

LCJSMS PTO Coffee with the Principal
Sept. 12, 2019 8:30 AM

I. Introductions

Co-President Renata Estupian welcomed the parents and introduced the other Executive Board members.

Jesse Reyes spoke about the MySchoolAnywhere directory, which has been purchased by MembershipToolkit. Because of late stage changes with class assignments, the directory cannot be issued before the start of school. Additional delays this year caused by PowerSchool migration. In addition, there is currently no way to distinguish among family phone numbers (e.g. home/work/cell). Hope to have the directory up and running before back to school night.

II. Administration Report - Dr. Donna Gallo

A. General Information

Introduced new Assistant Principal, Laura Muller, who comes to Summit from Union Township Public Schools.

Dr. Gallo explained that there has been a change in the assistant principals' roles. Rather than dividing their duties between curriculum/instruction and student affairs, now each vice principal has responsibility for both.

Introduced Karen Doherty, school librarian, who discussed the advent of "Battle of the Books" at LCJSMS. Parents may be familiar with it from elementary school level. Thanks to an SEF grant, BotB is being brought to the middle school at all 3 grade levels. Grade level winners will compete to be school winner. BoTB will be promoted in October; team meetings to take place in November at lunchtime.

Lanyard policy – Dr. Gallo explained that it is consistent across LCJSMS and SHS. This is a student ID that must be worn at all times. Distinguished by grade by color. This helps ensure that everyone in the building is supposed to be here. The school encourages students to leave them in their lockers after school. Consequences for students who are unprepared are outlined in the student handbook.

Attendance policy. Our prior policy was not in compliance with state regulations regarding the characterizations of excused and unexcused absences. Excused absences are personal illnesses that are **VERIFIED IN WRITING BY A PHYSICIAN**, death in the family, required attendance at a legal proceeding, school-sponsored activities, religious holidays as mandated by the state, suspension from school. Illnesses without note are unexcused. The state permits students to

have 18 unexcused absences within the school year. After 5 unexcused absences, parents will receive a letter. After 10, the parent will receive a letter and will be asked to come in to have a meeting. At the high school level, if a student is missing from a *class* more than 18 times, they are removed and cannot get credit. Parents are asked to call the attendance office to report any absence. Details in handbook.

Update on Parent Youth Empowerment Alliance (YEA). This is a 3-year program; LCJSMS is in year 2. Last year, the school surveyed all students and staff to identify culture/climate areas of strength and those with “room to grow.” This year there will be a parent survey, to be conducted electronically from 10/17 to 10/27. A link will be emailed. Computer lab will be made available for parents who wish to take the survey and don’t have access otherwise. 30% participation is required for results to valid.

LET GROW project. This is a project that “lives” in the home but is celebrated at school and is aimed at building resiliency and confidence. Students take on an independent project through which they discover skills and abilities, and can learn to fail. Students are encouraged to share experiences (documented in homeroom). LCJSMS will celebrate these achievements.

Introduction meeting to be held on 10/29/19

B. Building Goals and Initiatives

Improving culture and climate, develop a stronger school community. These goals are an outgrowth of YEA project.

Beyond the bagel – Advisory is being re-branded under the school rules: take care of yourself, take care of others, take care of this place. A newsletter will be sent home for each advisory with a brief description and guiding questions to engage parents in learning topics, encourage meaningful dialogue between children and families. Advisory takes place approximately twice a month, for a total of 15 over the course of the year. Students remain in homeroom for 50 minutes on advisory days.

Logo contest was rolled out to students 1st week of school. Deadline Oct. 4th. Winner will be selected by school-wide vote. The school will partner with PTO to offer LCJSMS gear and merchandise with the winning logo, to be ready for the holiday season.

Building unity across grade levels is a goal for the year. Currently, the school wide Olympics is the one event that takes place across grade levels. Now, Spirit days will be cross team rather than via grade level.

District wide initiative – Summit is seeking to be recognized as a “No Place for Hate School” by the ADL. This means that all students must sign a pledge. The school must also create 3 building wide lesson plans focused on inclusion, tolerance and diversity. These plans will be created within the YEA teacher committee. The lesson plans will then be submitted to ADL for review 3-4 weeks prior to school wide event.

Digital Citizenship week – addressing online hate speech. This will likely be the first of the three ADL activities, to take place in November.

One Book, One School initiative. This is a program in which the entire school reads the same book. This year's book is NEW KID by Jerry Craft. LCJSMS is applying for SEF grant to sponsor an assembly with the author. The book's plot centers on a middle school student struggling with racial and socio-economic identity in his new school. It is a graphic novel, accessible to a wide range of reading levels. Book will be available at Scholastic book fair. Also via Amazon Smile. Some copies in the library. A parent suggested having a parent book club around this book.

- III. Closing – Renata Estupinan announced that the PTO is currently looking for 2-3 parents to head 8th grade graduation committee. Two parents already signed up to plan pool party.

Meeting closed at 9:29 AM.