

## Discussion with teachers and BEA representatives from Cherry Crest

First, we want to thank all the staff at a Cherry Crest for safely bringing our hybrid K-2 children back to the school building. Thank you.

On March 12<sup>th</sup> the Cherry Crest BEA representatives, Heather Depaola and Patricia Gilbert meet virtually with the PTSA presidents, Reetika Saxena and Britt Heath, and immediate past president, Karin Hargrove for a continued candid discussion about our commitment to community at Cherry Crest. A lot has changed since then. However, we feel this information would still be helpful to parents.

The following is a condensed retelling of that discussion in a question-and-answer format.

**PTSA:** Thank you for suggesting another meeting to follow up on the General Membership meeting discussion of March 9th. There were a lot of questions and it felt difficult to address some of the issues.

**H&P:** Yes, it did feel frustrating on all sides and not productive. We would like to talk with parents in a more productive way. So, we suggested to meet with you and see how that could be done.

**PTSA:** What is the main thing you would like parents to know?

**H&P:** That we absolutely are here because of your children, their wellbeing is on our minds constantly. We also have children at home and are seeing their struggles. We are teachers because we love children, and we are constantly thinking about them and their well-being.

**PTSA:** The communication has indeed been difficult. Parents are very confused about how decisions are being made and then who is making those decisions and how those decisions are being implemented. We understand that BEA is only one part of the process and right or wrong is seen to be the one pausing the back-to-school process.

**H&P:** From our point of view the information that parents receive is one sided. And the leaders in both the BEA and BSD do not always work out the details nor gain agreement before sending information to the public.

**PTSA:** For our discussion here, we are going to focus on what is currently happening and what we can do, as leaders within the Cherry Crest community, to work together for the school during this transitioning of hybrid classes back to the classroom.

What things have been making the transition back to the classroom harder than it may seem from someone not at school?

**H&P:** The logistical details are incredibly hard to work out. For each group that has come to school we have looked at what is working and what is not. For example, there have been kids being sent to school sick with fevers.

When kids do need to go to nurse's office at school in the 2 ½ hours they are there, that information being tracked to see if there are any trends that may indicate more kids are getting sick as the number of people at school increases.

At the beginning of being back on campus we needed to ask people to leave campus so kids could be out at recess, but there are still neighbors that use the playground during school hours. The playground has

been divided into areas for each grade level so each grade will stay together and not mingle with others. It's hard to keep distances when community members are using the space as well.

Please remind parents not to send their child to school when sick and to not use the field or playground during school hours.

As there are more adults in the building there is more need for substitutes. However, there is a shortage of substitutes, because they too have families and kids at home these days. It's hard to find childcare on short notice these days. It is also unclear how or if the substitutes will be trained in the safety measures/procedures that are a little different for each school.

More people in the building means more daily health attestations. It currently takes the front office staff several hours to process the forms and this will need to be streamlined in some way as further classes come back in person.

Some classrooms aren't big enough to separate out the desks by 6 feet to accommodate all the students for that class. It's been a challenge to figure that out.

**PTSA:** We have also heard that it would be helpful if more kids rode the bus. The time it takes to transition from the morning to the afternoon classes and how long kids have to wait to get picked up is much longer than a typical transition. Keeping staff away from the classroom.

These kinds of details are what parents want to hear about and understand. Otherwise, hearing that the staff and teachers are being thoughtful and methodical does not have any meaning.

**H&P:** Yes, when it is time for pick up we still need to keep kids 6ft apart while they are outside waiting for their cars. If we double the number of students, we need double the space, but we don't have that kind of space. If we could get more students to ride the bus that would help but it's still a logistics challenge that teachers aren't trained to sort out.

**PTSA:** How are teachers, like other parents, going to be able to go back into the building with kids at home?

**H&P:** It is tough. Just like lots of parents we are already making it work. We have a Cherry Crest teacher who works in the earlier part of the day while her husband is taking care of their toddler. And then he goes to work until late in the night while it is her turn to take care of the child.

This will get more complicated as there are more classes back in school. Hopefully for everyone more childcare options open. Right now, it is very limited if you must go outside the home and your schedule is different than your child's.

**PTSA:** As the BEA representatives for Cherry Crest what can you do to help with communication and keeping our community together?

**H&P:** Encourage and participate in conversations like these. As well as be more available to parents. An easy way to do that is by being involved with the PTSA in a consistent basis.

**PTSA:** That would be a great outcome of all of this. We do have a teacher and staff meeting once a month, but also having a specific check in with the two of you as BEA representatives during the year could be very helpful.