



Sunshine Academy

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Parent Advisory Board Meeting Minutes December 6, 2017 4:30 – 5:45 PM

Building Relationships

- Community Building – Sunshine Academy would like to foster relationships between parent families
 - A fair amount of families are new to the area, from overseas, etc., and don't have emergency contacts. Becoming friendly with other parents in your kids' classrooms could help form relationships.
 - Given the rotation of students, the parents' directory will no longer be printed and distributed, but parents are always welcome to reach out to Chelsea for their class list/contact info.
 - Some classrooms are implementing events such as potlucks, which would give parents the opportunity to mix and mingle.
 - There was a suggestion to set a parents' area on the bulletin board where parents can post items for playdates, let other parents know if kids from the class are going to the local museums for a meet up, etc.
 - Regarding playdates and pick-up authorizations, Sunshine encourages parents to think ahead and be proactive about authorizing other parents in writing; if your child is going to have a playdate with a classmate be sure to note which parent, a babysitter, etc. will be picking up the children, and ensure you have authorized the proper person. (For instance, there was a recent incident where a parent authorized their child "A" to be picked up by "B"'s mother so the two kids could have a playdate. When B's father arrived to get the children, Sunshine was not able to release A to the father, as he had not been approved by A's parents.)

Teacher Retention, Benefits, and Teams

- The recent amount of teacher turnover at Sunshine is atypical – usually there is about 15-20% attrition in a year, whereas this year it has been closer to 50 percent.
- The turnover was based on a few different factors: turnover in leadership (with a former director recruiting staff to a new center), some former families recruiting teachers for full-time babysitting positions, and some hiring decisions that didn't work out.

- Chelsea, Andrew, and Ann have been very thoughtful about how to remedy the problem moving forward.
- Sunshine’s benefit package is very generous, especially compared to other daycare or early education centers—please ask Chelsea or Andrew for specifics.
- Teachers are reviewed every six months, and at each review are able to receive \$0-\$3,250 in salary increase (average is about \$2K) based on objective scoring. Reviews are based in part on bimonthly one hour evaluations by Ann, Chelsea, and the program coordinator (currently open) who look at curriculum, student portfolios, development reports, classroom function and mood, and interaction with children and their parents as some of the performance metrics.
- Given its designation as an early education center, Sunshine is committed to recruiting career-focused teachers. Classroom teachers are all on equal footing, as opposed to naming a lead teacher, and continued education is encouraged.
- Andrew shared that since Chelsea has been director there has been a happier tone to the workplace and interpersonal dynamics are improving. Dave, who attended the meeting as a parent but is also the academy’s music teacher, confirmed that he has witnessed this improvement.
- The leadership team is giving a lot of thought to which teachers have good chemistry when making classroom assignments.
- Morale boosting initiatives, including a shout-out board, a team potluck, occasional coffee and donuts, a team dinner, and the upcoming holiday party, all seem to be having a positive impact.
- Chelsea is meeting regularly with new staff and there is a 30 day probation (floating) period to ensure new team members are a good fit for Sunshine.
- When looking at the classroom assignments, Chelsea was sure to balance level of experience and education with a team member who knows the children well.
- Parents offered that they have some frustration with trying to get to know teachers: teachers are discouraged from conversation at pick up and drop off, at the large events (e.g. Halloween party, music show) parents are chasing around their kids, and at the meet and greet only one teacher presents, and while there is a Q&A it’s a formal setting and less of a “get-to-know-you” environment.
- In response to this sentiment, Andrew and Chelsea encouraged parents to call in to speak to teachers during naptime and to come in live for parent-teacher conferences as opposed to doing them over the phone. One classroom had recently had a potluck with parents that fit into the curriculum and was also a nice opportunity for parents and teachers to interact. To that end, they also encouraged parents to look at the curriculum for the month and see if they would like to come into the class to present on a topic. In previous years people have come in to read cultural stories, play musical instruments, teach yoga, show scuba gear, etc.
- Parents also thought it could be nice to recognize teachers in small ways, whether giving out a monthly “award” (like a gift card) for a job well done, highlighting a teacher each month in the parent newsletter, etc.
- Chelsea shared information about the new classroom teacher assignments—if you’d like to know more about the makeup of the teams please feel free to reach out to her for information!

Other items

- Parents mentioned that it would be nice to get seasonal crafts, cards for Mother’s and Father’s Days, etc. Andrew said crafts are up to the classroom teachers and often needs to align with the curriculum, but it’s totally fine to ask your child’s teacher about this type of thing or make a suggestion.

Holidays & Vacations:

- It is helpful when families can let the classroom teachers know when planning to take time off (where child will be out of school for a period of time), especially during the holiday season, as teachers are requesting vacation time as well. If families know in advance what days they may not be sending their child/children to school, this will help the Director (Chelsea) plan for teachers' days off too. No more than two teachers in the school can be scheduled off at the same time (unless several children in the school will also be out). Teacher/Student ratio is always the priority. It would be helpful for the teachers and the Director, if families can note any time off during this season, since it's such a popular time for teachers to want to take vacations too. It also helps the school order the right amount of food for the children during the holiday weeks as well.

Winter Music Show is set for Tuesday, January 23rd

The next Parent Advisory Board Meeting will be March 20, 2018 at 4:30PM.