

Baldwin School Council Meeting

Wednesday, November 17, 2021

Agenda:

What are our community's hopes and dreams for excursions and experiences beyond the classroom at Baldwin?

Ayesha Hoda is a Baldwin parent and a principal intern for Ms. Heidi. She is in a one-year graduate program in educational leadership. She has been a teacher in the Bronx for 14. She is gathering information from stakeholders around our experiences beyond the classroom that will be part of the design blueprint of our excursions for the future. Information gathered will be about what we have learned from past overnight trips and day trips. How can we build on existing and create new experiences in ways that are culturally appropriate?

Background on Baldwin Overnight Excursions

Baldwin has a tradition of overnight trips. Second and third graders, for more than two decades, have attended Cape Cod Sea Camp (CCSC) in Brewster, MA. Fourth and fifth grade had overnight experiences at Nature's Classroom. The CCSC trip encouraged parent participation.

The adults are put to work with very specific roles and duties leading activities with students. Parents were helpful and the trip got better and better each year. Any parent who wanted to go could attend. Teachers had information/orientation meetings with families prior to the trip. Students also had an overview of what to expect prior to going. The 4th and 5th grade overnight trips focused on independence and did not have parent chaperones, staff only.

Why the Review?

We are doing this review because there have been changes with our partner organizations due to COVID. CCSC shut down and Nature's Classroom had been shut down and re-opened with a changed structure. There are other factors that also need to be addressed:

- Staff coverage for overnight excursions
- Ensure that trips are inclusive for all
- Include all voices in the planning process

The following three questions were asked of the meeting attendees:

Question 1:

Think about the role excursions and the outdoors have played for you and/or your children. What do you believe the value or purpose is for excursions and experiences beyond the classroom?

- So much to learn and discover outside
- The wonder, like the first time a student sees a horseshoe crab
- In a new/different environment there is new learning
- Voices could be louder
- They could "run and do and explore"
- Doing things they had never done before
- Giving more experiences to our kids
- We have seen a change in our child in having more movement built into the day; movement and activity are good for all, but especially for those who don't learn traditionally
- Stewardship, appreciation for our earth
- Gaining more empowerment and a sense of self-confidence

- I think about how few people are wired for sitting in a classroom; the school environment isn't the best for all, but the more time we can mix in different learning spaces, the more we will see them thrive

Question 2:

Joy, belonging, challenge and growth for every student, every day. How can we plan excursions in ways that center equity and fulfill Baldwin's vision?

- Some parents/caregivers don't let their children attend overnight trips. There is a cultural element about restricting overnight trips in some cases. Yet, they are valuable. How can we be sensitive to cultural differences?
- If families felt nervous, they could always go in 3rd instead of 2nd grade. The trip just got better and better every year. At first it was pretty loose--time to hang out on the beach. The adults are put to work and have very specific roles and duties; a team of parents would lead activities with students. Majority of parents were helpful; everything had gotten better and better. It's devastating to not have Cape Cod Sea Camp.
- After attending the 4th/5th and also the 2nd/3rd, there is a big step in being independent. There are ways to reimagine that. I'm not sure how we've communicated the "WHY" clearly in the past. Why are we committed to these overnights? What is the value for our students?
- I think we can think it through better to make sure people are included in a better way--starting 6 months in advance. For example, if the classroom teachers didn't want to stay overnight are there other staff members? Or how can we prepare parents?
- What are the cultural reasons and differences that we are talking about?
 - I wasn't even able to do slumber parties because of the experience we had as refugee immigrants and what they experienced and observed. There might not be anything we can do to help them feel comfortable besides providing an alternative activity.
 - For some, there will never be a way to convince them.
 - High percentage of families of color interviewed worried about serious issues of abuse that can happen on overnights
- How can we encourage families to go and support their students?
- In households that have experienced trauma, can there be a day portion only; what can the alternative be?
- If we can identify the concern or experience, then we can assume some of the reasons that they might not participate. Some families might not feel comfortable sharing their reasoning.
- For the CCSC trip, there were some families who came just for the day, some came just at night.
- If we are closer to Baldwin school, does that make accommodation easier?

Question 3:

How would you like to see the role of excursions/ the outdoors at Baldwin moving forward and how can we engage the entire Baldwin Community in making this decision?

- Teacher trust is critical, when teachers have a relationship with the family, it goes a long way.
- I absolutely want to resurrect overnights! (Karma)
- We need fire, woods, water (and highway)
- In interviews with the kids, the beach kept coming up.

Next Steps

- Need to hear more from those who didn't or wouldn't send their children on an overnight trip
- More information gathering in December (including at a faculty meeting)

- Gather more people for a core group driving the process (email Ayesha: hodaa@cpsd.us)
- Re-establish baseline of trust and understanding of the trips for parents
- Information session and documentation for parents with the "why"
- Start to develop a list of possible location for trips and their amenities
- Get more details on what is possible and what the trip would look like
- Create a trip inventory for Baldwin. What are our usual trips and/or what are some of the trips from the past? (The district Science coordinator is mapping each science unit with an offsite location.)

Ayesha's contact information: hodaa@cpsd.us

Next Baldwin School Council Meeting is Wednesday, December 15, 6:30 p.m. (virtual).