



Parent Association Presidents' Forum

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Zoom

The Parent Association Presidents' Forum for incoming and outgoing Parent Association (PA) Presidents was held on Tuesday, May 11, 2021 via Zoom from 9:30am - 11:00am.

Participants gathered briefly for introductory remarks and an event overview by PCW President, Frazier Schulman, followed by a brief summary of the 2021-22 programming year by incoming PCW President, Elizabeth Savage.

Participants were then grouped into three online breakout groups with PA Presidents representing schools from K-8, K-12, and 6-12 schools. After the breakout discussions, participants returned to report out to the full group.

Suggested topics of discussion were presented in the agenda as follows:

- Transition to In-person Learning
- Community
- Communications
- Calendar Management
- Volunteers
- PA Budgets
- School Administration
- Balance

The main takeaways from the breakout discussions are described below.

Key Takeaways:

- ❖ Schools acknowledged that it has been an extremely challenging year due to the pandemic and are figuring out what the fall will look like for their respective communities.
- ❖ How do school administrators handle re-entry in the fall and re-engage students and parents with the pandemic still looming? Suggestions included:
 - Focus on community building quickly and early in the fall before schools shut down for the winter, since parents likely will not be allowed inside school buildings due to the ongoing pandemic. Parents are craving community and are eager to volunteer for next year!
 - Host outdoor “Welcome Back” and “Welcome to New Families” events in-person while the weather is nice and parents and students are tested. Some schools are already taking advantage of the warmer weather and are hosting new family events outside and after school hours.
 - Host monthly community activities in the fall in order to involve new and different parents, and to generate fresh ideas for the PA. PAs anticipate most schools will “quiet down” or “shut down” in the winter due to the ongoing pandemic.
 - Develop clear communications and create a year-long theme for the school year. Suggested themes are “Reset” and “Rejuvenation” because the predominant theme this past year was teacher appreciation.
 - Schedule events now, shifting from a pandemic “reactive” mindset to a more proactive and creative approach.
 - Continue to offer virtual events to increase parent engagement and accessibility and to widen reach and impact in their parent communities.
- ❖ Schools launched DEI initiatives this past year, because it is a current interest for schools across the country. They addressed important issues such as immigration, social justice, and discrimination toward African American and Asian Pacific Americans. These DEI efforts will continue into next year.

- ❖ One school shared its current DEI program with the group. The school was inspired by its black student union to establish 11 parent-run affinity groups that were offered over Zoom four times throughout the school year on a designated “affinity group night.”
 - The groups were led by newly trained parent facilitators.
 - The affinity groups were advertised and promoted in the school's newsletters.
 - Many parents participated in at least one affinity group where they met over Zoom with breakout rooms.
 - The final meeting of the groups will be in a town hall format where the parents will meet with the school’s administration for a debriefing and to share their learnings.
 - The school credits the success of the program to Zoom and plans to continue offering these affinity groups virtually next school year.
 - They also credit the Head of School for their unwavering commitment to the program as well as the efforts of the DEI school coordinator.
 - Some of the affinity groups created included the following:
 - African American
 - Asian Pacific American
 - Jewish
 - Anti-racists white ally (was one of the biggest groups)
 - LGBTQ+

- ❖ Outgoing PA Presidents agree that next year should be seen as an opportunity for positive changes or additions to the school calendar. The summertime is a chance to reevaluate and renew. It is also a chance for administrators and heads of school to launch new ideas and to consider new themes for their school.

- ❖ School events will continue to be reimagined next year. Manyschools will continue to offer a virtual component or hybrid model in order to maintain and increase parent participation and to reach more diverse audiences. In some cases, Zoom events allow schools, such as boarding schools, to reach parents all over the world.

- ❖ Vaccination policies at some schools have not been publicly announced. At other schools, administrations already have communicated that any parent attending in-person school events must be tested before coming onto campus.

- ❖ Schools are hosting outdoor in-person graduations and will allow a limited number of guests per graduate. The number of guests varies per school.
- ❖ Outgoing PA Presidents strongly recommend that incoming PA Presidents connect with their IT departments over the summer in order to be well prepared for online events in the fall and into the new year.
- ❖ PAs should also make sure to communicate their role to their respective administrations early on to ensure all parties understand the PA's role and to set joint expectations.
- ❖ Schools are focusing on fun and creative ways to honor seniors and to make the end of year special. Examples include:
 - Hosting a senior week with off-site activities such as Top Golf
 - Outdoor senior lounges with themes such as a smoothie or breakfast bar, or cappuccino bar, and a "Parent-Wish Tree" with hanging tags for each senior with a wish from their parents
 - Outdoor carnivals staffed by faculty so Covid testing isn't required
 - Beach-day theme outdoors with fun carnival-type games
 - Designated "senior days" to host outdoor barbeques for lunch or a senior luncheon with the teachers
 - End-of-year senior activities prior to graduation
 - Food trucks on Fridays