Notes on the October CHSCA Meeting, Oct. 15, 2020

Chsca president Marybel Martinez led us on Zoom, with principal Scott Barr and assistant principal Brian Baldizar joining for most of the meeting, along with 30 parents and other participants. Chsca secretary John Landry prepared the notes.

**Pandemic Updates**

So far the school has had two infection, from two students from the same household. Mr. Barr said the school and the state health department responded expeditiously with extra cleaning.

The school is not doing any testing onsite. If a student (or teacher or staff) is suspected of being infected, the school sends them off to take a rapid test, and then a follow-up PCR test to confirm. If positive, the school identifies all students that might have come into contact (classrooms, lunch, PE) and reports all of that to the health department, which handles all contact tracing. Doing all this requires a forensic mindset, and some reassigning of classrooms, but so far everyone has been cooperative.

Both principals said the distance learning was going better this fall than last spring. There’s much more technology for parents and students to use. The chromebooks were found wanting in terms of connectivity, so the school has been replacing them. The principals are not micromanaging individual teachers; just giving everyone the training and resources. Some teachers get the new environment and some don’t. It’s hard to recreate online the bond between teachers and students.

The annual test for city eighth graders to enter Classical is still happening, but will be entirely online. To administer the test, the school district hired Pearson, which has been administering the Law School Admission Test online. It will happen over two weeks in November.

Seniors are getting support in applying to college this fall. Counselors are now in full gear to help, either online or one-on-one in offices. The college room is getting busy.

On ventilation, the school got HEPA filtration units for all windowless classrooms. But with consolidation of some classes, the school has needed very few of those rooms. So almost all classrooms have been meeting with windows open. (Unclear what will happen in the winter.)

Unfortunately “the science is going against us,” in that the pandemic is lasting longer than we hoped. May be tough to have after-school activities, even after December.

There’s little opportunity for parents to volunteer in the school this year. Instead, the principals asked everyone to support teachers and staff (and principals) as much as possible during this difficult time. Teachers are working without student teachers, and there’s only one intern, helping the school nurse.

The principals are trying to put together a Zoom open house, so especially the parents of first-year students can get a sense of things. Maybe teachers could record videos in advance, so they wouldn’t have to give up their evening to attend. To be determined.

**Other Items**

Jevonya Allen, the executive director of the school’s alumni association, joined to talk about her group. Its main goal is to raise funds to help the school. In the past it has funded field trips and a second social worker, among other things. Last year it allocated $32,000, not all of which was spent. This year it is focusing on helping with the pandemic, mostly by giving grants to teachers for specific needs including ventilation.

Marybel said the Classical apparel sales were going well and would continue to December.

Julie Gearan, a parent, reported on a recent meeting of the Parent Advisory Council for the city’s entire public school district. Much of the discussion was on the Virtual Learning Academy. The district now has a chief equity officer; also the minimum distance for free bus passes was shortened from five miles to one mile. The district now has only 30 teacher vacancies, down from 100 in August.

Julie and Marybel have been attending the PAC meetings, but their kids are seniors this year, so we need at least one parent to represent Classical at these meetings for next year. John Landry, Chsca secretary, added that his twins are also seniors, which means neither he nor Marybel will be with Chsca next year. So we’re also looking for parents to take over as Chsca officers for next year.

Julie added that Classical is supposed to have a School Improvement Team, but it’s been inactive during the pandemic. We need parents to get together and form a SIT for the school. There’s also talk about an Instructional Learning Team for the school.