SGS Family Association Meeting

September 26, 2019

Present: Approx 25 people representing all grades. Dialed in: 6 people. 4 board members participated including 3 current parent/board members.

Staff: Phelana Pang and Brenda Leaks

Minutes captured by SFA Secretary Janet Ceballos

(Please understand the notes captured below are our best effort at representing the content and intent of the discussion. There may be unintended gaps or misrepresentation in our effort to be as comprehensive as possible. If you have questions or concerns please reach out to Brenda Leaks or Catherine Stanley.)

Grade level Updates:

5th Grade: 5th-grade camping trip was very successful and the students enjoyed it very much. It was a great bonding experience. In addition, the mask art projects and public speaking about masks was a success for all the students. Moving forward, activities planned for 5th grade are: parents’ happy hour this weekend and asking people to join the pumpkin carving party on Oct 4th, bowling trip in October and pool swim in January. Stay tuned for more details or reach out directly to Family Reps: David Spohr, david.spohr@gmail.com, or Sabrina Scott, sabrinasscott@gmail.com

6th Grade: Girls had a great time at Camp Sealth. Dad’s night out next Wednesday, 10/2. Other parents requested a Non-conforming parent night out. For more details or questions reach out directly to Family Reps: Satcha Dearborn Graham, satchadear@hotmail.com or Lisa Erlinger, drlisa@hotmail.com

7th Grade: Positive feedback from camp. Pajama day was welcomed after camping trip. Parents coordinating grade level activities have a Doodle poll out requesting preferred days for weekend and list of activities to do and service project ideas requested. Nothing scheduled yet. For information or questions reach out directly to Family Reps: Heather McAdam, hdwalters22@yahoo.com or Christine Stoffels, christine.stoffels403@gmail.com

8th grade: Camp underway. Planning a swim party next month. Lots of discussion about Spanish immersion trip. 8th grade rep, Kim, is planning on email reminders of events and activity coordination. For information or questions reach out directly to Family Rep: Kim Jones, kimljones08@outlook.com.

Reminder, Annual fund kick off begins Friday, 10/4/19. Pizza, salad and Molly Moons for dessert will be provided. Pumpkin carving competition. Lots of fun for the whole family.
Brenda Leaks Facilitates Discussion on School Partnership*

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Brenda began the conversation explaining the purpose of the discussion and some background. The idea came after a conversation with SFA Co-Chair, Catherine Stanley, as they discussed the importance of strong Family and School Partnership in making sure our children get what they need from all perspectives. The underlying goal of this approach is to come together to create a cohesive message/action to provide all students with the supports they need to be successful. Brenda shared that she had been able to reflect on the output of the parent led discussion on School/Family Partnership at the last SFA meeting on Sept 13th, 2019. Find the Output [here](#). While she had not reviewed the results of the survey, sent to the school community on September 23rd, 2019, approximately ¼ of school families had already responded. Brenda encourages families who have not, to respond to the survey as the discussion on Partnership is on-going and will inform future discussion. She will review the results. Very similar to the SFA led discussion on Sept 13th, the survey provides an opportunity for Families to reflect and provide feedback on what partnership between families and school looked like.

The questions in both the SFA discussion on Sept 13th and via the survey were asked from the perspective of what the school is doing/not doing and what families are doing/not doing.

Brenda selected some themes that emerged from the output of the SFA Discussion on the 13th Brenda’s selected:

- Communication
- Trust
- Engagement.

Shared values, being connected, being focused on the students connected all three of the above theme. Brenda based her facilitation of the discussion on these three themes.

In reflecting on communication, Brenda sharing on what parents expressed that the school/staff/faculty does well (inside the circle): Caring, passion and engagement. Push kids forward to be their best self. The second thing SGS does that is positive is Friday Forum.

Sharing on what may need to be strengthened includes (Outside of the circle): Communication. Parents don’t feel they have the right information at the right time. Parent education and group identity. Parent groups, what other support can be given.
Decision making clarity. When decisions are made how do those decisions evolve and if parents voices are included. Expanding diversity is another important thing SGS can do better. Partnership will be stronger if more of this is done.

Brenda also shared how families reflected on what they are doing well (inside the circle) Volunteer, and supporting message of SGS.

And what Families may want to strengthen based on their own reflections, Amplify SGS, fundraising, SGS awareness.

In addressing Trust, Brenda sought to dive deeper with the group and do break out discussions at each of 4 tables. She asked each table to reflect on How do parents builds trust with school how do school builds trust with parents. Brenda provided post it notes for table output and a scribe was identified in each table. Following 5 minutes of small group/table discussions

Breakout Report Back:

Nice things is having accessibility of teachers when there is an issue, Assume positive intent when someone brings up an issue, transparency on how things are done. Reflecting on what the other side has to say. Looking deeper into issue, if a behavioral issue is happening look at underlying problem.

Know my name, my child’s name. Accuracy of posts, make sure Friday forum is accurate. Clear communication about making sure my child is safe ie. lockdown. When teacher’s say they will do something actually do it. Complex social emotional problems, help kids with this. Address issues of diversity. When a crisis happens, make sure things are handled properly. Or when a custody dispute was happening administration took steps to address it and handle it.

Trust and safety. Open communication when there is a lockdown or neighborhood concerns. Responding to emotional needs of our kids especially around drama periods. Being proactive by anticipating concerns. Get proactive communication about what kids will be doing, contingency plans of what if? Taking situations seriously with timely follow-up. And do what you say you are going to do.

Transparency, champion our accomplishments but show vulnerability and needs. Leaning in during transitions so parents are included in status updates and process. 2 way street communication. Having a process that stem from small issues to big issues. Continuity: we follow-up as we say we are going to do. Welcoming feedback and not feeling guilty about it.

Brenda listened to the above reflections of each group and shared, when you are not feeling heard, bring that concern forward so we can make it right. Trust is earned in drops and lost in buckets. The biggest sign of trust is that we bring our kids every day.
Following on from the break out reflections Brenda asked parents if they wanted to share anything further. Parents shared the following Experiences:

Parent: A girl came mid year. From a big school while she was feeling vulnerable. She has found an incredible wealth of self-assuredness. Sometimes what is happening in school might not be felt immediately but it will be felt in the future.

Parent: When kids have needs to support their learning abilities the Arc of support and partnership, while many ups and downs, has been remarkable. Each year through partnership and increasing transparency there have been school and family improvements. When the school articulates what it can and cannot do, setting expectations has been great. Through all of this, the girl has blossomed and the trust she has developed has been amazing. However, within this web, how is curriculum determined and how are teachers being supported/developed, how are kids being consistently assessed? That has created anxiety for parents. But metrics are not always provided which is what I want. Is my daughter blossoming academically the way she should be - e.g. at grade level.

Brenda: One reality is that SGS doesn’t look like every other school. Projects, materials, everything looks different.

Parent: My daughter has ADHD, has worked with teachers to help her direct her. Tend to see at home, big behavior problems when something is going on at school. Ebb and flow about school and tasks.

Brenda: Phelana and Brenda brainstorming school family partnership and how the goal is to develop students who advocate. One example is the 95, 5 rule. 95% of the time student should be advocating and bring things forward and 5% they need our help. Parents should think How can I coach my child to advocate for herself. We guarantee process but not outcomes. 100% of the time we will jump in but that doesn’t mean it will feel like 100% positive outcome.

Parent: 95, 5 not reasonable for them, especially 5th graders - maybe 70%/30%. As they grow within SGS then it applies but not for the younger girls.

Parent: Our trusts is bounced of my daughter’s trust. If she is feeling unhappy I will be unhappy.

Brenda: Quote: “We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.” We hope you come with a sense of curiosity and partnership when issues arise. For some of our kids everything is a crisis.

Brenda: We encourage you to ask questions of your girls but don’t interview for pain. Give me a rose and a thorn. Don’t ask questions to draw out the negative. Teachers try to get the story and sometimes the approach is different from the parent perspective.

Parent: What do you take away from this process?
Brenda: relationships are built in conversations. If we’re not having the conversations then we are not building partnerships.

Parent: How does this get shared?

Brenda: SGS faculty is very self-aware and as we move forward we get more topical. Phelana & Brenda will debrief and bring it back to faculty so we can think about what we can do.

Follow-up is important and we will try to get better. There are hot topics related to math and decision making over the course of the year we can address it in meeting like this. **The next SFA hosted Discussion with Phelana and Brenda is Thursday, November 7th.**

With this we went just over 7pm. Brenda thanked everyone for participating, Catherine encouraged people to complete the survey and pressed the idea this is a continuing discussion. With that the meeting ended.

The notes below are captured directly from each Small Group/Table discussions scribes’ post-it notes. These are the actual notes, read outs captured above were summaries in many cases.

1. Timely specific responses to questions

2. Trust as it relates to transparency, championing accomplishments but also showing vulnerability/needs, two way street in communication. Process that stems from small issues and paying attention to larger issues- continuity. Leaning in especially during transition. Welcoming feedback.

3. Trust and Safety- Lock downs during police activity, Crosswalks

4. Emotional Needs of children, especially during “Drama”

5. Proactive by anticipating concerns

6. Doing what you say you are going to do

7. Taking situations seriously with timely follow-up (repeat)

8. How do parents build trust? Accessibility to teachers, responsiveness, understanding, follow-up, basics of good communication, hearing and reflecting, (repeat), transparency, how our kids feel and school with what is shared. Sharing curriculum. Assuming positive intent, school looking deeper- like in behavioral issue- school stepping back and looking at context.

9. Knowing kids are safe- prompt communications e.g. lockdowns (repeat). Know my name, accuracy with information/dates, the way crises are handled: Eg, custody disputes, teacher transitions, SGS doing exactly what they say they will do re: Special education and needs
10. Having mentorship and feeling heard around having kids of color. Helping managing social emotional problems. Kids are having friendship breaks. Stand ups, talking about how kids are the same and different. Community building.