

**SDMC Meeting Agenda  
February 22, 2018**

**I. Review and approval of minutes from January.**

The minutes from the last meeting were read. C. Carfello motioned to approve the minutes. L. Baldwin seconded the motion

**II. New Business**

**1. Election of Co-chair**

Mr. Amerson asked for a co-chairperson and S. Williams volunteered. Mr. Amerson said that he has been writing the minutes and expressed the need to have every member read over them and give feedback. S. Williams volunteered to take the minutes.

**2. Discussion of safety plan**

**a. Review of the intruder drill**

The drill went well according to most teachers. There was a concern expressed that the teachers have to step into the hall in order to lock their doors. There was a discussion about a magnetic device that can slip over the latch in the doorframe that allows the door to open but still be locked. Mrs. Mayces looked it up on Amazon. The decision was made to buy one set to see how they work. In the meantime, Mr. Amerson wants teachers to keep their doors locked at all times. This will cause inconvenience.

H. Houston asked if the district meeting that Mr. Amerson attended today had any district-wide policy changes to address the new safety concerns. Mr. Amerson said that there are already HISD policies in place, but he had questions about some of them and would contact the risk management about his concerns with placing green and red cards that are to be slipped under each door (red indicating that you are missing students and green indicating that all of your class is in your room). The teachers agreed they don't like this part of the procedure.

Discussion was held on the issue of students talking about people shooting guns while at school. It was concluded that there is no way to stop children from talking, but assuring them that they are safe at Poe is important.

T. Hilton expressed concerns that the Florida intruder pulled the fire alarm. N. Stout said that if the announcement is made that there is an intruder in the building and a few minutes later a fire alarm goes off, chances are it is a false alarm. Mr. Amerson said he can start making an announcement after a fire drill begins stating it is a drill or it is real so teachers will know.

Mr. Amerson described his vision of having a second set of doors in the front hallway after visitors enter. This would stop visitors from walking past the front office when they enter the front door.

L. Wubbenhorst described what actions are already in place by PTO for ordering blinds for the windows. She explained that they will be purchasing blinds or shades for the windows on the doors.

The Safety Committee will continue to look over each procedure.

Discussion took place about whether or not to keep the two back exits locked at all times. During the school day they will remain unlocked; the back area of the school is enclosed within the fence and there are too many students needing to come in to restrooms, library, nurse, etc.

**b. Review of rainy day dismissal**

We have safety measures in place that are not practiced during raining day dismissal. Tracy Hilton suggested looking at the dismissal procedure that River Oaks has in place. Discussion was held on having parents wait in the car line on rainy days, instead of coming into the building. Mr. Amerson asked the parents how they felt about waiting outside. The parents present said they would prefer waiting in the line or standing in the rain as opposed to parents coming inside.

Some discussion was held on having each child assigned a number and line up in number order but it was also discussed that students respond better when their name is called. Both systems have been tried and names are easier for the students.

**c. Parents in the building**

Some people sign in for one thing and then roam around the building. H. Houston suggested putting up a sign letting parent know that they need to indicate their destination in the school. L. Wubbenhorst suggested having a sign in the entrance way pointing to the office saying "sign in". T. Hilton suggested reiterating that dismissal is at 3:20, not before.

**d. Poe Co**

Keep exterior door locked. The employees do not have an exterior key. Mr. Amerson suggested putting something in the door, so they would not be locked out when in the playground area.

**3. Parent (Brooke Barclay) request/concern:**

- Dismissal procedure: Consider keeping children inside during dismissal until parent is in queue to pick up child. Child can then be sent out once parents have been identified. I do not think this would cause much of a delay compared to current procedure
- Extra precaution during lunches and any other gatherings. How would people, once let into the school, be stopped if they proceed beyond the front office without being vetted?

**4. Parent (Jason Willick) request/concern:**

- **How is disruptive behavior identified and addressed? Are teachers getting enough support in dealing with this? How is impact being minimized?**
  - Suggestion- More/better communication on this issue. We know it's an issue because our kids talk about it. We get no communication or plan of action from the school.

Disruptive behavior is identified and addressed following the HISD Code of Student Conduct guidelines. The SDMC discussed the support teachers have and also how to minimize the effects on other student. T. Hilton suggested having social groups held with some of our students. The school social worker is beginning groups with students but her schedule doesn't allow for much time for these. K. Mayces suggested teaching coping skills. Mr. Amerson suggested more training in CHAMPS, the district's Social/Emotional Learning discipline guidelines. Most teachers agreed that a "step two" training would be beneficial. He will look at including more classroom management training in the professional development plan.

C. Carfello suggested having more time to counsel with the social worker. It was also suggested that students with discipline problems leave the class and go to their book buddy's class. Mr. Amerson suggested forming a committee to address these issues and come up with a plan of action.

S. D'Amico said that Little Heroes has the students move to different age groups (mixed ages). This seems to help with disruptive behavior.

- **There doesn't appear to be any differences for G/T students. How are G/T students challenged and supported? How is the G/T experience different?**
  - **Suggestion- A descriptive plan for G/T students. Why would a kid want to be G/T at Poe?**

All teachers at Poe are G/T certified and G/T differentiation happens in various ways. K. Mayces said that sometimes it's the child who will not accept the challenge. L. Baldwin said that sometimes a child is above grade level in one subject, but average or struggling in the other.

Mr. Amerson said that the G/T differentiation varies from classroom to classroom and grade level to grade level. He questioned the benefits of the G/T professional development teachers have attended off campus. Teachers said that the training was not helpful. Mr. Amerson would like to bring in more G/T training for the teachers during the pre-service weeks next year.

Mr. Pyle pointed out that some teachers already do things such as genius hour. K. Mayces said that the IB units challenge the students at their own level. L. Baldwin agreed. Mr. Amerson asked if teachers are communicating to the parents what is happening in their classroom. Parents don't know what is happening if it isn't getting communicated. H. Houston suggested that this be discussed at the next PTO meeting. L. Baldwin suggested that teachers share what they do with other teachers.

##### **5. Parent (Constance Adams) request/concern:**

- Request sponsorship for food services (HEB?) and/or supplies (OfficeMax) to alleviate impact of these cuts on school core mission?

A discussion in regard to a request for food and supply sponsorship led to a conclusion by the committee members to get the gardens going at Poe. This could lead to students growing their own food and learning the science of agriculture. The school is always open to sponsorships and bringing in outside partners.

**6. Parent (Jennifer DeLange and Janet Collins) request/concern:**

- Determine future of Colonial Day. Colonial Day still exists in the PTO Budget @ \$500. If there is a question about if Colonial Day will continue next year, please remove it from the budget/schedule and reallocate those funds.
  - Suggestion- Determine if Colonial Day remains an event and, if not, reallocate the \$500 to 4<sup>th</sup> grade Science Day (started this year, held on Valentine's Day). Ideally this can expand to include 5th Grade if it is established and budgeted early.

Mr. Amerson explained that the decision was made last year to discontinue Colonial Day by the 5<sup>th</sup> grade team and himself. Since the amount was only \$500, the PTO parents in the meeting said 4<sup>th</sup> grade could have \$500 for the Science Day and 5<sup>th</sup> grade could still use another \$500 for any events replacing Colonial Day.

**7. Parent (Erin Briscoe) request/concern:**

- Young children need to move their bodies often, and they do not get enough opportunity to do so with Poe's schedule. This has a negative impact on their learning and testing performance.
  - Suggestion- I have attached article on the benefits of added break/recess time. The LiiNK Project would be a good one for Poe, since it is based in Texas. The CDC has found no negative effects from increased recess in schools.

Mr. Amerson said that the students have 30 minutes of recess a day. We have dance breaks in some classes. L. Wubbenhorst suggested that grade level teams share what they do. Mr. Pyle suggested Project Learning Tree, Project Flying Wild, as well as others. Most require minimal supplies. Everyone agreed that movement is good for the children and the demands of covering the curriculum do make it difficult.

**8. Parent (Rania Saad) request/concern:**

- My son is only six and I feel he has been taking several assessments/exams during the year, many which were done through answering tests via computer. In this age, students don't really understand how important exams like these are, and may be completely distracted merely because of recess or hunger, etc. Also, I would like to know more about these tests beforehand, and their dates and implications. To me, a child this age should not have to go through exam after exam. It also concerns me there is a lack of information about these tests, or the info is sent on very short notice. Also, if the blue folders could be sent on Friday prior to the week, more preparation can be done on my part to meet homework requirements, form filling, etc.

A letter was sent home explaining the testing earlier. Mr. Amerson and the teachers said that these assessments provide useful information for teachers in regard to students' academic needs. The screeners and certain benchmarks are also required by the district. They are helping teachers differentiate instruction to help their various students.

It was decided that the Monday folder remain on Monday. It has been tried on different days in the past but Monday seems to work best for most people.

## 9. Parent (Trey Christensen) request/concern:

- **Improve student behavior**
  - **Suggestion- Follow Student Code of Conduct and discipline committee**

The committee said we'd really already covered this in earlier discussions. Ms. Baldwin said having the discipline committee review the plan had already been discussed. Mr. Amerson said that we do follow the Student Code of Conduct. Ms. Carfello suggested we include CHAMPS as a book study. Mr. Amerson said he knows part of the perception involving discipline is because we don't share with parents what is done with other children. He wants the discipline committee to review the current school-wide plan in the faculty handbook. He wants teachers from each grade level to be involved. He will also invite some parents to be a part of this committee. He said we need to see if our plan is still relevant, aligns with CHAMPS, and teachers need to reflect and make sure they are following it.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> party teacher/staff survey to understand areas of concerns.**
  - **Suggestion- 3<sup>rd</sup> party can achieve unbiased interpretation of concerns**

Mr. Amerson explained that the SDMC committee is the appropriate way for teachers to share concerns. He has asked in the past why there aren't more concerns submitted by teachers and was told by the committee in the past that he addresses concerns and there aren't any to submit. He asked if teachers feel uncomfortable about presenting concerns to the SDMC. Both K. Mayces and T. Hilton said that teachers feel uncomfortable expressing concerns if they have to put a name to it. Mr. Amerson explained that as professionals, teachers should be professional in presenting concerns and be able to put their names on them. He asked if he let teachers submit anonymous concerns if they would and one of the teachers said "possibly not." She said some people like to complain. Mr. Amerson shared his concern and confusion with this and asked if complaining in the lounge is legitimate. Wubbenhorst stated he cannot read peoples' minds. L. Baldwin explained that the discipline is something we all work on together to keep it from impacting other students but address the issue in a kind, thoughtful manner. H. Houston asked if teachers know the SDMC meetings are happening and if teachers know the SDMC members are their representatives. Teachers said they receive emails and reminders the meetings are coming and they do know they are their representatives. H. Houston and P. Sweeney suggested trying something like an improvement survey using Survey Monkey. P. Sweeney said it can help determine the percentages of how many people actually have the same concerns. She also agreed that people should sign their names but said not everyone does. Mr. Amerson said he'd think about it and the best way to go about it. H. Houston suggested a possible after year review as an improvement vehicle. Mr. Amerson said he has done some anonymous surveys using blue slips and other tools at the end of each year to help determine areas to focus on. He said it's also helpful to know what part of discipline people are talking about as it's a big umbrella. He thanked Heather and Peggy for the suggestions and will give some thought to how best to move forward. He says he's surprised to hear that people don't want to voice concerns. One of the teachers said they may be afraid to look ineffective; another person stated most people don't like conflict.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> party administered exit survey for staff leaving to understand why leaving**

- **3<sup>rd</sup> party can achieve unbiased interpretation as to reasons why teachers are leaving Poe.**

Mr. Amerson said that teachers who leave Poe do tell him why they are leaving. There are some things teachers tell him he won't repeat. He explained that some leave due to marriage or motherhood. Others have left because they do not want to be self-contained or follow the IB PYP. He explained the district's HR department also gives teachers the opportunity to complete an exit survey. Mr. Amerson explained that this is a business and there will always be a certain people exiting and entering. He stated that Poe is a hard school and parents don't always realize how hard it is. He and the teachers give reasons like the diversity, different parent demands and expectations, different levels of parent support. He said we love our parents and our community but everyone wants something different making it difficult on teachers and staff. It is stated by one of the parents that she has had and loves some of the new teachers and if people want to leave, they're going to leave. She said there can be many reasons, it won't boil down to one thing, and wonders if parents really want someone teaching their kid if they don't want to be here. L. Baldwin says she doesn't think it's any different than any other school.

T. Hilton said that one of the teachers who left said it's too hard at Poe. She said we need to see what we can do to make it easier.

PTO said to let them know what they can do to help. Mr. Amerson explained also that as a fine arts school that we want to do extra things but that also puts a strain on teachers. He said we don't breathe much at Poe. Teachers put in extra time and late nights. IB takes extra work. Mr. Amerson says we discuss often that being at Poe means doing more. He also said by far Poe is his favorite school he's worked at so he didn't want people misinterpreting what is being said. It's hard but we love it and our community and the support we get from our parents. He said he totally understands the question "Why are teachers leaving?" and it hurts him, too. The topic wrapped up with a lot of laughter.

H. Houston said from a parent standpoint to let them know if we need more funds for trainings, etc.

Mr. Amerson moved that we have a time limit on the SDMC meetings if they are going to run past 5 pm. He thanked everyone for their input and adjourned the meeting.

The meeting concluded a little past 6:00 pm.