Notes on the CHSCA Meeting, Dec. 10, 2020

Chsca secretary John Landry led the meeting on Zoom, standing in for president Marybel Martinez. Principal Barr and Assistant principal Brian Baldizar spoke to 30-plus parents and other participants, and answered questions. John Landry also prepared these notes.

**Pandemic Update**

Giving the Classical admissions test online wasn’t such a good idea after all, so it was rescheduled to this month for in-person testing, with kids spaced out in large rooms, separated by their middle school. This is more equitable than an online test.

Many kids are not coming in to school even when their cohort is supposed to be there. Attendance is down 10-20% in classes. Attendance falls after every new notice of a student or staff person’s infection.

Mr. Barr praised the support and patience of parents as the administration deals with the pandemic, every day a new variable.

Teachers’ morale is low, they’re “punchy,” disappointed in the state government’s leadership, still no labor contract. But they’re coming in; their attendance has been great.

Why have two extended advisories each week, instead of just one? It’s a district-wide requirement, a good landing spot for kids, social, also helps with juniors and seniors figuring out college etc. The added Wednesday advisory also enables teachers to reach out to students who have been absent or are otherwise struggling.

Kids in quarantine, forced to stay home from school, can still call in to classes. They are marked absent, but not to worry, absences are not marked with transcripts.

No decision yet on how to grade this year, whether to go back to the usual policy or adopt something in between that and the “Do No Harm” policy last spring. Teachers are adapting on their own, with a lot of autonomy.

After the series of helpful pandemic updates, we asked about inviting a different speaker for January’s Chsca meeting. Possibilities are Sarah Lawson (school nurse), Nikki Best (social worker who does a lot of mental health counseling and support groups and has spoken to Chsca before), Sabrina Mazzilli (the other school social worker), Lou Toro (on college applications etc), Scott Harding (another guidance counselor), or someone from the Providence Student Union? How about city superintendent Harrison Peters? Send suggestions to Mr. Barr; he will get back to us soon. The next meeting is Jan. 14, 7pm.

**Other Issues**

Parent-teacher conferences went well under the zoom circumstances. They were necessarily brief; better to run them longer than five minutes at a time. Many teachers had full schedules, but accommodated parents with other times.

For juniors and seniors on college applications, Mr. Toro will likely speak at some point to Chsca, but kids should start with their own guidance counselor first.

Kim Rohm, a parent, reported on the recent monthly meeting of the district-wide Parent Advisory Committee. Highlights: Central Falls (unlike Providence) tested all of its kids for Covid, but that was mainly because they had an unusually high incidence of infection. EnrollRI.org is a state-wide portal giving kids access to schools (conventional and charter), career advice, and outside educational offerings. We need new parents to represent Classical at the PAC, as Kim and other representatives are the parents of seniors. (This is true of Chsca leadership too.)