

## Parent Connection Minutes

October 20, 2009, noon

**Chair Report: Carol Hennessy** opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Carol introduced herself, and then asked the rest of the Parent Connection (PC) Leadership Team for reports, if any. There were only two Leadership reports:

**Staff Luncheon Coordinator: Kathleen McAteer**—There will be a potluck dinner provided to the teachers during conferences next week. Thursday October 29 is a long day with conferences all day and evening. During a brief one-hour break, teachers refuel with a parent-prepared potluck. Please consider helping and reply to Kathleen McAteer ([k.mcateer@comcast.net](mailto:k.mcateer@comcast.net), 754-7537) to indicate what you will bring (please refer to an email that was sent last week for requests and food categories). Please reply by Monday, October 26.

**Website: Alesia Duncombe**—She is keeping the website up-to-date. The slideshow on the front page has primarily sports-related photos and more diversity is needed. If you have other school-related photos that you would like to include in the slideshow please send them to her at [spartanwebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:spartanwebmaster@gmail.com).

Alesia is changing the website calendar to Google Calendar, which allows her to work on it from home anytime, instead of having to be at CHS to make changes. For those of you who use Google Calendar, you can download CHS events from the website to your calendar. You should see a change in two to three weeks.

**Carol Hennessy** is always interested in new thoughts and ideas and welcomes all input [chenness@peak.org](mailto:chenness@peak.org).

### **Dawn Granger—Principal**

**What's New at CHS—Conferences** (October 28 and 29): there has been huge interest this year—much more than past years. Most teachers were full after two days of scheduling; 243 people called in the first two days. The amount of conference time is the same as past years, but there was much more parental interest this year. A temporary employee had to be hired to handle the requests. Some teachers have up to 160 students and only 66 time slots to meet with parents. Teachers with AP (advanced placement) classes usually fill up first. Dawn urges parents who didn't get conferences scheduled to contact teachers directly to set up a meeting time. Use email or voice mail, and most teachers will respond within 24 to 48 hours (see the CHS website [www.csd509j.net/chs](http://www.csd509j.net/chs) for teacher contact information). There is a drop-in time on Thursday, Oct. 29 from 2:10 to 4:30. All conferences are in the cafeteria. Teacher conference times cannot be increased, because teachers have a set number of hours in their contracts for conferences. Dawn always welcomes input from parents—conference times could be renegotiated for next year.

*Budget:* Even though \$110,000 was cut from last year's budget, we managed to avoid increased class size overall. However, if we do not increase enrollment, we will lose \$98,000. We are currently 38-39 students down in enrollment. This may equate to one less FTE.

This year our district schools are funded from three sources: (1) General Fund, (2) Local Option levy approved by Corvallis voters, and (3) Federal stimuli dollars.

1. General Fund: The legislature allocated \$6 million to K-12 education *contingent on two things:* First, that state revenues would meet their budget projections and allow for a reserve exceeding \$300 million. If the reserves fall below that amount, K-12 funding will be cut to \$5.8 billion. The Oregon economic forecast for September showed smaller revenue collections than budgeted. If this continues, Corvallis would see about \$2.3 million less this biennium. Second, that the income tax increases approved by the legislature would hold. These increases have been referred to voters and we won't know the outcome until late January. The increased taxes added \$733 million to the state budget. If this revenue is cut, Corvallis could expect to have \$3.2 to \$3.7 million less state school funding over this biennium.

2. The Local Option is a continuing levy and we expect that it will be stable over the next two years. Reducing class sizes in core subjects was the primary purpose of the levy. Middle and High schools received 40 teachers in language arts, math, social studies and science from the Local Option levy, along with support at the high schools for athletics/activities, and career learning. Corvallis K-12 students have 59 teachers in total paid for by the Local Option levy this year.

3. Oregon used \$570 million in state fiscal stabilization stimulus money to help balance the budget for 2008-09 and 2009-10. The Corvallis share of this money was \$3 million and it saved 16.5 teacher jobs in 2008-09 and 21.3 teacher jobs this year. This stimulus money was intended to be a one-time boost for the national economy and isn't likely to be available for the 2011-13 biennium.

Dawn would like to get input from parents—please let her know what your priorities are for next year. Where should resources be focused to best serve students?

*Achievement Gap and Attendance:* a priority for Dawn is to narrow the achievement gap and she is focused on the school improvement plan and the staff development plan to improve equal access to all school programs for everyone at CHS. A primary concern is attendance, and one solution is making "contracts" with students to keep up their attendance. Freshmen are the worst offenders. Last year 70 freshmen were considered "credit deficient" which meant their status at the beginning of this school year did not advance to sophomore—and this in large part was due to poor attendance. Failed classes must be retaken, unlike in middle school. In high school if you fail, you don't move on, you must meet a level of proficiency. A problem with freshmen is the belief that things "didn't count in middle school" and they need to know how serious attendance is in high school, and this perhaps should be emphasized at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade open house. The open campus can make it easier for freshmen to fail. Your student's attendance and grades are updated each week and can be seen via the Pinnacle Internet Viewer

accessed through the CHS Website. (To log in, the student's ID number and a parent password are needed. These are available from Linda Keller, counseling office administrative assistant, or Karen Nelson, registrar. Due to confidentiality restrictions, CHS is unable to give Pinnacle access information over the phone.)

*Northwest Association of Accredited Schools:* CHS is in good standing—we have met the teacher load standards for the first time, as well as the counselor loads. We now have four counselors, and with 1,219 students, that means about 306 students per counselor, which is lower than in the past. Students need counselors for a variety of things and now that we have four, they can do more.

*TV in Forum:* temporarily gone—there was a pane of glass over the TV that allowed no access, so a cabinet is being created that will allow access to the TV.

**Julie Williams—Teacher, Gay Straight Alliance Club Advisor, Green Club Advisor, Aerobics Club Advisor, Assistant Track Coach**

Julie was going to speak today about sustainability and society, solar panels for CHS, Gay Straight Alliance Club Advisor, and Green Club, but she was sick, and will be rescheduled.

**Counselors—Keri Phipps and Matt McDonough**

We have two new counselors this year, Keri Phipps and Matt McDonough. Keri was a counselor at middle school for six years before coming to CHS, and this is Matt's first year as a high school counselor. He worked previously in college admissions and at Linus Pauling with at-risk students.

The following is a synopsis of items they both talked about:

*Career Learning Curriculum:* Both are coordinating with **Donna Keim** (Career-related Learning Assistant). As part of their 7-12 education, students in Oregon are required to complete career-related learning activities designed to help them develop an understanding of their personal strengths and interests and to set goals for their future. Go to the district home page for more information on career learning ([www.csd509j.net/district\\_information/departments\\_and\\_services/extended\\_learning/](http://www.csd509j.net/district_information/departments_and_services/extended_learning/)).

Each counselor is given responsibility for Advisor Program Development: Keri Phipps has freshmen, Josh Miller has sophomores, Matt McDonough has juniors, and Cathy Wright has seniors.

CHS is on top of advisory and career-related learning compared to other high schools. Counselors are trying to connect school activities with the work force. One example is attending the OSU job fair in the spring, where students get good advice on important job-seeking skills and experience with mock interviews.

*“High School Counts!” and College Now:* “High School Counts!” is a booklet that has been designed to not only help students chart their way to a high school diploma, but to also look at various career paths and see what sort of educational foundation can be laid to help them reach their goals. These were handed out at College Planning Night during the “High School Counts!” presentation on Oct. 1 and can be downloaded from the district website

([www.csd509j.net/district\\_information/departments\\_and\\_services/extended\\_learning/highschoolcount](http://www.csd509j.net/district_information/departments_and_services/extended_learning/highschoolcount))

[s.html](#)). On Page 12 is a list of **College Now** classes offered at CHS—if you don't know about it, this is the best deal in town. A large number of classes taught at CHS qualify for high school and LBCC credit. To participate in the program, you must pay a one-time processing fee of \$25, through Beyond CHS, CHS College Now teachers, or at LBCC Benton Center. These credits are accepted at all OUS schools, state schools of Washington and California, and others. You can visit LBCC's website (<http://www.linnbenton.edu/go/collegenow>) for an updated list of courses and teachers. This can be a huge cost savings for an initial \$25 investment; some students can start college at the sophomore level. This is not retroactive—your student must be enrolled in College Now by the end of the class to get credit for it.

*Letters of Recommendation:* Most students applying to a four-year college or university will need a letter of recommendation from their counselor. Many will also need a letter of recommendation from one or two teachers. There is a student assistance packet for letters of recommendation in Beyond CHS. Students answer a lot of questions in the packet and then share their responses with their counselor and select teachers. Students must initiate requests for letters of recommendation; it doesn't reflect well on the student to have the parent do this. The counselors are meeting with all the seniors and letting them know what they need to do depending on the college(s) they are applying for. Assistance is always available in Beyond CHS. Seniors should ask teachers if they would be willing to write a letter of recommendation as soon as possible in their senior year. Some students ask teachers at the end of their junior year. Some teachers may limit the number of letters they write so it is good to be early, especially for early decision applications. Teachers typically require a month advance notice to prepare a letter. Some teachers write a great number of letters on behalf of students.

For general academic advising, special ed, or emotional concerns, etc., the students are divided alphabetically among counselors as follows: Josh Miller A-E; Keri Phipps F-K; Matt McDonough L-Ri; and Cathy Wright Ro-Z.

**Next PC Meeting**—November 17—please note that this is an evening meeting, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sally Olson-Edge  
PC Secretary

Parent Connection is a group of parents, for parents and guardians, who foster and facilitate communication within the CHS community. There are monthly meetings scheduled for the 3rd Tuesday of each month with CHS Principal Dawn Granger. Everyone is welcome.