



Cedar Park PTC Community Meeting

November 4, 2020

CALL TO ORDER 6:35pm

ATTENDEES: **Bettina Jeszenszky, Dr. Shannon Anderson, Kristopher Damiano, Dana Sexton, Hannah Donohue, Jenna Dornblaser, Melissa Manos, Felicity Wienand, Julie Wewerka, Megan Clifford, Melissa Ackerman, Skye Kutansky, Sune Cremer, Aaron Coday, Renn Sanderman, Callie Mcauliffe, Renne & Brian Niepoky, David Waldrip, Shannon Sherry, Penelope Smith, Lianne Yarvis, Dorena Campbell, Jeannette Hill, Jona Davis, Karen ?, Mandy Wood, Manuel Galvez Perez, Maureen Louie, Alex Perez Escobar, Amber Lindsey, Ana Gomez, Barry Raber, Kristin Zubel, Henry?, Kathleen Everett, Kelly Kinzer, Kristin Zubel, Dena ?

***Due to the fluidity of zoom/virtual gatherings, this list may not accurately reflect all participants/attendees.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (from Oct 7, 2020)

PRINCIPAL REPORT, Dr. Shannon Anderson

- **First spirit day was a success:** Kids dressed up for Halloween, great pictures, organized by Ms. Ackerman.
- **Attendance remains good, but still struggling to have cameras on:** (especially 8th grade), teachers are struggling to stay engaged with students; becoming clear that some students join zoom, turn off camera, and leave the room.
- **Thank you for teacher appreciation:** Snacks were well-received.
- **CPMS admins are listening to parent and student feedback around synchronous time and work time:** Dr. A and her team are talking/reminding teachers about the original plan (synchronous time ½ and ½), however it is easy for teachers to fall back into old habits (as core classes used to 84 minutes) & feel pressured to get through content; some adjustment happening, but feel free to reach out to Dr. A with your feedback/concerns.
- **Cedar Park is creating student voice groups** to gather feedback and inform decisions around what is the student experience for Latino or Black students. There will be several opportunities for all students to give feedback.
- **CPMS Parent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Group:** Meeting two times per month - everyone invited to join, Email Dr. A if you'd like to participate.
- **Advisory is NOT optional:** It is required to deliver important social emotional support for kids, is a chance for teachers to have fun with kids, and is different from regular class. The counselors & Ms. Ackerman are creating fun lessons to develop relationships; not graded, but is valuable socio/emotional support.
- **New metrics announced for schools to move to hybrid**
 - Look for upcoming meetings in Dec/early January where CPMS admins will communicate more about hybrid. Families will need to understand the choices before they can make an informed decision.
 - In person school will NOT be the way it was, and may even be different from the District's original hybrid plan from last summer; look for more info soon.

OFFICER REPORTS

President, Bettina Jeszenszky

- **No Fuss Fundraising launches with Paypal:** [Our easiest fundraising campaign is live!](#) Because the PTC is providing students resources that go home & staff support, we do need some level of fundraising this school year, especially if Cedar Park moves into a hybrid situation. A larger virtual or spring event may take place this spring, but we are keeping it easy this fall, as families adjust to this new schedule.
- **Team Email directory update:** [Change Request Form now available online;](#) no one opted out of providing parent info this year
- **Thank you to Staff Appreciation donors!**
- **Committee Leads Needed:** The PTC still has an opening on the Board (Vice President), as well as opportunities to help with this year's fundraising. Email Bettina (president@cedarparkptc.org) if interested-- we are fun!
- **All Board Roles Open in 2021-22:** All four current members will be ending their two-year term at the end of this school year, with two members being rezoned to a different middle school. To continue the strong PTC tradition, anyone interested in leadership in 2021-22 can shadow the current members to learn the ins & outs and gain valuable experience. Email Betting (president@cedarparkptc.org) if you are even slightly interested in a Board role next school year.

Treasurer, Skye Kutansky

- **Year to Date Numbers:**
 - **Several expenses from last year actually appear in this year's budget,** as they were posted after our June 30 end of year deadline. Those include 8th grade banner/yearbooks, rubix cubes for the library, a staff appreciation raffle last spring, and classroom supply expenses.
 - **Expenses accrued in 2020-21 include:** journals for teachers, staff appreciation gift cards, State of Oregon reporting fees, PTC website fees and smore fees
 - **Additional expenses from 2020-21** that have not posted (but checks have been sent) include: science and art kits, 6th grade t-shirts, whiteboards/marker sets, & additional OBOB books for library

GUEST SPEAKERS

Kristopher Damiano, BSD TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) for Socio-Emotional Learning

Kris began his presentation asking attendees to write in the chat how they are feeling. Responses ranged from stressed, drained, overwhelmed, done etc. Kris shared that a recent international poll found the same thing-- when asked that same question, over 95% of responses were negative. That's telling of the emotional and mental strain our world is currently experiencing.

Our roadmap for tonight's presentation will include a short intro, some universal current challenges our children are facing (not comprehensive), recognizing/addressing fear and stress, and identifying healthy ways to cope. Kris' position includes teaching teachers and working with parents to better educate our communities on the importance of socio-emotional learning.

Identifying Challenges Facing Our Kids:

- **Change in Routines:** Adolescents coming into a social tension stage are now being asked to be socially distant; day-to-day routines are drastically different from usual school routine

- **Break in continuity in learning:** No after school activities/programs, change in structure, inequity of resources and access/connectivity
- **Break in continuing in health care:** Kids/families are missing well checks/immunizations/oral health care, creating downstream effects, such as speech therapy or OT; loss of momentum in development
- **Missing in Life Events:** Zoom birthdays, vacations, homecoming, 8th grade celebration, no first day of school for 6th graders (fun experience missed)
- **Losses of security/safety:** Students now online all day; adolescents gravitate to risky behavior (needed to calibrate well-being in life); developments surrounding them creating insecurity, disorientating landscape
- **Withdrawal:** Moody teens are the norm, but when we start to see them withdraw (little time with us) creates bigger challenges

Pressure vs. Stress

Stress is a catch-all description (even for adults). For tonight, we'll define ***stress as a response to too many demands and not enough resources to meet those demands***. Students are being pushed up against increasingly adult issues and they don't always have ability/resources to deal with them.

This is opposed to ***pressure, which is the perception that something is dependent on their performance***. Students may often say that they are stressed by school work, but more accurately defined as pressure.

Recognize & Address Fear & Stress

Stress can manifest itself in **behavioral** changes (moody, rude, cranky, acting out, withdrawing), **emotional** changes (increase or decrease throughout the day), **physical** changes (stress eating & less active, getting sick more often) and **thinking** (negative thoughts, less optimism).

Parents are being tasked to be clinicians to recognize so much, but it's okay to not to be perfect, but keep trying.

Some symptoms of stress that you may notice include:

- Perseverating fear and worry
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Chronic health/mental health problems worsen
- Substance use/abuse
- Educational issue and/or change in socialization

Kris shared the powerful youtube video, "[Student Reflections on Remote Learning](#)." (Yes, the screen is meant to be black). After listening to the video, Kris challenged attendees to imagine our own children saying these statements. What is one step you'd take to provide support? Answers ranged from "listen, remind them we're on a team, ask them to walk away, have them set boundaries, etc."

Though adults and adolescents are going through these world experiences in similar ways, our adult brains are fully developed. An adolescent brain is still under construction, including the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for much of our reasoning & ability to avoid thought distortion. Students are relying on parents as a teammate to bring to them what they need, and to do that, parents need to listen, listen, listen.

What Can We Do as Parents: Steps for Stability & Support

- **Talk:** Answer questions & share facts about COVID-19 in a way that children can understand; No need to pretend to be an expert
- **Reassure** them in an honest way to their concerns (and not just our own); share how we deal with our own stress
- **Social Media:** Limit exposure to current events/information; however, have a replacement for the time they might have spent on social media (such as video games, which are providing a social aspect & a collective time together virtually). Don't take away something without having a plan on how to replace it.
- **Routines:** Create a visual schedule for learning and relaxing that provides boundaries and structure to the day, as humans thrive on predictability (schools provide visual cues in hallways/classrooms); Possibly have a checklist/whiteboard with goals for the day.
- **Model** effective coping skills by taking breaks, getting enough sleep, having healthy habits & connecting with family & friends; easier said than done. Set up reminders to call/connect with friends & family.
- **Time together:** Meaningful activities like reading, walking, board games, etc. Find something that works for your family & their personalities.

Reducing Suffering

Kris shared the video "[PxR= Suffering: Brad Chapin](#)," which discusses the idea that Pain multiplied by [our] Reaction equals Suffering (PxR=Suffering). When we improve our self-regulation skills, we can greatly reduce reactivity, therein reducing suffering.

Similarly, the Cedar Park staff have been reading the book *Onward* by Eleanor Aguilar that touches on the importance of the space between a negative experience and our reaction to it. The greater that space, the more we can reduce the gravity and strain of our reaction.

Ultimately, when parents give good counsel and provide effective coping strategies to adolescents to deal with pain or negative experiences, our students can see improvement in their amount of suffering.

Here are some examples:

1. **Care:** For ourselves & for others, showing care can reduce stress; taking care of a sibling or participating in outreach can alleviate stress.
2. **Regulation:** Is just a fancy word for calming down; development of emotional regulation means keeping yourself as calm as possible in a "socially tolerable" way. It's okay to be angry, but not screaming out of control etc. (Obviously this is a much larger topic and a quick google search can provide additional resources).
3. **Parry:** A martial arts metaphor describing how you move to allow a stressor to go past you; a cognitive strategy of "dodging a bullet"
4. **Mental Health readiness:** This can be a range from the smallest area (knowing your feelings) to extreme (getting your adolescent therapeutic help) and everything in between.
5. **Optimism:** Cultivating a positive attitude is an underrated skill in combating stress; thinking three good things, however simple, even putting a visual reminder on a mirror to think of three good things.
6. **Recreation:** "Winter is coming," so whatever we can do to help .

Two Ways to Build Resilience:

1. **Three specific actions are better than 1000 intentions:** When things around you are crumbling, it's way better to have three tangible actions that you KNOW will make you feel better (example: running, playing guitar, skateboard). Knowing these items ahead of time (for you and your adolescent) will help in stressful moments and make it easier to cope.
2. **Keeping up your pandemic hygiene:** (Wash hands, wear masks, avoid close contact, stay active, & hydrate) Remaining vigilant and continuing to support our health and our community's health will only be positive.

BE THE SQUIRREL THAT SAVES ALL THE NUTS-- it's getting nutty (with winter coming). Get all of our things organized now, so that when we need it, we are ready to cope and help our students.

Dana Sexton, Cedar Park Social Worker

As parents, we are our own worst critics. Some advice Dana adds would be to list three things we did well each day & give ourselves some grace and recognize what we do right. Look for Dana's list of resources in the next Cedar Reader.

Other Discussion/Ideas:

- Creating pods not just for your students, but for yourself; friends you can connect with every couple weeks
- Connect with Cedar Park's counselors, as they can be a resource for making connections; they are setting up "lunch bunch" events for new/struggling students
- Hopefully the team email directory will help with creating pods/meeting friends; brainstorming how PTC/parents can help facilitate that; additional meetings like this help
- Ms. Ackerman is hoping to start a Friday "Hot Cocoa" Meeting in the mornings in the first 20 minutes before school starts.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:59pm

Next Meeting: January 13, 2021 @ 6:30 PM