

## MSMPA Meeting Minutes

Sharon Ahn:

Sharon began the meeting. She shared that Jon Aaron recently spoke at the Executive Board Meeting about the history of McDonogh, where he gave a long and very interesting presentation, including an explanation of the character compass and the notion of how “we give something more than we take.”

Darren Ford:

Given the recent issues (most notably the Florida school shooting), we want you to know that we take safety and security very seriously. Darren shared a document about how we talk to kids about these things. We start the year talking about safety with Charlie Britton, including talk about how we would work through a crisis and actual practice. I know I sent a “cryptic” email to 8<sup>th</sup> grade families recently but we could only share so much information. We spent a lot of time working on this. There was a student posting things on social media and there was a threat; parents and students stepped forward and we acted on it. We got the person the help that they needed. We do try to keep kids’ names and parents’ names confidential. We need to hear about issues to be able to take action; even little things are important. We need to have a partnership with parents. Please be a partner and continue to work with us; trust us and allow me to do my job.

A parent commented how the Florida shooting is unreal because our community is so safe, but she knows someone with kids at the school in Florida so it really hit home. Ann Fleming explained that the administration team does do drills routinely, and Rick Landsman, the Head of Security and former Baltimore County police officer (as are many of his staff) has a system that accounts for everyone and their location. It is a relief to know that there is a quick response time from the police, and Ann is thankful to administration for all they do. Darren stated that we can’t do it alone; parents and kids need to step forward.

Darren addressed parent questions:

- **Alarm system: fire vs. lockdown** - There is a piercing loud fire alarm to get people out of building as well as an announcement through phone system, cell phones, and over a loudspeaker letting everyone know if the alarm is for fire, lockdown, or a drill. Although the kids should be able to tell the difference between the alarm, they really just need to listen to the adults. Once in the hallway, teachers shout out the type of alarm and direct students to move to appropriate locations. All drills are taken very seriously; failure is not acceptable where safety is concerned.
- **Shell Road gates** - Since we have a heavy flow of traffic on to the campus during the day, the Shell Road gates remain open. However, if we have need to close them, the Director of Technology and Security can activate the gates from their phones. The Lower School keeps the doors locked and we have had discussions about locking other buildings. We are considering this with the new Middle School building. The Upper School is difficult to secure in this way as the students must move between so many buildings. We discuss this with the kids and tell them to say something if they see something.

- **Faculty/Staff ID** - A parent asked a question about lanyards for teachers and administration. Darren explained that teachers and administrators have a lanyard ID but they are not required to wear them. The Lower School teachers wear them as they are their key to gain access to the LS buildings.
- **Access to the Security phone number by students, faculty, and visitors** - Everyone has access to the security number. We encourage all faculty members to have it in their phone and it is posted on all of the entry doors around campus. If, as a parent, you would like to have the security number in your phone or your student's phone, the number is 443-544-7111.
- **Bumper sticker for all cars** - McDonogh has a windshield sticker for registered cars, but many parents are not aware of this (especially new families). Darren will communicate this to Pete Welch. We will also post a reminder in Parent News with a link to the Parent Page where you can register your car.
- **New Middle School building timeline** - It is in "value engineering" right now.
  - We started with the dream and now are working on the cost and the fundraising, which is in the silent phase.
  - Will be between 12 – 24 months in the building phase once the project starts.
  - We will probably need to have 6 – 8 learning cottages (or trailers) in addition to the space in Keelty to house the whole MS. Darren plans to move offices into the learning cottages first to allow for as many classrooms as possible to be in Keelty.
  - Original thought was that this would start this June, but not very likely right now.
- **Academics** - We worked through five snow days and cyber school. Darren likes to give kids the first two snow days off. The next two worked well with cyber school, but the students did not complete their work as thoroughly on the last snow day.
  - There was discussion about the amount of work: some think too much, some not enough, some just right.
  - A parent explained how teachers helped a lot when her daughter missed a week because of flu; this is great to hear.
  - March 2 is the last day of winter trimester; this trimester is five days longer than others but we lost five days to snow so it is equal with others. We want report cards to come home before spring break. Any questions or concerns, email teachers, but please be mindful that they are on vacation as well.
- **Winter athletics goes through February 22 or 23** - The following week is "between the seasons."
  - The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades will have some activities: Matt Goode social media presentation; 8<sup>th</sup> grade bowling; 7<sup>th</sup> grade movie; all MS movie about technology and innovation. A Baltimore County police officer is coming to present, and Alex Gardner, 9<sup>th</sup> grade dean, will talk about vaping and "juuling."
  - Marie Allee explained "juuling" and how kids charge them in their computer and they are almost undetectable. She shared a story of Alex Gardner demonstrating juuling in the front row of an US Assembly and no one noticed (this was his point).
  - Discussion began on this topic but was deferred until Marie's presentation.

Marie Allee

School Counselor Dr. Marie Allee spoke about the counseling services available at McDonogh.

- Dan Wagner is both the LS Counselor and the Counselor for fifth grade. This allows a transition in the MS to Marie.
- Marie is the Counselor for sixth through twelfth grades.
- Students can get support however it makes sense (email, call, meeting, drop by office, etc.)
- Dan and Marie don't do therapy, but they do coaching and support. If additional services or support are needed, the school can assist families with finding support that is a good fit for them. They have developed contacts within the community, people who know the school and are good and thoughtful clinicians.
- Address any kind of concern, nothing is too small or too big; whatever is on kids' minds.

Marie answered parent questions:

- How do students know that you are there? Do you meet with students through an assembly or in classes? We come into assemblies and do silly things to explain what we do, like make up song lyrics to popular tunes. Marie's office is in the Edward St. John Student Center near the dining hall and the side door. Her door is usually open and the office is stocked with food and hot chocolate. Kids can come in and just chill out and relax.
- How should a child respond to exclusion on social media? Marie can help them with tools and strategies for coping with this situation. Middle school and social media is a big topic: there is little to no parental presence and a "Lord of the Flies" aspect. Some kids self-police and restrain, but lots of kids think more is better and "Friend" a lot of people they don't know.
- A more detailed discussion on social media took place.
  - Snapchat is where kids try to get "streaks" and some give their password info to friends to keep the streaks going if their parents take their phone away. Instagram revolves around the number of likes – "LMR" means "Like My Recent." This causes a lot of stress. There is also a social hierarchy and rules exist amongst the kids. You need to make sure you follow "Finsta" account (Fake Instagram) as well.
  - Marie suggests that you take your child's phone and spend a couple hours going through the apps on it. Click around on the things on the sides and ask your kids questions. They might have a vault or ghost app (where they can hide photos) so look at all the apps on your kids' phones.
  - More monitoring is better than less.
  - One app is called Pocket Guardian: it doesn't show you pictures but it checks texts and apps for language and alerts you via email. In order to install more direct parent monitoring apps, you may need to get your child's phone "jailbroken" (Apple) or "rooted" (Android);
  - Monitoring apps generally involves a monthly fee and it's not cheap, but you will be able to see everything. If you screenshot a picture on snapchat the person who posted it is alerted but people can also save things "for my eyes only."
  - We all need to be deliberate and practice self-restraint: being able to put the phone down and not check every alert; turning off notifications on phones as well as

laptops. It is very different for today's students; there is lots of darkness in their world. We need to try to make their world smaller and bring some meaning to it.

- The discussion turned to vaping and juuling: "We don't have evidence of middle schoolers vaping at school" in the Middle School, meaning only that it hasn't been caught.
  - It is happening for sure outside of school and there is no regulation of these products: there are dangerous chemicals, nicotine, marijuana, hemp oil, etc. Kids are enticed by fruity flavors and the impression that it is "harmless."
  - Marie offered to come back to an MPA meeting to address this another time; parents stated that we need a parenting education session on this topic. Ann Fleming stated that we have a parenting technology and social media presentation – usually in the fall in the Klein Lyceum – with small group breakouts afterwards.
  - Marie noted that kids struggle to balance social standing with doing what is right and the school is continuing to have these conversations. There are so many adults in our community to support them.
  
- Parent question: what do other parents think, are these things starting from the bullying side as opposed to just mental illness? Lots of discussion. Parents need to be willing to say something and are welcome to call the school counselors for help.

A discussion started about the recent troubling situation in the boys dormitory. Due to time limitations, Kirsten Lockyer suggested that parents read the USMPA meeting minutes as Merritt and Bridget addressed this topic.

Kristin McCarthy: Bake sale

This was a big success despite last minute panic. We made \$297.75 which goes to Darren to spend directly on the kids. Thanks to all who helped. Sharon said thanks to Kristin McCarthy for all her hard work. Kristin shared that any leftovers went to the Corpus Christy soup kitchen with Bridget Collins, who was already bringing sandwiches that the lower schoolers made.

Sharon: MS Class Events

5<sup>th</sup> grade class event coming up – pizza and cake wars – some conflicting events so that impacted attendance – has enough volunteers.

7<sup>th</sup> grade event was great and a huge success with about 60% attendance.

Ann Fleming:

Multicultural night is Friday 3/2. We need some parents to pick up some dishes from local restaurants who are donating them. If you have a dish that your family makes – any culture – please contact Ann to donate. One year a grandfather visiting from Italy made pizza. It is a great family event.

Sat 3/24 Mix Mingle McDonogh event. It is now also an opportunity to thank Charlie and Jen Britton. There will be food from Copper kitchen, cocktails, magician, and a 3 piece jazz band. We encourage people to get together and know other families.

Sharon thanked Carrie Arbaugh for the food and adjourned the meeting.