

Minutes from PTA meeting

9/10

Coffee was from 8:30-9:00.

Birgitta was introduced by Karen.

Birgitta gave history of the leadership at PYP. She explained how Robert Butler was principal but then in December of 2014 he resigned and Marilyn stepped in until 2016. Moragh and Elin became deputy principal and coordinator. Birgitta asked for feedback on how parents thought this team was working and she received 95% positive feelings towards extending contract. Marilyn will retire in 2017, and will continue to be principal until then. Moragh and Ellen will also continue in their roles.

Question was posed: Is it a yearly contract in 2017-2018? No.

When will recruitment start? September 2016

No further questions – but one parent mentioned she was pleased with this arrangement. System is working this way.

Topic switched to Differentiation – teaching kids on their level.

At ISGR there is open enrollment which means that students can come whenever they arrive. They also come from everywhere and all different methods and levels. ISGR has a goal for this year to improve on differentiation. Diane Heacox, Ed.D presented a workshop to the teachers on October 7th. Teachers really enjoyed it – felt it was hands on and felt that they now have tools to work with. Many teachers started immediately.

Math is main focus. Kids need to be challenged and motivated. Graham had meeting with math teacher and new extending materials are being found. Levels aren't static. IT is crucial that the kids stay up on what the kids are doing.

Corrina and Matt will ask teachers to find resources at MYP and Ellen and Moragh will be finding these at PYP. There are groups of teachers in each school on a differentiation committee. 5th grade is already doing this. All classes are having math at the same time so kids can be fluid.

Next step is assessment. Assessments need to be individually fair. Diane Heacox gave tools for assessment.

Question was posed: How will this be explained to kids?

Answer: Teachers will explain to students that they are doing a task that is the best for them.

Question: Is differentiation about leveling or is it also about learning styles?

Answer: Yes, learning styles are important too.. There are tools to teach using different learning styles.

Question: In the past it was all about ability. Now it seems to have changed – did training change the focus?

Answer: In the past it was about learning styls. Now it is about leveling tasks, working alone vs. in a group, or pairs. Kids who know a lot like to work alone. Need to find right tasks for students. A needs analysis will be continual.

Graham explained that materials should be challenging enough for the highest level but lesson is the same for everyone and tasks are different. There will be an extended curriculum so everyone will be challenged.

Remember this is a process. Won't happen over night. There is reflection of professional days. Expectation is that every teacher will be using one tool. Encourage teachers to observe other teachers. There is a greater learning process that way.

Differentiation has to do with tasks – NOT assessment.

Question: How transparent will this be?

Answer: Depends on the way the teacher is presenting it. Hiding it won't work.

Question: What can we expect as parents and What can we do to help with your goal?

Answer: Homework will be different and continue with a dialogue at home and at school. Make sure you see what is going on.

Moragh explained that teachers aren't new to differentiation – this is just more tools in their toolbox. Coordinators will be going into classroom to see what teachers need. Principals will be supervising. Parents can help by understanding what differentiation is and by coming to coffee mornings. Parents as partners. 22nd of October is a math coffee morning at PYP.

Question: It is frustrating going to development talks and not knowing where our kids fall in level. Will parents know now?

Answer: They should know! Aim to make sure where student is from reporting system. Parents should know where their kids fall. There should be no surprises at development talks or in report cards.

Evening meeting will be set up to talk about this with parents who can't attend day meetings.

Dialogue: Kids will know what level they are on no matter what you label it. Parents need clarity. Be careful about labeling your child. Learning is a continuum. Graham suggests being honest with a child while boosting that kid up. They can still be taught at their level and move up.

Question: How does this work for science and humanities?

Answer: materials, tasks in class, simplified versions, ideas.

Dialogue: kids shouldn't feel like they are in the lowest group. Make kids understand goals. Support kids. We as parents need clear communication. Reality based. Need honest assessment with language. Not about labeling – papayas, mangoes. Kids need to know where they lie. Self-esteem – parents and teachers should work as allies. Celebration of learning. Being not doing. Kids need to learn how to learn.

Meeting adjourned.