

Minutes of the Winston Churchill High School PTSA General Membership Meeting
10-15-19
7:00 – 9:20 p.m.

Attending:

PTSA Board Members -

Brandi Heckert, Churchill Principal
Carla Morris, PTSA President
Ping Lu, 1st Vice President
Alejandra Mercado, 2nd Vice President / Membership
Heidi Wei, Treasurer
Lisa Chung, Corresponding Secretary
Eric Myers, MCCPTA Delegate
Lola Tobun, MCCPTA Delegate

Speakers –

Principal-Parent Coffees from Dominic Benford,
Sharon Field, Co-Chair, Special Education Services Committee
Bo Saulsbury, Co-Chair, Special Education Services Committee
Carla Rush, NAACP Representative, Co-Chair, After Prom Committee
Peter Stocksclaeder, Chair of the SafeTech Committee
Eric Myers, MCCPTA delegate
Dr. Mitra Ahadpour, Substance Use Programming Committee Chair, internist at FDA

50 some parents attending are listed on a separate roster available from the PTSA board. One student attended as well.

The meeting opened with introductions and welcomes, name tags, and a distribution of index cards with the questions: Card #1 - *What have been your student's best experiences at Churchill this year? What has been a challenge, if any? What would you most like the PTSA to prioritize this year?* Card #2 - *Does your student have a cell phone? How does your student use a cell phone at school? Do you know what the federal, county and MCPS rules are for cell phone use in the classroom? What recommendations do you have for the SafeTech Committee for programming this year?*

The PTSA president opened the meeting at 7:00 pm, thanked so many parents for attending, introduced the board and the committee chairs, the focus of the PTSA's programming this year, and asked for approval of the May meeting minutes and the budget the board approved for the school year. All materials were available for review. Discussion ensued around the budget and both the meeting minutes and the budget were approved and seconded.

Mrs. Heckert welcomed the parents to the meeting and introduced her background and gave a "state of the school" overview.

The membership heard about Principal-Parent Coffees planned for the year from Dominic Benford, committee chair. Four coffees will be held, two in the fall, two in the spring. The flyer is on the PTSA web site.

Parent chairs from the Special Education and After Prom committees introduced themselves and their committees' goals, and urged members to join, and help those committees be the most responsive they can be this year. Our NAACP chair discussed the needs of continuing our goals of meeting social justice and academic equity priorities within the school community this year.

Eric Myers reported on the legislative advocacy priorities recently formally proposed by the county PTA legislative committee to pursue for the school year. Those priorities have been posted in the Churchill Flyer and can be found on the PTSA web site.

Dr. Ahadpour, Substance Use Programming Committee Chair, gave a presentation on the dangers of vaping, what parents should know about vaping any substance, and how quickly and often permanently teens can become permanently impaired. She held questions and answers with parents at the conclusion. Her presentation has been posted in the Churchill Flyer and can be found on our web site.

Peter Stocksclaeder, Chair of the SafeTech Committee, introduced the creation of this new PTSA committee, and its current focus on ensuring consistent, fair and least use cell phone policies within the school this year. He noted the research already completed on cell phone use best practices at U.S. high schools, and how MCCPTA's SafeTech committee work in this area can be used to assist Churchill in reducing class use of cell phones. He referred to the Top Ten Teacher cell phone best practices list distributed to attendees with meeting agenda.

Parents were formed into small break-out groups by table, and discussed the index card prompts about their students and cell phone use at school. Refreshments were offered, including pizza, by the SafeTech Committee.

Primary points raised in report-outs at the conclusion of the break-out groups include:

1. Some teachers use cell phone baskets to park student phones within classes at the beginning of each class.
2. Teacher cell phone use and/or "parking" policies varied widely from class to class.
3. Some parents saw recreational cell phone use during their classroom observations during Open House on 10/15 – they would like to see less recreational phone use and more consistency in the overall student cell phone use policy throughout the school day.
4. Parents agreed that teachers can't monitor whether 20 plus kids are using their phones for recreational use in the classroom. If the phones out, it's hard to monitor – they would like more standards consistent across all classrooms.

5. Parents reported incidents like teachers requiring Facebook to post assignments for an APUSH class in years past.
6. Parents wanted a showing of Screenagers 2.
7. Parents wanted "Tech Tuesday" tips, similar to the initiative the "Screenagers" group provides.
8. Many parents wanted to go "back to basics," with students using pen and pencil in class and fewer Chromebook and other computers required for academic work.
9. Privacy concerns were raised, and that "big brother" is in attendance at school, where student data is being sold and potentially used as data against students in colleges, jobs and for insurance applications (Naviance, for example).
10. Students are "served" "hate" online via still screen and video screen advertisements while using such applications as Kahoot. Student safety remains a concern, particularly with younger students, and parents should know there is an alternative teaching method available to their students if they opt out of consenting for their child to use such applications as Kahoot.
11. Phone use is distracting and prevents kids from talking to each other during the lunch hour, where they would be better off interacting with each other and living "in the moment" instead of texting the person sitting right next to them. Many students are finding growing impulse control problems with smart phones.
12. Mrs. Heckert said she had to work within the "system" - a parent pointed out that she had discretion to have a "crisper" standard on educational use for limited time periods, such as students needing to raise their hands and asking to use the phone for a specific purpose before bringing a phone out and turning it on, which often triggers other students to do the same.
13. Teachers' phone collaboration assignments make it difficult for parents trying to limit screen use for students at home, and also results in screen use late at night beyond family bedtime. It's not possible for parents to take away student phones for parenting/safety reasons, if the phone is required for classwork. Some teachers still require it, in spite of the rules apparently in place discouraging this practice.
14. For 1st year students who just arrived from a middle school environment where phones are not allowed out at all during the day, suddenly having access to their smart phones all day long with few if any restrictions is overwhelming and confusing. Students have been taught cell phone self-control and restraint in elementary and middle schools, and suddenly at Churchill there are apparently no limits at all.
15. Many students don't have phones or have only flip phones, so when a teacher requires phone use in class, these kids feel bad and can't participate for graded assignments.
16. Other U.S. high schools have "no cell phone use" policies (Silicon Valley tech people keep students away from screens) and it has demonstrably helped those students in classroom productivity and socialization.
17. Mrs. Heckert asked parents to provide her or Carla with specific cell phone use problems, and she promised to keep reports anonymous. Parents are encouraged to report cell phone school challenges in an incident log-like fashion. Parents pointed out, however, that without knowing what the Churchill cell phone policy is, it would be hard

to know what did or did not violate safe classroom use, other than referring to federal and county regulation violations.

18. Overall, parents present reported a strong interest in wanting significantly less phone use in school, but one parent pointed out that there might be other parents not present who would want more phone use and access to more WIFI.
19. A parent survey was recommended, to be filled out by staff, students and parents.
20. A PTSA hand-out had safe technology resources for parents.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.