

When we look at the number of devices we have, we are very close to being one to one in particular the middle and high schools and hope to be 100% over the next few years. Academies are already there. This is a huge cultural shift and we need to make sure teachers, students and parents are comfortable with the digital blended concept. A Continuous Improvement Committee is in place and meets monthly to look at what’s next and how we are doing as a district.

Dr. Worthington asked the group to write down questions they may have on the topics discussed today and leave at their tables. From last month’s meeting, a question was asked regarding “the night before calls” (as it relates to calls from the district on weather/snow conditions or possible school interruption). Based on feedback, parents would prefer both “night before” and “morning of” calls but parents should be reminded to listen carefully to the entire message for instruction on pending or closing situations.

November 10 – Parent Group Meeting – Cyber Security. There will be a speaker from Homeland Security giving a presentation that is designed to inform educational leaders and parents about the risks that children face in the online environment. Principals will also be invited to attend.

Question of the Month: Are school resources aligned with the system’s mission and beliefs? (Resources include money, time, afterschool programs, personnel, etc.) If not, what are your concerns? If you have comments, please send those to Deb Cummings ([deborah.cummings@cmcss.net](mailto:deborah.cummings@cmcss.net)).