

QUESTIONS RECEIVED DURING October 6, 2016 HSA Meeting (Q&A Session with Dr. B)

NON-SPECIFIC

Question/Comment:

Why do we have to use these cards?

Why can't we just have a "town hall" conversation with you?

Clearly parents are frustrated by what we feel are changes, and not in the better. Can we just have a conversation? A respectful, back and forth exchange? Allow this discussion to happen, please. Otherwise, folks will leave here just as frustrated as they were when they arrived.

Question/Comment:

I have been a Lafayette parent for 10 years, and am one of [the] more sufficiently happy. But clearly there are concerns at school among many fellow parents – not an isolated angry few. The principal-parent dynamic is much more difficult and antagonistic than before... so something has changed in give and take, responsiveness, or tone. I urge parents to work through the LSAT, but there must be collective policy awareness, not individual interactions, for all of us to succeed. This is your responsibility as principal, not teachers. We want you to win for the sake of our kids. We need to see some grace and flexibility on all sides.

Question/Comment:

Access helps with a feeling of community. Your comments on building access left me more confused. Is your policy to allow more access? If not, why not?

Question/Comment:

What is your system going to be to make parents feel involved in volunteer activity and welcome in the school without a special invitation?

Question/Comment:

What do you most need from parents? What can we do to help?

LOGISTICS

Question/Comment:

When will the baseball fields be completed? Where's the bell donated by the class of 2013?

Question/Comment:

I'm happy with all the hard work Dr. B has accomplished so far. This is an amazing school and to keep it that way all parents need to be part of the process. And a big, big thank you to HSA board for all your wonderful work and dedication to Lafayette!

[Child 1] and [Child 2] are both having a great year. But this new building is especially amazing for Child 1 who has sensory processing issues, particularly with noise. Every day of school was overwhelming to him due to the noise in the old building. The difference this year in his behavior, attitude, and willingness to work, basically everything is improved because he isn't assaulted by noise constantly.

Question/Comment:

Are you going to add a lot more acoustic paneling throughout the school (especially the cafeteria)?

Question/Comment:

Not a question – an observation: I happen to think we have a principal who – in addition to running the largest elementary school in DC – has navigated through trailers, through a massive school project and through the pressures of increasingly difficult school curriculum. She did it on time. She did it without impacting the children or their education. When does this ever happen? Bravo!

STAFF

Question/Comment:

In corporations, turnover is seen as a flag of concern for senior leadership. How will the school address the 20% turnover rate? How will the school retain its senior teachers who provide mentorship to newer teachers?

Question/Comment:

How can parents support teachers?

Question/Comment:

Why have teachers been told they can't use the words "developmentally appropriate"?

Question/Comment:

Last year, 3rd grade teachers were told that “students should not be reading purely for entertainment.” If everything is supposed to have a PARCC-related purpose, what’s the purpose of putting heads down at lunch?

Question/Comment:

When can teachers and parents see the results of the spring 2016 stakeholders survey for teachers?

Question/Comment:

Are you letting staff choose to be sponsors of events/clubs like Cub Facts, or are you telling them they have to sponsor it?

Question/Comment:

You got a letter from “concerned parents.” Why did you tell the SCAC and then the whole staff that that letter was about parents becoming upset with teachers? That’s not true. Our teachers are awesome. We are concerned about your destroying morale of teachers and kids.

Question/Comment:

Please provide for us every answer for every question on the staff survey.

Question/Comment:

Four of the seven teacher exits were not “life reasons” and the fifth’s “retirement” was a gracious excuse. Where do you get the #2 for staff who didn’t leave for life reasons?

Question/Comment:

Why do you keep blaming teachers? Aren’t you their boss?

CIRICCULUM

Question/Comment:

3rd grade teachers decided as a team to do an art gallery walk/wax museum instead of DC Theater Café. This is aligned with curriculum. The Instructional Coach informed you of the team’s decision.

You told them they had to do the DC Theater Café. Don't the instructional coaches and teachers get to decide what's best? Or are you dictating?

Question/Comment:

Common Core – It does seem like the common core curriculum is not challenging for my kids. Can we work in supplemental or more challenging assignments and give the teachers the latitude to add these to the classroom work? I feel more teacher involvement is needed.

Question/Comment:

What type of training have teachers received to implement NGSS?

Question/Comment:

Have you consistently talked to SCAC about teacher concerns or have you asked the teachers bring concerns individually?

Question/Comment:

In Montgomery County, DIBELS (phonics test) is administered to kindergarten and below. Why did my child, who can read Harry Potter, have to take a phonics test 3 times? And how can you justify pulling the classroom teachers out 20-30 minutes x 3 times per kid?

Question/Comment:

Why did you characterize read-a-loud to students as "glorified babysitting?" don't you know that listening aloud to books is the gateway drug to reading?

Question/Comment:

Can you help us understand strategies used to help bring kids from proficient to advanced?

Question/Comment:

Is it accurate that you used the words "hate-mongering," "racist" and "elitist" to describe parents in your meeting with staff this morning?

Question/Comment:

If one of the 3rd grade teachers instrumental to DC Theater Café got rated so low on contributions to school that her overall rating was pulled down, why would any 3rd grade teacher want to take on that job this year?

Question/Comment:

Given the writing scores, are we having a school-wide essay contest as we did last year?

DISCIPLINE

Question/Comment:

Did the staff want PBIS?

Question/Comment:

I liked Golden L's better. Every kid who got 1 brought home something tangible that could be posted, celebrated, etc. The tickets get stuffed in pockets and don't have the same celebratory positive reinforcement. Why did SAMM tickets get chosen?

Question/Comment:

There has been a shift from a responsive classroom to a reward punishment style classroom over the last years. By all accounts there is a punitive discipline system in place and a reward system that could be viewed as bribing our children. Who made the decision to make this shift, Administration or teachers?

Question/Comment:

For the first time ever, my child is crying and says that he doesn't like going to school because of the harsh environment and excessive punishments. Please explain why you as principal have created such an environment and what the philosophy behind it is?

Question/Comment:

I have a kindergarten student. There is so much focus in his classroom and "working hard." I feel this emphasis is completely inappropriate on the kindergarten level. Why is there such an intense focus on discipline? When I explain this to friends who have children in other DCPS schools, they seem confused.

Question/Comment:

My kid marginalizes kids who go to red on the behavior charts. She thinks they are toxic and untouchable and no amount of explaining helps. Research shows that they all feel this way. Please read from attachment. [[ATTACHED POST ARTICLE: The dark side of classroom behavior management charts, by Katie Hurley, 9/29/16](#)]. Question: will you let teacher who choose to remove the behavior charts from their rooms do so?

Question/Comment:

PBIS all sounds reasonable and mindful sounds good too. But the reality for my two kids are that they feel punished for some minor things like talking at lunch and saying "hi" to friends. And they cry and are not happy like they used to be – and my kids are not the only ones that feel that things have changed towards not rewards but punishment. They lose self-confidence! Why monitor bad behavior like this – is it part of the new system?

Question/Comment:

Dr. B – we really appreciate your hard work and dedication. Thank you! Will you please consider abolishing or modifying silent lunch, silent hallways and "behavior charts" in classrooms? Maybe a Peace Team/Climate Team conference on modifying these things? Thanks.

RECESS

Question/Comment:

I was on the playground today with my younger child. 2nd graders had only 15 minutes of recess. They came out at 11:40 and went in at 11:55. What happened?

Question/Comment:

- 1) Are there any plans to increase recess time for younger students?
- 2) When will the field be finished?

Question/Comment:

My child's class has had recess taken away for punishment this year for misbehavior during lunch. Is this school policy? My understanding was that this was not permitted. Can you please clarify what the school's stance is?

Question/Comment:

During recess, how does a student know what teachers are on the playground?

LUNCH

Question/Comment:

Are you seeing behavioral change in kids during lunch? For instance, are the kids that end up [being pulled from their regular table] the same kids every day?

Question/Comment:

I am deeply concerned about the situation in the lunch room, as are many other parents. The situation is so oppressive my daughter has stopped eating and we have had to consult our pediatrician. I know I am not the only concerned parent. Dr. B, can you please commit to a dialogue on this important issue with a selected group of parents so we can collectively come to a better situation for all?

Question/Comment:

Silent lunch extends beyond 7 minutes. Will this be changed?

Question/Comment:

I am concerned about lunch. My kids tell me that they have to be silent and if they are not they will be moved to another table and they see that as punishment. Also they have to put their head on the table when they are done eating. Please explain?

Question/Comment:

Silent lunch doesn't seem to be achieving its goal as a calm transition. The children report a lot of yelling, being told to put their heads down, and far more than 7 minutes of silence. Socializing at lunch is important to the children and silent lunch is stressing them out. Will you consider eliminating it?

Question/Comment:

Why these silent hallways and silent lunch? 7 minutes at the beginning and 5 minutes at the end of lunch – plus the minutes of silence added for whispering or talking during those 12 minutes – is A LOT of silence, which stifles children's freedom to socialize. Can this be modified?

Question/Comment:

What's the deal with silent lunch? It seems like kids need some time to be loud and mess around. They shouldn't be loud in class, but why not lunch?

Question/Comment:

You haven't answered the question: Will you end silent lunch?

ENVIRONMENT

Question/Comment:

Is the elimination of things such as the wax museum and 5th grade research project driven by teachers, testing demands, DCPS, admin, or what?

Question/Comment:

How much freedom do teachers have to deviate from DCPS – wide curriculum? Do you encourage deviation? Why or why not?

Question/Comment:

I feel as parents we are instrumental in setting the tone for the school. This year has felt fundamentally different than other years as a parent – more negativity, more criticism that is non-constructive and not in the spirit of what Lafayette is about!

Question/Comment:

Is student government being eliminated like other student-run activities such as the newspaper?

Question/Comment:

Why is there not 5 minutes of transition time on the master schedule between recess and lunch?