



PUTNAM AVE. UPPER SCHOOL

School Council Meeting, March 6, 2024

Meeting Time: 5:30 - 7 PM

ATTENDEES:

School Council members: Jennifer Elisa Betancourt, Nekeya Dancy, Keremu Dawed, Jodi Ekelchik, Betsy Vizcaino

Admin. & Staff: Dr. Phanenca Babio-James, Kunjal Shah, Liam Doherty, Marianne Bees, Danielle Rivers, Joe Connors (Guidance Counselor), Tashima Point Du Jour (Guidance Counselor), Patricia Vasquez-Smith.

School community members in attendance: 5

AGENDA:

5:30-5:40 Welcome & Reflection

5:40-5:50 School Counseling Support

5:50-6:25 Behavior Support and Response Plan

6:45-7:00 Updates and Reminders

Link to the Presentation shared during the meeting:

[MARCH 6 SCHOOL COUNCIL PRESENTATION](#)

MEETING SUMMARY, QUESTIONS & NEXT STEPS

Topics discussed are referenced in the presentation attached above.

- 1) Dr Babio-James welcomed all attendees and invited fellow parents to comment on how they see their roles on this team to support our school goals, and discussion followed from attendees.
- 2) **The School Council was asked to approve the meeting minutes from the Feb 7 School Council meeting ([link here](#)).** It was noted that the minutes were shared with the Council, minutes have been shared by email with the PAUS Community, and have been posted on the website. Since there were no further updates, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- 3) **The PAUS Counseling Team provided a presentation on the role of school counseling services.** The slide deck presentation offers further detail, and includes their role in crisis response, bullying support, helping new students acclimatize to school, and in support for social and emotional learning, academic/guidance counseling and Peer Mediation. PAUS Counseling team & support staff contacts were shared:

PAUS Contacts:

Joseph Connors: jconnors@cpsd.us

Tashima Point Du Jour: tpointdujour@cpsd.us

Patricia Smith: pvasquez-smith@cpsd.us

Alison Farr (Psychologist): afarr@cpsd.us

Kharif Rowe (Peer Mediator): krowe@cpsd.us

Kunjal Shah (Family Liaison): kshah@cpsd.us

During the presentation, PAUS counselors spoke about their role, and offered examples around the following:

- Why students might see a school counselor and how a student can access counseling services;
- Steps a parent/caregiver can take should they need to reach the PAUS counseling team.
- How PAUS counselors can also offer support to parents/caregivers. There was an invitation to reach out should you want a referral, or for more resources within the community. PAUS School counselors are available to help make the connection to services within the district.
- When asked, how does the school manage confidentiality, staff provided the types of issues and frequency of occurrence when they would reach out to parents/caregivers.

Council members and other parents attending the meeting shared their questions, and a summary of these questions is provided here:

- ***How does the Counseling team address a student's resistance to their plan for student counseling?*** The Counseling team shared some feedback, including the need to be discrete, provide stability to the student, and to build trust and engage with the student.
- ***How is the Counseling team addressing recent behavioral challenges at school?*** The Counseling team shared further insight around proactive and reactive steps being taken around e.g., phone usage, bullying, and in managing the school day.
- ***How are behavioral issues being dealt with in the lunch cafeteria whereby the consequence results in students now assigned seating with their advisory classrooms?*** It was noted that although the plan was to lift this restriction after Feb break, another incident this past Monday led to the continuation of the seating policy. It was also noted that while there are staff who monitor the lunch room, the school does not have dedicated lunch monitors. The school aspires to return to allowing students to sit where they wish at lunch.
- ***Building on the subject of school climate, in light of the matters brought to our attention so far this year, what can we do as a community to improve for students moving on to their next middle school grade?*** It was noted that by no means is this behavior reflective of the full student body, but is focused on a few students and the school knows them and is aware. It was shared that the school sees atypical behavior in about 2%, and the school is working with the students, the School Counseling team and parents to address these matters.
- ***A follow-on question was asked if it is feasible to remove students from the cafeteria?*** It was noted that while there isn't opposition to removal of a student. Other items were flagged, including the short time window of the lunch period, addressing the issue when it happens and when observed, and taking the necessary steps to prevent it from happening again.
- ***How are we taking into account as a community and as a team the impact on our kids with many disruptions? How are we ensuring accountability from all including students, school leadership, teachers and parents? Can we consider a robust approach to addressing this as a community, such as with the launch of a "School Climate Committee" involving staff, parents/caregivers?*** There was acknowledgement about addressing this further. It was also noted that there are many in our community who play a part in our school climate, but we don't often see them attending School Council or

PAFA meetings/events. It was flagged about how we can collectively advocate for greater connection and engagement?

- **Where is the student voice and how can students be involved in improving the school climate? Do we engage students in helping to make improvements and offer them the opportunity to help improve?** It was noted that this is part of the SIP plan, that the school works with student government, and the school conducts surveys (e.g., reflection worksheets) to hear from students. It was also noted that students are asked to think about a consequence for their own actions, and often share a consequence that they believe is appropriate. Peer Mediation is also an approach used at Putnam Ave., to help students help themselves with the assistance and counsel of their peers.

4) Behavior Support and Response Planning

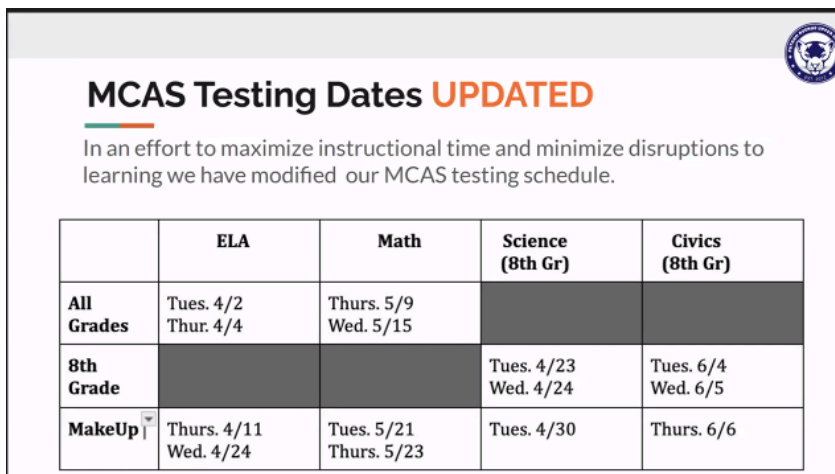
The School provided an overview on atypical behavior (seen in about 2% of the student body), reviewed information on staff professional development in the area of behavior support, and that staff are provided with training by the Instructional Leadership Team. Additional information was shared about proactive steps taking on behavior planning, and shared some key practices and is referenced in the slidedeck.

A question was asked around parent support. It was noted that parent support on behavioral issues is of high importance in tandem with established consequences (e.g., ensuring good practices for chromebooks, reminding students to turn in their cell phones). The school cannot do this on their own, and support from parents/caregivers is an important component.

The presentation included a review of the Peer Mediation program, whereby 18 students signed up to become leaders in our school and took part in training. This program offers conflict resolution from our trained students, under adult supervision, who then can help their peers discuss and resolve interpersonal conflicts. The objective of the program is to help support their peers on a non-disciplinary matter. This is the third year of hosting the peer mediation program.

5) MCAS Testing dates

The schedule was updated to reduce the time of the exams by 50%. This helps us have additional instruction time as well as reduce test anxiety in students over multiple days.



MCAS Testing Dates UPDATED

In an effort to maximize instructional time and minimize disruptions to learning we have modified our MCAS testing schedule.

	ELA	Math	Science (8th Gr)	Civics (8th Gr)
All Grades	Tues. 4/2 Thur. 4/4	Thurs. 5/9 Wed. 5/15		
8th Grade			Tues. 4/23 Wed. 4/24	Tues. 6/4 Wed. 6/5
MakeUp	Thurs. 4/11 Wed. 4/24	Tues. 5/21 Thurs. 5/23	Tues. 4/30	Thurs. 6/6

6) Reminders of upcoming school events and activities.

A listing of activities planned this coming month was shared in the slideshow, and is also reflected in the weekly emails "Take Home Communication".

It was recommended to invite more parents/caregivers to attend both School Council and PAFA meetings.

7) Next School Council meeting: April 24, 2023, 5:30-7pm

- The agenda for the April meeting will include a presentation of the School Climate data for review and discussion.
- Future meetings: May 22 (in-person, prior to the Spring Concert), June 12

8) Meeting ended at 7:01pm

GENERAL REFERENCE MATERIALS:

- Putnam Ave. Website about the School Council: [link here](#) (meeting agenda and notes posted here)