

Collie,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond in writing to some of the thoughts and questions circulating in Parent Group this evening.

I used to be very active in PG and have been single parenting and working too many hours to engage very much with this group this year. However, I hope to be active beginning in the fall.

In the past, we used the term 'three legged stool' in describing the how education is supported at Steller. The 'legs' are parents, students and staff at Steller. Parent Group used to be an active group of parents who contributed and were given information about most everything that goes on at the school. Parents looked for ways to support students and staff (NOT just with the checkbook). Parents, staff and students each have their own group. Ad Board, the policy-making body of the school was filled with parents, students and staff who each contributed to this and could then pass the information to the parent group. Maybe this is how things are happening this year? This feels like a good design to me, as long as it is still feeling good to our whole community.

As for volunteer coordination, in the past, this was done with parent liaisons from each advisory. For a couple of years, each family was asked at the BEGINNING of the year how they would like to contribute to the Steller goes on (drive, chaperone, staff lunch, supplies, teach a class in... directory, etc, etc) Then, I organized binders for each liaison in each advisory which included contact information for each family who signed up for various tasks. So, if a family signed up for driving and cooking, they are in those sections in all of the binders. When the teacher (advisor) needs ANYTHING, they ask the liaison, and the liaison then can easily find contacts to make that happen. This seemed to work fairly well for some advisors. The key is meeting with the liaisons to tell them how it works and encouraging the advisors/teachers to REACH out and seek support from the liaisons.

As for 'making waves', I feel that parents should be engaged in two-way, meaningful conversations and activities with the school, These conversations should begin with helpful questions, like: how can we best meet the needs of students looking for opportunities in... (music, colleges, career development, whatever the community decides)? How can I contribute? Who can we partner with to make it happen? If the questions are framed in an inclusive, positive format, provoking the community to participate in finding solutions and actively doing this together. These conversations need to be organic, not predetermined or contrived. This involvement does not feel like 'making waves'.

Not only do we have out Steller history of strategic planning that we could use as a base, or foundation, we could also look to Joyce Epstein's six ways of parent involvement in education. Much study has been done on the most successful ways to involve parents both nationally and internationally, especially over the last 30 years. Research says: when parents are actively engaged, students achieve more, and..staff morale increases.

Here are the six ways:

Joyce Epstein's "Best Practices for parent involvement" types of activities to consider:

- a. Parenting – Assist families in understanding adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support the student; also assist schools in understanding family backgrounds, cultures, and goals;
- b. Communicating – Provide information to families and partners on school activities and programs; create two-way communications;
- c. Volunteering – Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families and partners at the school and in other locations to support students and the school's programs;
- d. Learning at Home – Involve families in student learning;
- e. Decision Making - Include families and community partners as participants in school decisions and activities;
- f. Coordinating with the Community – Coordinate the resources of community businesses, agencies, and cultural, civic, and other organizations to strengthen school programs, family

## practices, and student learning

How to employ these six should be individual to each school or even each staff member. However, we should look into how much of this we truly have going on. There are measurement tools available to use in checking into how we are doing in these six ways. This may be very helpful to us.

I am supportive with whatever direction this body chooses to go, if there is a large body of input. I suggest to start from some of the work that has been thought about, especially to honor those who may be in the room who were present in the past, and then to forge a new path that feels like everyone can own it. Thank you again so much for being there and I am sorry I cannot be there.

Feel free to call me with any questions.

Alyse Galvin

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As a community, we've been discussing what we would like to see as part of the Advisory Group experience. We would like to have the same discussion regarding Parent Group. What do parents expect from the group? Why do they, or do they not participate? What do parents, as a group, see as their function in the Steller Community? What role do you see Parent Group fulfilling—should we only hold the purse strings? Organize the volunteers? Or, is our purpose just to make waves? Please come with a list of three things you would like from Parent Group—or email same to Rochelle Wilhelm [colliebarks@aol.com](mailto:colliebarks@aol.com) If you are unable to attend Thursday's meeting to participate in the discussion you can also post your comments here.