

Peruvian Park School Community Council Meeting, Oct. 28, 2015

Attending: Leslie Jewkes, Stacey Kratz, Gretchen Murray, Jennifer Crane, Jessica Dalton, Melinda Morgan

ACTION: Melinda Morgan made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Jennifer Crane. Approved.

Leslie Jewkes provided a financial report on our expenditures so far this year. She said that, besides the expected expenses for salaries and related costs, the main monies being spent were for classroom supplies, particularly for Peruvian Park's many new teachers. The supplies are all directly related to curriculum, such as math manipulatives for classrooms that have none of those available.

ACTION: Jennifer Crane made a motion to approve the budget so far; Gretchen Murray seconded the motion; it was approved unanimously.

We started our discussion on digital citizenship and school technology; Ms. Jewkes reported that the filtering system we use is called Lightspeed and that filtering is set at the district level. The goal is to filter out inappropriate materials students may encounter when doing search, and elementary is the most filtered, with filters being somewhat relaxed at the middle school and high school levels. Of course, it is impossible to filter out every bit of inappropriate content, so the school also has the option of reporting problems encountered by students and teachers to the district. The usual procedure is that we notify our "ed tech," Chandra Martz, and the issue is typically resolved by the next day.

Melinda Morgan had questions about who uses the internet at school and how it is governed and regulated by teachers and administrators. Ms. Jewkes replied that every student at school uses the internet in a manner she described as "organically, within the classes and curriculum." Regulation is done within classes as well, with teachers training students in both how to use computers and the internet as well as in how to use the internet safely and be good digital citizens. Mrs. Murray said students typically hear statements from teachers like, "The only web sites you should be using are the ones I told you to use," and that teachers are very active in monitoring what students are doing. Ms. Jewkes said she is a "one-click principal," meaning that any student may accidentally stumble upon inappropriate material as a result of one click and that those students, when they inform their teachers and allow their teachers to help them deal with the problem, are not subject to school discipline. However, students who stumble on inappropriate material with one click and then continue to explore that material or to seek out more inappropriate material are subject to discipline, because they are not acting as respectful, responsible digital citizens — in particular when they involve other students in their activities.

Mrs. Jewkes said that the reporting of problems is typically from the classroom on up and that the school has a technology officer, Mrs. Jessica Chang, who attends training at the district level and then herself trains and updates the teaching staff monthly. Mrs. Chang

planned an information table for our upcoming Family Literacy and Arts Night (FLAN) on Nov. 5 containing resources for parents and families regarding technology and digital citizenship issues. Mrs. Sorensen will host that table at Literacy Night because Mrs. Chang is on maternity leave. In addition, the school in conjunction with the PTA is planning activities related to White Ribbon Week in February, including age-appropriate assemblies for older and younger students and a parent information night, possibly with a district representative.

With regard to devices, each of Peruvian Park's third, fourth and fifth grades have access to their own grade-level iPad cart containing 30 laptops. First grade has an iPad cart with 30 iPads, while kindergarten, using an iPad cart that previously was used by fourth grade, has 5-6 iPads in each classroom that stay with that classroom and are built into those classes' center time; in other words, students doing curricular rotations will have a rotation in which they use the iPads. There also is an iPod cart that gets very limited use, mainly due to the small screen size of iPods. Ms. Jewkes made it clear that Peruvian Park's philosophy regarding use of these devices is that we are not doing "tech for the sake of tech," nor are we using the devices as substitutes for teacher involvement. Instead, usage is determined by teachers, many of whom are very savvy about technology, and the technology is brought into the instruction and curriculum rather than being imposed onto the instruction. Mrs. Murray said the key is that teachers are actively engaged not only in planning technology use within their instruction, but that they are actively engaged in monitoring that use: "If you stand up at the back of the room, you can see all the screens; if you sit down you can't. Sometimes it's as simple as that." Ms. Jewkes also said that the teachers are consistently and continually engaged in instruction as to standards for using technology, teaching students actively (while they are using computers) and a bit at a time about digital citizenship and personal responsibility.

Ms. Jewkes said that our school policy with regard to personal devices is that no personal devices are used at school. Students may bring the devices at their own discretion, but they must be kept in backpacks and turned off and are brought to school at the students' own risk. The only technology used at school is school-owned technology. The greatest risks with this technology are kids giving out personal information and of course seeing things they shouldn't.

Thus far, the council is planning a three-part parent education effort this year, starting with the technology table at Literacy Night on Nov. 5. We will do more planning at our November-December meeting for White Ribbon Week in February and will also send information home. We will continue intermittent and consistent education with students throughout the year, as well. Mrs. Chang and Stacey Kratz will work together on February's activities as well as early planning for an expanded digital citizenship and technology presentation at next year's Literacy Night. FOR OUR PLAN: intermittent education with students throughout the year; same with parents and at least one parent activity at the school, probably during White Ribbon Week; Mrs. Chang and I will work together for February and do something for FLAN next year; Sarah and Jessica doing the table at FLAN.

Several parent members expressed surprise both at the extent of technology use at school; i.e., that every student from kindergarten through fifth grade uses computers. Stacey Kratz said she is a supporter of the district's entire approach to technology, in which filtering is as sophisticated and frequently updated as possible, but which also acknowledges that no filter is perfect and puts a strong emphasis on teaching students how to govern themselves in the digital realm. She said it would be great to have a district representative come to talk to parents about these issues, because she was impressed with a similar presentation given by district IT personnel at PTA fall leadership training. She also said that she, as a parent, finds it empowering to think of our approach to students using technology not as attempting to build a secure fortress with the students vulnerable inside, but as building as secure a fortress as we can while also teaching the students to be good digital warriors and give them the tools and training to fight back against inappropriate material and practices. Several council members also expressed the feeling that, given how much of Ms. Jewkes' presentation was news to the parent members, efforts to educate parents about technology at school is an excellent idea.

At our next meeting on Nov. 18, we will take a look at major/moderate/minor discipline at school and how that is going so far; she said that, this year, teachers seem to be handling a lot of disciplinary interactions in classrooms. The school also is working on trying to make our referral system electronic; Chandra Martz is working on that with us to resolve several issues before the system can be taken live.

ADJOURN