

September 24, 2024

Baldwin School Council Minutes

7:45 - 8:45 a.m.

School Council Members in Attendance

Parent Members: Caitlin Dube, Matt Meyerson, Eugenia Schraa, Chunying Yue

School Staff and Community Members: Heidi Cook, Corianne LaBounty, Sara Oliveira, Susan Tiersch, Phoebe Sinclair

Also present: Lauren Begen, Michelle Morpew, Jennifer Nigro, Bill Palin, Nicole Stone

Welcome and Introductions

Thank you to Lee McCanne, Cambridge Public Schools Chief Information Officer and Gina Roughton, Director of Education Technology, for coming to the meeting today to share information about instructional technology and screen time.

Agenda

- Broad overview of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) Budget
- Technology and screen time

School Improvement Plan (SIP) Budget Overview

Ms. Heidi shared a draft of the SIP budget. The school receives approximately \$75,000 allocation for school improvement. This includes:

- teacher professional development
- hiring of graduate student interns to support classrooms
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum *Second Step*
- funding to pay staff for additional time (like morning supervision in the cafeteria)
- after school programming (like HOOPS)
- faculty collaboration projects
- GoGuardian to help manage what kids are doing on their screen

In addition to the items listed, there is a reserve for things that may come up as the school year progresses.

Technology and Screen Time

Last spring, the school council had discussions about screen time. Mr. McCanne, Cambridge Public Schools Chief Information Officer and Ms. Roughton, Director of Education Technology, explained the goal of educational technology is to prepare students for successful careers by providing age-appropriate tools for

communication and information gathering. The jobs our children will have in the future do not currently exist. If we look at AI, this is an example of ever changing technology. We need curious students who are nimble and facile with technology.

Some technology can be destructive, like social media, depending on how it is used.

Instructional technology is to support teachers and students in every school. There are K - 12 standards as to what is age appropriate. There are great tools for learning. Our job is to teach students how to interact with those tools to become good digital citizens.

Grades 3 - 5 have a standalone technology class. Technology teacher, Mr. E. J. Beucler, collaborates with our library media specialist, Mrs. Karin Kugel. Together, they teach students various technology tools. For example, the Google suite of applications. Understanding these tools will prepare students for middle school and beyond. They learn to explore and how to show their learning. In addition, they do wonderful projects like learning CAD as part of science content (designing space stations). This supports instructional goals. The key is balance.

Questions

Are there recommended screen time guidelines?

CPS does not have recommended time guidelines. The American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines are vague. The ideal is the quality of screen time (maybe not Minecraft).

Is it instructionally necessary to use computers?

It is all about balance. As we know, standard testing helps show the growth and development of a child's learning and is used to help determine what that child needs to grow. With technology, we trust the educators know what is best for the instruction of their students. Think of it like a healthy diet. We all know what are good foods and what are junk foods. Moderation is key. Children need to learn how to identify good and 'junk' technology. As parents, we can also help with this by setting good examples. One easy boundary for parents to set is no technology overnight. Be sure all screens are out of the bedroom, charging elsewhere in the home.

How do screens affect mental health and social well being?

We know there is effective and efficient instructional practice. We utilize tools to solve real world problems and schools prepare students for that. If you think about word processing, we learn to think through writing and word processing helps with that. Parents can model technology use for their children. If they see you constantly on the phone, children will think this is okay. Thinking about AI, there is always "a human in the loop", analyzing output. In schools, the human in the loop is the teacher. They witness how a student responds, observing the benefit and impact, and then make adjustments.

Thoughts for parents at home?

Have conversations with your child. Ask them what they are doing while they are playing an online game. If they are playing Fortnite, sit with them and ask them questions about it. This will show you are interested, which will make it so it's not secretive.

The health curriculum also has information about media literacy. It shows students how to recognize the tactics of social media.

Balance is always the key.

[Interland](#) is an example of a choice activity in library / technology class that the kids love.

Ms. Kugel suggested the following resources for parents:

- [Common Sense Media](#)
- [Media Smarts](#)

In a few months, students will cover this [digital literacy unit](#) in 5th grade.

Open Comment

Concern about the timeliness of buses.

Ms. Heidi said this topic was discussed in detail at the principals meeting last Thursday. The Transportation Department is making adjustments.

Back to school night - why no dinner?

The priority for the evening was student safety, centering families, and being respectful of parents time. We've heard from families that childcare was greatly appreciated and the childcare felt much safer and calmer this year. A video of the opening welcome by Ms. Heidi was done to be respectful of parents time (although Ms. Heidi loves to gather the entire school community!) This gave parents the opportunity to watch at school or at home if time was a factor. Some of our students enjoyed watching the video with their families at home.

School Council Meeting Schedule for the School Year

Ms. Heidi and Caitlin will work together to plan the meeting dates for the remainder of the school year. Meetings will be in the morning from 7:45 - 8:45 and will most likely be on Tuesdays, but not on street cleaning days.

Reminder: School council meetings follow the open meeting law. Meetings are open to all.