

## PTO Meeting Minutes:

**Date:** Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**Attendance:** 16 people

### 1.) Anna Krughoff - Interim Director:

- Anna talked about “asking the question”: Are kids happy at school? As the school counselor, Sarah Fahey would be talking today about this from the students’ lens.
- Anna is well educated in the topic of what happens to your brain when you are happy, and how that translates into the classroom. She said that it helps students academically, and they have better performance, because the brain is flooded in cortisol, and there have been a lot of studies done about when a child does not feel safe, and how they can struggle with learning because of the excess cortisol.
- Anna talked about implementing student surveys to see how the kids are feeling, about teaching them to be advocates, and about asking students about what they need. When students are feeling pressure, we can give them the resources they need.
- Anna said that Sarah has a master’s in counselling, is well versed in this area, and encouraged parents to access Sarah as a resource for their child(ren).

### 2.) Sarah Fahey- School Administrator/Counselor

- Sarah’s background; she has lived here for 15 years, has her masters in counselling, and credits being an empath and introvert to allowing her to approach kids in a way that connects and helps them.
- Sarah discussed “What is a school counsellor”?, then explained that she is available to help kids whenever they need it, does individual one-on-one counselling, does small groups, and forms groups based on what she’s seeing and the need at the school.
- She talked about how there is an incredible new staff, and she has more time now to spend on counselling, getting in the classroom more, and parent support - she reaches out to parents if she’s noticing something at school with the children.
- She’s here to help and support and to use as a teacher resource, working with the teachers to come up with solutions – does observations in the classroom etc.
- Her role also is in crisis response, which has been minor this year, but as an example, in past years has helped with things like: a parent dying and when a child died in a car accident; she steps in and helps in these situations.
- Sarah indicated that she likes to celebrate with the kids too, sharing their wins, getting called into a classroom to be a part of wins, etc.
- Sarah said that it brings her so much joy, she knows every child by name, and she wants them to feel comfortable with her.
- Sarah discussed what she doesn’t do: she doesn’t diagnose, prescribe medication, or psychoanalyze (long-term Freudian therapy).
- Sarah explained that the main topics that come up are in the areas of: boundaries, healthy friendships, relationships, loss, body image, family struggles, being new, and fitting in. She indicated that 80% of what she sees are surrounding friendships.
- Sarah helps the students by working on them with: goal setting, perspective taking, normalizing experiences, helping them identify what they want, building resilience, moving away from absolutes (never’s and always’), a lot of breathing and pause work, encouraging the kids to meet their needs from the inside out, and the circle of control (acknowledging what you can control and what you can’t).

- Sarah clarifies her rules for confidentiality with the kids (exceptions: you're being hurt, you're planning on hurting someone else, or hurting yourself) and if she's going to tell this she'll tell them first.
- Sarah talked about this great reframe: "Attention seeking is Connection seeking" (see Sarah's presentation notes to dive deeper on this topic).
- Sarah told the parents: "You are their safe space, they are using everything they have to keep it together all day at school, and when they come home they need to just let it out, and you are their safe space to do that".
- Sarah also said that just 5-10 minutes of focused time with your child will go so much further than an entire day with your child, distracted.
- Sarah talked about the topic of choice: "Kids are at various developmental stages going into their independence and autonomy; if they are freaking out when you drop them off just know they are fine within 5 mins, just reassure them that they will have a good day".

### 3.) Save the Date/Admin Notes:

- a. January 11<sup>th</sup>: Anna discussed that the PTO will be holding an Open House for the next PTO meeting for all parents. It will include an opportunity for the parents to come together on the school grounds in an Open House format, with a short PTO meeting, and a fresh and invigorating way to launch us off into the New Year. Also at the Open House will be a State Of The Union for the academic components. It will be a unique PTO/ Open House event, with the PTO meeting at 9:30, immediately followed by the Open House at 10:00am.
- b. January ??: Teacher Appreciation breakfast
- c. 6/7 laptops donated by the PTO are currently on campus for use by the school.
- d. PTO has approved two grants for teachers to purchase reading books for their classes.

### 4.) Open Q & A and Discussion:

- a. Question: One of the attending parents asked: "With regards to the PTO new Leadership initiatives with the new committees formed, what are their long-term strategies and initiatives for the school; what are the goals and how are we carrying them out?" It was further asked about the roles of each volunteer in the committees, and how could the parents better understand how they can contribute to them.

Answer: Anna indicated that now that the board has been formed, and it's working in a much better capacity, the leaders are now given the space to really lean into doing that work. She talked about how it's a work in progress, and offered that maybe it's a one-page document for each grade where the long-term strategic goals are presented would be a good strategy to implement. She noted that it's a process and we are doing it and that we choose 5 strategic goals.

- b. Robin Chatten – Organizational/Resource Development Committee: Robin had sent in the following brief update for the PTO meeting: "We are working on and preparing for strategic planning items kicking off in the new year".

The meeting ended at 9:45am. Next meeting will take place at the school for the "Open House/PTO Meeting" January 11<sup>th</sup>.