

Parent Voices Forum 12/2/2020 7:30 via Zoom

Hosted by Parent Council, open to all SunRidge Families

Eight parents met for an hour on Wednesday, December 2nd. Every class was represented except for 2nd grade and MS Kindergarten; feedback from 2nd grade was given separately after the meeting.

The meeting was advertised in the 11/18 Newsletter and on Facebook. We think there would've been a higher turnout if the 12/2 newsletter had gone out on the day of the meeting like we had expected it would. *We would like clarity on how to send out a meeting reminder to each grade.*

Parents shared their reasons for coming to the meeting: missing parent interaction, wanting to understand our school and school life better, wanting to participate in making SunRidge the best school it can be, wanting to collaborate and work with other parents; wanting to support parents; wanting to learn how to get involved; wanting to support teachers in the wake of losing their classroom teacher, wanting to bring parent voice to Charter Council and the administration.

The topic of this Forum was Distance Learning.

Highlights of Distance Learning ("What's going well in your class?"):

- **Movement** incorporated into the live class meetings and class schedule - walks, running in place (7th grade)
- Breakout Rooms for **small group interaction**, gets kids on camera, engaged, motivated (6th, 8th). This may be best for middle school students; younger students may lack maturity to be in breakout rooms
- Informal, unstructured social-focused time on live zooms - for example, kids having time for sharing (1st, 4th) and **fun interactions**
- Beautiful **Main Lesson Book work** during a screen-centric year (4th, 6th)
- **One-on-one times with teacher** for help, check-ins, connection (1st, 5th, Math)
- **Posting pre-recorded lessons and assignments onto Google Classroom** for kids who need access to it later (1st, 4th, 5th) or who can't pick up work on Fridays (working or traveling families); having flexibility for families who can't accommodate the class schedule
- **Doc camera** for Main Lesson Book work (1st, 3rd, 4th)
- Middle School Math tutoring - each grade now has a new, designated drop-in time
- Schedule where work assignments are M-F with project work and catch-up work happen on Fridays (5th)
- **Clear Schedule** for the week of work/activities ahead is given in advance (2nd, 4th)
- Mr. T's **movement challenges** - gets kids outside and exercising (October and current)
- **Kids aren't on live Zooms all day**
- Choosing own learning topics and project-based learning - 6th grade has an **independent study project**

- Acknowledgment that teachers' work is so public this year and the challenge that can bring to teachers
- Kindergarten: "The best possible Distance Learning experience possible for a Kindergartner" - teacher holds the songs and movements and stories a la Mr. Rodgers and it's a short amount of screen time for a Kindergartner
- **New Lessons are introduced by the teacher via video/zoom** and then practiced/reviewed via worksheet (2nd)

What would you like more of in Distance Learning?

- **Movement!** Want classroom teachers to pass ideas to colleagues about how to incorporate movement into Distance Learning. Would like kids to be moving during live Zooms with Mr. T.
- Access to lesson content: there was a request that **all learning/lessons be accessible through video** so that students can access it with parents according to their parents' work schedules/availability
- **Nature-based or project-based Waldorf-style learning opportunities** - exploration of outdoors, nature.
- Options for students to access teachers. Middle school students may need mandatory weekly check-ins because they otherwise won't seek out time with their teachers. Some grades may need optional drop-in times as well as mandatory check-in times. Offering group times is helpful for shy students. **Each age group will have different needs for office hours.**
- **Flexibility for the work expected on Fridays** - parents are incorporating pickup/drop off into their Friday afternoons and aren't available to help students do lessons
- Continuous improvement - how do we keep making Distance Learning better? Part of the answer would seem to be to be well-informed about the successes and challenges of each student. **Does each teacher understand each family's distance learning situation? Can there be a survey of parents regarding Distance Learning?** How can we help teachers learn about each student and family situation?

Challenges in Distance Learning and Suggestions:

***Having access to the internet is a huge problem, especially for older students who may access inappropriate content. Parents would like a Parent Education session on how to make internet access safe, and specific products/apps to use to limit access.** Perhaps another Parent Ed talk with Ben Klocek regarding specific questions that are submitted in advance. A question arose - what sites are accessible on the school Chromebooks? Are all inappropriate sites and content blocked? A helpful website may be: benklocek.com/tech-habits-resources and Ben Klocek may be a good resource for a Parent Ed evening. Two out of eight parents mentioned recent instances of their children accidentally ending up on porn sites for the first time.

*** Limited access and connection to other students.** Some Kindergartners may not even know each others' names yet because they are in Speaker View highlighting the teacher

and there isn't a whole-class social piece. On the other hand, Kindergartners aren't necessarily ready to handle a screen full of zoom boxes. Students are feeling disconnected from each other, from their teacher, from the school. This is a very hard year for students. Several parents cited that spending some zoom time on class community building through fun activities, conversations and projects is very appreciated and necessary this year. Some parents cited learning pods as essential to the emotional health of children; others mentioned that it is difficult to network with parents to find podding opportunities.

* **Limited access and connection to other parents.** Parents are feeling disconnected from each other, from teachers, from the school. There is limited ability for parents to engage one another in dialogue; limited communication between parents within a class; limited parent feedback solicited from the school (the recent THUSD survey lacked specificity and clarity). We hope the Parent Voices Forums that will occur every other month will help parents connect in the future, but there is a lack of day-to-day communication between parents. Perhaps parents could brainstorm ideas to add to their class' experience. For example, supplementing for Farm Year - paperwhite bulbs could be sent home on Friday to all students for observation at home. Parents used to get to connect, network and give/receive support in the parking lots and hallways; it is much harder now to make and depend connections with other parents during this time.

* **Limited feedback from teachers to students;** this can affect student motivation, participation and connection to teacher

* **Limited feedback from parents to teachers;** each family may have specific issues regarding Distance Learning that would be important for the classroom teacher to know in order to ensure the child's success during Distance Learning. Parents are concerned that the school and classroom teachers do not know each family's specific distance learning experience - what is going well, what is not going well, is an adult available to support the child's distance learning, if so, when and where? Parent Council would like to put out a survey to parents with questions that parents want asked of them. Some teachers have dominated class meetings with a one-sided stream of information while other teachers have used class meetings as an opportunity for gathering parent input and feedback.

- Some new learning and instruction happens only during live zooms and isn't accessible via Google Classroom. This negatively affects working parents who need to support distance learning in the afternoons or evenings and who are not able to support morning zooms.

Question... How can Parent Council create a survey and send it to families?

Reflections on this Forum:

Next time, lets have breakout rooms for deeper chats or have specific breakout rooms for specific topics

We could have specific topic that will be discussed and it could also be announced ahead of time in the Newsletter

There could be brainstorming time for parents for their specific classes

This is different than Kalen's forum; she should continue doing hers; her Town Halls are based on her sharing information about the school

Next Parent Council Meeting: Wednesday, January 13th 7:30-8:30

Next Parent Voices Forum: Wednesday, January 27th 7:30-8:30