

McDonogh 35 Parent Teacher Organization Meeting with School Leadership REPORT FROM SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

On September 18, 2018, the Executive Board of the McDonogh 35 Parent Teacher Organization met with school leadership to raise concerns shared by parents of students at McDonogh 35.

The PTO was represented by President Treschere Washington, Vice President Lynn Pittman, Treasurer Zanda Dandy, Recording Secretary Dave Cash, Corresponding Secretary Trenise Pittman, and Sergeant-at-Arms Ronald Magee.

The school's leadership was represented by Executive Director Harold Clay, Operations Manager Samantha Pichon, and Business Manager Cochanda Caston.

Cell Phone Policy

Mr. Clay said that the cell phone policy is such that students are not allowed to use their cell phones on campus at any time. They must be powered off at all times on campus. The first time, they are taken until the student serves Saturday detention. The second time, the phone is taken for nine weeks. He said that this policy protects our young people from cyberthreats, cyberbullying, sexting, and other laws.

President Washington thanked Mr. Clay for clarifying the policy.

Mr. Clay said he is not trying to go through the Code of Conduct behind a cell phone. But he wants to make sure that the school is not party to a lawsuit. He said the policy has been clearly and repeatedly disseminated.

School Lunch Policy and Acceptable Food Brought into School

President Washington thanked Mr. Clay for adding fresh fruit and vegetables to the cafeteria at lunch.

Mr. Clay said that if there is a health or medical need for specific dietary needs, students need to bring in a note from a physician. He also said that if students have religious dietary restrictions, students need to bring a note to Mr. Clay from a parent explaining the restriction.

Time Allotted for Lunch

Mr. Clay said that based on their monitoring, only 390 students are consistently eating lunch. He said that if students do not spend time talking or waiting to the last minute to get into line, there is plenty of time for everyone to eat in 30 minutes.

New School Bus Schedule and Routes

President Washington explained that some parents are experiencing problems with where they are supposed to stand to get picked up.

Ms. Pichon asked for the names of the specific students experiencing these problems. Mr. Clay said that they can address the issues as they come up. Ms. Pichon said parents can call the bus company to get specific route information.

Student Check Out Procedures

President Washington said that some parents didn't know about the 3:00 p.m. deadline to pick up students, but that we explained it to them and now they understand.

Mr. Clay explained the purpose for the policy, which is that finding children during dismissal, when they might already be on buses, is difficult.

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Parental Access to School

Vice President Pittman said parents wanted to know how they can visit classes. Mr. Clay said that visits like that can be arranged with Ms. Bertrand, at which point the Parent Liaison will explain the do's and don'ts to the parent before allowing them to visit.

Ms. Washington asked that parents who wish to volunteer to march in parades be recruited early, so they can have their backgrounds checked prior to parade season.

PTO meetings came up as a possible place to collect parade chaperon sign-up forms. President Washington also wanted the form to be available online as well. She doesn't want that to happen at the last minute.

Mr. Clay said the school can get the word out that people need a state and local background check.

Computers for the Parent Information Center

Mr. Clay said that they are working getting the computers (four, he thinks). He does not have an estimated date. He said that funds for the computers will likely come from McDonogh 35 MFP funds.

President Washington expressed concern that funding would take away from monies for students. Mr. Magee said that some of the Title I monies were supposed to be spent on parental involvement. Mr. Clay said that money may be allocated for this purpose, but perhaps not enough.

Scheduling Regular Advocacy Meetings with School Leaders

Mr. Clay agreed to meet monthly, but not on a regular date. He prefers 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. He would like to receive an agenda prior to these meetings. He said he may not always be able to attend, but that a representative from leadership will always be present.

Concerns about Ms. Bertrand

President Washington shared concerns expressed by parents about Ms. Bertrand and the way she interacts with them.

Mr. Clay said he could look into it. He said he has not witnessed what parents are sharing. He said that customer service is important to him and he will observe.

Treasurer Dandy said that she has never experienced rudeness from Ms. Bertrand.

Sergeant at Arms Magee asked if security and the receptionist were the same duty. Mr. Clay said they were different. Mr. Clay said that the monitoring of the metal detector and visitor sign-in are handled by security.

Mr. Magee said security is his pet peeve. Mr. Clay said that his background also makes security his priority. He said that this building has twenty-eight doors and that they cannot be effectively secured with the amount of security we have. He said it would take at least six to seven security officers to properly secure the number of doors the school has. We have two. Right now, one works the front desk and one roams.

Mr. Magee asked if chimes could be added to the doors. Several members noted how expensive it would be. Mr. Magee asked if Mr. Clay was putting a price on children's safety. Mr. Clay said he was not and wanted it to be clearly noted.

President Washington asked if reserve police or sheriff officers could be tapped to help with security at the school.