



PTA Parents/Members Meeting

March 1, 2022; 7-8:00 pm

Virtual Meeting

Attendees: 24 parents attended, including PTA Board Members (Rob Burnett, Heather Ann Roe, Sarah Schaffer, Emily Wurst, Theresa Wilson, Deena Munroe, Rachel Martin) and guest speakers (Dawn Stahly, Kathryn Panek, Mariah Button)

AGENDA

1. Overview of Merrill Middle School and Callanan Middle School
 - a. Speakers: Dawn Stahly – Principal at Callanan Middle School, retiring at the end of 2021-2022 school year; Kathryn Panek – Principal at Merrill Middle School
 - b. Overview of Merrill and Callanan Middle Schools
 - i. 600 students each
 - ii. Same opportunities for 504 plans and IEPs that students have at DTS
 - iii. Cluster grouping available for students at same level to be taught together
 - iv. Dress codes are similar to DTS
 - v. For new middle school students, switching classes is an adjustment, as are lockers
 - vi. Seven periods in each school day (51 minutes each), the week is split between A Days and B Days (every other day)
 - vii. Many different clubs and extracurricular activities available. If a student wants to start a new club, they can do so (just need to meet with Student Engagement Coordinator to get that going)
 - viii. Sports available for students in 7th and 8th grades
 - ix. Students will tour the middle schools in April
 - x. Parent-orientation night in the spring
 - xi. Over the summer, there's a day for 6th graders to drop off their supplies, get their schedules, find their classrooms, etc.
 - xii. Parent-teacher conferences are a bit different, not one teacher for all needs. Tend to meet with the advisory teacher as the central point of contact, but encourage parents to communicate with children's teachers throughout the year.
 - c. Q&A
 - i. Class size? Varies a lot – 16 students on the low end, 30 students at the high end (try not to exceed 30)
 - ii. Earlier passing time for the 6th graders? Yes, will continue the 2-minute earlier passing time for 6th graders at Merrill. At Callanan the 6th graders are in their own hallway, so they're sort of sequestered together, but mingle with the 7th and 8th graders while passing to common areas like the cafeteria, gym, etc. May consider the earlier passing period idea too.
 - iii. Are there teacher teams within the grade levels? There used to be, but due to upcoming budget allocations, staffing levels have to be reduced some which will make the team approach "less clean".

- iv. Cell phone policy? No phones on during the school day, need to be turned off.
 - v. PTA and how to get involved? Callanan PTA meets every other month; Callanan Cougar Cart has fun prizes kids can earn from RISE points; volunteer opportunities; donating/food drinks during conferences. Merrill PTA meets monthly; sponsor activities (like the Merrill Olympics, to bring back joy); building in-class libraries; volunteer opportunities; donating food/drinks during conferences.
- 2. Introduction to Mariah Button, new school/community coordinator
 - a. Two months in this role, prior to this Mariah worked for nine years as a child therapist for preschool age children.
 - b. Goal is to create, strengthen and maintain the bridge between schools and the community.
 - c. Some of her work is to make sure students and parents have the resources they need, build awareness of Des Moines community offerings (sports, rec opportunities, etc.), and to help facilitate engagement with activities like student clubs (in-school, over lunch, after school). Also looking into after-school childcare options with Mr. Burnett.
- 3. Other items for discussion/awareness
 - a. Make sure to sign up for parent-teacher conferences
 - b. Check out the volunteer sign up to bring food, drinks and treats to teachers during conferences
 - c. Working on Movie Night (April 8 in the Central Campus auditorium) logistics – movie viewing options will be provided for students to vote on
 - d. Close to getting permission from the school district to bring parent volunteers back in the classroom – hoping for a return to the open door policy that DTS had pre-COVID
 - e. Remember to read the updates in the Falcon File email that Mr. Burnett sends out

MEETING ADJOURNED 7:35 PM