

January 30 SAC Get to Know Your Teacher's Night MINUTES

Guiding questions for this afternoon:

1. Overview: What it is
2. What to expect (what you'll see, hear, feel, experience)
3. Highlights of interesting components (unique programs that stimulate kids and have a great impact)
4. What does an assessment look like?
5. How have you evolved as an educator in recent years?
6. What do you attribute your classroom's successes to this year (i.e: motivated, excited readers; good math skills that carried over from last year; volunteer support; new engaging curriculum; better physical set up of the classroom/more open floor plan, etc.)
7. Initiate Budget Visioning: What Would double the building budget mean for this program or your classroom
8. What are the specific needs you have right now for your classroom?
9. What do you need?

Mr. Sampson and Ms. Harriman's Discussion (Summary):

In an environment of an ever-increasing range of abilities within the classroom, Mia and I have been focusing on developing agility within our program. What are ways in which we can better meet the diverse needs of children? How can we break down the walls of traditional models to allow kids to get what they need in an environment in which learning is visible.

One solution that second and first grade offers is our PIT time (Personalized Instruction Time). Pit time is a co-teaching practice in which Mia and I divide up skills to best meet the needs of smaller groups. We can rotate, adjust, and offer more individualization within this time because students can go to whichever teacher involved in the PIT time that is best equipped to teach them at that moment. For example, there are first graders who may be ready to go to Mr. Sampson's room for a brief second grade skill lesson. And there are second graders who might need more time or a refresher with Ms. Harriman. The idea is to remove stigma about this and simply create a culture in which all kids get what they need whenever they need it.

As we designed and refined this, another important question for us is "what is at the core of the perception of quality that keeps parents choosing us?" We want to be cautious about offering things that are "shiny" or simply designed to bring in more student numbers. Instead, we want to look at what constitutes long-term quality. This is the best generator of word of mouth in a school and district that has high choice numbers.

Likewise, in the design of PIT as well as any other design process we go through, we want to make sure that we are truly meeting the needs of parents. We don't want to design things that actually push parents and children away. That's why feedback about specific things working or not working, from parents, is so incredibly helpful. Again, our goal is to build quality in the long-term.

Detailed Points from Conversation:

(During this portion of the presentation, Mr. Sampson asks Ariella Rogge why she and her family chose UPE).

Ariella: Because when I walked down the hall, I would see the projects. I saw teaching that inspired kids to do things and create. In some schools, it's all curriculum, the workbooks, etc. As we move forward, we see more curriculum and worksheets. What I liked back then was the sense that teachers were always going above and beyond. It's the applied piece that really meant a lot. The integration of the Gifted and Talented into the regular classroom. Integration of the classical piece (Shakespeare, etc.).

Jacob: this is great feedback. That the perception is there is more curriculum workbooks.

Ariella: The other piece that keeps us here is the commitment to differentiated learning. Jessie and Candy partnering. (Co-teaching). Jacob and Ms. Mortensen. Lynn and Kym. Partnerships between teachers is an attraction to parents. I don't see it in the middle school right now. We have visionary leadership. I also feel like, without what you just said - that desire from the front line staff. If people don't feel really confident about where they are going, it's a problem in any school.

Discussion: Does our administration reflect who are teachers are or is it the teachers reflecting the administration. The administration should be the filter.

Heather: Why people are coming. Have people answer why do you choose us? Then have us follow up? We are finding more ways to have that conversation. Why did you choose to come here and are we still on track for that? How do we know if we are losing sight of what our mission is? What does it look like in fifty years?

Jacob: We can't be all about just getting our numbers up? That's not the question. The question is "are we doing what parents want?"

Heather: What are those parents excited about?

Jacob: What is the long-term vision of the greater Manitou. These question are things I can answer, but I can only answer them in my little environment. We all have to start thinking about “what does the whole community think?”

PIT Time Presentation:

Will those parents understand why we want to do multi-age? How do we put that together in ways that is understandable and covariant with parents. Communication was heavy in the beginning but now, more and more parents see the value in it.

Pit Time - it allows us to go deeper. Not just surface level.

Math Example: Number sense property and - we want them to be accurate and flexible.

Mia: I start with concrete objects. It all starts with manipulatives. My kids have a working number. We start with 5. Can they make the combinations up to their number until mastery.

Bag example. They will have six cubes. They take away two. They say how many is left in their bag. They check their answer.

Jacob - Changing demographics: how do we find that opportunity to meet such a wide variety of needs. From kids who've never been exposed to kids who already know it.

Mia: Pit time is meaningful.

Jacob is starting the process of working with Louisa.

Jacob: where do they go once they are past us? I know the pressure that 4th, 5th, and 6th, but how do we break that cycle for those kids who are still struggling years ago.

Jacob: A dream I have - get all the resources they need at primary? How do we stop that greater cycle of lack of success for some kids?

Ariella: There has to be that sense of freedom.

Sarah - I'd love to get to a place where I'm linking and reinforcing Spanish with classroom content in meaningful ways.

Sarah - where is Manitou? Is it cultural awareness? I need to know the vision of the district. Is that for the greater good?

Mia: Something we've discussed is raising money to support people to cover recess duty. We had indoor recess - When do you get a lunch and when do you go to the bathroom?

What is the number of extra duties that teachers have? It would be interesting to compare this with other schools.

More small group intervention - if we had more time during lunch to make more copies.

Jacob: Family attitudes have to change to get parents on board with multi-age. We've done it enough years that we can explain it less. Less time explaining and more time doing?

Ariella: when you set up classroom schedules. Would first second third have the same block?

Team: Yes. Jacob: there are always obstacles to making that happen.

The idea that we brought two new programs in and smooshed it into a old framework.

We have so many people who compliment each other - how do we maximize that?

We have enough staff to REALLY meet the needs of 160.

What can 30 incredibly talented people do to meet love, rigor, opportunity needs of 160 kids?

Mia: We split the skills so we can each go deeper.

Jacob: I don't know what I want for my classroom? How will we know the vision of the district is going to lead to kids will come into their own? And that they can be who they truly are?

After visioning, we need STEPS.

Spanish:

Sarah Ulizio - It's so fun for me to hear the excitement from students. Survey says kids want more Spanish time. How do we do more to make sure they grasp the language. The fifteen minute blocks are tricky for me.

Losing class time - how do we balance it. How is that working for you? I am flexible enough to do what's best for their learning?

Something I really like about how Spanish is going: Calico Stories. They are comprehensible stories - I use as a backbone. Then I add lots of different stuff. I'm always trying to do as much movement, signing, and games as I can. Students seem really repetitive to that. That is something I really like so far.

Heather: finding a reason to move in Spanish is very purposeful.
What do you need?

My license and training is gen ed. I'd love more PD and training in both foreign language instruction and Gifted and Talented. I'm heading to a foreign language conference in the beginning of February.

The PLC time I get with the other FL teachers, it really, really valuable.
Short list: training, more contact time.

Calico - Alejandra and I - we decided to purchase that for the first year of Elem. Spanish program.

Ariella: I'm curious if there are thematic units with an emphasis area for each grade. We could do emotions for kids in second in September. Does that exist? Is there a specific reading. Is there a cross curricular reading? A partner story in Spanish and English.

What about one immersive Spanish block for each grade.

Jacob: if we could do that more - it would show our families what Spanish means to me?

Sarah: What's really interesting, THIS year everyone started with the same thing and intermediate classrooms have advanced much quicker than primary but this changes as the years go by. The curriculum is a work in progress. Common outcome - learn Spanish. The curriculum will look totally different when the current Kindergarten class is in 5th or 6th grade.