



PCW Orientation

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Holton-Arms School

Featuring Guest Speaker Phyllis Fagell, LCPC

Introduction

Susan Newell, President of PCW:

- Expressed gratitude to Holton for hosting the event.
- Holton was an original founding member of PCW 55 years ago.
- PCW's mission is to foster communication and connect schools, parents, administration and faculty.
- Schools pay membership dues to belong to PCW and PCW puts on annual programs for the school communities.
- Introduced all PCW Board Members and schools represented.

Program – PCW Orientation: Elizabeth Savage, Co-Chair of Orientation:

Introduction

- PCW's theme for the year is *Healthy. Connected. Engaged.*
- Orientation exists to empower PCW Representatives at all member schools to make PCW work in the best possible way for their schools.
- PCW is a non-profit in existence since 1964 with more than 50 dues-paying schools representing more than 25,000 students in the DC metropolitan area.
- PCW creates 8-10 programs each year for parents, students, and administrators of schools.

How to Be an Effective PCW Rep

- Learn about the PCW programs. Use the yellow card from today's hand-outs, which tells the date/time, venue, and audience for each program.
- Read the pink paper that you also received today detailing your responsibilities.
- Attend and promote the programs at your school. Invite your friends, and encourage administration/faculty to attend. Remember that the Fall Speaker event is open to the public.

- Find out who at the school to talk with about sharing information. It is different at different schools – it might be a communications director, the PA President, etc.
- Read and follow the PCW Checklist that you will receive by email once a month. This details what to do every month.
- Share materials from the PCW events with your schools.
- Consult the PCW website which has comprehensive information about programs past and present.
- Follow and “like” the PCW Facebook & Twitter pages. Share articles.
- Attend one or more of the casual PCW coffees this year, which will be held 4 times (October, November, January and March).
- Refer to the “Resources for Reps” section of the PCW Website.
<https://www.parentscouncil.org/resources/resources-for-reps/>

Roundtables/Breakout Session

Each table met as a group with a PCW Board Member and the Reps from their schools and discussed how to be an effective PCW Rep: Publicize, Promote, Attend, Distribute!

Featured Speaker -- Phyllis Fagell, LCPC

Phyllis Fagell is a licensed clinical professional counselor, school counselor at Sheridan School, and author of Middle School Matters: the 10 Key Skills Kids Need to Thrive in Middle School and Beyond - and How Parents Can Help; see <http://www.phyllisfagell.com>

- Ms. Fagell recommends attending Lisa Damour’s talk at PCW’s Fall Speaker event on November 14, 2019 at 8:30am at National Presbyterian School.
<https://www.drlicadamour.com>
- When she started writing the book *Middle School Matters*, Ms. Fagell was wearing multiple hats: counselor at a large school, counselor in private practice, and a parent.
- She believes that the tween age group (she defines as ages 10-15) is not well-understood by schools or parents.
- Different schools define the Middle School years differently but from a clinical standpoint the age group 10-15 has commonalities.
- Some reasons why these years are so important:
 - Confidence and creativity drop.
 - Rates of mental illness and suicide increase.
 - Kids are forming their identities.
 - Kids are solidifying their values.
 - Kids can become less resilient.
 - Kids are still watching parents, who still have influence, even though it may not seem that way.
 - Parents need to be more involved than ever at this age. Children are smart, interested in social justice, and malleable, and need lots of guidance to channel their impulses positively.

- Common myths about this age:
 - Middle Schoolers are looking for drama.
 - In fact, they may feel very intensely because they do not have as many experiences to compare to (everything is a 10!), but they are not looking to be dramatic.
 - Best strategy when dealing with high levels of emotion is to coach them, but do not tell them what to do. Listen with empathy.
 - They want to be their best selves, but it can be hard. Help remind them of their best selves. Instead of commenting on their choices, ask if their choice reflected their best self. If they made a mistake, ask how they could make amends.
 - They are embarrassed by us.
 - In fact, they are just embarrassed to be with us instead of with their friends. But they probably do not find us as individuals embarrassing. Learn to say hello and keep walking.
 - They are trying to push our buttons.
 - Kids this age lie a lot. She discusses this at length in her book. They are not doing it to push our buttons – it is developmentally normal.
 - They want to figure out our beliefs so they can rebel against them.
 - They are the temperature, and we are the thermometer.
 - They do not want to talk.
 - Kids this age become more internal than at an earlier age, but they still want to talk.
 - If we can keep the conversation more open-ended, they will be more likely to engage.

- 10 Key Skills for Teens to Thrive
 - Make good friend choices
 - Negotiate conflict
 - Manage student-teacher mismatches
 - Create homework and organization systems
 - Consider others' perspectives
 - Self-advocate
 - Self-regulate emotion
 - Cultivate passions and recognize limits
 - Make reasonable, safe, healthy, ethical choices
 - Create and innovate

- More nuggets of wisdom
 - Only 2% of friendships from 7th grade last through 12th grade.
 - It is very important for children this age to feel competent, capable and independent. Allow them to do many things for themselves.
 - A telling quote from a tween: “I feel simultaneously judged and ignored.”
 - Every emotion at this age can feel like a 10 since they do not have as much life experience for comparison.

- To teach coping strategies, keep a log of strategies that work and strategies that do not work.
- Middle Schoolers want to be independent, but also want to be hugged and supported.
- It is a critical age to teach them to take care of themselves.
- The best rules for kids this age are rules that parents and children create and revise together.
- Especially with technology rules, Ms. Fagell is a fan of experimenting and tinkering to find the rules that work the best.
- With respect to clothing, Ms. Fagell recommends letting children express themselves outwardly with their clothing. They are expressing their identity this way. It is interesting to see what it is and how it changes.
- Adults sharing their own failures helps children to continue to take risks and keep creativity alive.
- To create good conversation, let them lead and figure out what they want to talk about. The least good strategy for this is a lecture.
- To help kids continue to take risks, help them find a smaller step toward the risky thing. If risk is on a scale of 1-10, do not push them to do a 10. Help them find a 4-7 on the scale.
- Maintain your sense of humor!